

URGENT APPEAL FOR TROCAIRE. The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference has announced that special collections at all Masses will take place across Ireland on the weekend of 22nd and 23rd July to fund life-saving aid for people currently affected by the devastating hunger crisis in East-Africa. The money raised will be donated to Trócaire, the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland, which is delivering emergency food, water and health care to the 25 million people affected. Severe drought, driven by climate change, is currently affecting Kenya, South Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia and this has resulted in failed harvests and the widespread death of livestock. Conflict has exacerbated the effects in South Sudan and Somalia, with areas in both countries now on the verge of famine. Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, says the situation is critical and has urged support for the collection from parishioners, "With the failure of successive rains and a prolonged drought having taken hold of the region, just surviving has now become the main challenge facing people in large parts of east Africa.

Millions of people in the region are facing starvation. The crops have failed and animals are dying because of a lack of grazing and water. The large number of people affected may shock us, but we must realise that behind these stark numbers are real people: mothers and fathers unable to provide for their hungry children.

"The Catholic Church in Ireland is already responding to this crisis through Trócaire. However, needs are so enormous that we will hold special collections across the country on the weekend of 22nd/23rd July. All money collected will go directly to Trócaire's humanitarian relief work in East Africa. Bishops are asking clergy and parishioners to respond to this terrible tragedy with generosity." The United Nations has described the situation in the drought-ravaged parts of Africa as the greatest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War. Trócaire has a long-standing presence in all four affected countries and is working with local communities to deliver life-saving aid, including food, water and healthcare, to hundreds of thousands of those most affected.