

Grades K-12

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

CRISIS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

A cross-curricular educational resource designed to support the elementary and secondary guides **When Disaster Strikes**, **Understanding Humanitarian Emergencies**

To download these guides, go to: globalclassroom.unicef.ca/en/resources/emergencies.htm

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES: CRISIS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

A Humanitarian Emergency Response

OVERVIEW

By early July, 2011, it became apparent that a crisis was unfolding across Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia and Djibouti, an area known as the Horn of Africa. A worsening drought, rising food prices, and on-going conflict in Somalia have created the most severe humanitarian crisis in the world today, with some 12.5 million people in need of life-saving humanitarian assistance.

The emergency in the Horn of Africa is also a children's emergency. Over 2.5 million children under five are facing imminent, life-threatening malnutrition and disease. This is more than a food crisis; this is a crisis for child survival. In addition to a lack of food and water, malnourished children are extremely susceptible to killer diseases, including measles, cholera, malaria, diarrhea and pneumonia, as well as abuse and exploitation.

"What we are seeing here is almost a perfect storm...In many of the poorest communities people are either too poor or too weak to be able to try to walk for help."
– Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director.

In several regions of Southern Somalia, where the crisis is most severe, the UN has declared a famine, indicating that more than 30 percent of children are malnourished and child mortality rates are at catastrophic levels. Desperate for help, thousands of families are crossing the border from Somalia to reach refugee camps in neighbouring countries, but many children are not surviving the two-to-three week journey. The world's largest refugee camp in Dadaab, Kenya is now home to nearly half a million people and refugees continue to arrive at an average of 1,200 per day!

"UNICEF is using every means possible to reach every child. There simply can be no compromise on the objective to keep children and their families alive."
– Elhadj As Sy, Regional Director for UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa.

UNICEF is supporting a range of interventions and essential services to treat malnourished children and their families, including feeding programs, immunization campaigns, health outreach, and access to safe water and improved sanitation. In Somalia alone, UNICEF supports 500 feeding centres to treat 33,500 children per month suffering from moderate to severe acute malnutrition. With supplementary feeding, UNICEF and partners are working to reach all children under five.

By using simple solutions, UNICEF is saving children's lives. When a severely malnourished child arrives at a feeding centre, they are assessed and then immediately started on treatment with therapeutic milk and Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods such as Plumpy'Nut®. Plumpy'Nut® is a high impact peanut paste fortified with essential vitamins and minerals. This therapeutic food can be administered at home or at therapeutic feeding centres, and is eaten right out of the package. Children are given about 2-3 packages of Plumpy'Nut® a day over the course of 4-8 weeks until their weight returns to a normal range.

UNICEF is a leading supplier of therapeutic food in the Horn of Africa. By land, air, and sea, UNICEF has delivered over 4,000 metric tons of life-saving supplies to some of the hardest hit and hardest-to-reach areas of Somalia. Across the Horn of Africa, UNICEF and partners are also working to prevent the spread of disease, improve access to clean water and sanitation, protect vulnerable children, and safeguard education through the provision of tents, school-in-a-box kits and early childhood development kits for temporary schooling. The routine of school helps provide children with a sense of safety and normality during the chaos and confusion of this overwhelming emergency.

FURTHER RESOURCES:

- Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) – East Africa Relief cbc.ca/eastafricarelief/
- UNICEF Canada – BLOG: Stories of Survival from the Horn of Africa unicef.ca/portal/SmartDefault.aspx?at=2730
- UNICEF Canada – Crisis in the Horn of Africa unicef.ca/portal/SmartDefault.aspx?at=2727
- School is a safe haven for children displaced by famine and conflict in Somalia unicef.org/infobycountry/somalia_59675.html

Compiled on September 2, 2011.

A STORY FROM THE HORN OF AFRICA: SAVING LIVES IN ETHIOPIA

Adapted from *Outpatient therapeutic feeding programmes save lives in Ethiopia* by Indrias Getachew

Berida Jateni looks worried and thin and much older than her 40 years. Sitting next to her hut in Borena, near the Kenya border, she is terrified that the continuing drought will destroy her way of life.

To view a video on this story, visit:
unicef.org/infobycountry/ethiopia_59652.html

Berida's family has raised livestock, mostly cattle, for generations, but now nearly all the cows have died. The last decent rains fell over two years ago and the long drought has killed the prized cattle herds upon which the community depends for food and money.

UNICEF knows that children will suffer the most from the long drought as they are often the first to die from malnutrition. Berida's youngest daughter, Firdoze Liben, was diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition, a health condition that is deadly if untreated. The impact of the drought on the health of the community is plain to see. Berida is very thin as she comes out of her hut, carrying baby Firdoze. But thankfully some help has arrived.



