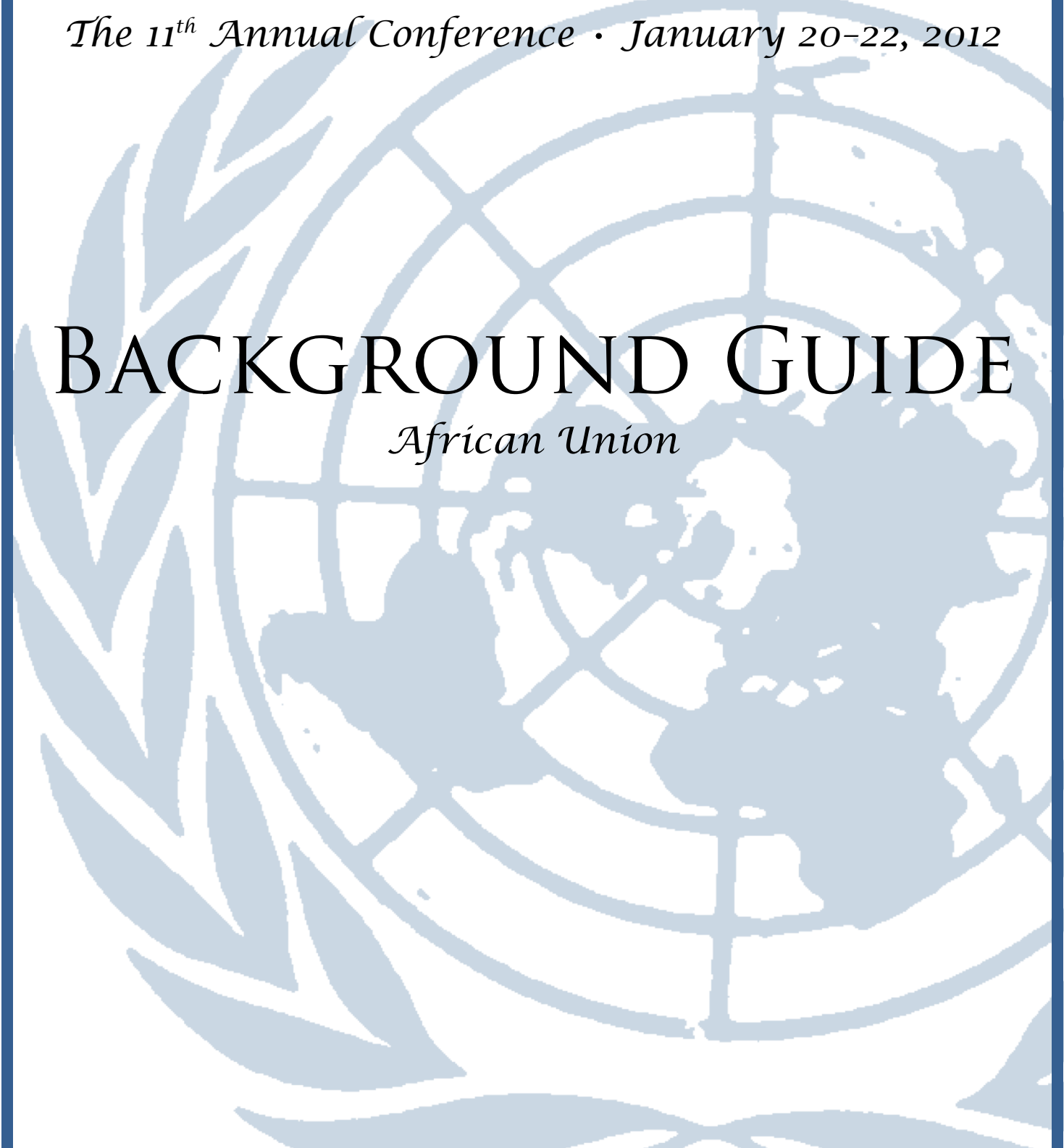


VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS

The 11th Annual Conference • January 20-22, 2012

BACKGROUND GUIDE

African Union





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Dear Delegates,

My name is Kachau and I am the African Union Director for VMUN 2012. A grade 11 student studying at St. George's School, I am an aspiring linguist currently studying four languages. I attended my first MUN conference in Grade 8 and have seen all aspects of the conference from being a delegate to helping organize the conference itself. Not only are MUNs a great opportunity to expand your knowledge on world issues, they are also an excellent opportunity to meet interesting and unique people from diverse backgrounds. As a delegate at VMUN, I have had amazing experiences both educationally and socially and I hope you will as well.

The two topics that have been selected are both very important to the continent of Africa, and I truly hope you will enjoy discussing them as much as we enjoyed writing about them. The first topic revolves around the pursuit of a sustainable and oil industry, which, although much less prominent in the headlines than many other issues, is vital for Africa and Africans especially in terms of long-term economic growth and improved living standards. In our second topic, we will address the issue of the recent Somalian famine of the summer of 2011 that devastated the lives of millions. The African Union did very little in terms of humanitarian aid and even less in terms of financial aid. Without throwing blame around, the African Union must figure out a way to avoid future disasters of this kind.

I believe that both topics are fascinating and will lead to fervent debates. I am excited to see everyone at the conference and to hear the points you will bring to the table. Please do not hesitate to contact me or any of the African Union staff if you have any questions.

Regards,

Kachau Leung
Director, African Union
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Topic B: Drought in Eastern Africa

Introduction

On July 20th, 2011, the United Nations officially declared famine in Lower Shabelle and Bakool, two southern regions of Somalia. It was the first time in three decades years a famine was declared in Africa by the UN.