

Food crisis calls for long-term response

by [Fredrick Nzwili](#) in the [September 6, 2011](#) issue

As relief organizations minister to thousands suffering from drought and famine in the Horn of Africa, some religious leaders say they are exploring short- and long-term strategies for ending the reliance on food aid.

The worst drought in 60 years is affecting more than 12 million people in Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia. Its epicenter is Somalia, where tens of thousands are fleeing to refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia.

"We would not only want to work on the immediate needs, but we are thinking, because this is becoming a chronic problem, we have got to see the root causes and fight [them]," Archbishop Ian Ernest, chairman of the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa, told news reporters August 10 in Nairobi after a meeting of Anglican archbishops.

"We are calling for immediate action to address the needs and root causes of the crisis in Somalia and the refugee population in Kenya and Ethiopia," said Ernest. The archbishops said donations are urgently needed.

As he spoke, an average of 1,300 Somali migrants fleeing both civil unrest and famine continued to arrive daily at the Dadaab refugee camp in northern Kenya, which has become the world's largest camp—a small city of tents in a dusty desert.

The camp holds more than 400,000 migrants, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with new arrivals being settled in

rows of identical white tents, portable latrines and mobile health clinics.

While the rate of arrivals remains steady in Kenya, the daily arrivals have dropped significantly in Ethiopia from 2,000 to 400, with no clear explanation, said Lemma Degefa, the Lutheran World Federation country representative there. Ethiopia is hosting 114,539 Somali refugees in the Dolo Odo area in the east.

The UN's World

Food Program is providing high-energy biscuits for a day's nutritional needs to new arrivals, in addition to a three-week food ration. All children under age five and pregnant women in the refugee camps and the transit centers are receiving special nutrition products. In Ethiopia, a total of about 42,000 children are benefiting.

UN Humanitarian

Aid chief Catherine Bragg told the Security Council on August 10 that \$1.3 billion in relief aid is still needed, in addition to the \$1 billion already committed by world governments.

Separately, Martin

Junge, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, which is managing the Dadaab camp for UNHCR, asked in a statement that pressure be put on governments to contribute to the relief efforts.

In

Kenya, the Anglican Church says that since last year it has spent over \$3.2 million in famine-related interventions. The UN program says 3.5 million people in the country are affected by the drought, worsened by high food and fuel prices.

"This [intervention] has been going because we discovered this [drought] a long time ago," said Archbishop Eluid Wabukala of Kenya in a statement. "The famine we are facing did not come as a surprise, as the drought was predicted well in advance," he said.

The effects of the drought will be ongoing and will spread, Junge added. "After the drought is over we have to prepare for

mid-term and longer-term solutions for rehabilitation, climate change adaptation, and disaster preparedness," he said. —ENInews