



Three-year-old Aden Abdallah was severely malnourished when he was admitted to the IRC's hospital in Hagadera, Dadaab. His family trekked to Dadaab from Somalia for 25 days. His mother died from starvation on the way. Aden is on the mend and was recently discharged from the hospital.

(Photo: Peter Biro/IRC)

OVERVIEW

The drought in the Horn and East Africa has been described as the worst in 60 years, with an estimated 12.5 million people facing a severe food crisis and in urgent need of emergency assistance. While the current crisis has attracted international attention, drought has been a chronic problem in the region for much longer, one which the IRC has been responding to for over a year.

Poor rains have led to crop failure, loss of livestock and soaring food prices, and famine has been declared in five areas of southern Somalia. In northern and eastern Kenya and in central and southern Somalia, malnutrition is at its highest rate since 2003. Somali refugees must walk for days or weeks to reach Dadaab, the world's largest refugee camp in northeast Kenya, or the Dolo Ado camps in Ethiopia.

The IRC's RESPONSE

The IRC has mobilized a multi-faceted response across Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia.

SOMALIA

The IRC is implementing emergency livelihoods and water sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programs in Mudug, central Somalia, targeting people displaced by the famine and host communities who have taken them in. Through the IRC WASH program, boreholes, shallow wells and hand pumps are being rehabilitated, upgraded and/or installed in Galkacyo South to serve displaced families.

KENYA

Dadaab: The IRC works in Hagadera, one of three camps in the Dadaab complex. The current population of Hagadera is 128,705 registered refugees. The camp was built to house 30,000. The influx of refugees is continuing with up to 1,400 people a day arriving in Dadaab and approximately 900 people a day being registered at the camp. The IRC is providing health care and gender based violence support in Hagadera and is expanding its health programs to provide more support to the host community. In

Kambioos, a new camp in Dadaab, the IRC is installing temporary tents in order to provide essential health care. In partnership with the United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, the IRC has set up reception centers where newly arrived refugees are given ready to eat food, medical screening, nutritional support for children under five, and appropriate referrals for those who require further medical care. The IRC also runs a mobile health clinic that provides primary healthcare and gender based violence support to refugees who are awaiting registration outside of Hagadera.

Turkana: Malnutrition rates are alarmingly high in this region of Kenya. In northeast Turkana, for example, the global acute malnutrition rate is 33.5 percent, far higher than the established emergency threshold of 15 percent. This situation is partly attributable to a severe lack of food brought on by the drought. High rates of malnutrition among the local community are also impacting services at the Kakuma refugee camp, which is located in Turkana. There has been an increase in locals seeking access to camp services—currently over 50 percent of admissions at the Kakuma camp's stabilization center are from the local community.

The IRC has scaled up its nutrition program in partnership with the Kenyan Ministry of Health and local institutions to meet the needs of 16,000 malnourished children under the age of five and 5,000 pregnant and breastfeeding mothers. A supplementary feeding program is due to begin in August, targeting a total of 18,672 people, including 10,639 children under the age of three and 8,033 pregnant and breastfeeding mothers in northwest Turkana. The program will include distribution of supplementary feeding supplies and Vitamin A and immunizations. The IRC has increased its outreach sites from 12 to 32 for outpatient therapeutic care and supplementary feeding programs.

The IRC is also responding to the drought in central Turkana, Loima and Turkana West districts. The IRC is supporting 10 schools with water trucking services and hygiene supplies, improvement of hand washing facilities and hygiene promotion and awareness sessions. The project is also improving access to safe water in four health facilities in Turkana West where the IRC will support water trucking, water source repair and hygiene promotion. Our emergency water response project is currently benefiting at least 4,840 school children and 2,600 drought-affected people in Turkana.

ETHIOPIA

Drought and security concerns continue to drive refugees into the southern regions of Ethiopia. The IRC is the primary agency for water provision in the Dolo Ado camps and has been responding to humanitarian needs in the camps for over a year. Programs include rehabilitation of non-functional water systems in drought affected areas and the installation of water points in the camps.

In the local community, the IRC has been providing water, sanitation, hygiene and livestock services to more than 285,000 drought affected people in three regions of the country, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples, Oromia, and Somali Regions. There are plans to scale-up activities to reach an additional 112,000 people before the end of August.

For more information, contact IRC Horn and East Africa Region Media and Information Manager Sophia Jones-Mwangi on +254 737 800028 or email sophia.mwangi@rescue.org

About the International Rescue Committee

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people to survive and rebuild their lives. Founded in 1933 at the request of Albert Einstein, the IRC offers lifesaving and life-changing assistance to refugees forced to flee from war or disaster. At work today in over 40 countries and 22 US cities, we restore safety, dignity and hope to millions who are uprooted and struggling to endure.