

ETHIOPIA

DROUGHT + FOOD INSECURITY



Women pray for rain in Ethiopia, where 10 million people depend on emergency food aid. Photo by Petterik Wiggers for CRS

CONTEXT

Above average rainfall throughout April and May has brought limited relief to a country that has faced its worst drought in 50 years.

The rains allowed for some land preparation and planting. However, torrential rains caused severe flooding and landslides in some areas, uprooting 200,000 people, disrupting agricultural activities, and damaging infrastructure.

It remains to be seen how much the rains will transform the areas most affected by the drought—such as southern Afar, northern Somali, eastern Oromia, southern Tigray, and areas along the Tekeze catchment of Amhara and Tigray.

The impacts of the drought have been diverse and far-reaching. First, without rain over the past 2 years, families have not been able to grow food to eat. Second, without crops to sell, farmers could not earn incomes. And third, many people without land earn a living harvesting crops as day laborers, but without productive land to cultivate, they are unable to earn incomes. As a result, people are turning to increasingly desperate coping mechanisms.

Many sell their livestock—often a family's most valuable asset—at very low prices, to buy food and basic supplies like clothing for their children. Some migrate or send older children to cities and towns to find work. Many tell CRS about eating fewer meals per day, and about lacking nutrition.

More than 10 million people face hunger and malnutrition and depend on emergency food aid—this number is expected to grow. The government has called for international assistance.

If more rain comes, recovery can begin. But without rain or immediate aid the number of people who need emergency food assistance could rise above 15 million.

SLIDESHOW ON THE DROUGHT

CRS Communications Director Kim Pozniak recently traveled to Ethiopia to report on the effects of the drought, and encountered women praying for rain. Watch [this slideshow](#) to hear her perspective.

CRS RESPONSE

CRS is providing emergency food aid to 2.9 million people. We are also investing in seeds. CRS works with the government of Ethiopia at all stages, in the Oromia, Amhara, and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' regions. Activities include:

- Providing emergency food to 2.8 million people through the Joint Emergency Operation Program, a USAID-funded, CRS-led consortium of NGOs.
- Holding seed and voucher fairs that rely on commercial seed firms as well as local seed producers and traders.
- Distributing seeds from local and regional suppliers where functioning markets and seeds are not available.
- Planting hundreds of acres with distributed seed and monitoring crop performance.
- Strengthening community resilience through income opportunities; soil and water conservation; restoration of crops; and improvements in water and sanitation systems and local infrastructure.
- Supporting Savings and Internal Lending Communities to boost financial stability.