

Zimbabwe in dire need of food aid, say Catholic bishops

About 8 million people could starve if emergency help is not forthcoming, says Archbishop Robert Christopher Ndlovu of Harare, president of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference

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The president of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference has appealed to the international community for urgent food aid to his country.

Speaking recently at a press conference in the country's capital Archbishop Robert Christopher Ndlovu of Harare said about 8 million people could starve if emergency food aid is not forthcoming – largely due to a poor harvest.

The country's drought situation and the economic collapse has only exasperated to the food insecurity.

The World Food Program had also estimated that nearly 8 million people would require food aid in 2020 as Zimbabwe faces severe food shortages.

Archbishop Ndlovu said food insecurity is already affecting not only rural but urban communities, school-going children, newly born babies, mothers and refugees.

"This food insecurity will affect urban and rural communities. Millions of school-going children, refugees, and the poor will suffer from the severe effects of this drought," he said, Vatican News reported.

"Our health coordinators in our hospitals are telling us that (already) some of the newly born babies instantly show signs of not being healthy. Their mothers too, because they (probably) eat only once a day and as a result may not produce enough breast milk for the babies and that will affect the development and growth of that child," said the archbishop.

Catholic bishops in the country are targeting to raise over 1 million dollars for the initial response program, which will be administered to all people, through Caritas Zimbabwe.

"Our appeal and response is on behalf of the people of every race, culture, gender and religion in Zimbabwe who are and will soon be in dire need," Archbishop Ndlovu said. "Our goal is to mobilize sufficient food aid for us to make a difference to the lives of the many millions who face starvation, including children, women and those living with HIV/AIDS."

He said that through the bishops' Caritas appeal, the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe had already received over 200,000 dollars and distribution to needy areas was presently underway.

Zimbabwe is facing a complex economic crisis, with the highest inflation rate in the world, according to the IMF. The country's food emergency is also part of a regional climate crisis that began with a severe drought in 2018.

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