

INTERNATIONAL

Famine killing millions in Ethiopia, food aid needed

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP) - At least 4 million Ethiopians would die each year without food aid, a British aid group said Monday, marking 20 years since a devastating famine killed more than half a million people in the impoverished country.

Now, foreign aid should focus on lifting this nation of 70 million out of poverty, rather than just keeping people alive with food handouts, the Save the Children aid group said.

"Millions of people in the historically famine-prone northeastern highlands are worse off and more vulnerable than ever," said Mike Aaronson, head of the group.

Aaronson said "lack of political will" by world leaders and "paltry" aid have not helped the nation combat persistent food shortages — two decades after the 1984 Live Aid hit song "Do They Know It's Christmas?" raised \$10 million for starving Ethiopians.

The song raised awareness of a famine facing 8 million Ethiopians and spawned other projects, including the trans-Atlantic Live Aid rock extravaganza in 1985 which brought in more than \$100 million.

"It is shocking that 20 years after Band Aid, millions of children still experience hunger," Aaronson said. "Yet, in the last 20 years, donors have shown a lack of political

will and a shortsighted approach to aid that has compounded poverty in Ethiopia."

The criticism came on the eve of a visit by British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who is set to attend a meeting of a commission he set up to assess the economic, political and social crisis in Africa and develop policies to help the continent.

The Commission for Africa, which includes rock star and Band Aid founder Bob Geldof, meets for the second time on Thursday and Friday to discuss regional conflicts, aid, refugees, trade and corruption in the world's poorest continent.

Ethiopia is one of the poorest nations in the world where the average annual per capita income is \$100.

Aaronson criticized attempts to solve the poverty in Ethiopia by food aid alone — which makes up half of the annual aid to the Horn of Africa nation.

Donor countries must inject more investments in education and health care in a bid to help the country break out of poverty, he said.

"A great deal of money has gone into keeping people alive with food aid," Aaronson said. "However, in comparison, the sum invested in longer-term development to lift Ethiopia out of the cycle of poverty has been paltry."

Nigeria pushes for polio vaccine

KANO, Nigeria (AP) - Nigeria's president kicked off a mammoth effort to immunize 80 million children against polio in 23 African countries, described by international health experts as "the single-largest public health campaign" in history to wipe out the disease.

President Olusegun Obasanjo led health workers in giving dozens of children oral vaccine drops in the mainly Muslim northern city of Kano, where until recently Islamic leaders had opposed immunization, inadvertently allowing the virus to spread in the region.

The campaign is being coordinated by the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, which includes U.N. health agencies, the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Rotary International.

The effort will get under way in earnest starting Oct. 8, when local and international health workers are due to go door-to-door in an effort to immunize every child under age 5 across west and central Africa as well as war-ravaged Sudan.

A statement by the Glo-

bal Polio Eradication Initiative called it "the single-largest, public health campaign in history."

Fears fanned by some Islamic preachers that polio vaccines were laced with the AIDS virus and anti-fertility agents in a U.S.-backed plot to depopulate Muslims prompted authorities to suspend polio immunization in three states in the mainly Muslim north in August last year.

While other states rejoined the polio eradication campaign within weeks, Kano state governor Ibrahim Shekarau maintained his vaccine ban until late July, when he said he was satisfied with vaccines obtained from the predominantly Muslim nation of Indonesia.

The 11-month break saw a resurgence of the polio virus, as strains traced to Nigeria re-infected 12 previously polio-free, African countries.

Shekarau — whose 1-year-old daughter Zainab was vaccinated by Obasanjo on Saturday — supported two earlier polio vaccination rounds in Kano state. Those campaigns, held in July and September, immunized 4.6 million children.

Polio usually infects chil-

dren under 5 through contaminated drinking water. It attacks the central nervous system, causing paralysis, muscular atrophy, deformation and, in some cases, death.

"Polio anywhere is a threat to children everywhere," said Rima Salah, director of the UNICEF in west and central Africa, welcoming the African Union's efforts to halt its transmission in the continent.

Nigeria and its northern neighbor Niger are among six countries in the world where polio remains endemic. The others are India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Egypt.

By Aug. 24, the World Health Organization reported 602 cases of polio globally, with 476 in Nigeria alone. India recorded 34 cases, Pakistan 23, Niger 19, Afghanistan three and Egypt just one.

Elsewhere, Chad has reported 12 cases, Ivory Coast has nine, Burkina Faso has six, Benin six, Sudan five, Central African Republic three and Mali two. Guinea, Cameroon and Botswana each have one case.



MASKED MEN

A group of men costumed as the "Eight Generals," characters of the Taiwanese pantheon, stand-by before performing a traditional dance to clear the way for the City God, during the opening of the Taipei Arts Festival, Sunday, in Taipei, Taiwan. The festival which, runs through Oct. 31, is part of the 120th anniversary of Taipei City.

De Klerk: AIDS threat in S. Africa

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) - Because AIDS was not identified as the potential killer it now is, it has become South Africa's biggest threat, former President F.W. De Klerk said Monday.

"The disease has already reduced life expectancy from 63 years in 1990 to only 47 years now," De Klerk said at the annual

conference of the National Association of Pharmaceutical Wholesalers in the southern Cape.

He said 5.6 million South Africans — 28 percent of the sexually active population — are HIV positive. South Africa has an estimated population of 46 million.

(See AIDS, Page 15)

Armstrong wins student of month

Tamaya Armstrong recently relocated to Las Vegas from California with her husband Tommy and their five children. "I've been doing hair at home since I was 15-years-old... my specialty is hair coloring... once we moved here I decided to go to school and get licensed so I can open my own shop" she said. Armstrong's peers describe her as a person who works well with clients, has a positive attitude and is always encouraging to others. After graduation Armstrong will continue training at a local hair chain. "I'll build my clientele and gain more shop experience before I open my own shop... don't cheat yourself [by not getting licensed] from having all the benefits gained from being a licensed cosmetologist," she added.



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