

Ending famine in India depends on all religions and cultures



Indian vegetable seller.

May 11, 2017

Worsening global inequality is borne out as more people face famine now than any other time in modern history.

Fr Nithiya Sagayam, national coordinator of the Association of Franciscan Families of India (AFFI), is gravely concerned that the global response to extreme poverty is too low in almost every country while, he says, “corporations continue to grow richer and richer.”

This doesn’t just affect some people and not others, Sagayam believes. “The social security of every last person is at risk,” he says.

As the World Council of Churches (WCC), All Africa Conference of Churches and other partners invite churches, organizations and individuals to join a Global Day of Prayer to End Famine on 21 May, Sagayam said he is grateful for the opportunity for fellowship and public engagement. He believes the Global Day of Prayer to End Famine provides a way of getting in touch with what he describes as “the forgotten people.”

In India, he said, in addition to praying, the AFFI is also negotiating with government officials to better respond to the needs of hungry people.

The Parliament of India signed into law in 2013 the National Food Security Act which aims to provide subsidized food grains to approximately two thirds of India's 1.2 billion people.

Advocacy groups have questioned whether the program adequately covers balanced nutritional needs, and whether it reaches the most vulnerable and hungry people in India.

For AFFI, raising awareness is an even bigger challenge since Christians in India - Catholics, Protestants and Evangelicals all put together - are only 2.8% of the population. "Hence our campaign involves people of all religions, cultures and regional backgrounds," said Sagayam.

To encourage people of faith and good will around the world to observe the Global Day of Prayer to End Famine, the WCC is making available a collection of liturgical resources, prayers, photos and suggested songs to be used in faith congregations worldwide.

Sagayam, who is also a member of the strategy group of the Food For Life Campaign of the WCC Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, plans to use the WCC's materials related to the Global Day of Prayer to End Famine to amplify the voice of justice in India.

He added, "I shall be distributing this to the Franciscan network all over India, and the many participating organizations of the WCC-EAA located in India, will be popularizing these prayers throughout the country."

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 194.6 million people are undernourished in India. Across the world, about 795 million people - or one in nine - are suffering from chronic undernourishment.

WCC is inviting other organizations to the Global Day of Prayer to End Famine. Confirmed partners will be listed on the PraytoEndFamine.org website.

[Webinars on Global Day of Prayer to End Famine – action steps](#)

[WCC resource pack - Global Day of Prayer to End Famine](#)