



World Vision®

East Africa's Quiet Famine

**Testimony before the
House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human
Rights, and International Organizations**

Mr. Thabani Maphosa

Vice-President for Food Assistance and

Senior Director for Food Security & Livelihoods

World Vision

March 28, 2017

Introduction

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on the East Africa hunger crisis. Your continued leadership and focus on these critical humanitarian issues is more important than ever.

I testify before you today as both the Vice-President for Food Assistance and as the Senior Director for Food Security & Livelihoods with World Vision.

World Vision is a Christian relief, development, and advocacy organization serving millions of children and families in nearly 100 countries. Our 42,000 employees are dedicated to tackling the root causes of poverty and injustice. This work includes emergency relief and preparedness for people impacted by natural disasters and armed conflict; long-term economic and agricultural development; programs to support the health of mothers and children, including water, sanitation and hygiene and training of community health volunteers; preventing and responding to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence against children; mobilizing children, youth and local communities to hold their governments accountable; and advocating for effective systems, laws, and policies that protect vulnerable populations where the social fabric is especially weak.

World Vision US has more than one million private donors in every state and Congressional district, partners with over 16,000 churches in the United States, and works with corporations and foundations. We are motivated by our Christian faith to serve every child in need that we possibly can, whether they are of any faith or none. We partner with faith leaders throughout the world, equipping them to be champions for the needs of their communities. We are part of the global federation of World Vision International, which last year implemented more than \$2.7 billion in programming to help children and communities through international relief, development, and advocacy assistance. Although private donors support much of our work, the US Government is an invaluable partner. We leverage this partnership to reach many more vulnerable children and ensure that the precious resources of the American taxpayer are prudently used to promote and protect the well-being of children and communities abroad.

World Vision maintains a significant and long-time presence in East Africa, working in Ethiopia since the early 1970s, Kenya since 1974, in South Sudan since 1989, and Somalia since 1992. In addition, we have an East Africa regional office that provides technical and programmatic support to the entire region.

Famine and Food Crisis in East Africa

In East Africa, a new arc of fragility has quietly emerged and given rise to a complex hunger crisis driven by drought, conflict and poor governance. This crisis is currently affecting over 22 million people, who require urgent, life-saving assistance. More than 3.5 million children under five are acutely malnourished, and 844,900 children are severely malnourished, with an estimated 14.4 million people in need of health assistance. In Kenya, South Sudan, and Somalia, certain areas have already reached or are approaching famine levels. At the same time, the number of people escaping conflict and hunger is dramatically increasing across the region with more than 3.3 million people now living as refugees. Somalia and South Sudan remain two of the largest sources of refugees globally. Host countries, such as Uganda which is home to more than 800,000 South Sudanese refugees, are reaching capacity limits.

The immediate needs in this crisis are clear – food assistance and nutritional support must reach the region quickly and efforts by donor governments and the international community must be scaled up. At the same time, the international community cannot ignore the long-term impact of malnutrition, particularly in children and pregnant mothers. Should we fail to address this crisis soon, not only will we witness more deaths from hunger, but we will see an increase in stunting in children that will have long-lasting impact.

The interventions required in these crisis situations go beyond immediate life-saving food assistance and nutritional support. Famines and food insecurity cause a ripple effect across communities and families, impacting health, child protection and economic security. As clean water for drinking and household sanitation, like handwashing, becomes scarce, we see malnutrition exacerbated by diarrhea, cholera and other diseases. As families are displaced or leave their homes to find water and food for themselves or for livestock, there is a need to ensure access to latrines, education and basic health services. A lack of access to consistent health care services means that mothers do not get needed prenatal care, which may cause complications during pregnancy and childbirth, and children do not receive vaccinations for preventable diseases. As communities migrate, millions of children are forced to leave school, putting their education, careers and dreams on hold. As families' exhaust coping mechanisms, children become more vulnerable to hazardous child labor, child marriage, trafficking, and recruitment in armed forces and other groups.

