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Avoiding Food Aid Misuse ***Vouchers Offer Resourceful Way to Help Famine Victims***

August 31, 2011 (Dadaab, Kenya) – With growing concerns over food aid falling into the hands of terrorists, or being diverted and sold in Somali markets for profit, World Concern is implementing a unique voucher system in drought-affected communities along the Kenya-Somalia border.

Displaced families and refugees continue to arrive in strained host communities, such as Dhobley, Somalia, having walked for days or even weeks in search of food and water. Unlike in developed countries, water here is not free. With no money to buy water from local wells or food, these families are desperate for help.

World Concern is providing families with vouchers to purchase food, water and essential supplies like cooking pots, jerry cans, blankets, soap and mosquito nets. These people, who left everything behind when they fled drought and violence in their hometowns, are able to shop for their families needs. World Concern reimburses merchants for the items purchased with the vouchers.

Using vouchers supports the local economy and helps build and maintain relationships with community leaders, said World Concern Emergency Coordinator Tracy Stover.

“After distributing vouchers to families in Dhobley, the District Commissioner invited in his office, offered us some cool water, and told us he appreciates World Concern because of the way we are working with the community,” said Stover. This type of relationship is critical to reaching parts of southern Somalia previously inaccessible due to insecurity.

“Many of the families who receive vouchers have just arrived in the past 24 hours,” explained Stover. “They were tired ... Some of the people had walked 250 kilometers. One woman and her family left their home a few weeks ago for this journey with just a few belongings and their donkey cart. Half way here her donkey died from over exhaustion.”

World Concern’s famine response team is based in Dadaab, Kenya, and is repairing wells and providing emergency water, food, medical care and supplies to displaced families on both sides of the Kenya-Somalia border.

For more information, or to arrange interviews, please contact **Derek Sciba at (206) 713-5564**.

Donations can be made at www.worldconcern.org, by calling 866-530-LIFE (5433), or by texting the word "CRISIS" to 20222.

Photo Captions:

WC-Somalia-famine-voucher.jpg: Displaced families receive vouchers from World Concern in Dhobley, Somalia, to purchase emergency supplies.

WC-Somalia-handing-out-vouchers.jpg: World Concern staff members distribute vouchers to displaced families in Dhobley, Somalia.

Current Somalia Famine and Drought Facts

**Source:* United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Aug. 30, 2011

- 3.7 million people across Somalia are in need of food; 2.2 million are estimated in the south
- Aid agencies are scaling up interventions to reach an additional 900,000 people in southern Somalia through general food distributions and the provision of food vouchers
- There is a 15 percent increase in the number of malnourished children, from 390,000 children to 450,000 children
- Almost a third of the 1.5 million children under five in Somalia suffer from acute malnutrition
- Aid agencies aim to reach 2.8 million people with emergency water by the end of 2011, including 1.3 million with emergency sanitation
- Aid agencies are targeting 1.8 million people this year through the provision of emergency assistance packages and temporary/transitional shelter across Somalia
- Aid agencies aim to provide access to improved agricultural assistance to 2.6 million people in Somalia this year, which is 70 percent of the 3.7 million people in crisis nationwide

***World Concern**, part of CRISTA Ministries, is a Christian humanitarian organization that helps lift people out of poverty through activities including microfinance, agriculture, disaster response and small business development. World Concern works with the poor in 22 countries, with the goal of transforming the lives of those we touch, leading them on a path to self-sustainability. Worldwide, World Concern offers life, opportunity and hope to nearly six million people.*