

**Addressing the Humanitarian Emergency in East Africa**  
**Testimony**  
**House Committee on Foreign Affairs**  
**Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health and Human Rights**

**Presented by Shannon Scribner, Humanitarian Policy Manager**  
**Oxfam America**

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Mr. Chairman, Congressman Payne, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the humanitarian situation in East Africa and the importance of a coordinated and sustainable US strategy. Oxfam is grateful for the work this committee has done to address the humanitarian situation affecting 12 million people today living in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. We are also grateful for the leadership role the US government has played as the most generous donor, providing \$600 million since the beginning of the year. Oxfam America is an international development and relief agency committed to developing lasting solutions to poverty, hunger and social injustice. We are part of a confederation of 15 Oxfam organizations working together in more than 100 countries with over 3,000 local partners around the globe.

In my testimony today, I will be outlining the humanitarian crisis in the region and providing recommendations for the US government's response based on the situation on the ground.

**Oxfam's response to the East Africa crisis**

Oxfam teams and partners are rapidly scaling up activities to provide lifesaving assistance in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia through water and sanitation and food security and livelihoods interventions. Working with our partners, Oxfam is rehabilitating wells and boreholes, building latrines, providing sanitation and hygiene services, providing cash transfers and cash-for-work assistance and supporting livelihoods through activities such as rehabilitating livestock. We are currently reaching over 1 million people and aim to reach 3.5 million with emergency relief, while at the same time addressing long-standing threats to livelihoods and further building the resilience of the communities.

- In Somalia: Oxfam has worked with Somali partners for over 40 years with programs that focus on building the capacity of local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and Somali civil society to carry out both development and humanitarian activities. Through this network, Oxfam is able to support our partners in reaching hundreds of thousands of people in need throughout the country. Our partners have scaled up programs and seek to assist around 1.5 million people in 21 of south central Somalia's 45 districts. Our partners' programs include the single largest nutrition program in south central Somalia, which treats more than 12,000 severely malnourished children and pregnant and lactating mothers per month. We are also supporting the single largest public health program in Somalia, providing water and sanitation services to more than 250,000 displaced people in the Afgooye corridor and cash relief to over 16,000 vulnerable people.

- In Kenya, Oxfam’s work combines development, campaigns and humanitarian response to contribute to the rights of communities in the Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASALs) and in urban informal settlements. We also provide water and sanitation services in the Somali refugee camps of Dadaab in Kenya. In response to the current crisis we have scaled up our programs and aim to assist around 1 million people in Kenya. A key component of our work is providing cash to people affected by the drought so that they can buy food available in local markets. Our teams are drilling boreholes, rehabilitating water points and pumps, servicing generators that pump water from wells to communities and, where necessary, trucking water in and doing public health promotion work both for local communities in Turkana and Wajir and in the refugee camps of Dadaab.
- In Ethiopia, Oxfam has been working with local NGOs and Ethiopian civil society since 1962, building the capacity of local organizations in the effective planning and management of both development and humanitarian programs. In the current crisis, Oxfam seeks to reach over 1 million people with water and sanitation services, health care, and cash relief to buy food. Our teams are providing income and livelihoods support through cash for work programs and livestock feeding and vaccinations, so that people can protect their most important productive asset – their animals. As several hundred Somali refugees cross the border into Dolo Ado every day, Oxfam is working to provide water and sanitation facilities for an estimated 20,000 people in Hiloweyn camp, one of five refugee camps in Liben zone in the southern part of Ethiopia’s Somali region.

## **Overview**

The Horn of Africa is experiencing its worst food crisis in years. The UN has declared that six areas of southern Somalia are experiencing famine conditions and it is currently estimated that half a million people are at the risk of death if they don’t receive urgent assistance. All signs point to the crisis extending into 2012, and the after-effects of this crisis will be felt for years to come.

The famine and ongoing conflict in Somalia has resulted in large-scale population movements, internally and throughout the region. Thousands have fled from rural parts of Somalia into Mogadishu, while even more have walked for weeks or months to Kenya or Ethiopia in search of relief. In Kenya, 70 to 80 per cent of new arrivals are women and children and half of the children arriving are severely malnourished. According to the United Nations, there are 430,000 refugees living in Kenya’s camps of Dadaab, making it the largest refugee camp in the world.

In Kenya, the number of people facing food insecurity is estimated at 3.75 million. There has been near total crop failure in marginal agricultural areas and national corn output for the season is expected to be 15 per cent below average. Food prices in local markets reached record levels in July, with the highest price increases in pastoral markets.