¹ Although the famine was of natural causes, primarily due to a lack of rainfall, the crisis Eastern Africa faces has been widely criticised as largely preventable. In fact, many months before the drought became obvious, scientists had predicted the exact catastrophe that occurred. The international community and regional governments have both been accused to doing little to help avoid this crisis. Currently, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya are the main countries affected by the ongoing famine, with an estimated 12 million people who are in dire need of food, clean water and basic sanitation.² It is important for the African Union to act on this issue, and implement African solutions to African problems. However, delegates should not only be prepared to discuss and resolve this current famine crisis, but should be prepared to consider how the African Union can plan and prepare to ensure that we are not blindsided by famine again in the future. However, he AU should approach this and future famines not only with strategies for prevention but also with strategies for combating and mitigating food crises that do occur.



¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/somalia/8648296/UN-declares-first-famine-in-Africa-for-three-decades-as-US-withholds-aid.html>

² <http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/east-africa-food-crisis>

³ Photo Source: CNN

Timeline

1945 — Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN is created

1959–1962 — Great Chinese Famine occurs in China; an estimate of 16.5 to 40 million people die from the famine⁴

1960 — The World Food Programme is created

1975–1979 — Cambodia faces a famine; 500,000-800,000

1980 — Famine occurs in Uganda⁵

1984 — Famine declared in Ethiopia; estimates of around a million dead⁶

1985 — Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) is created by the United States

1991–1992 — 300,000 dead in Somalia from an ongoing famine⁷

1995–2000 — North Korea suffers 600,000 to 1 million deaths as a result of poor harvests

1998 — Famine in Sudan amongst a civil war

2001, 2002, 2005 — Malawi experiences multiple food crises

2004–2005 — Niger experiences a famine; over 3 million people are affected⁸

2010 — Large scale drought leads to the Sahel Famine⁹

July 20, 2011 — UN declares famine in two regions of Somalia¹⁰

2011 — East African Famine affects Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia

Historical Analysis

Over the past couple centuries, almost every corner of the world has played host to famine or drought. In the 21st century, however, the major famines have all taken place on the African continent.

