

Christian agencies warn that 10 million people face famine in Horn of Africa

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London, July 7 (ENInews)--With the United Nations warning that the Horn of Africa and other parts of Africa are facing their worst drought in sixty years, Christian Aid and several other relief agencies have called on their supporters to help, despite global economic uncertainty.

"More than ten million people are thought to be affected across the region, with Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia hardest hit," said Kirsty Smith, director of the Methodist Relief and Development Fund. "Two successive failed rainy seasons have meant lost harvests, and the decimation of livestock. Soaring food prices have exacerbated the situation, leaving people hungry and unable to meet their basic needs," she said.

At the Methodist Church conference in England concluding today, Rev. Paul D. Critchley called on Christians everywhere to respond to the worsening situation in East Africa through prayer, action and giving, "thus to stand in solidarity with the poor as the Gospel tells us to do."

Aid workers report cases of widespread malnutrition, children begging for water by roadsides, animals dying of thirst, and schools and hospitals closing throughout the drought-struck region. The UN confirms that large swathes of northern Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Uganda are in the "emergency" category, one stage before what is officially classified as famine.

Christian Aid's Andrew Hogg said "donor fatigue" had not yet been reached in the UK. The group has launched an emergency appeal and released £135,000 to partners in various parts of the Horn and East Africa to respond as the situation worsens.

Oxfam estimates £50 million will be needed this year to save lives. The British government has pledged £38 million to increase food aid to help more than one million Ethiopians facing starvation reach the next harvest. The money will be channeled through the UN World Food program.

The UK's International Development Secretary, Andrew Mitchell, has called on the international community to provide "fast and effective relief."

Fergus Conmee, head of the humanitarian program in Africa for the Catholic Overseas Development Agency, told reporters that rather than wait to see pictures of starving children in the world's newspapers, "we need to act now and stop it."