

Caritas Australia has applauded a decision by the Federal Government to match funds raised for the East Africa Crisis by aid and development agencies.

Drought has ravaged the region leaving more than 13 million people in danger and there is a dramatic shortfall in the funds needed to alleviate this suffering.

“Australians have been generous throughout this crisis but unfortunately the scale of this disaster means a great deal more funds are needed,” Caritas Australia CEO Jack de Groot said.

“We hope that this decision by AusAID will see a marked increase in funds raised for the crisis,” Mr de Groot said.

AusAID announced the dollar for dollar initiative today and it will remain in effect until November 30. The agreement has been capped at \$10 million for all agencies and \$1.5 million for individual agencies.

Millions of people in Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti are affected. Adequate rains are not expected to ease the situation until at least February. At present:

- More than 13 million people require urgent humanitarian aid.
- In Somalia 750,000 people are at risk of starvation and 1.3 million children are acutely malnourished
- Unprecedented numbers of people are fleeing their homes for neighbouring countries
- The situation is being made worse by life-threatening cholera and measles outbreaks in the region.

The Caritas network has been deeply engaged in the East Africa crisis from the outset and to date have contributed the following.

In Kenya 79,000 people have received food, 5,000 people and 15,000 livestock have improved access to safe water and 17,000 farmers are receiving agriculture training.

In Somalia food has been distributed to 43,115 people and 80,800 people have access to clean water.

In Ethiopia emergency food has been supplied to 199,918 people, 376,723 people have access to clean water and food security has been delivered to 521,980 people.

“But there is a great deal more that needs to be done or this could descend into a humanitarian catastrophe, the likes of which we haven’t seen in a very long time,” Mr de Groot said.

“We would like the Australian community to recognise just how serious this situation is and stand in solidarity with the millions of families affected across East Africa.

“This is a vast area taking in numerous countries and many people, so the emergency response is going to take some time.”

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FOOD insecurity is deteriorating in urban environments across Kenya because of rising global food prices and the lack of food available in local markets," Caritas Australia CEO Jack de Groot said.

"There are reports coming out of the region that the number of severely malnourished children is growing. This is of great concern to us," Mr de Groot said.

Following last week's announcement of a Federal Government initiative to match, dollar for dollar, funds raised by foreign aid and development agencies, Mr de Groot said there was hope for people in the region but we need to act quickly.

"The Government's announcement is very welcome and we would ask the Australian community to support this initiative and get behind the people of Kenya and East Africa," Mr de Groot said.

"The Caritas network has a strong presence in Kenya. The emergency response has already seen 79,000 people receive food, 5000 people and 15,000 livestock now have improved access to clean water and 17,000 farmers have received access to agriculture which will help them in the long term."

However, Mr de Groot said food insecurity was affecting 3.75 million people countrywide.

The food sector is assisting approximately 1.4 million people and 550,000 refugees. The Government of Kenya is assisting an additional 780,000 people until October.

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In Ethiopia emergency food has been supplied to 199,918 people, 376,723 people have access to clean water and food security has been delivered to 521,980 people.

"The sheer geographical scale of this crisis means that more needs to be done urgently," Mr de Groot said.

“Now is the perfect time for most Australians to play a role. Whatever amount of money we donate will literally be doubled by the Australian Government.

“So please do what you can and bring hope to our brothers and sisters in East Africa. They need us at this time.”

The AusAID program will remain in effect until November 30.

The Government will match donations from individuals only. Donations from corporate sponsors or philanthropic organisations will not be matched. **For more information on the initiative please go to: www.aid.gov.au**

For more information the crisis please go to: www.caritas.org.au/eastafricacrisis or call 1800 024 413

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