In the past, the most devastating famines have occurred under undemocratic regimes or unstable governments with poor human agencies, such as the Great Chinese Famine under Mao Zedong. This pattern has continued into the new millennium, which is why African nations have been the ones stricken by famine. One of the main issues related to the incompetency of these governments is that the droughts that have caused recent African famines were predicted months beforehand and steps could have easily been taken to prevent and mitigate disaster. Such was the case with the famine in Somalia in 1992, the Malawi famines in 2001, 2002, 2005, the Niger food crisis in 2005, and most recently the current ongoing famine in the Horn of Africa.

⁴ <http://chronicle.uchicago.edu/960314/china.shtml>

⁵ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/6118725>

⁶ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/8315248.stm

⁷ <http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-205.html>

⁸ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4699643.stm>

⁹ <http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFJ0E60S04T20100129?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=0>

¹⁰ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=39086>

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The famine in Somalia in the early 1990s was in part due to a drought, but was exacerbated by many complex political and civil problems that continue to this day. At the time, Somalia was pretty much in ruins. There was no real government, no police force, and no basic services. Armed thugs roamed the country while battles raged savagely for control of Mogadishu, the capital. At one point, the United States and the United Nations attempted to intervene to help create order, but their efforts had a negligible effect. As a result, the United States ceased operations in the area early in 1994 and the United Nations greatly reduced its involvement soon after. Since Somalia's civil war began over two decades ago, the situation in the country has been relatively bleak all along.

When drought hit Somalia in 1992, the effects were multiplied as the country was completely unprepared to deal with natural disaster. Without a central government, there was absolutely no way for the country to coordinate its efforts. To further complicate matters, militant groups fighting for control of the country were aggressive and hostile towards foreign aid. At the time, the Organisation of African Unity (the precursor to the African Union), did little to help the situation. Many wondered why the OAU did not mobilise their militaries to quell the embattled warlords dividing Somalia.¹¹

In terms of government mismanagement, similar situations have plagued other countries during famines. The 1998 famine in Sudan claimed over 70,000 lives¹² during a civil war. Many of the casualties were malnourished young children.

Another country greatly afflicted by food shortages in recent times is Malawi. Since 2001, the country has suffered a series of famines varying in severity. The country had tremendous dependence on the agricultural industry prior to the year 2000, which greatly limited Malawi's economy from diversifying and growing. As per instructions from the international and donor community such as the International Monetary Fund, Malawi reduced its agricultural subsidies and sold off the majority of the country's maize reserves (the staple food of Malawi) to help reduce budget deficits. When a drought hit and famine ensued, Malawi had no other options than to issue food crisis appeals.¹³ As of 2005, UNICEF estimated there were 46,000 severely malnourished children in the country.¹⁴

Foreign aid has helped in the past, but has been plagued by much controversy. One notable instance was during the 1984 Ethiopian famine, when the BBC released a report stating that millions of Euros were channelled from NGOs and aid funds into warmongering. The CIA reported in 1985 in an assessment entitled "Ethiopia: Political and Security Impact of the Drought" that funds were being misused by insurgent organizations instead of being used for relief operations.¹⁵

¹¹ New African, January 1993, p. 24.

¹² http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/june/11/newsid_2510000/2510999.stm

¹³ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4345246.stm>

¹⁴ http://www.unicef.org/media/media_28776.html

¹⁵ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8535189.stm>

Amidst these cataclysms, the African Union has failed again and again to successfully help its member organizations, both in the short term to feed the hungry and in the long term to avoid repetitions of the disastrous famines. Despite all these recurring famines, caused and exacerbated by the same reasons, little has been learnt. With no sustainable long-term plans in place to prevent and combat future disasters, the same famines will continue to plague Africa to the same effect.

