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EarthBeat
A woman walks past couches in the Kamuchiri village of Mai Mahiu in central Kenya's Nakuru

A woman walks past couches in the Kamuchiri village of Mai Mahiu in central Kenya's Nakuru County April 29, 2024, after heavy flash floods wiped out several homes when a dam burst, following heavy rains. (OSV News/Reuters/Thomas Mukoya)

Fredrick Nzwili

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NAIROBI, Kenya — April 30, 2024
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Amid severe floods, a leading Catholic archbishop in Kenya appealed for humanitarian support to aid thousands of displaced people, as he expressed the church's closeness to the affected populations.

By April 29, rescue operations were continuing as the death toll surpassed 120 people due to excessive rains and floods linked to the continuing El Nino phenomenon in East Africa.

El Nino is a naturally occurring climate phenomenon that starts with unusually warm water in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific and then changes weather worldwide.

Floodwaters have submerged homes and public installations, and bursting rivers have swept into villages, making roads temporary riverbeds over the last several weeks. Many roads have been cut off as dams burst due to the heavy rains that began in mid-March.

On April 29, a dam collapsed in western Kenya, killing at least 45 people, including 17 children after a wall of water swept through houses.

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"We want to be very close to you as you go through the pain of loss and as you feel the weight of these floods," Archbishop Anthony Muheria of Nyeri said in a recorded appeal April 28, delivered in Swahili and obtained by OSV News.

Earlier statistics indicated that over 130,000 have been displaced in the severe floods resulting from weeks of heavy rainfall. The death toll and the numbers of displaced were expected to rise as rains continued to pound the East African region.

Muheria, vice president of the Kenyan bishops' conference, said while the country was grateful for the blessing of the rains, which have followed a period of severe drought, they had so much force that they triggered destructive floods.

"Unfortunately, lives have been lost and many people are affected. Their houses, property and crops for those who had planted them have been swept away; even cows and goats have been swept away," he said.

Residents wade through flood waters as they recover their belongings in the Mathare Valley s

Residents wade through flood waters as they recover their belongings in the Mathare Valley settlement of Nairobi, Kenya, April 24, 2024, after the Nairobi River burst its bank. (OSV News/Reuters/Monicah Mwangi)

The Kenya Meteorological Department warned of more rains, as the number of the people affected by the floods continued to rise.The floods so far had submerged at least 27,000 acres of farmland, while raging waters had killed an estimated 4,800 livestock. The Kenya Red Cross set up 59 camps to host displaced persons. The humanitarian organization also had rescued 350 people trapped by the floods.

Muheria said God was calling on Christians and people of goodwill to help — in all ways — the people who have been affected by the devastating floods.

"That’s why we are launching this appeal so that each person gives anything that can help. Either mattresses, blankets, cooking pots, food, clothing — anything that can help the children or families that have been affected by the floods," he said.

The parishes will act as the collection point, while cash donations will be channeled through a mobile money account.

Residents and motorists are seen along the Mai Mahiu-Naivasha highway in the Kamuchiri vill

Residents and motorists are seen along the Mai Mahiu-Naivasha highway in the Kamuchiri village of Mai Mahiu in central Kenya's Nakuru County April 29, 2024, after heavy flash floods wiped out several homes when a dam burst, following heavy rains. (OSV News/Reuters/Thomas Mukoya)

"A little money, a little flour, even clothing. ... The good Samaritan, who meets the afflicted man on the side of the road, is us," the archbishop said, urging donations.

The country's Ministry of Education said an estimated 100 schools are reportedly flooded, with some classroom walls having collapsed and roofs blown off. School will be closed for a week, the ministry said.

The government will provide alternative settlement and shelter for those displaced by floods, and deliver basic needs including food and non-food items.

Meanwhile, Tanzanian Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa told the parliament April 25 that 155 people had died from torrential rains and flooding. The weather conditions also had caused excessive damage in the country.

The effects of the rainfall also were being felt in Uganda and Burundi where more than 100,000 people have been displaced.

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