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Community Health Workers Kalkidan Yimam and Chaltu Tesfaye have both been trained to treat severely malnourished children through the UNICEF-supported Therapeutic Feeding Program. Since 2008, UNICEF has supported the training of community health workers in the area of malnutrition treatment and therapeutic feeding, and provided supplies helping them to offer life-saving services at the community level in close to 8,800 sites.

"This is a largely pastoral community and they make their living and raise their children by selling milk and by feeding the children milk," said Kalkidan Yimam. "But now, because the cattle have died, they don't have anything to give their children and as a result the children are suffering."

Kalkidan explained that they came across Firdoze when going from house-to-house to check on the children and screen for malnutrition. Using a special measuring tape wrapped around the arm of the little girl, they determined that she was severely malnourished and asked her mother to bring her to the health post. When she arrived, 10-month-old Firdoze weighed only 12 and a half pounds.

Firdoze was in very bad condition, so they began treatment by giving the little girl ready-to-use therapeutic food, with the added vitamins and minerals her body needed to grow strong and healthy. After only two weeks on the program, Firdoze was doing well and had gained two pounds!



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Imagine you are one of the children in Berida's family. How would you feel? How have you been affected by the crisis? What hopes and dreams would you have for the future?
2. Whose responsibility is it to make sure that a child's right to survival and development (Article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child) is being met for Berida's children and others affected by the crisis in the Horn of Africa? What is the role of the government in upholding these rights? What needs to change to improve the chances of child survival in the region?
3. How is UNICEF helping Berida's family and others like hers in the short term? What kinds of things could UNICEF do to improve conditions in the community in the long term?

ACTIVITIES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

1. View the video clip *School lunch as a lifeline* at unicef.org/infobycountry/kenya_59661.html. As a response, write a journal entry and reflect on the following questions: How would you feel if you had to survive on one small meal a day? What worries, fears and hopes would you have for the future? What can we do as Canadians to help the children affected by this crisis?
2. Read *A Story from the Horn of Africa* (included above) and the *UNICEF – Canada BLOG: Stories of Survival from the Horn of Africa* at unicef.ca/portal/SmartDefault.aspx?at=2730. Create a bulletin board or poster board profiling the stories of survivors. Include photographs, quotes and life summaries that focus on the strength and determination of the people affected by this humanitarian disaster, as well as a call to action on their behalf.
3. In emergency situations, the first task for aid workers is to meet the most immediate needs of the people at risk. However, countries in crisis require assistance even years after the worst effects of the drought and famine are over. Create a visual story, timeline or booklet to show how UNICEF aid workers can help the Horn of Africa recover from this crisis in the immediate future, in 1 year and in 10 years.

ACTIVITIES FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

1. Research the crisis in the Horn of Africa and write an article for your school or local newspaper addressing one or all of these questions: What factors have contributed to this drought becoming an emergency? What can be done to protect countries in the Horn of Africa from similar emergencies in the future? Why has this disaster not received the world's attention compared to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti?
2. View a video clip about educating children in Internally Displaced Persons camps in Somalia at unicef.org/infobycountry/somalia_59675.html. Imagine you are a journalist interviewing a UNICEF aid worker, teacher and students in Somalia about this issue. Create a skit or a video presentation of your interviews. Address the following questions: What challenges do schools face in educating children during a crisis? Why is it so important to keep schools open during an emergency? What can be done to ensure a child's right to education is met during an emergency situation?
3. Read a story about how a Ghanaian boy has called for urgent action on the Horn of Africa crisis at unicef.org/infobycountry/ethiopia_59663.html. Working in small groups or as a class, plan your own fundraising event. Publicize your event (e.g. write a press release for the local newspaper) and invite media to attend to bring more attention to this emergency.

WHAT CAN YOU DO IN YOUR SCHOOL?

When humanitarian emergencies happen in other countries, we can take action in our own country, community and school to help people who have been affected by the disaster. Brainstorm a list of creative fundraising activities you can do as a class or a school to assist people in the Horn of Africa. For example, you could organize a concert, host a movie night or invite a speaker to your school. Here's an idea of what donated funds can do:

- **\$50** can provide 100 packages of Plumpy'Nut, a calorie enriched food that helps to quickly bring malnourished children out of the danger zone.
- **\$100** can provide 40 sachets of Therapeutic Milk, a necessity at emergency food centres.
- **\$250** can provide Food Relief Bundles including Plumpy'Nut and High Energy Biscuits

Check out: unicef.ca/hornofafrica for more details.