Current Situation

Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), an organization created by the United States to help secure global food security and alert countries of any potential food crises, had expressed concern about the food situation in east Africa as early as December of 2009. Later in March 2011, warning from FEWS NET grew more urgent, stating that “The development of new strategies to reach affected households in restricted areas is especially critical. In addition, large scale contingency/response planning should begin immediately given that a failure of the March - May rains would result in a major crisis”.¹⁶

Eastern African countries should have known well ahead of time that there could be an incoming drought, yet they did little to prepare for it. The African Union was as well aware but turned a blind eye to the situation. From an unusually strong La Nina over the Pacific Ocean, the rains failed to fall in Kenya, Ethiopia and for the second consecutive year in Somalia at the start of the main rainy season in April of 2011.¹⁷ And as predicted, a drought followed, which has led to the current famine.

The United Nations first declared famine in two regions of Somalia on June 20th, and two weeks later declared famine in three other regions. As of August 3rd, over 860,000 refugees from Somalia had fled to other countries, in particular Kenya and Ethiopia.¹⁸ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees base in Dabaab, Kenya swelled to at least 440,000 refugees in three camps. The maximum recommended capacity of Dadaab camps is 90,000.¹⁹ Overcrowding of this sort leads to increased cases of violence and sexual harassment in the refugee camps.²⁰ The camps themselves are unsanitary, overcrowded, and are all affected by water shortage. In early August, an incident was widely reported in which a mother had to send back four of her children as it was taking her nine days to have her and her family registered at the Kobe refugee camp.²¹

Measles has also broken out in Dadaab camps. Ethiopia and Kenya are also facing a severe measles epidemic due to the large influx of refugees. Over 17,500 cases have been reported in just the first six months, including 114 deaths.²² Cholera outbreaks have also been reported and according to a World Health Organization report, 181 people have died from suspected cholera cases in just a single hospital in

¹⁶ http://www.fews.net/docs/Publications/East_Regional_Alert_03_15_2011.pdf

¹⁷ <http://reliefweb.int/node/419452>

¹⁸ <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/UN-Somali-Refugees-Top-860000-126662168.html>

¹⁹ <http://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2011/07/15/help-kenya-manage-somalia-crisis-us-pleads/>

²⁰ <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2011/07/25/f-dadaab-sexual-assault-women.html>

²¹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/08/06/us-ethiopia-drought-idUSTRE77516K20110806>

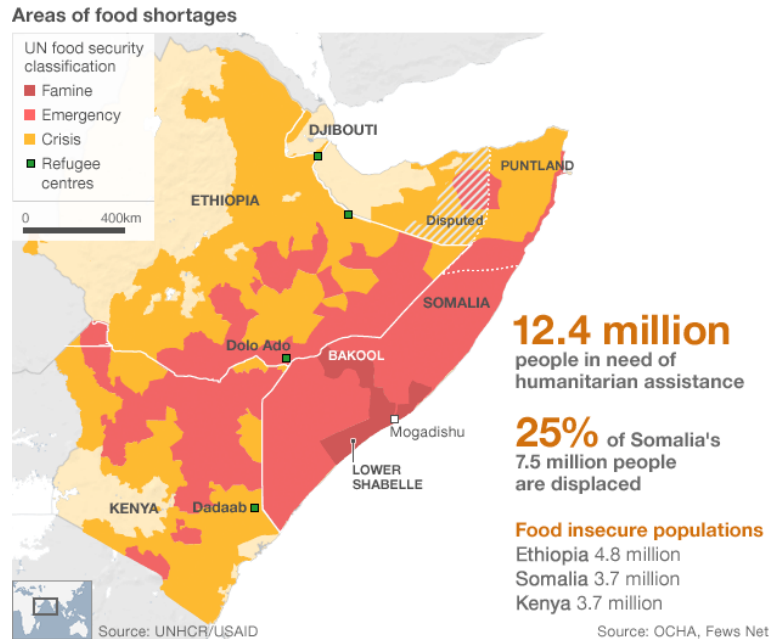
²² <http://yourlife.usatoday.com/health/medical/story/2011/07/UN-reports-measles-outbreaks-in-Ethiopia-Kenya/49409254/1>

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Mogadishu.²³ The unsanitary conditions at many refugee camps and other health care facilities can potentially lead to many other outbreaks.

