



NEWS RELEASE

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SOMERSET AID WORKER VISITS COMMUNITIES HIT BY HUNGER AND DROUGHT IN KENYA

An aid worker from Somerset has visited drought-stricken communities in Kenya, as part of a humanitarian relief operation for families hit by East Africa's unprecedented hunger crisis.

Nick Guttman, who lives outside Taunton, travelled to northern Kenya in March to support the work of overseas development charity [Christian Aid](#), where he is the Head of the Humanitarian Division.

Nick spent a week in Marsabit County, one of the worst-affected regions: he met people affected by the severe drought and supported Kenyan colleagues with its aid response.

Some 2.6m Kenyans are facing starvation and more than 350,000 children, pregnant women and new mothers are acutely malnourished, according to the United Nations. This crisis has been caused by prolonged dry spells and three years of poor rains, which has dried out rivers and water sources, and has ruined farmers' harvests.

Nick, who is 61, said: "It's an extremely grave situation. In the 37 years since I first travelled to Kenya, I've never seen it so dry. In Marsabit County, where I visited, some communities hadn't seen rain since as far back as October 2015. There wasn't a blade of grass or leaf in sight. Everywhere we went, people kept telling us it was the worst drought in living memory.

"In many places, pasture, water and food supplies have completely run out. Pastoralists who I met are being forced to trek in the heat for up to 70km to find grazing areas and water. Meanwhile their animals are dying in unprecedented numbers. I lost count of how many carcasses I saw: camels, sheep, goats, donkeys and cattle. The smell of dead animals was hard to forget.

"Some people I spoke to had lost everything. Without animals to rear and sell, there is no money to buy food, no meat to eat, no milk for their children. I have seen first-hand the devastating impact this is having on people in poverty.

"I met one 19-year-old pastoralist, called Mamo Toro, who hadn't eaten or drunk anything in 24 hours. When we came across him on a barren, parched road, he had spent the night

standing vigil over his young camel, who was starving to death. It was the second of his camels to die in 24 hours.”

“Tragically, this dire situation is being echoed across the East Africa region. In Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Ethiopia, over 16 million people are on the brink of starvation. It’s a humanitarian crisis of an unprecedented scale,” says Nick, who lived in Kenya from 1995-1998 and has been an aid worker for three decades.

Christian Aid is working with local organisations in Kenya to support those who are most in need of help. In Marsabit Country, Christian Aid and its partners are providing water and cash support to families, to give them the means to buy food and other essentials.

Nick said: “I’m grateful that the UK public, including the people of Somerset, have given so generously to the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) East Africa Crisis Appeal, which has raised an astounding £55m.

“Sadly, climate change is making droughts much more frequent and much more intense, making it much harder for people in countries like Kenya to harvest crops and cope with weather-related disasters.

“That’s why Christian Aid wants governments to invest in enabling poor communities to adapt to their changing climate and protect themselves against the life-threatening impacts of these ever-frequent droughts. If we can support communities to become more resilient to natural disasters, many more lives will be saved.”

To find out about Christian Aid’s fundraising appeal for the East Africa crisis, visit www.christianaid.org.uk/emergencies/east-africa-crisis-appeal

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Nick Guttman is available for interview. For more information, contact Tomi Ajayi on 07850 242950 or tajayi@christian-aid.org or regional media coordinator Emma Nutbrown on 07814 131169 or enutbrown@christian-aid.org

Notes to Editors:

1. Christian Aid works in some of the world's poorest communities in around 40 countries at any one time. We act where there is great need, regardless of religion, helping people to live a full life, free from poverty. We provide urgent, practical and effective assistance in tackling the root causes of poverty as well as its effects.

2. Christian Aid’s core belief is that the world can and must be changed so that poverty is ended: this is what we stand for. Everything we do is about ending poverty and injustice: swiftly, effectively, sustainably. Our strategy document [Partnership for Change](#) explains how we set about this task.

3. Christian Aid is a member of [ACT Alliance](#), a global coalition of more than 130 churches and church-related organisations that work together in humanitarian assistance, advocacy and development.

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