

Oxfam America Facts For Action

Ethiopia: Behind the Famine



Children after famine, 1983-84

It is not only natural powers, but also human ones, that have combined to keep Ethiopian peasants among the poorest people in the world. The current famine, which has brought more than seven million Ethiopians close to starvation, is as much a human-caused as a natural disaster.

At times it seems as if the very forces of nature are conspiring against the people of Ethiopia. Strong crops of food and fuel, teamed with such care, winter under the relentless

sun. For months - and at times, for years - the winds that sweep the high lands are forced away before they can release their rain.

Sometimes, when the rain does fall, it creates torrents that wash up seed bins and wash the soil itself from hillside fields. The cold nights of the high lands and the desert plains, where shelter is poor and firewood scarce, bring chills and sickness to bodies already weakened by hunger.

Despite the forbidding terrain and harsh, unpredictable climate, Ethiopia was one of the birthplaces of agriculture; people have been farming there for as

long as 8,000 years. Although much of Ethiopia's land is too hilly, dry, or swampy to be farmed, other areas are quite fertile. The country is potentially capable of supporting more than its current population. In Ethiopia, severe droughts have occurred even in years of enough rain. Many of them live on the edge of survival. Their average life expectancy is just over 40 years. Ethiopia is one of the world's least developed countries, with a gross domestic product of only \$1.40 per individual.

An important educational resource series from Oxfam America

War, poverty hopelessness. That's the usual picture we get of the Third World. But Oxfam America's experience with grassroots groups working for change in the Third World has given us a more optimistic view. **Facts for Action** explores the causes and solutions to crucial global issues. Must reading for all who want to understand the developing world—and then do something about it.

Excellent for use by teachers and organizers.

- 8½ x 11 many photographs
- 3-hole punched for binders
- ideas for further reading and action

"An absolutely invaluable resource that motivates people to act"

—Sr. Mary Turgi
St. Mary's College
South Bend, IN

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