In Ethiopia, over 4.5 million people require emergency assistance, alongside over 250,000 refugees, mainly from Somalia. Ethiopia’s Somali region and southern Oromia are among the worst-affected areas. In these regions, pastoralists have lost much of their livestock and it is

anticipated that many more animals that families need to survive will die due to high disease prevalence among severely weakened livestock. In the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples region, corn and sorghum crops have failed in many areas, and since January, the price of corn has increased by 150-200%.

In Somalia, ongoing conflict, poverty, insecurity and recurrent natural disasters have led to a severe humanitarian crisis. This week, the United Nations declared the country's Bay region to be experiencing famine, bringing the total number of famine areas up to six. Bay has been classified as having Global Acute Malnutrition rates of 58% and Severe Acute Malnutrition rates of 22%. Both figures massively exceed the respective emergency thresholds of 15% and 2%. The total number of people now living in famine conditions in Somalia is 750,000. There is an expectation that the famine could expand to parts of Gedo, Juba, Middle Shabelle and Hiraa regions in the coming weeks.

It is no coincidence that the epicenter of the crisis is also the place where it is most difficult to provide humanitarian assistance to those most in need. Ongoing conflict and insecurity, insufficient provision of social services for the population, limited freedom for local organizations and the politicization of aid both by parties to the conflict and donor governments have all played a part in preventing Somalis from receiving the help they need and deserve. Despite these challenges, our experience has shown that aid can be delivered and people can be reached if those delivering the aid are accepted by the local communities and if the aid is not linked to political or military agendas. Through Somali partners, we are currently reaching 800,000 people in Somalia and aim to reach 1.5 million as part of our emergency response.

The scale and severity of this crisis is unparalleled. The situation is set to worsen and swift action is needed to save lives and avoid further suffering. The severe drought, with some of the driest conditions we have seen in 60 years, triggered this disaster, but it is not the sole cause. The conflict in Somalia, entrenched poverty and decades of under-investment in small-scale food producers have also contributed significantly to the crisis, with pastoralists particularly hard hit.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), below-average precipitation is predicted for the November to January rains in south and central Somalia and the greater Mander triangle where Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia meet. This means that emergency conditions could persist well into March/April 2012. In southern Somalia, recovery may not start until the next harvest in August 2012.

### **Failing to respond adequately to the early warning signs**

According to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET), which is largely supported by USAID, back in August 2010, there were clear indications of the impending drought and its possible impacts on food security in the region. Initial warnings of increased risk were published even further back in April 2010, when the La Niña phenomenon was foreseen. While a massive humanitarian operation is now underway, little was done until the May 2011 rains failed – as was predicted by early warning systems.

Drought is common in many parts of Africa, but with early warning systems working, there is no real excuse for continued late responses to impending food emergencies. Looking forward, national governments, regional actors and the international community, including NGOs, must do a better job of coordinating a holistic response early on if food emergencies are to be avoided in the future. Recent droughts reveal a series of slow or delayed responses, including last year in the Sahel and Kenya during the 2008/9 drought. Such delays suggest a failure on the part of the national and international actors involved at multiple steps in the response. More should have been done to respond to these warnings, including strengthening the resilience of local communities to better endure drought and other shocks in the first place.

### **Improving access to food**

A number of factors have resulted in significantly reduced food production in the region this year, including the failed rains and harvests, conflict, weak infrastructure, restricted access to agricultural inputs, a lack of market integration and restrictions on movement and trade. Addressing these constraints to agricultural productivity will require long-term assistance to help food producers, many of whom are women, grow more food while preserving and even enhancing a diminishing natural resource base

At the same time, it is important to provide immediate assistance that will increase people's access to food. With high and rising food prices, basic staples are simply not affordable for tens of thousands of people throughout the region. The majority of people in the worst affected areas have no savings and few safety nets to support them when drought or other disasters strike. Oxfam's assessments have shown that cash-based interventions are a rapid, effective way of saving lives, supporting livelihoods and contributing to local market functioning. As the World Food Program faces ongoing challenges in procuring enough food to meet the immense needs, we must work to ensure that food aid is available in areas where markets are not functioning and cash assistance is available in areas where markets are functioning and food is available.

### **Mass displacement**

Drought and conflict have resulted in massive population movement and displacement throughout the Horn. According to the United Nations, more than 100,000 people have fled from other parts of Somalia into Mogadishu.

Those who have been able to escape from Somalia take a harrowing journey through dry and insecure parts of southern Somalia, eastern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. Kenya has received about 130,000 new Somali arrivals since January, with 85,000 arriving since June. In Ethiopia, 120,000 Somali refugees have arrived in Dolo Ado, with 80,000 arriving this year. Over the last two weeks, thousands have begun to arrive in Yemen.

