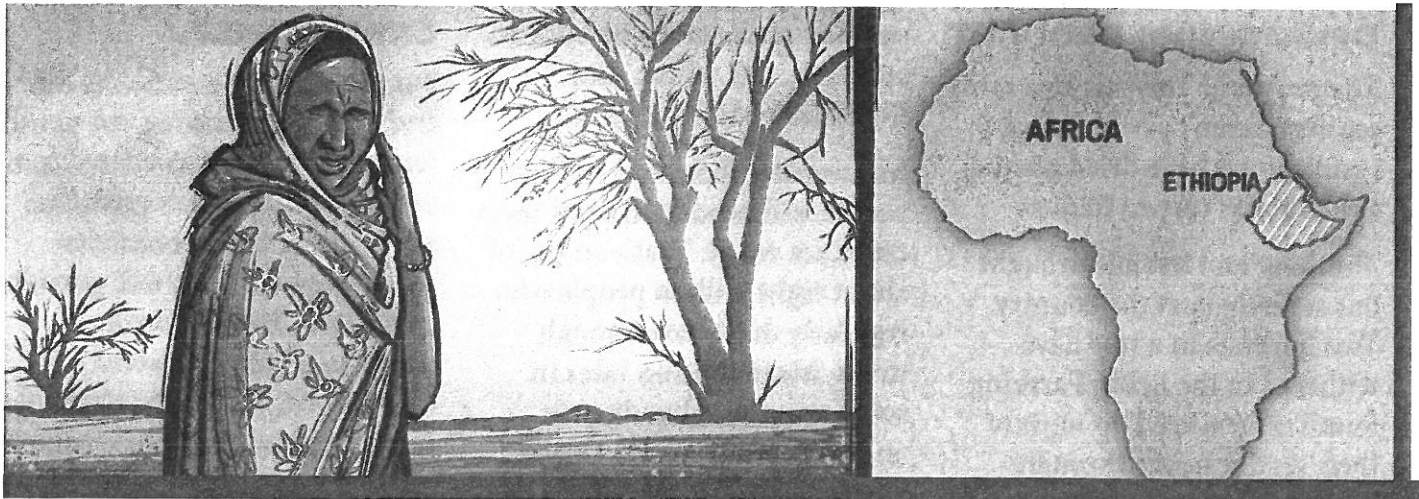




# INTERNATIONAL DROUGHT IN ETHIOPIA



Picture yourself on a hot, sunny summer day when you're ready to cool off. Time to grab a cold glass of water. Maybe you head to the local outdoor pool, river or lake for a swim.

Now imagine life without these options. That might help you begin to understand what many Ethiopians have endured for the past year.

Their tropical African nation is experiencing its worst drought in 50 years. There has been no significant rainfall since January 2015. Never mind cooling off. Most Ethiopians don't have enough water to meet even their most basic needs.

## ETHIOPIA'S CLIMATE

Ethiopia is a landlocked country in the Horn of Africa, a peninsula in Northeast Africa. It is surrounded by Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia to the east,

## EL NIÑO AND CLIMATE CHANGE

What is causing the drought in Ethiopia? The strongest and longest El Niño in decades.

Every two to seven years a shifting mass of warm surface water in the Pacific Ocean edges closer to North America. This weather pattern disrupts temperatures on land. It can cause drought, heat waves, forest fires, torrential rains, heavy snow and floods.

Experts say more than 40 million Africans in 12 countries now need drought relief because of the current El Niño.

Climate change worsens the effects of El Niño. Nick Nuttall, of the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change, believes that these emergencies are likely to recur more often in the future.

"By the end of this century, temperatures in Africa could have jumped by between three and six degrees Celsius," he states. "The effect on harvests and the population would be horrendous [if that happens]."

Sudan to the west and Kenya to the south.

Eighty percent of Ethiopians live in rural areas, and the country depends heavily on farmers. The crops they plant feed 85 percent of the nation's 100 million citizens.

