
Vétérinaires Sans Frontières about the Crisis in the Horn of Africa

Vétérinaires Sans Frontières calls upon the aid organizations and governments not to forget the livestock and the important role it plays in the livelihoods of the refugees, and asks for an increased awareness to their plight and situation. As a professional non-profit technical and integrated international development organization we are available to assist at any time; already our specialists are operational in the area.

The situation

As the UN declares a state of famine over the Horn of Africa, Somali refugees keep pouring into the surrounding countries of Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti. The respective governments, UN agencies such as UNHCR, FAO and other aid organizations are joining efforts to provide food, water and shelter for the 600-800,000 displaced refugees. From one side all people are being sheltered in refugee camps and their immediate needs are being cared for, but livestock is often not considered in the frame of the intervention. Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Europa (VSF E) wants to raise awareness for the long-term consequences this will have on the livelihoods of the millions of people involved, including the (non-refugee) people living in the areas of the refugee camps.

The position held by VSF Europa

Over 70% of the people in East Africa living in arid and semi arid areas (and even more in Somalia) depend on livestock for their survival. Already 30% of Somali livestock have died due to drought-related problems. Even when the rains will come, the problems will not be immediately over, since the increased level of diseases and the shortage of food crops will have an impact at least until January. There is little hope for the livestock to still be productive or to survive, if the provision of feed, water and veterinary care will still be lacking.

Vétérinaires Sans Frontières, as technical organization without any political implication, has the possibility to access communities living in Islamist controlled areas, where the humanitarian aid has been at least partially suspended. VSF raises concerns and worries to the donors about unblocking funding to these areas for the intervention agencies that are still able to work with these most endangered communities.

In East Africa, VSF is known for supporting pastoralist livelihoods. Indeed the current famine situation calls for organizations like VSF, that know how to engage with mobile livelihood systems. VSF feels that the plight of animals should not be forgotten as they will play a fundamental role for the refugees for coping with the post-emergency and with the recovery phase. The presence of healthy, productive livestock will be a big step forward towards a sustainable solution to the food crisis. Thus, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières offers its expertise, knowledge and international network provided by partner associations to the international community and aid organizations to assist in providing as much veterinary help as possible to the livestock – both in Somalia, in the refugee camps and in their surroundings.

Concrete and effective solutions do exist and Vétérinaires Sans Frontières can assist on site!

For further information: www.vsfe.org