

The World Vision logo graphic consists of an orange triangle pointing towards the top right corner, with a white four-pointed starburst in the center.

**World Vision**

*Building a better world for children*

**Testimony by**

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**Before the**

**Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health and Human Rights**

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs**

**Regarding the Drought and Famine in the Horn of Africa**

## **Introduction**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting World Vision to testify before your Committee and thank you for holding this hearing. My name is Kent Hill. I am the Senior Vice President for International Programs for World Vision.

World Vision is a child-focused, Christian humanitarian organization, serving the most vulnerable people in almost 100 countries, including the United States, through our committed 40,000 employees. Of World Vision International's \$2.5 billion budget in 2010, World Vision United States raised \$1 billion, with 75% coming from private donations. Our supporters include one million American donors, from every state and congressional District.

## **Crisis in the Horn**

World Vision has been working to strengthen communities and respond to emergencies since 1950. In 2010, World Vision served 15 million people through our responses to 80 humanitarian disasters around the world, including the devastating earthquake in Haiti, flooding in Pakistan, and severe drought in China. We have been operational in the Horn of Africa for many years. Our work has included partnering with communities to improve their food security, access to water, and ability to earn a living.

This drought is the worst in the Horn of Africa in 60 years. On September 5, the food monitoring systems of the U.S. Government and United Nations warned that as many as 750,000 Somalis could die in the coming months unless they receive help. This is approaching the number of people who died during the 1984-85 Ethiopian famine. An incredible 58% of the children in Somalia's Bay region are suffering from acute malnutrition. In total, more than 12.4 million people are presently at risk. Their crops have died. Their animals have died. And now the people are dying in the tens of thousands, many of them children, many of them in Southern Somalia, where famine has been declared. Many more thousands will be lost unless the world responds. World Vision is reaching out to 2.5 million people with life-saving aid and other assistance.

## **Smart Aid Saves and Transforms Lives**

While droughts are cyclical events and more will certainly come in the future, famines are entirely preventable with the right response. We can and must respond, and quickly, if the devastating consequences of this terrible famine are to

be significantly reduced. We know first-hand from our own programs that aid can make the difference between someone living or someone dying. Throughout the Horn of Africa, World Vision is delivering water to communities whose water sources have dried up. We are providing emergency nutrition to malnourished children. Our clinics in Somalia will serve people who have fled their homes, have already walked five to 25 days on desert roads, and are on their way to Ethiopia. These clinics will provide pre- and post-natal care to women, and immunize these soon-to-be refugees from the diseases that are breaking out in refugee camps. We have put up 5,000 tents in Dadaab, the largest refugee camp in the world, perhaps the first shelter that these Somali refugees have had in more than 30 days.

It is sobering to think how many more people, especially children, will die if we and the world do not respond energetically and quickly.

Famine prevention must also be a priority. For two and a half decades, World Vision's Morulem Irrigation program has enabled families in Northwestern Kenya's Turkana County to grow, eat, and sell crops. In this same region many other communities have often relied on food aid. Yet the residents of Morulem have avoided relapsing into famine since 1996. They also continue to move toward sustainable food security. They have even been able to sell extra crops to families from other communities who are unable to produce enough food.

Sadly, other areas in Turkana have not known the benefits of famine prevention, and they are now in crisis. In Morulem, 2,000 families have accessed these crops because their farms are part of the irrigation program. Without initiatives like this, drought in the Horn will always carry the potential of famine in the Horn.

## **U.S. Policy Integration**

Americans rightly recognize that it is essential for the U.S. government to engage but that it cannot, and should not, solve these problems by acting alone. Transformation in the Horn requires local communities, governments, faith groups and the private sector to all come together. U.S. leadership is critical to ensure this happens.

The Obama Administration through its initiative called Feed the Future, and longstanding food aid programs like P.L. 480 - Title II, is working to focus on the short-, medium-, and longer-term issues around global hunger.

One such issue that must be prioritized is access to clean water and sanitation. Such projects help preserve community livelihoods and protect communities against drought.

