
Africa faces the worst food crisis in the world, but humanitarian crises are underfunded

People in Africa are facing acute food insecurity as a result of climate change, armed conflicts, COVID-19 and soaring grain prices due to the war in Ukraine. The four factors are the root causes of the ongoing severe global food crisis. And while billions of dollars are being spent on wars, the humanitarian appeals of major international agencies, NGOs and Catholic organisations remain highly underfunded. "This applies to all crises except Ukraine," said **Fabrizio Cavalletti**, head of the Africa office of Caritas Italy. In response to the food crisis Caritas Italy launched the campaign "[Africa, hunger for justice](#)", that will continue until Lent. Besides fundraising for projects in the most severely affected African countries, carried out across Italian dioceses, the goal of the campaign is to raise awareness about these issues and encourage changes in lifestyles.

Eastern Africa is facing the world's worst food crisis

due to high dependency on grain imports, chiefly from Russia and Ukraine, soaring prices, severe drought in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, flooding in South Sudan, conflicts and political instability in Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan. The figures are overwhelming: 20.4 million people are in need of food assistance in Ethiopia and there are 4 million dead animals," reports **Federico Mazzarella**, a Caritas Italy worker in Nairobi, Kenya, "4.4 million face acute food crisis in Kenya, owing to a severe drought situation affecting 85 per cent of its territory; 6.6 million people face acute food crisis in South Sudan; approximately 6.7 million people across Somalia are expected to face high levels of acute food insecurity, while as many as 26.4 million people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity. **"South Sudan is awaiting the arrival of Pope Francis and the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby.** They will find an abandoned country that went through tremendous suffering caused by the conflict, a country the world becomes aware of only on certain occasions", said Monsignor **Christian Carlassare**, Bishop of Rumbek in South Sudan. Monsignor Carlassare, a Comboni missionary, was shot and wounded two years ago in his home in Rumbek, prior to his installation as bishop in the diocese. After the 2019 peace accords, a unity government was formed for a 'transitional period', until the national elections planned for 2024. "Peace agreements often produce conflicts", noted the bishop. "The various groups tend to cause unrest in order to have a stronger voice and a greater influence at the negotiating table, so as to secure increased powers and resources, even if it means destabilising the country." "How can one even describe elections as 'democratic' when citizens stick to their ethnic group and one third of the population, amounting to 4 million displaced persons and refugees, are unable to cast their vote?" he asked.

South Sudan is a country rich in resources but whose richness "is a source of division, ill-distributed and misused",

said the prelate. "Some groups succeed in gaining access to resources but fail to establish an indigenous economy, while the population lives below the poverty line." Moreover, extreme variations in rainfall due to climate change result in "low rainfall during the sowing season or too much rainfall, which destroys the crops." "In the diocese of Malakal - he remarked - two parishes will be left without food from March to May. People in Rumbek face food shortages due to insufficient rainfall." The diocese will begin distributing food and emergency supplies to the most vulnerable groups in 16 parishes, with the cooperation of German and Austrian humanitarian agencies. Caritas Rumbek has been carrying out a project for the past three years aimed at helping communities along the Nile River affected by flooding, to promote community resilience in various areas.

<https://youtu.be/03ANHW5VGEc> **Somalia is currently one of the most severely drought-impacted country in Africa**, with half the population facing hunger and 6.7 million people - one third of the overall population - expected to face high levels of acute food insecurity. Approximately 7.8 million people require humanitarian assistance, 5 million of whom are children. Three million people are displaced and 1 million have fled to neighbouring countries. In 2022, more than 800,000 people were forced to migrate as a consequence of hunger. Over 3 million livestock died in 2021. "The people of Somalia are hungry for justice. These countries have been used as landfills on a number of occasions, including with Italy's involvement in toxic waste dumping. The international community's role must be one of accompaniment, towards domestic and international justice", said Msgr. **Giorgio Bertin**, Bishop of Djibouti and Apostolic Administrator of Mogadishu.

"Somalia is an extremely poor country and has been plagued by insecurity for more than 30 years due to clan conflicts, climate change and Al-Shabaab's Islamist insurgency.

This led to extremely destructive situations", he explained. Al-Shabaab's violence, seeking to impose a form of Islamism typical of the Taliban, resulted in a large number of internally displaced persons. In addition, "excessive deforestation over the past 30 years, fuelled by the demand for charcoal for cooking purposes in Gulf countries, aggravates drought," he said. "Overgrazing of livestock is another factor behind the aggravated impact of climate change. Cattle previously sold only in the local markets are now exported to the Arabian Peninsula for larger profits", he said. Increased flooding caused by rivers overtopping their banks, damaging the crops and destroying them, is another major problem. All these factors have led to a rise in acute hunger. "The rebirth of a well-functioning state that truly serves the population is of utmost importance for Somalia". Caritas, in co-operation with the Rome Mission Centre, distributed tents and mosquito nets to displaced persons in Mogadishu. Three projects financed by the Italian Bishops' Conference thanks to funding from Italy's "8 per thousand" law regulating taxpayers' contributions, ensured the construction of sanitary facilities and the distribution of food packages. An appeal was launched through Caritas Internationalis and Caritas Ireland to support displaced persons in remote areas in the southern part of the country, but only 20% of the requested funds have been received to date.

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