To further complicate matters, the ongoing civil war in Somalia has caused serious security issues for humanitarian operations in southern Somalia. The UN has stated previously that aid is only reaching around 20% of the drought-affected peoples, with most of the famine-stricken areas still controlled by rebels.

Funding in these situations is an issue as well, partially due to the instability in the region. For example, humanitarian agencies had asked for \$2.48 billion US dollars to sufficiently address the crisis, but as of August 1st had secured less than half of that. The United States deferred funding to Somalia due to fear sending aid would “materially benefit” designated terrorists; in Somalia’s case, the rebel groups in southern Somalia who control Shabelle.



On August 25th, after much delay, the African Union managed to raise a rather disappointing \$51 million dollars of direct aid, some of which had already been announced. While this was a fairly small sum considering the number of countries in the AU, the AU is a young organisation with limited humanitarian experience, and this has been cited as an important step for the organisation.²⁴

UN & NGO Involvement

Most United Nations committees are involved with the immediate famine relief efforts, rather than long-term solutions to prevent future famines. Branches of the United Nations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have been involved directly, helping set up camps and providing basic non-consumable goods whenever they are needed. The World Food Programme has helped bring in food to affected areas. Other branches of the UN, such as the World Health Organization, were already heavily involved in Africa beforehand, dealing with a multitude of other issues such as the epidemic of HIV/AIDS.²⁵

A United Nations body that is much more involved with long-term development in Africa is the UNDP. The United Nations Development Programme describes itself as “the UN’s global development network,

²³ <http://www.bendbulletin.com/article/20110813/NEWS0107/108130383/>

²⁴ <http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFJ0E77P01L20110826?pageNumber=3&virtualBrandChannel=0>

²⁵ <http://www.afro.who.int/en/who-in-the-african-region.html>

advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life.”²⁶ While the organization has not directly created plans to help prevent and counteract famines, it has greatly helped many African countries make substantial progress towards the UN Millennium Development Goals,²⁷ which in turn will make it easier for all African countries to fight any future famines.

In addition to involvement from the United Nations, many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been involved in Africa both before and during the East African famine. Unfortunately, NGO aid workers have become the victims of assassinations and kidnappings, with 111 reported security incidents that have targeted aid agencies.²⁸ NGOs’ works can range from raising awareness and money to directly delivering supplies and food to those in need. For example, Doctors Without Borders, more commonly known as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), is a NGO that provides health care and medical training to impoverished countries around the world. To combat the current famine, MSF has operations at all major refugee camps throughout Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya to help monitor and treat diseases such as measles. Despite their presence, their programs in Somalia are running way over capacity and are unable to serve everyone.²⁹ Since 1991, MSF has worked continually in Somalia and currently provides free medical care in eight regions of the southern Somalia, which has been heavily affected by the famine. There are over 1,300 Somalia staff supported by around 100 Nairobi staff helping provide free primary healthcare, malnutrition treatments, support to displaced people, surgery, water, and relief supply distributions.³⁰

Other organizations helping in the area include Save the Children, the International Rescue Committee, CARE, Mercy Corps, the International Committee of the Red Cross, World Vision, and American Jewish World Services, among many others.³¹ All of these organizations are working in conjunction with one another and the United Nations for immediate famine relief in the area.

Possible Solutions & Controversies

A priority before any long-term plans is to raise enough money to help sufficiently aid the 12 million people affected by the famine in East Africa. Refugee camps are in critical condition, with the death rate at 15 times more than levels seen in other emergency situations.³² The United Nations is also far from its estimated goal of a billion dollars to sufficiently provide enough aid for the region, and the current situation is expected to continue on for at least several months.³³

²⁶ <http://www.beta.undp.org/undp/en/home/ourwork/overview.html>

²⁷ <http://www.undp.org/africa/>

²⁸ <http://www.oxfamamerica.org/press/pressreleases/statement-by-52-ngos-working-in-somalia-on-rapidly-deteriorating-humanitarian-crisis>

