

KEITH ELLISON

5TH DISTRICT, MINNESOTA

2263 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4755

2100 PLYMOUTH AVENUE NORTH
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55411
(612) 522-1212

ellison.house.gov

TWITTER: @keithellison



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HOUSING AND INSURANCE

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 22, 2016

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chair
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations
Room HT-2, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Granger and Ranking Member Lowey:

I write to request that you prioritize USAID funding for humanitarian efforts and aid in East Africa, particularly for programs related to humanitarian crises resulting from global warming and the El Nino crises. Through our assistance, the United States will expand its leadership in much-needed humanitarian efforts and assistance in this region.

Climate change is shifting global weather patterns, resulting in increasingly destructive El Nino events in East Africa. El Nino weather patterns have caused both heavy flooding and drought in East Africa, affecting millions of people. The destructive impact of El Nino is exacerbated by ongoing territorial disputes and war, displacing communities throughout the region.

The current El Nino cycle mirrors the trend toward drought and low harvest yields that predated the 2011 famine throughout East Africa. Thus analysis for the potential impact of the current cycle is based on 2011 numbers. The 2011 famine in East Africa resulted in over 260,000 deaths due to food shortage in Somalia alone, with over half of these deaths occurring in children under the age of 6. The international humanitarian response was slow in 2011, exacerbating the impact of the famine. We must learn from this mistake and be prepared to take rapid action as necessary in the future.

As highlighted below, shifting climate patterns particularly impact Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, and Ethiopia. These countries need a robust U.S. assistance.

In Somalia, flooding from El Nino has displaced 60,000 people internally and impacted another 85,000 people. 4.9 million Somalis are currently in need of humanitarian assistance, with over 1

million experiencing crisis or emergency levels of acute food insecurity. The United Nations estimates that areas affected by flooding will expand throughout early 2016.

In Sudan, 6.6 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. El Nino has dramatically decreased the rainfall in the majority of the country, and thus the number of individuals in need of assistance is forecasted to dramatically increase as crop yields fall.

In South Sudan, the UN has called for \$1.3 billion in aid in 2016. Approximately 5.1 million individuals live in food insecure areas resulting from the combination of ongoing conflict and low crop yields.

Ethiopia has 10.2 million individuals requiring food assistance relief. Due to the drought, over 880,000 households throughout the country will require emergency seed assistance over the next two planting seasons.

The United States Government has the opportunity to advance humanitarian aid to tens of millions of individuals living under threat of extreme duress. Climate change has made El Nino and La Nina persistent threats to the region. Continued U.S. leadership is essential to assist in the well-being of those facing the full meteorological effect of carbon emissions.

Thank you for considering providing the robust funding that USAID's East Africa programs need in Fiscal Year 2017. I look forward to working with you to craft a FY2017 State Foreign Operations Appropriations bill that demonstrates U.S. leadership and compassion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Keith Ellison". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Keith" and last name "Ellison" clearly legible.

Keith Ellison
Member of Congress