The farmers rely on rainy seasons to water their crops and keep grazing land green for their livestock. Heavy rains in Ethiopia normally occur from June to August. A shorter rainy season happens in March and April.

## DEFINITIONS

**DROUGHT:** a long period of time when there is little or no rain and crops die



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## DEVASTATING DROUGHT

The problem? The past two rainy seasons haven't arrived. As a result, rivers have dried up and the land has turned to dust.

This long and terrible drought has severely hurt the country. Two harvests in a row have withered in the fields. Farming families have used up most of their seed reserves through failed plantings. They have eaten the rest as food.

Animal feed stocks are low, too, and hundreds of thousands of livestock have died. The remaining animals are weaker and thinner, so milk and meat production has dropped sharply.

People are trying to sell their chickens, goats and cows to provide for their families. But once that livestock is gone, they'll have nothing to fall back on.

"I have nothing to eat at home. I can't even buy maize," said one mother. "People look at us and think we're OK, but we are in great danger."

## CRISIS POINT

At present, some 7.5 million farmers and herders are desperate. They need help to

produce staple crops like maize, sorghum, teff, wheat, and livestock feed.

Meanwhile, about 10.2 million people will need food until these crops are ready. That's on top of about eight million people who regularly don't have enough to eat. **Malnutrition** rates in some areas are already over 20 percent. The World Health Organization's emergency threshold is 15 percent.

As well, the United Nations says some 500,000 children need treatment for malnutrition and nearly six million people need water.

Ethiopia has had killer droughts before. In 1984, about one million people starved to death in a **famine**. The country had another severe drought in 2011, but this one is even worse.

## PROGRESS

However, thanks to foreign aid Ethiopia is stronger than it used to be. Today, it has one of the world's fastest-growing economies. Millions have been lifted out of poverty. That has given the government the resources it needs to spend \$381 million (U.S.) on food rations.

## CRY FOR HELP

But that money is running out and Ethiopia is asking the world for help. Canada has offered \$30 million. The U.S. has promised \$97 million. Other countries and groups say they will provide funds, too. Still, Ethiopia needs \$1.4 billion to avoid a catastrophe. So far, the world has committed just half that money.

One reason? Ethiopia's plight comes at a bad time. There's a civil war in Syria, a refugee crisis in Europe, and an American election. The drought just isn't grabbing the headlines. Aid worker John Graham says it's the world's worst-ever response to a drought.

The UN World Food Program (WFP) is giving desperate people cereals, beans and oil. But that food, and government rations, will only last to the end of April.

"We are on a cliff edge," said the WFP's John Aylieff. "If we run out of food [we'll see] a spike in severe malnutrition. We have a chance to stop this. We have a chance to keep Ethiopia on its development trajectory. But the window we have to work with is very small." ★

## DEFINITIONS

**FAMINE:** a widespread scarcity of food, caused by several factors including crop failure, population imbalance, or government policies

**MALNUTRITION:** poor nutrition because of an insufficient or poorly balanced diet or faulty digestion or utilization of foods  
**TRAJECTORY:** the way in which a process or event develops over a period of time



# INTERNATIONAL DROUGHT IN ETHIOPIA

## ON THE LINES

Answer the following in complete sentences:

1. What is the population of Ethiopia?

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2. List at least three other important facts about Ethiopia.

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3. What happened in Ethiopia in 1984?

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4. Why is the drought this year so severe? Explain.

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5. When was the last significant rainfall in Ethiopia?

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6. Describe the current conditions in Ethiopia.

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7. How many Ethiopians will be affected if the situation does not improve?

