

AFRICA FAMINE: A MAJOR HUMANITARIAN DISASTER THAT REQUIRES AN URGENT RESPONSE

“Our people are struggling simply to survive”- in a powerful pastoral letter, the Bishops of South Sudan have expressed a desperate plea for support.

United Nations agencies recently declared famine in parts of South Sudan and it's a famine that is likely to spread. Caritas Australia's CEO, Paul O'Callaghan said without concerted political and community action, there is the risk of famine spreading across the region.

“With over 20 million people at risk of starvation, this is a major humanitarian disaster that requires our urgent action. It's vital for us to do whatever we can to assist before it's too late and the worst of this large-scale fine becomes entrenched,” Mr O'Callaghan said.

“This is an unprecedented situation and may be the gravest food security event since the 1984 famine that devastated the people of Ethiopia.

“Caritas recently launched its Africa Emergency Appeal to raise life-saving funds for those in need.”

Caritas Australia, in collaboration with the Caritas Internationalis network, has a long history of working successfully with desperately poor communities in the affected countries of Africa.

Mary Wachira, Caritas Project Coordinator, who works on the ground with communities in South Sudan said: “Caritas' unique reach through the Church into vulnerable communities means that it is well-placed to support those in need.”

Through the generous support of Australians, Caritas is providing people with essential food and water, as well as continuing our long term development work so communities have resilience in the face of future threats.

“When you have no food, you have nothing. We must act before our worst fears are realised,” Ms Wachira said.

This humanitarian disaster is being driven in many areas by conflict, as well as sky rocketing food prices due to inflation, while climate change is compounding a severe drought throughout the Horn of Africa. The long term impacts of climate change are undermining the region's ability to endure extreme weather, leaving thousands of people vulnerable to hunger and disease.

“While this is a moment to act to secure communities immediate access to food and water and sustainable crops, it is also a moment to reflect on the role of climate change,” Mr O'Callaghan said. “If we don't move aggressively to tackle climate change, we will see more and more of these events in the future.”

To donate to the Africa Emergency Appeal visit <http://www.caritas.org.au/learn/emergency-response> or phone 1800 024 413.

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