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A Catholic worshipper kneels before a crucifix on Easter April 5, 2026, outside the Cathedral of St. Anne in Yagoua, Cameroon. (OSV News/Reuters/Desire Danga)



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Pope Leo XIV's tour through Africa will include stops where sweeping cuts to U.S. foreign aid have already begun hitting Catholic institutions and humanitarian networks that serve the poor.

"We need to start encouraging these young churches to find how to support themselves," said Archbishop Fortunatus Nwachukwu, secretary of the Dicastery for Evangelization's section for emerging Catholic communities, in a meeting with reporters. "The water from the tap is drying up; the amount coming in from foreign aid subsidies is decreasing. We must start searching for how to survive, how to support these churches."



Pope Leo XIV kneels in prayer at the threshold of the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica before closing it Jan. 6, 2026, marking the end of the Jubilee Year. Leo will visit four countries in his 11-day tour of the African continent. (CNS/Pool, Franco Origlia)

Of the four nations Leo will visit in his 11-day tour of the African continent, Cameroon and Angola have been particularly impacted by the cuts to USAID operations which began at the start of President Donald Trump's second term. Leo's

other destinations, Algeria and Equatorial Guinea, have not historically been major recipients of U.S. foreign aid.

In 2024, $48 million was given to Cameroon from USAID, part of which was directed through Catholic Relief Services, the U.S.-based international Catholic humanitarian agency.

Leo will travel to the Anglophone region in the country's northwest, where marginalization among the English-speaking population has sparked clashes between separatist groups and the military since 2017. Notably, the pope, who has read speeches in French in his previous international trips, will speak in English in Bamenda.

Some estimates say more than 6,000 people have been killed in the fighting and over 1 million people displaced.



A flag flies outside the U.S. Agency for International Development building in Washington Feb. 3, 2025, as the agency sits closed to employees after a memo was issued advising USAID personnel to work remotely. (OSV News/Reuters/Kent

Nishimura)

CRS operated a USAID-funded crisis response program supporting about 12,000 individuals in 2,000 households displaced by the conflict, in partnership with the Archdiocese of Bamenda, which Leo will visit.

That $12.2 million program was terminated in March 2025 following the shutdown of USAID operations.

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In a separate initiative, CRS, working with the local Caritas network, launched a $3 million project to support nearly a half million refugees hosted in Cameroon, helping some 8,100 people build self-reliance through agricultural training and access to financial services. Originally scheduled to run through August 2026, the project was also cut short in March 2025.

Backed by $3 million in USAID funding and originally set to run through August 2026, the project was cut short in March 2025.

CRS also said it "worked intensively to prepare [the Cameroonian bishops' conference] to become a prime recipient of USAID funding" for a project to assist orphans and vulnerable children. USAID had signed an agreement with the Cameroonian bishops' conference to fund their work over five years starting in January 2023.



Orphans pictured in a file photo work on sketches at the Catholic Bilingual School of Our Lady of Resurrection in Yaoundé, Cameroon Feb. 8, 2022. Pope Leo will travel across 11 cities, 18 flights and a total of more than 11,000 miles during his first apostolic trip to Africa April 13-23, 2026. (OSV News/Ngala Killian Chimtom)

Following the pope's visit to Cameroon, he will travel to Angola, where USAID funded nearly $28 million worth of projects in 2024.

One of the flagship projects of USAID in Angola was funding the Catholic University of Angola's independent economic think tank to study the country's economic situation.

U.S. funding cuts have also created challenges for the country's HIV prevention and treatment efforts. Although Angola is resource-rich, with significant oil and mineral reserves, its poverty rate remains above 50%.



A girl is pictured in a file photo outside her home in Luanda, Angola. (CNS/Reuters/Henrique Almeida)

Among the topics the pope will touch on in Angola, such as healing the wounds after its 27-year civil war and encouraging its youthful population, is the corruption that fuels the country's inequality, said Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican Press Office.

Angola has among the greatest oil reserves in Africa, meaning "the richness is there," said Nwachukwu, but "a conversion is needed that places the common good, human dignity, at the center."

"I am sure that the Holy Father will make a call for this type of conversion," he said.

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This story appears in the **Leo XIV in North and Central Africa** feature series. View the full series.