## **U.S. Funding**

It is a tough political and budget environment right now, with many Americans struggling to make ends meet and with much legitimate political attention on reducing the U.S. government's debt. Reducing the U.S. budget deficit and living within our means are moral issues, but so is it a moral imperative to save vulnerable children from death, hunger and the effects of disasters. There are important conversations happening across America and in Washington about taxes, spending and debt. These are all moral issues, and good stewardship is more important than ever.

Saving the lives of dying children and families in the Horn of Africa is a moral issue we are also facing now that must be on the front burner. Do we turn away and pretend as if we neither see nor hear them, as if they have less inherent worth and dignity than ours? Or, do we follow the Biblical example of the widow who gave even though she was struggling financially herself?

The United States can do both: get its fiscal house in order and continue its funding for important global humanitarian programs.

One of the great misunderstandings about American foreign assistance is the assumption that most of that assistance comes through the U.S. Government. In fact, the amount of foreign assistance provided privately through non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, foundations, corporations and remittances, dwarfs what the Federal government spends. The government portion, however, is still critical.

If America is going to respond to devastation in the Horn and help prevent famine, we will have to respond fully. This includes individual Americans, faith communities, foundations, non-governmental organizations, and yes, government. World Vision partners with all these groups. We have seen how many more vulnerable people our country is able to reach when America's resources are used together and smartly. Our Morulem project in Kenya is one of many examples of programming made possible because of our partnership with U.S. government agencies like USAID.

For many years, the U.S. has been, and continues to be, the leading donor government to humanitarian crises in the Horn. However, our share has shrunk from approximately 53 percent of the world's response to the drought in 2008 to around 30 percent today. Or consider this: **The U.S. government's response to what may be the worst drought in the Horn in 60 years is only 60 percent of what it was for the Horn drought of 2008!**

Tens of thousands of people are at risk of dying in the Horn unless they receive life-saving aid. Disaster response, refugee and food aid are only 1/10 of 1 percent of the federal budget. They are also the parts of the budget that for decades have been the most effective. Yet Congress is considering disproportionately cutting them and crippling America's ability to respond to people at risk in the Horn and elsewhere by as much as 30 percent.

It is tempting to think that whenever there is a new disaster, enough money can be raised at that moment. However, as InterAction, the membership organization of more than 190 U.S.-based non-governmental organizations, including World Vision, working in every developing country, noted in November 2008, "cutting appropriations for the humanitarian accounts in the regular appropriations bills causes program cuts, delays and disruptions that carry very serious, irreversible human consequences, regardless of any eventual 'make-up' funding provided in supplementals."

If you'll indulge an analogy: Imagine that you have a life-threatening medical emergency and go to a hospital. There are plenty of staff and they are very experience and skilled. The hospital is fully stocked with diagnostic and other equipment and has plenty of medicine.

Now imagine going to another hospital. It is empty. Staff need to be hired and trained. There is no equipment or medicine. Everything needs to be bought. By the time all that is done, you will be dead. That is what it is like when there is too little funding available to reduce the risk that communities face from disaster, too little funding for humanitarian agencies to plan, prepare, and respond.

### **Appropriations Issues**

This is not a time for America to pull back. The Horn of Africa is suffering from its driest conditions in 60 years, causing famine in Southern Somalia and putting people at risk of famine in neighboring countries. More than 12.4 million people

need emergency humanitarian assistance. It is not a time to reduce these cost-effective and life-saving accounts by as much as 30 percent. If anything, it is a time to increase them.

Therefore, I would request funding be at least at the FY 2010 enacted level which includes:

- \$1.85 billion for Migration and Refugee Assistance Programs at the U.S. Department of State;
- \$1.3 billion for International Disaster Assistance, which funds the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance at USAID;
- \$1.84 billion for food aid through P.L. 480 - Title II, which funds the Office of Food for Peace at USAID.

I would like to include for the record a copy of letter signed by more than 50 non-governmental organizations asking for these disaster assistance accounts to be funded at FY 2010 levels.

## **Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, I want to thank both you and Ranking Member Payne for holding this hearing, for your on-going internal advocacy within the U.S. Congress, and for your public leadership to ensure a strong U.S. response to the emergency in the Horn of Africa.

I look forward to your questions.