
BEST WISHES FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

Canada's special programme for welcoming 60,000 Indochinese refugees in just over a year and a half would have been impossible without the participation of thousands of people from coast to coast.

While the special Indochinese movement was endorsed by the former and the present federal governments, as well as the provinces, its success was assured by the full and compassionate participation of many thousands of Canadians from all walks of life.

This newsletter — initiated by the Canadian Foundation for Refugees and Operation Lifeline — is another welcome effort. It will provide a forum for sharing information and ideas and for coordinating services among all the Canadian groups and organizations working on behalf of refugees; and it will no doubt encourage others to mobilize public support for refugee relief activities.

Canada will continue to accept its fair share of refugees from all regions of our troubled planet. I am sure that this newsletter will be an important communication link for both governments and private sponsoring groups, and I gladly extend my congratulations and best wishes to the Canadian Foundation for Refugees and to Operation Lifeline on the occasion of this first edition.

PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU

A HUMAN TRAGEDY

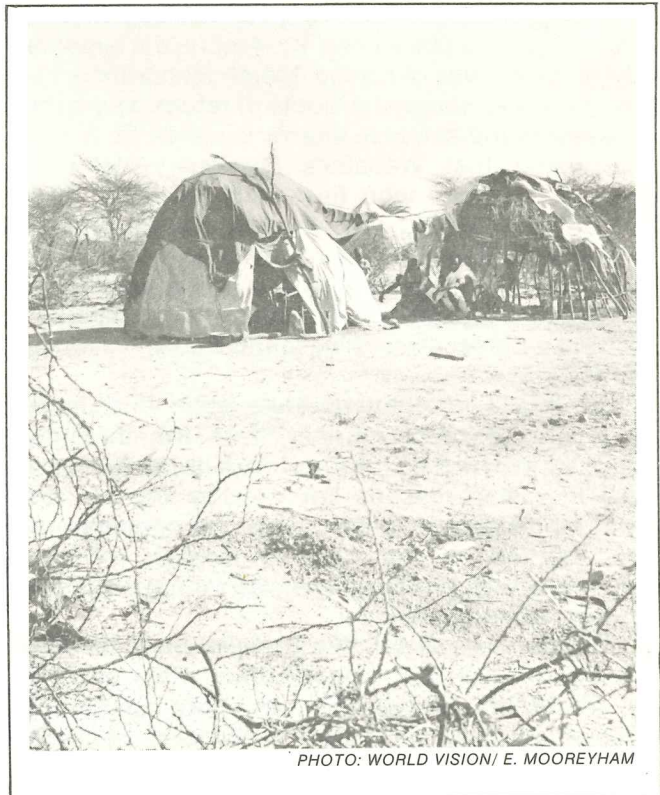
By Linda Durno, Manager of Relief and Development, World Vision of Canada.

While Canadians were rallying as a nation and individually in response to the plight of the Southeast Asian Boat People, another human tragedy was quietly being played out in the Horn of Africa, where Ethiopia and Somalia have been warring over an area known as the Ogaden. Although geographically located inside Ethiopia's border, the Nomadic Somali tribes have for centuries roamed the Ogaden in search of pasture land for their cattle, the main-stay of their existence.

As a result of this war, as well as a severe drought and famine, Somali nomads started pouring out of the Ogaden into neighboring Somalia by the thousands. Classed as refugees in order to qualify for assistance from the UNHCR, they now number 1.7 million. One out of every four persons in Somalia is a refugee. Crowded into 37 refugee camps, they make up the largest refugee population in the world.

I have just returned from a visit to Las Dhure camp located in northwest Somalia. The reality of the suffering and hopelessness of its people will long remain with me. This camp of 76,000 is the largest in Somalia. Conditions are almost beyond description. Situated beside a dry river bed, the small rounded attels (huts of cardboard, animal skins and straw mats) spread out over the parched ground. Broken, jagged rocks litter the ground and make driving and walking difficult. The wind continually whips the dust into your eyes, ears and mouth. Although the camp is sprayed to control the flies, there is no relief as they swarm around your eyes and mouth.

Ninety percent of the camp population is made up



of women, children, the sick and the aged. Many walked for days, even weeks, over the cruel desert with little or no food. They watched helplessly as many of their children died along the way. The men have been killed or remained in the Ogaden to fight or protect the few remaining cattle.

The plight of the women is depressing and discouraging. Already in a malnourished state themselves, they must build huts with their bare hands. To gather firewood they are forced to walk further and further as the land surrounding the

camps has been stripped of its squat thorn bushes. Water, what little there is, must be scraped from holes dug by hand in the riverbed, or obtained from one of the eight holding tanks where women line up waiting their turn. I watched again as these same women bent under the 100 pound sacks of maize they received at ration distribution. The maize is so hard it must be pounded, a small portion at a time, in a hollowed out stump. A 3' to 4' hardwood log weighing at least 10 lbs. is used to pound the maize into a cookable powder. But the work does not end there. The meal must still be prepared, and those mothers with severely malnourished children must spend extra hours at special feeding clinics assisting with the extra feedings.

While it is always tragic to see sick children, I will never forget the look of despair on one mother's face as she lay quietly on the ground in her attel. She had hepatitis and was unable to care for herself or her children. The sadness and despair she communicated were apparent enough in spite of the language barrier.