This rapid and massive increase in people arriving in both Kenya and Ethiopia has posed significant challenges to responding to need, and leaving humanitarian agencies struggling. Three existing refugee camps in Dadaab were originally built to house 90,000 people but the according to the United Nations, approximately 430,000 Somali refugees are currently living in and around Dadaab. After considerable delay, a fourth camp has been opened along with extension sites to an existing camp.

In Ethiopia's Dolo Ado region, new camps are being built. The state of health of those arriving in Dolo Ado continues to be extremely poor and there has recently been a worrying rise in deaths among children under the age of five, the main cause of which appears to be measles. Malnutrition, pneumonia and diarrhea are also causing high infant mortality rates and death in children.

UN agencies and NGOs are working around the clock to try to provide basic services in all these camps, but with the arrival of an additional 1,200 refugees a day in Dadaab and increasing numbers in Dolo Ado, it is an uphill battle. Steps must be taken to ensure these additional camps meet humanitarian standards, with improved coordination and safe transfer of refugees from one location to another. The massive influx of refugees is also causing considerable tension with the host communities over water, resources and land. These tensions must be addressed and a long-term solution to the situation in Dadaab must be found.

### **Challenges to response**

Perhaps the greatest challenge to ensuring that lives are saved and this crisis does not worsen is making sure that all actors involved, including national governments, the international community, United Nations agencies, NGOs and civil society organizations respond swiftly and appropriately to the immediate and longer-term needs by ensuring adequate emergency and development funding and access, improving coordination and being flexible.

1. **Funding**: Currently, \$2.4 billion is required to cover immediate humanitarian needs. \$1.4 billion has already been provided and the United States is the lead donor, having provided just over \$600 million. Other donors have stepped up, including the African Union, Saudi Arabia and other non-traditional donors. Oxfam commends the United States for its leadership and early response to the drought. Secretary Clinton's announcement of \$17 million three weeks ago and USAID Administrator Shah's announcement last week of \$23 million are critical to the response and we hope that the US government will be able to continue responding generously as this crisis unfolds.

Increased funding for emergency accounts should not come at the expense of other relief and development accounts that fight poverty and often help prevent the need for emergency spending in the first place. In addition to emergency assistance, more investment in long-term solutions is required.

Feed the Future (FTF) is an important initiative in this regard, and Oxfam commends its comprehensive approach to investment in country-owned agriculture and food security plans that involve key stakeholders in planning and implementation. Agriculture and pastoralism provide critical livelihoods for the 237 million people in East Africa who live in rural areas. The agriculture sector (farming and livestock) is essential for food availability, livelihoods and economic development in the region. The sector comprises a significant portion of gross domestic product (GDP) in the Horn countries - 44.5 per cent in Ethiopia, 27.0 per cent in Kenya and 65.0 per cent in Somalia. Yet, globally, the share of official development assistance that supports agriculture has declined by 77 per cent,

accounting for only 7 per cent of the total official development assistance today. From 2005-2008, agriculture assistance as a share of official development assistance was 6.12 per cent in Ethiopia, 6.88 per cent in Kenya, and a mere 0.87 per cent in Somalia.

National governments must also play a role in directing investments toward agriculture. Ethiopia and Kenya have agreed to direct 10% percent of national budgets to agriculture, however the lack of investment in livestock production in the region is particularly stark. In Ethiopia livestock production contributes 40% of agricultural GDP, but the government only allocated 0.3% of its budget to investment in livestock production, while in Kenya livestock provides 50% of agricultural GDP, but receives less than 1% of the budget.

It is critical that the United States maintain full funding for the emergency accounts and make greater investments in agriculture, disaster risk reduction and long-term development assistance, such as Feed the Future.

2. Access: Along with donor funding, access remains another significant challenge, especially in Somalia. South central Somalia is one of the world's most difficult environments to work in, yet Oxfam's partners continue to operate and provide services to the community. Additionally, donors have placed legal restrictions on international NGOs that have compounded their ability to adequately respond to the needs. As the United States continues to respond to the famine in Somalia and drought in the region, it is critical that humanitarian assistance is given on the basis of needs alone and that response remains neutral and impartial.
3. Coordination and Flexibility: The scale and scope of this emergency presents numerous challenges to the humanitarian response, and we need to ensure not only that enough money is provided, but also that it reaches those most in need. Therefore, coordination, information sharing and transparency amongst all actors must be improved. Now more than ever, humanitarian actors need to be strategic and flexible in how we provide assistance.

### **Ways forward**

The Horn of Africa is highly vulnerable to natural hazards, particularly drought, and climate variability is expected to increase in the future, which will have major impacts on livelihoods and food production. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) seeks to analyse, manage and address the causal factors of disasters and their impact on men and women. DRR activities should be a core feature of humanitarian, rehabilitation and development programming going forward, because appropriate prevention not only saves lives but also money. Unfortunately there is a lack of priority given to resilience building, especially for poor farmers, in the region.