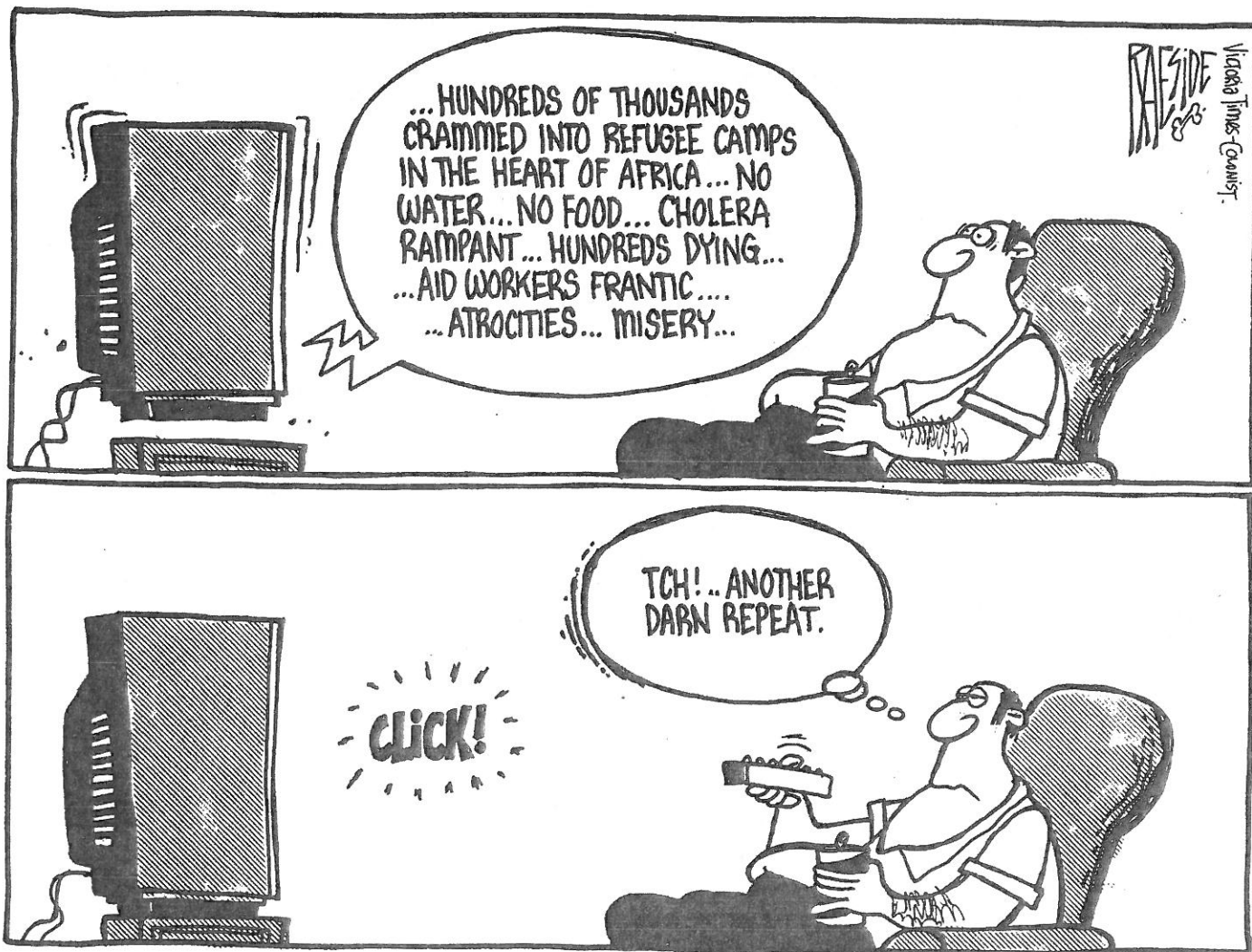
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8. How have the Ethiopian government and other countries reacted to this developing crisis?

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**DROUGHT IN ETHIOPIA****YOUR TASK:**

Examine the editorial cartoon. Then, answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper:

1. What do you already know about the drought in Ethiopia? Explain.
2. Describe what you see and read in the cartoon. Who is featured? What is this person doing? What is he saying/thinking? Explain.
3. As you see it, what might the cartoonist be saying about the attitude of people in the West to Ethiopia's drought? Explain.
4. For what reasons do you agree with the cartoonist's perspective? For what reasons do you disagree? ★