²⁹ <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/news/article.cfm?id=5427>

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2011/08/02/501364/main20087152.shtml>

³² <http://www.hindustantimes.com/Somali-refugee-death-rate-at-15-times-above-norm-UNHCR/Article1-723239.aspx>

³³ http://articles.cnn.com/2011-08-11/world/africa.famine.donations_1_famine-conditions-al-shabaab-somalia?_s=PM:WORLD

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A major setback to humanitarian aid efforts has been the Al-Shabaab rebel group occupying southern Somalia. The group has been designated a terrorist organization by several western governments, and in early 2010 acknowledged its ties to Al Qaeda.³⁴ Al-Shabaab's troop strength as of May 2011 was estimated at 14,426 militants, and with this military strength they have imposed their own strict form of Sharia law in the region. More troublesome is the fact that Al-Shabaab rebels are rejecting any foreign aid agencies that they believe to have spies. These include major aid agencies, like CARE International and the World Food Programme. They have had to stop operations in Southern and Central Somalia following pressure from Al-Shabaab. Many aid workers have also fled Somalia, intimidated by kidnappings and killings.³⁵ Progress in East Africa will be severely hampered if aid agencies and NGOs cannot work there, and many consider stopping Al-Shabaab our top priority.

The key to long-term planning for prevention of famines is appropriate and effective government policies. To prepare for famines, government policies must intend for the well-being of their people and the prevention of corruption and conflict. A main objective for the African Union is to help all member countries build substantial reserves of grain that can help relieve famines and stabilise food prices in times of need. Without grain reserves large enough to feed the population, there is no immediate internal solution to famines, as exemplified by Malawi's crisis. Any long-term planning included in an African Union resolution about famines must not only focus on prevention and prediction of famines, but must also emphasise immediate relief strategies such as grain reserves *and* should include long-term steps to recovering from food crises. Public works programs and resilient economies will be crucial in this regard.

Bloc Positions

South Africa

Although South Africa boasts the largest GDP on the continent, it has been criticised for contributing little towards the famine cause contributed little towards the famine cause in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia. South African contributed around the same amount as the AU's newest state, South Sudan.³⁶ While the future for South Africa looks bright and chances of a South African famine are slim, South Africa might look towards being a leader in the African Union helping poorer countries recuperate from disasters such as famines.

Egypt, Algeria, Angola

Although these three countries have mid-sized economies, the countries have shown compassion and willingness to help its African neighbours contributing a big chunk of the \$51 million pledged by the African Union to help Somalia. These mid-sized economies should also look to play a leading role in the African Union; but only second to Nigeria and South Africa.

³⁴ http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/12/14/091214fa_fact_anderson

³⁵ <http://allafrica.com/stories/201107260329.html>

³⁶ <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatches/globalpost-blogs/africa-emerges/somalia-famine-africa-pledges-350-million>

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Rest of Africa

The majority of African countries should primarily focus on their own economies and creating sustainable infrastructures internally. These are the countries that should be the most concerned as they are the most susceptible and vulnerable to calamities such as droughts and famines.

Discussion Questions

1. How responsible are African countries for their own citizens?
2. How can the al-Shabaab militant group be stopped?
3. Where can additional funding for immediate relief efforts be found?
4. Despite these early warnings, how come the famine still caused so much damage?
5. Should African countries with booming economies, such as Nigeria and South Africa, be asked to contribute more to the betterment of the continent?
6. Is there a correlation between undemocratic regimes and famines?
7. How can the African Union be more proactive on intercontinental crises?
8. How can the conditions in the refugee camps be improved?

Additional Resources

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/africa/>

BBC News Africa

<http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/>

Doctors with Borders

<http://www.undp.org>

United Nations Development Programme

<http://www.unhcr.org/>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

<http://www.oxfam.org>

Oxfam

<http://www.worldvision.org>

World Vision

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