



## Food Aid for Refugees in East Africa

**Today** as many as 13 million people are at serious risk from lethal famine in East Africa. For the last few months, tens of thousands of people have fled the drought and famine in Somalia and Ethiopia into refugee camps in Kenya. At the Dadaab Refugee Camp, Lutheran teams are at the heart of coordinating the world's response to the crisis.

### **Why are so many people now in danger?**

East Africa is enduring its worst drought for 60 years. Large parts of Somalia have been declared a famine zone. People literally have no food, and their 'savings' in cattle and crops have all been used or destroyed. Desperate families are walking to Ethiopia and Kenya seeking safety. The journey is as many as 1000 kilometres. Most of the drought/famine refugees are going to the Dadaab Refugee Camp, however some end up at other camps in Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti.

**Food aid is essential to ensuring the survival of the people who have fled their homeland into refugee camps, and those who remain in their country.**

### **Who is most at risk?**

A famine is declared when the death rate is greater than two people per 10,000 per day. Those most at risk are children under 5 years old, the elderly, anyone who is sick, and pregnant and lactating mothers. In families arriving at Dadaab Refugee Camp, at least



50% of children are suffering malnutrition.

### **What is Dadaab like?**

Dadaab is the largest refugee camp in the world, home to almost 500,000 people. It is really seven refugee camps together, because as it has grown, aid agencies have tried to spread the people out.

When Dadaab first opened two decades ago, a family of five lived on a plot of land that was about the same area as a small house. Since August 2008, the UNHCR had to put second families in each of those plots of land. And then third families. Now they are at the stage where they have more than 42,000 of the newly arrived refugees actually outside the camp boundaries because there is nowhere to fit them inside. And this number is growing. Apart from not being able to access services, the new refugees, that are technically illegally settled outside the camp boundaries, cannot be guaranteed protection and the areas are also prone to floods.

The feeling for the newly arrived refugees is uncertainty and sometimes panic. Many of the refugees

have lost children during the journey to Dadaab, and too many children die on arrival, as they were past the point where food and water could bring them back to life. Many women are mostly alone, trying to protect babies and small children by themselves with nothing but thorny twigs. Most women have collected unaccompanied minors along their journey to the camp. These children are no relation to the women who now try to keep them alive. They are probably orphans. But that will take some time to sort out.

In the camp, there are food and non-food distribution centres, medical facilities, logistical facilities, many tents, some makeshift long-drop loos and other rudimentary facilities.

The new arrivals are often very tired and exhausted, having travelled very far. The majority of the new arrivals are women and children – many are farmers and animal herders. The prolonged drought means failed harvests and dying animals, and the families are suffering unimaginable horror.



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## Food Aid for Refugees in East Africa continued ...

### What happens when people arrive at Dadaab?

All persons arriving at the camps are **medically screened**. Children below 15 years are **vaccinated**. The majority of the people have spent several days, sometimes weeks, walking through the dry land, often without food and with little water. They arrive in Dadaab in very poor conditions. Most of the people arriving are dehydrated and very hungry. Many lack clothing and are bare foot.



All refugees undergo a “**vulnerability assessment**”, by Lutheran teams when they arrive. This is to identify persons with disabilities, social vulnerabilities, female headed households, unaccompanied minors, separated children and unaccompanied elderly persons. When these persons are identified, they are given priority for transport to the registration centre for documenta-



tion and issuance of ration cards. After reception and processing, the new arrivals receive a wrist band for identification and are given high protein foods. They are given 15

days of rations to start with, and then are given more rations every fortnight. The family need to make the rations last until the next food distribution day.

### Rations Per Person Per Day

**420gms uncooked rice**  
**70gms beans / lentils**  
**40gms sugar**  
**20gms vegetable oil**

**This daily food ration delivers 2100 Kcals per person per day – the UN standard.**

Refugees are also provided with non-food items (cooking pots, mats and jerry cans and plastic sheets, tents), though the huge number of arrivals means that many miss out on shelter/tents and are living in small, unsafe makeshift shelters.



To be able to extend basic services, (including layout of family plots, provision of water and sanitation, health, emergency shelter, education and security) the camp needs to be planned out in a structured manner.

Water is a big challenge because taps are few and there is a limit to how much water can be pumped from existing boreholes. People have to walk long distances and wait for more than 2 hours in line to fetch water. There is a need to truck water into the camps as well as to the host community.



Distribution of enriched porridge flour to the children and elderly is helping to improve the health of the very weak after they arrive at the camp.



### Strength and Determination

The strength and determination of the people in the camps is inspirational. Their determination to protect their family and return to their homelands never wavers, and it is all possible with the giving of food and love in the camps.

**Food really does matter.**