Additionally, much of the humanitarian need today is driven by civil wars, instability, and unresolved political disputes. The famine in South Sudan is largely a man-made catastrophe and in Somalia, the humanitarian crisis is a result of the combined effects of the drought and ongoing conflict. Standing on a 30-year history of working in many of the world's fragile states, World Vision remains committed to scaling up interventions that prove effective in supporting countries as they transition out of fragility towards greater stability and lasting peace.

In recognition of these evolving complexities, World Vision has worked to improve integrated programming models for addressing poverty and vulnerability, including famine and food insecurity. We are looking at and testing models that allow us to commit to longer-term projects in specific geographical locations focusing on the holistic needs of children, their households and communities, through multi-sector and integrated programming with a focus on rebuilding livelihoods, water resources, health, and education systems. At the center of this work is community relationship building and collaboration with government ministries, local leaders, women's group, children and youth to create sustainable impact.

Recognizing household vulnerability to drought, conflict and other disasters, we are also working to prioritize community-led disaster preparedness and management plans linked to early warning systems. When shocks are forecasted, World Vision aims to quickly modify project plans by accessing additional emergency public or private funding and link communities to other available safety net programming.

Country Overview and World Vision's Response:

World Vision's East Africa regional office is leading the coordination of our famine response and programming efforts with our national offices in Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia, and South Sudan. Given the recurring nature of food insecurity in East Africa, our life-saving interventions have and will continue to address the vulnerabilities and shocks that brought about this crisis with the further objective of building resilience among communities in our areas of operation. However, additional international aid and response is urgently needed to avert this looming catastrophe.

South Sudan

World Vision partners with the World Food Program (WFP), UNICEF, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other partners to bring life-saving interventions to the most vulnerable around the world. This is no more apparent than in South Sudan, the world's youngest country. South Sudan plunged into civil war in 2013 and the protracted, precarious, and intensely violent nature of the conflict has resulted in untold suffering experienced by millions of South Sudanese men, women, and especially children.

The conflict and the immense internal and external human migration it has caused is wreaking havoc on the country's food security. Coupled with the effects of climate change, the conflict, general insecurity, human migration, land degradation, economic collapse, and years of underdevelopment, the humanitarian community declared the presence of famine in two counties in the former Unity State of South Sudan where roughly 100,000 people are on the verge of starvation. This is among the over 5 million individuals estimated to be experiencing severe food insecurity across the country – the highest ever recorded year on year.

If the situation remains, the level hunger and malnutrition experienced across the country will continue to deepen where it already exists, while also continuing to spread. This is particularly true for urban populations who are experiencing collapsed markets and inflation rates over 835%. For example, based on the most recent analysis, over 230,000 individuals, or 71 per cent of the population in Juba alone is considered food insecure.

In response to the complex crisis, in FY 2016 alone World Vision reached over 1 million beneficiaries with multi-sectorial interventions through its emergency response activities across the country. It has also scaled up its food assistance programming using a variety of modalities to provide life-saving food and nutrition support to vulnerable households through activities such as general food distribution, conditional cash and voucher assistance, and others to reach an expected 950,000 beneficiaries in both rural and urban areas across the country.

Somalia

The humanitarian situation in Somalia is rapidly deteriorating, and hundreds of thousands of children and their families need immediate life-saving assistance including access to food, water, medicine, and other basic services essential for their survival. Currently, 5 million people, almost 40 percent of Somalia's population is food insecure with 322,350 children under five acutely malnourished, and 57,140 children severely malnourished. Last week, the International Committee of the Red Cross warned that there is a small window of only three to four months to save millions of lives before the worst-case scenario in Somalia and Yemen is realized.

