

Bath charity warns food crisis in Ethiopia is worst in decades

East Africa is in the grip of a critical humanitarian crisis. Many people have already died and millions more are at risk of starvation.

Ethiopia is one of a number of countries, alongside South Sudan, Somalia and Kenya, who are struggling to combat the effect of changing weather patterns. The Ethiopian government has estimated that 5.6 million people require urgent humanitarian assistance at a cost of \$948 million.

Bath-based charity Ethiopiaid has launched an appeal to raise urgent funds and draw attention to the plight of families facing starvation in the Afar region, where it works with local partners. The charity has been closely monitoring the situation.

"Our partners are telling us that the situation is escalating. Water collection pits are running dry, food is scarce, livestock are starving and disease is spreading. Families in the worst-affected areas are scared about what lies ahead. They are no strangers to drought, but this is the worst they have seen for decades. Our partner APDA has recently identified 15,000 children under the age of 5 and 25,000 pregnant or breast feeding women already suffering severe malnutrition. The situation is deteriorating rapidly and we need to act now to provide the emergency aid they so desperately need." - Alexandra Chapman, Chair of Ethiopiaid

The rains known as 'belg' rains are due to begin in a couple of months but with uncertainty over whether they will appear and the failure of rains last year, people are facing what will be the worst drought in decades.

"I have just been for 3 days with rural communities in the Afar region. Thirst is again beginning to bite; more animals will be dead by May/ June if we do not get rain in April and the greatest problem we are struggling with right now is malnutrition and the extreme vulnerability to disease, especially the under 5's and pregnant women. Even if the 'belg' rains come it will be many months until people are able to be self sufficient and replenish their livestock." - Valerie Browning, Afar Pastoralist Development Association

APDA's health workers are vital in ensuring aid gets where it is most needed. They travel huge distances on foot for 15 days at a time, visiting households to conduct nutrition surveillance, treat immediately those identified with malnutrition and give awareness on hygiene and disease prevention. The government, UNICEF and the World Food Programme rely upon APDA's health workers to get vaccinations and malnutrition supplements to remote communities across the Afar region.

In just 15 days one health worker can reach and treat 150 severely malnourished and vulnerable people. **It costs £15 a day to keep a health worker in the field and provide medicine for 10 people.**

Water trucking is expensive at £203 per day but vital for those living in areas where the geology of the land means well boring is impossible. One truck can carry 14,000 litres of water providing 2,800 people with 5 litres each.

There are currently 7,500 households in Eli Daar, Erebti, Afdeera, Kori, Teeru and Awra that have lost their livestock and their livelihoods. Getting veterinary care to the remaining livestock is crucial if they are to have any hope of survival and self sufficiency.

In the last 18 months Ethiopiaid's donors have sent over half a million pounds to support vulnerable communities that were beyond the reach of government aid distribution points, providing a safety net for thousands of people. But now the situation is escalating again and more funding is urgently needed to ensure that they can survive the coming months.

To make a donation to Ethiopiaid's Emergency Relief Fund please visit www.ethiopiaid.org.uk, email emergencyrelief@ethiopiaid.org.uk, or telephone 01225 476 385.

The charity operates with minimal overheads and promises that 100% of the funds raised from the appeal will be sent directly to its partners in Ethiopia.

Whilst the Ethiopian government continues to put money into supporting those most in need and distributing its limited food stocks, NGO's are calling for more to be done and the international community to step in and help.

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Editor's Notes:

- **Photos** - Images attached were taken in Afar, Ethiopia, by APDA.
- **Interviews** - If you would like to speak to an Ethiopiaid representative please contact Francesca Rutherford, Fundraising Officer, at the charity.
- **T:** 01225 476 385 **E:** emergencyrelief@ethiopiaid.org.uk . We can also potentially arrange an interview with Valerie Browning by Skype who lives in Afar, Ethiopia and runs APDA.
- **History** - Ethiopiaid was founded by businessman and entrepreneur Sir Alec Reed CBE in the late eighties, with the vision of an Ethiopia without preventable poverty, in which every person enjoys the right to quality education, healthcare and a life of dignity.
- The charity provides funds to trusted Ethiopian partners working to improve maternal health, opportunities for women and girls, preventing harmful practices, education, disability and elder care.
- The charity has sent over £34 million to Ethiopia since its founding in 1989.