

CALL FOR ACTION: MAKING LEADERSHIP WORK IN THE CONTEXT OF FOOD INSECURITY

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in”

Matthew 25:35 NIV

Introduction

We faith leaders and representatives of Christian Organisations (AACC, ACK, CAPA, WCC-EHAIA, FECCLAHA, LWF, OAIC, WSCF, EAA, ACT Alliance, Anglican Alliance and World Vision)¹ meeting in Nairobi on the 9th of August, 2011 hosted by the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA) to reflect on the current and persistent food insecurity and humanitarian crisis that has affected a number of African countries, especially those in the Eastern and Horn of Africa. Our current predicament is a wake up call to the global community and its various organs including the African Union, Arab League, United Nations, and National Governments to appreciate that the foundation for a stable and productive global community is food security. It is therefore urgent that we review existing policies and priorities in light of the pressing global challenges of sustainable living and food security.

We recognize that in addition to drought factors like conflict, climate change, weak governance, and lack of effective farming technologies for communities, gender dynamics and insecure livelihoods are part of the drivers that are fuelling the humanitarian crisis. These realities have awakened us to our responsibilities towards planet Earth in a manner that is expected of us as stewards. The time for complacency is over; the time to reorganize ourselves as faith leaders and representatives to act is now in an *integrative* and *collaborative* manner.

As Christian leaders representing different African Countries and faith institutions in Africa, we are moved by the wide spread and protracted suffering of our brothers, sisters and children, especially in Eastern and Horn of Africa. We deeply reflected on the root causes of this crisis in an attempt to find sustainable ways of responding to the immediate and long term needs of our people. As a result, we hereby call upon all people to respond to this urgent **Call to Action**, recognising that:

- We are accountable for the manner in which we have handled planet earth and for our differences resulting in the incredible suffering of over 12.4 million² of our brothers, sisters and children through drought and continuing conflict in the region;
- We are also accountable for the fact that in this age of advanced scientific knowledge we are still unable to bring this knowledge to bear on the challenges of food security;
- We are responsible/recognise for the lack/(inadequate peace and reconciliation) of political leadership motivated by care and policy choices have not been guided by the crucial needs

¹ AACC – All Africa Conference of Churches, ACK – Anglican Church of Kenya, CAPA – Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa, EHAIA – Ecumenical HIV/AIDS Initiative in Africa, FECCLAHA – Fellowship of Christian Councils in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa, LWF – Lutheran World Federation, OAIC – Organisation of African Instituted Churches, WSCF – World Students Christian Federation, EAA – Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, ACT Alliance – Action by Churches Together

² UNOCHA Horn of Africa Drought Crisis Update & Developments, 2 August 2011

facing the people and sustainable livelihoods including food security for communities, thus placing over 12.4 million people in dire need of humanitarian assistance;

- We also feel responsible that while some parts of our region have experienced a bumper harvest, we have been unable to create effective mechanisms of reaching out to our starving brothers, sisters and children with food in time.

We call on the African Union to:

- A regional crisis calls for a regional response. Urgent action by the African Union (AU) and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs)³ is needed to address the immediate needs and root causes of the crisis affecting the Somali population and the refugee populations in Kenya and Ethiopia. Protection for the affected population, especially children, must be a priority. The proposed African Union donor conference was a welcome step forward. However its postponement from 9 August to 25 August is disappointing and needs to be urgently reviewed given the immediacy of the humanitarian needs;
- Urgently seek to work with relevant state and non-state actors on cessation of hostilities to ensure immediate, safe, unimpeded access to the affected population in South Central Somalia for all humanitarian organizations. Scale up efforts to address the dire nutritional and health situation among under five year olds and pregnant and lactating mothers by strengthening emergency nutrition and health support programs;
- In addition, bring together the African Regional Economic Communities (ECOWAS, SADC, COMESA, EAC and IGAD) to reinforce information sharing and learning between the RECs based on experiences of the most recent responses to similar crises in West and Southern Africa with a view to develop a comprehensive pan African plan of action to address immediate humanitarian needs and future humanitarian crises.
- Work towards establishing a *credible* and *inclusive* Somali-led mechanism for civil engagement, peace building and reconciliation processes;
- Assess the current implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) Compacts and Roadmaps across the affected Member States in light of the Horn of Africa food and drought crisis and paying particular attention to maternal and child health, as well as child protection.
- Continue to work with Member States on achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and implementing the recommendations of the MDG Africa Steering Group.

³ Regional Economic Communities (RECs)³ - the East African Community (EAC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern Africa Development Community (SADC).

As Faith leaders, we will continue to accompany and support the affected communities, advocating and promoting the oneness of our humanity globally and recognising that money alone, without a renewed approach to lifestyles, is not enough. We must act together and harness our resourcefulness to secure a stable future for the generations to come.

We call on Faith groups to:

- Create a sustainable framework to provide spiritual support to survivors of this crisis and the staff of humanitarian organisations and network with other individuals and organisations of good will to relieve the suffering of our brothers and sisters in the affected communities;
- Use our grassroots structures to enhance community efforts towards food security through provision of appropriate technology and knowledge;
- Create liturgies that can bring an authentic response to issues of concern prevalent in our respective communities;
- Seek to engage in interfaith dialogue so as not to allow our denominational and faith interests to come in the way of responding to the acute needs that are threatening the life and the dignity of the human family;
- Draw on our spiritual resources to foster faith virtues such as wisdom, justice, courage and temperance, and to confront vices such as greed and corruption in our midst.

We appreciate and recognize those who have responded to the current humanitarian and food crisis in various ways:

- The local leaders and fellow community members reaching out to each other in love, care and comfort;
- Professionals working in deplorable conditions to relieve suffering in the camps and drought stricken communities;
- Faith groups for providing accompaniment as people struggle to find meaning, hope in the face of harsh realities and a dehumanising environment;
- The business community for creating synergy in their response;
- The international community for galvanising financial and technical support to assist the affected communities;
- The humanitarian organisations and local leaders for internationally advocating the plight of the afflicted presence;
- The media for keeping us abreast of the plight of our brothers and sisters and challenging us to respond;
- Governments for reaching out and opening their borders to those afflicted by famine.