In Somalia, World Vision has been responding through resilience and nutrition programming working with the World Food Program (WFP) as well as USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP) and Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). The coordination between FFP and OFDA on resilience underscores our recommendations for working beyond relief-only solutions. Through partnership with WFP, World Vision is supporting more than 53,000 people to create productive assets in their communities which either prevent the effects of disasters or support land reclamation and development for agriculture to promote long-term resilience. A further additional 68,000 people are being supported with food assistance and targeted trainings to improve rates of food security in some of the areas hardest hit by drought including Somaliland, Puntland and South Central Somalia. Lastly, in cooperation with the Office of Food for Peace, World Vision is implementing a \$2.5 million voucher program to provide life-saving assistance to 2,611 households in Somaliland and South Central Somalia who have been adversely affected by drought; this enables families to meet the monthly food needs of their families.

World Vision supports USAID's ongoing efforts to distribute food rations to the most acutely food-insecure people, as well as provide food and cash transfers in exchange for participation in vocational training or productive asset building activities. Specifically, we also support efforts by USAID to modify existing awards and provide flexibility to partners to meet growing emergency needs in a timelier manner, and thereby helping to curtail future food crises.

Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, 5.6 million people are now in need of direct food assistance to stem the effects of multiple seasons of failed rains and drought in more than 360 districts throughout the country. Cross-border movements by families in search of fodder and food continue in the southern areas of the country where food insecurity has reached crises levels. Malnutrition in children under the age of five has increased severely and access to water in affected areas is decreasing daily.

World Vision Ethiopia currently implements a multiyear integrated food security development program called "Strengthen PSNP 4 Institutions and Resilience" in some of the areas hardest hit by the drought in Ethiopia. The PSNP is the government's Productive Safety Net Program which is currently in its fourth iteration. In collaboration with the Government of Ethiopia and other partners, the program supports the country's Productive Safety Net Program which enhances the ability of communities to adapt to, recover from and mitigate against disaster through immediate food assistance and creation or rehabilitation of productive community assets. This program is expected to reach nearly 530,000 people over the next five years and it will support the development and maintenance of a more efficient, responsive and effective safety net program across the country.

Under the leadership of Catholic Relief Services with the support of the USAID Office of Food for Peace, World Vision is also implementing a Joint Emergency Operations Program responding to critical food needs of nearly 160,000 of the most vulnerable households across Ethiopia, many which are in areas that have been hardest hit by the drought.

Kenya

In Kenya, more than 2.7 million people are food insecure and an estimated 357,000 children under five are acutely malnourished. Staple food prices in the country have risen by close to 30 percent in the past three months. In certain areas of northern Kenya, severe acute malnutrition levels have reached double the emergency level with nearly 30 percent of children on the brink of starvation.

World Vision Kenya is responding in 15 out of the 23 most drought affected counties: Turkana, Baringo, Marsabit, Isiolo, Makueni, Garissa, West Pokot, Kilifi, Samburu, Taita Taveta, Wajir, Narok, Kajiado, Kitui and Lamu. In partnership with national and county government, WFP and other development partners, World Vision's immediate responses are prioritizing cash transfers for food, rehabilitation of water sources and water trucking for domestic and livestock use, school meal feeding programs to mitigate school drop-out, and support for the Ministry of Health to conduct nutrition surveillance and manage acute malnutrition.

Other medium and long-term interventions include the creation of community assets that increase people's resilience to future food security shocks such as farm ponds, promotion of relevant climate smart agriculture technologies to increase crop and livestock productivity, the construction of water facilities for increased access to safe water, and support to strengthen county governments to coordinate drought response activities.

Recommendations

In these highly violent and volatile circumstances, the humanitarian system is struggling to deliver enough emergency relief today, enhanced livelihoods for tomorrow and sustainable security for the future. Despite these challenges, World Vision believes international and national actors are capable of re-building a resilient, peaceful and prosperous future in East Africa for children and their families. To do this, all actors—governments, UN and multilateral agencies, donors, faith communities, and more—must protect rights and uphold the rule of law, provide emergency water, help build economic resilience, and look at the many other vulnerabilities, including violence, that particularly impact children.

