

Press release

22 December 2011

9000 tonnes of British aid to arrive in the Horn of Africa for Christmas

More than 9,000 tonnes of British-funded food supplies and life-saving medicines will arrive in drought zones in the Horn of Africa over the Christmas period, International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell announced today.

Basic food supplies will feed some 800,000 people, as the latest figures show that up to 13 million people in the region will start 2012 in desperate need of help.

The food, alongside vaccines and other medical supplies that will treat more than 75,000 refugees, are being flown and trucked into Ethiopia, Kenya and parts of Somalia from emergency stores across the world.

Britain is also providing clean water for more than half a million people in the Horn of Africa as the area struggles to recover from the effects of its worst drought in 60 years.

In a year which saw the UK help keep millions alive in the drought-stricken region, International Development Secretary, Andrew Mitchell, said there were some signs that the situation was improving but the situation remained desperate for people who remained malnourished and stuck in camps. Famine status has been lifted in three of the six areas of Somalia but many families remained without sufficient food.

Britain's food support over the Christmas period includes:

- 5,076 tonnes of supplementary food and oil for 199,000 malnourished children and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers in Ethiopia
- 2,272 tonnes of supplementary foodstuffs to feed 300,000 children in Mogadishu and Somalia's border areas
- Vouchers to enable 200,000 people in Kenya to buy food
- 1,681 tonnes of oil, corn soya blend and dried milk to benefit 108,000 children and 26,000 pregnant and breastfeeding mothers in Kenya.

Based on data collected by the UN, latest UK estimates show that, from April to August 2011, between 50,000 and 100,000 people may have died due to drought-related causes, over half of whom were children under 5. The full extent of death caused by the drought may never be known.

British support has already helped triple the number of people receiving food each month and had a major role in reducing cases of measles by almost half.

International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell said:

"Britain can be proud that we have got emergency aid to millions of people during the last six months.

"In many cases, this has been the difference between life and death.

"Millions across the region remain in danger and will face a fight for life in the New Year as they struggle to recover from the drought.

"But British aid is arriving as we speak so that families have enough to eat today and in the weeks ahead, providing hope that there can be a better future."

So far, British aid has:

- Fed 2.4 million people, including nearly 500,000 children and pregnant or breastfeeding mothers who are receiving supplementary nutritional packages
- Vaccinated 1.3 million people against measles and 680,000 against polio
- Provided 400,000 doses of anti-malarial medication in Somalia
- Provided 1.2 million people with clean water and sanitation equipment such as latrines
- Given 200,000 people seeds and fertiliser to enable them to plant crops now conditions are improving

In addition, Britain's long-term 'safety-net' projects, which provide cash and food in exchange for work, has enabled people to feed themselves in Ethiopia and Kenya without relying on emergency food aid.

In particular, International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell praised the generosity of the British public, who have donated more than £72 million to the DEC East Africa appeal.

But he warned that millions are still at risk of malnourishment and possible starvation in the months ahead.

Mr Mitchell said that security issues and political instability in Somalia threatens to undermine progress as access to the affected population remains the greatest challenge for aid agencies.

The UN has called the humanitarian situation in Somalia the most serious in the world with four million people lacking basic necessities such as clean water, 250,000 still locked in famine conditions and at risk of imminent death from starvation and disease.

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