

SEEDS OF HOPE AMIDST CRISIS

Our partners say 'thank you'

Of those who have helped, our partners in East Africa say, "We truly praise the Lord who has shown us his favour in the challenging work of saving lives in drought.

"Your have been His hands, since through you we have received grace from Him, making this work possible."

How help is being given

Our partners have scheduled to feed 4,200 families in the key towns of three affected areas. As well as food, water supplies are also a critical need. The digging of new wells also began in October, and our partners plan to sink a borehole in a strategic central location.

Their work with water is just one example of how our partners are looking at longer-term recovery beyond the present drought - a crisis of famine proportions in some areas according to USAID's famine warning system.



Queues for food aid

"We had already purchased parts for a windmill," say our partners, "and work on this was going on at the beginning of October. This will be particularly useful for the women's groups who have been using the windmill for water for their families, and to do some small-scale farming for food. Had this been working they would have had less pressure from drought.

The farm has been divided into 40 plots of a quarter acre each for every woman member. "The windmill is pumping water in the tanks, then on to the farms," say our partners. "The women are very excited, ready to start farming again. Their seed beds are teeming with seeds while the grounds are being tilled. This windmill is going to serve more than 300 women from the village. We are looking forward to helping them manage this project well; if this is done, the women will be able to sustain themselves financially."

Our partners' feeding programme for children under five, as well as the school feeding programme, is also being stepped up. In one town alone, 480 children have been fed so far, and hundreds more in other villages, with rice, beans, maize and Unimix (a special pre-mixed nutritional food for use in drought or crisis zones). Previously, many children had only porridge.

A greater emphasis will be made on helping children who will be out of school at the end of this month. The school feeding plan will be supplemented by support for children at home, provided through centres or via their parents.

With nurses in place and a nutritionist being lined up, the capacity for vital healthcare work is also increasing.

"This month we went a notch higher, by bringing children and their parents to our clinic for medical help," explain our partners. "We got very interesting results! All kids we

examined had worms, and so we de-wormed them. We found it important to train them on basic hygiene, and the change is showing.

"There are also expectant mothers who are not attending ante-natal clinics. We have begun providing health services for them. Pray for funds to equip the clinic, to be able to serve them well."

And then came the rains...

The logistics of many aspects of all this work have been made more challenging still by conditions on the ground.

"The rains had just begun, and we got our first serious rains coming down in the second week of October," our partners explain. "Roads were made impassable. We could not bring food in from Nairobi as before. While waiting in Garissa in preparation, we got a small window of a dry week, which we exploited - amidst great challenge - to get food to our destinations."

Food reached the affected region... "Then it began raining again!", say our partners. The gift of a heavy pick-up vehicle with the help of Partners International/WorldShare and others has enabled movement to and fro. "It will contribute heavily in making our work manageable, and co-ordination possible," they say.

Amidst all this difficulty, surrounding military activities were a fresh reminder to our partners that they are working close to a war zone, with curfews imposed in major towns, and restrictions on movement and gathering. Our partners request we step up our prayer for the safety of the workers, amidst reports of increased tension, and grenade attacks including one which killed two people in a church compound.

"The challenge continues to grow as more people come forward needing help. Terror within the (refugee) camps has raised tensions and trauma for many here. Provision of this help would truly lift people's spirits.



"Though we have received rain, people in the region will still need help with food aid, to carry them through to the harvest. Pastoralists will need re-stocking to get them to the levels where they can sustain livelihood."

In one place, a community elder called our partner a few days after the distribution of food, to thank them for other help received... which was in the form of a goat! "I noticed that it was a huge sacrifice for a people who have lost most of their flock, and would do anything to re-stock. I am yet to take the goat, but joyfully received it from him."

Other activities our partners are engaged in to help famine victims:-

- Conducting training of trainers courses for community leaders, on trauma counselling within the refugee camps, where many people are struggling with stress, trauma, grief, bitterness, loss of dignity, fear and other complex issues arising from their situations.
- Food relief specifically for Christians within the camps. "This support enabled us to see answered prayers in the middle of the turmoil we Christians have been going through," said one church leader. "Believers in the camps can now understand the meaning of Christianity."

- Leadership training for pastors in the camps. Rehabilitating churches will be a key future need.
- Bibles distributed to 400 people in the refugee camps who were in great spiritual need.
- Sunday distributions to churches.

After the drought

"We often provide relief with an eye on the after-drought period," conclude our partners. "In the wells, we were sowing seeds of this, and we would plan to build on this like we have already begun.

"Thank you for coming alongside us in this trying time, and allowing us to make a difference in the lives of people in the region."

Any gift you can make, whether large or small towards MKM's continuing relief work would be a great blessing to those affected by the drought, especially as these families will need support for the next few months, at least.

POSTAL DONATIONS: Please make cheque payable to 'WorldShare'. Add 'Horn of Africa Famine' & your name & address to reverse, and mail in the envelope provided. *(You do not need to add any more text to the envelope, and no stamp is needed.)*

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Thank you