



Horn of Africa



Those who share this conviction are driven forth quite as much by inner impulse as by outer needs.

— Henry J. Cadbury

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) consistently seeks to ameliorate the impacts of conflict, while at the same time addressing the causes. In considering a response to the crisis in the Horn of Africa, AFSC has worked to apply these principles. The approach described below provides immediate assistance to those who may find it more difficult to integrate and access services within the refugee camps, and provides trauma healing for those most harshly impacted by the conflict and famine. It has been our experience that without support to heal from the trauma of conflict, the cycle of violence is often perpetuated.

Following months of extreme drought, ongoing armed conflict, and the continuing lack of an effective central government, tens of thousands of Somalis have left their country and made the long trek to the border with Kenya. There they join refugees in the Dadaab refugee camp, which is overcrowded and housing far more people than its original intent. While calls have gone out to the world community for funds to ameliorate the plight of the Somali refugees and financial commitments have been made, sending the funds can be a long process. Meanwhile, urgent needs continue day by day.

The Service Committee has worked in Somalia and the Horn of Africa region for some decades. Most recently, activities focused on peace and conflict resolution trainings, especially for young leaders.

However, the current hunger crisis prompted an evaluation of how AFSC might best contribute its experience and resources to alleviate suffering.

After consulting with many in the camps, as well as humanitarian groups and UN agencies, the following plan was developed.

Among the refugees in Dadaab, AFSC is targeting aid to the following most vulnerable groups:

- **Young parents** (mostly mothers) with many dependents, no spouse and no means of support;
- **The elderly** who are ill or who have responsibility for grandchildren;
- **Orphans** who are caring for siblings or elderly relatives or both;
- **The disabled or mentally impaired** who require special attention to meet their basic needs.

In cooperation with the other agencies that identify appropriate recipients, AFSC is making cash grants of up to \$100/month per family. The overall program is supervised by staff based in the AFSC regional office in Nairobi, Kenya. However, given the distance from the city and the extremely difficult travel conditions, AFSC representatives who operate the aid program reside in and around Dadaab.

An additional aspect of AFSC's program is trauma healing. Untold numbers of the Somali refugees have witnessed murders and other horrors present during long periods of conflict, as well as suffering deprivation caused by famine. Many of the females, some as young as 12, are rape victims, with the consequent mental anguish such attacks can trigger. AFSC has extensive experience in trauma healing, both from manmade and natural disasters.

Restoring the refugees to health—both physical and mental—is the main goal of AFSC's program. Its success will strengthen community cohesion, allow neighbor to interact with neighbor on an equal footing, and thus reduce tensions that can arise in refugee situations. This work is an extension of AFSC's commitment to building peace in the Horn of Africa, as well as its commitment of decades to the Somali people.

BUDGET:

The overall cost of the aid program for one year is \$250,000 (this figure is in addition to the budget for on-going work in the region).