Our World Vision medical team is working long hours in oppressive heat with little relief. As I assisted in a clinic one afternoon I experienced first hand the burden of responsibility these nurses carry. A young woman, beautiful and tall, brought her eight day old baby to us. Is it unkind to say that a tiny baby looks like a scrawny old man? Perhaps, but that is the truth. Anne, our nurse, looked at me and said, "She won't make it." I didn't want to hear that but that too was likely the truth. Then Anne had to decide whether or not to administer an injection

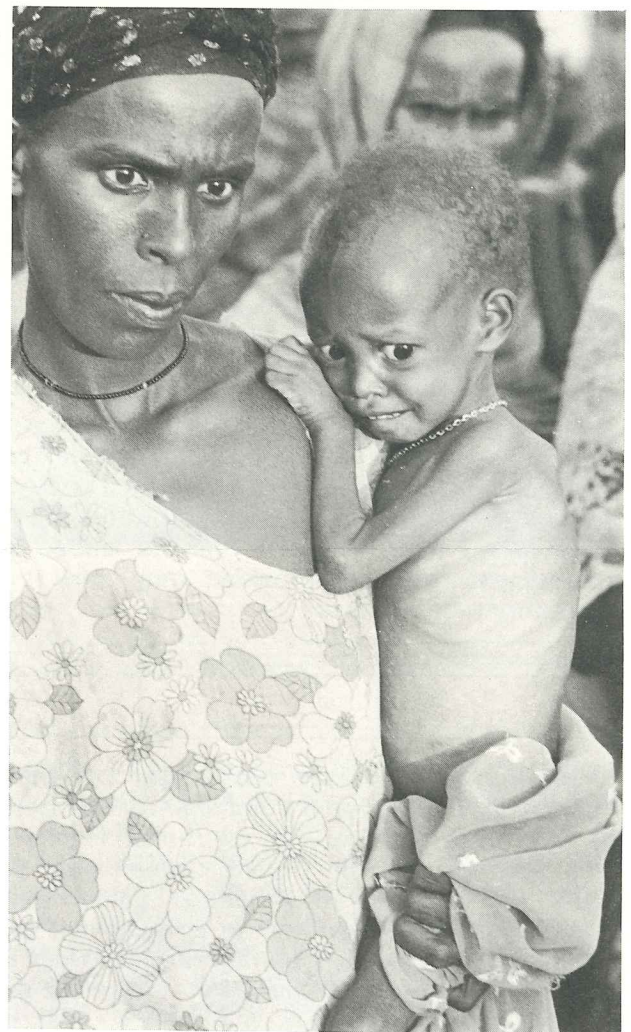
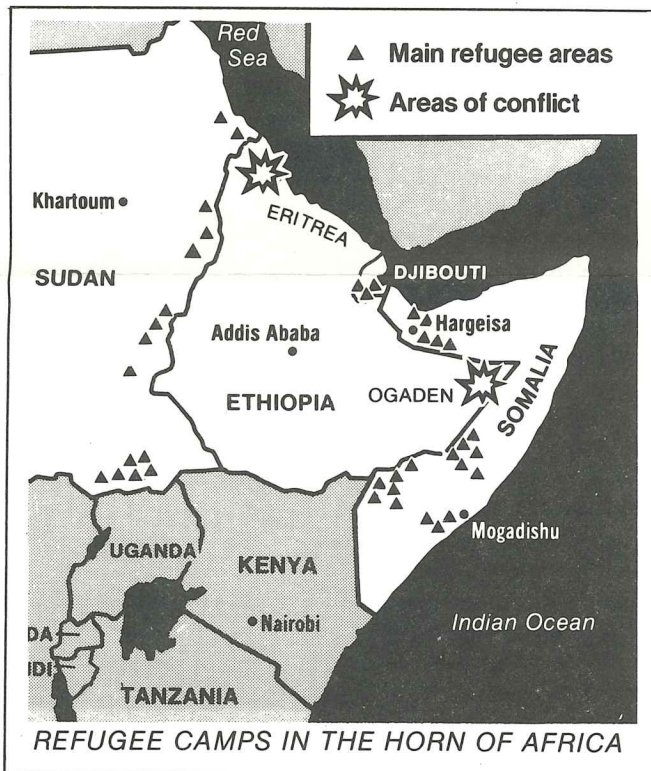


PHOTO: WORLD VISION/ E. MOOREYHAM



of precious penicillin. "Should she use it on a dying child or might it just be enough to save her?" But there were so many with a better chance who desperately needed this medicine too.

Anne looked into the mother's eyes. Her only hope was that Anne could do something. I held the baby while Anne found a place in her shrivelled little leg to put the needle. And together we prayed that God would heal this little one.

This scene is played many times over in the camps in Somalia. Often, the mothers themselves have been forced into the position of choosing to save one child at the expense of another. Life is hard for the Somali refugees. For most, their memories are crowded with acts of violence, bloodshed, hunger and death. I was too embarrassed to ask about their hopes for the future. And yet as I move among them, amid the stench and the filth and the dust and the flies, their greetings was always the same: Nabat — Peace be with you.