

FAMILIES ON BRINK OF STARVATION

How tiny Deborah depends on YOU to stay alive



ALL that stands between this child and starvation is how generous Irish people are with their donations to Concern.

Four-year-old Deborah Pilloh is painfully underweight and suffering from cerebral palsy.

Her family are trying to get her weight back up by feeding her high-nutrition packets of 'plumpy nut', supplied by Concern.

In a developed country like Ireland, Deborah and her five-year-old brother David, who also suffers from the disease, would have a better than fighting chance of survival.

But here in Sajiloni, 10km west of Kajiado in drought-ridden Kenya, the clock would already be ticking for Deborah without the intervention of Concern.

Dead

"We used to have five cows and 15 goats," their mum Margaret tells us. "Now the cows are dead and 10 of our goats are gone."

"Once we had enough milk each day and we were even able to sell some," she adds.

By the time Concern intervened last month and began supplying the Pillohs with plumpy nut — fortified peanut butter enriched with milk which the charity distributes to 3,000

CONCERN worldwide

THE Star's chief reporter Patrick O'Connell (left) and photographer Noel Gavin have been visiting

some of Kenya's poorest people with Concern.

They report on the devastating effects of unrelenting drought — and

Concern's work to help thousands in the daily fight for survival.

Today they visit families in the Kajiado District who are teetering on the brink of starvation.



STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE: Deborah Pilloh; (below) mum Margaret weighs her; (left) in mum's arms with David in wheelchair, Gabriel (8) and Priscilla; and (below left) Ntukai with son Lewuasin and daughter Oyiah

children in Kenya — Deborah's weight had plummeted to just 7kg.

"She is happier now," Margaret says as she feeds the tot. "She is stronger."

At least Margaret has been given some hope.

"I'm praying to God for the rains," she tells us.

"If the rains come and we can get money to put Deborah and David into a

care home I will be better able to look after the three other children."

Some 30 miles further west in Enkaroni we meet another family who would struggle to survive this drought without donations.

Vouchers

Widow Ntukai Pose and her eight children are one of 1,600 families in Kajiado

District receiving €20 a month in food vouchers from Concern.

Ntukai spends her credit on basic foodstuffs like flour and oil.

But even with careful rationing this food will only last two weeks, as she must share it with relatives.

"My big worry is for my children," Ntukai admits. "The biggest thing right

KENYAN DROUGHT WORST IN 80 YEARS

THE drought gripping Kajiado district in southern Kenya is the worst to hit its estimated 580,000 Masai inhabitants in more than 80 years.

The last time a drought this bad hit the Masai they were forced to

grind up their dead animals' bones for soup. It became known as the 'Drought of the Bones'.

The current drought has lasted three years and has claimed an estimated 60 per cent of the Masai's animals.



FAST FACTS...

THE Concern Fast takes place on Thursday December 3, 2009.

To sign up for the Fast or for more information log on to www.concernfast.org or call 1850 50 50 55.

This year the Fast aims to raise more than €1 million to help fund projects such as supporting drought-affected people in Kenya.

Over the last five years — from 2004 to 2008 — the

Fast has raised a staggering total of €7,235,898.

Concern is also fundraising this year through a Christmas gifts programme. Details of this can also be found on the website.

TOMORROW: The abandoned children of Nairobi's slums