Robust Funding & Program Support for Emergency Food Assistance Interventions:

- *Scale-up emergency hunger and malnutrition interventions, with a focus on the first 1,000 days of life and other vulnerable populations, such as lactating and pregnant women, the elderly, disabled, persons living with HIV and AIDS or TB, and robustly fund the USAID Offices of Food for Peace and Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) that support these programs.*
- *Leverage the full range of food assistance modalities, including U.S., locally, and regionally purchased food commodities, ready-to-use therapeutic and supplementary food, vouchers and cash transfers, as contextually and culturally feasible and with the aim of reaching as many food insecure persons as possible.*
- *Advance more flexible emergency response through existing programming, ensuring quick response as food deficits are identified. During the massive drought induced by El Nino last year in Zimbabwe, World Vision was the recipient of a \$19 million cost modification to our Title II- Food for Peace funded ENSURE program. This flexibility from the U.S. Government enabled us to quickly respond to the needs of the hardest hit households with more than 18,000 metric*

tons of US commodities. Also, through the cost modification, supplemental feeding rations were also provided to more than 313,000 people, helping to protect earlier gains made in building community assets and long-term resilience.

Access:

- *Seek solutions that secure safe, sustained and unhindered access for humanitarian workers to all the locations where needs have been identified, including occupied territories.*
- *Collaborate closely with implementing agencies to provide more flexibility in funding and transportation modalities when access is not allowed due to a variety of issues.*
- *Work to resolve bureaucratic impediments that would otherwise result in a more efficient and effective response in the countries where we are seeking to operate.*

Coordinated Multi-Sectoral Response

- *Support grant mechanisms that allow for cross-sectorial, flexible, and holistic responses to famine and food insecurity that utilize technological innovations to provide more targeted and coordinated programming.*
- *Ensure cooperation and collaboration between USAID bureaus and offices to ensure a holistic response to community needs using funding tools that allow for integration of sectors and innovation in emergency response.*

Long-Term Investments and Resilience-Building

- *Adopt multi-year, flexible funding, with an aim to improve long-term investments in fragile states to build resiliency, provide greater sustainable impact and increase community ownership. By intervening in fragile states before they become failed ones, future famines and food insecurity crises can be averted.*
- *Promote development food security programs that support communities in coping with shocks and risks associated with climate change and severe weather patterns. To mitigate current and future emergency food assistance needs, long-term investments in development food assistance programs that empower vulnerable communities to “grow their own way out” of poverty through the promotion of agricultural production practices that include natural resource and drought cycle management, as well as land and water conservation techniques.*

Conclusion

The number of hungry people globally has declined from about one billion 25 years ago to about 795 million today, and agricultural production has, on average, doubled as well. Ending hunger and malnutrition in our lifetimes can be achieved. But, as evidenced in East Africa, we do face growing challenges in achieving this goal, and in other regions and countries prone to fragility and severe impacts from climate change and other extreme and increasingly unpredictable weather.

Despite these obstacles, we have also never been as well prepared to overcome them. World Vision, along with our partners, will remain focused in responding to the immediate needs of affected communities in South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya. But, we are seeing the window of opportunity to avert a larger catastrophe rapidly closing. Historically, the United States has led the international community as the largest single donor for humanitarian assistance, and we believe that if other governments, international donors and humanitarian actors all join together, and act swiftly to meet the current global need, we can prevent this crisis from worsening. If we don't act now, we will have failed in living out our American values, and for many of us, a Christian call, to care for the least of these and we will have stood by while millions suffer and die. We will also have to address the consequences of migration and displacement that will lead to increased conflict, not only through competition over land, water and other resources, but also a potential for those in need to look for other sources of food and income, like armed or terrorist elements.

We hope that Congress and this Subcommittee will continue to provide strong leadership and advocate for the funding and programs that are needed to respond to this crisis. This includes strong support for the International Affairs Budget as Congress finalizes fiscal year 2017 spending bills and begins discussions around 2018 appropriations, and for much-needed humanitarian funding alongside any defense emergency supplemental appropriations in 2017.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today.

Appendixes

- World Vision East Africa Hunger Response Situation Report- March 13, 2017
- World Vision Somalia Appeal
- World Vision South Sudan Hunger Crisis Appeal