Africa And Famine Essay, Research Paper

There are many causes for famine in Ethiopia. Some of which include: crop failure, war, and food/water shortages. Nearly all famines result from crop failure. The chief causes of crop failure include: drought, flooding and plant disease and pests. Ethiopia has large areas near deserts, where rainfall is light and variable (Electric Library). In May of 2000, it had appeared that an entire generation of children was battling to stay alive through one of the worst droughts in Ethiopia for several years. Until last week, it had not rained, for three years where about 1.3 million people eke out a living. Then last week rain pounded down. Far from a blessing, though, it brought new dangers. In some stricken areas the dirt roads became impassible, halting aid deliveries. A month of flooding in Ethiopia already has destroyed thousands of acres of crops, dislocated hundreds of thousands of people and killed at least 1,300 (News Bank). A continuing border war with Eritrea, one of Africa s worst conflicts, with each country claiming to have killed tens of thousands of soldiers on the other side. In 1999, Ethiopia had spent $467 million on defense, up from $140 million prior to the conflict. Ethiopia s attempts at economic growth have been hampered by the global trend of this past decade to reduce development assistance and by the government s pursuit of its border war with neighboring Eritrea. Overseas development aid to Ethiopia fell from $1.2 billion in 1992 to $543 million in 1997. When war broke out in 1998, the government boosted military spending and most nations froze aid (EBSCO 1) Eighty-five percent of Ethiopia s aid is sent through Eritrea however Ethiopia complicating aid delivery refuses to have aid shipped through these more convenient ports. Many countries that have given aid in the past are withholding aid on purpose; fearful that a large-scale humanitarian campaign might fuel the country s war against Eritrea. U.N. officials say almost 8 million people in Ethiopia might face death due to food and water shortages. Many farm animals die and are killed for food. Farmers, to avoid starvation, may have to eat all their seed before the planting season begins. Such damaging loses hinder them from returning to a normal life and lowers production levels.

Chief effects of famine include: death/disease, destruction of livestock/seed, crime and migration. People who lack sufficient food lose weight and grow extremely weak. Many become so feeble that they die from diarrhea or some other ailment. The weakened condition of a starvation victim is called marasmus. When victims get into this weakened state it increases the possibilities of epidemics such as cholera and typhus. In Ethiopia there is almost no medicine. Very few people are dying of actual starvation but are dying of diarrhea, measles and bronchial infections: things, which kill because they are weak and have no water. The U.S. had stopped sending aid to Eritrea in 1998, after the Eritrea government seized 45,000 tons of U.S. food aid on its way to Ethiopia (Facts.Com). Crime and other social disorders increase during famine, such crimes as looting, prostitution, and theft. Desperate people steal food and other items they could not obtain otherwise. They may sell stolen goods to buy something to eat. There may be scattered outbreaks of violence, particularly near food distribution centers. Victims often leave their homes in rural areas and flock to cities of refugee camps where food may be available. Although in the confusion, parents and children may be separated (Electric Library).