

## Deficit food fights in Congress dampened fund drives for famine in Somalia

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Relief organizations often chalk up their biggest fund raising successes during major humanitarian crises.

But the devastating famine in Somalia fell by the wayside as media turned its attention to other news scoops – including the protracted Congressional fight over the debt ceiling, the Rupert Murdoch phone hacking scandal, and the recent massacre in Norway.

“It’s even slower for us than Pakistan was,” grieved a spokesman for Mercy Corps, a U.S. relief and development group.

“I’m asking myself where is everybody and how loud do I have to yell and from what mountaintop?” asked Caryl Stern, chief executive of the United States Fund for Unicef, the group’s fundraising arm. “The overwhelming problem is that the American public is not seeing and feeling the urgency of this crisis.”

Funds to provide care and food for the children affected by the famine have totaled \$5.1 million — out of \$300 million that UNICEF estimates it will need over the next six months to address and prevent starvation in Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti.

Another relief group, Oxfam is seeking to raise more than \$70 million. It has raised about \$36 million so far, mostly in Europe, where donors have been more responsive.