DRR funding represents a very small percentage of overall humanitarian and development activity expenditures. New global data shows slowly increasing expenditures, but still to only extremely low levels. Global expenditure on DRR in 2009 reached \$835 million – a mere 0.5 per cent of total annual official development assistance.

Studies have shown the wisdom of investing in DRR. For example, protecting core livestock herds is much cheaper than rebuilding them once they have been decimated by drought. One study found that in northern Kenya, it was three times more expensive to restock a core herd than keep animals alive through supplementary feeding. In the Afar region of Ethiopia, restocking sheep and goats costs 6.5 times more than supplementary feeding, and restocking cattle costs 14 times more.

In Ethiopia, as a result of Oxfam America's disaster risk reduction programs to build and preserve livelihood assets, communities that received emergency aid in previous droughts are not in need of assistance. For example, a small-scale irrigation project developed in Liban district of Guji zone pumped water from a major river to enable pastoralist households to produce grain not only for their own consumption but also for local market supply. Women report that they no longer worry about milk and food shortages for their children and families. In contrast to last year and neighboring pastoralists' communities, this community is no longer included in food aid targeting and they have not been forced to migrate with their livestock, due to the lack of animal feed. Oxfam is seeing similar resilience being built through support for community grain banks and cattle restocking programs. Cash-for-food programs have helped communities in Ethiopia develop more than 2,000 hectares of degraded land into grasses for herds to graze. More than 15,000 pastoralist households with which Oxfam has been working with are still benefiting during the current drought from having preserved hay, now used for feeding dairy cows in a "cut and carry" management system.

Solutions do exist to ensure that crises on this scale are avoided. Governments and the international community need to treat this as a long-term problem as well as an urgent crisis. This is not a standalone emergency but a recurring problem that will become more severe and frequent. The chronic cycle of food insecurity is leaving donors and affected communities limping from one crisis to the next. It is a cycle that must be broken.

***Recommendations to the US government:***

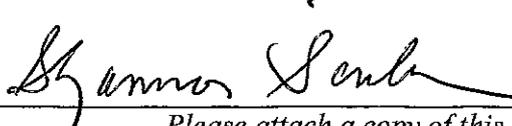
- Use its influence to ensure a strong and strategic humanitarian response, where humanitarian principles are upheld, and actors are encouraged to share timely, accurate information about their activities, any challenges they may face or limitations to what they can do.
- Fully fund and maintain the emergency accounts to ensure as many lives are saved as possible, including support for cash-based interventions and other alternative programs.
- Invest a portion of humanitarian and development assistance towards disaster risk reduction and promote a global compact between development and humanitarian actors that would put disaster risk reduction at the heart of development approaches in disaster prone countries.

- Fully fund Feed the Future and ensure that USAID has the flexibility to re-assess and if necessary realign investment priorities, in consultation with developing country stakeholders, in the context of the current crisis.
- Fulfill the pledges made to the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative (AFSI) to fulfill the US piece of the L'Aquila commitment of \$3.5 billion for agriculture and food security over three years. This should be seen as a down payment on a long-term commitment to funding agriculture and food security activities in a manner consistent with Feed the Future. Also should agree to a longer-term plan for fighting food insecurity and malnutrition after the AFSI expires in 2012.
- Support national governments in the establishment of social protection and safety net programs, such as delivering regular food, cash or vouchers, which will protect poor people from the impact of food crises, reduce and reverse malnutrition of vulnerable populations including children under the age of five and encourage national governments and other donors to do the same.
- Make concrete commitments towards building the resilience and productivity of pastoralists and other small scale food producers, including policies and long-term investments that focus on drought cycle management; development of dry land areas and affected pastoral communities; improving access to markets for smallholders; targeted support to women and provision of financial services including savings, credit and insurance.

United States House of Representatives  
Committee on Foreign Affairs

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SHANNON SCRIBNER	OXFAM AMERICA
<b>3. Date of Committee hearing:</b>	
SEPTEMBER 8, 2011	
<b>4. Have you received any Federal grants or contracts (including any subgrants and subcontracts) since October 1, 2008 related to the subject on which you have been invited to testify?</b>	<b>5. Have any of the organizations you are representing received any Federal grants or contracts (including any subgrants and subcontracts) since October 1, 2008 related to the subject on which you have been invited to testify?</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>6. If you answered yes to either item 4 or 5, please list the source and amount of each grant or contract, and indicate whether the recipient of such grant was you or the organization(s) you are representing. You may list additional grants or contracts on additional sheets.</b>	
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