

Seeds of Hope – The Church at the Service of Food Security *Good Practices from Africa*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, allow me, first of all, to express my warmest thanks for your presence today. With great joy and gratitude, I welcome all of you, including those joining us online, to this moment of reflection and shared purpose. Your presence today is a powerful sign of hope and unity. Here, we are joined together in our efforts to grow peace in the world.

In these challenging times, peace is not just an aspiration; it is a responsibility we all share. I am grateful for the many ways that each of us works towards peace. I pray that we may increase our shared efforts in the ways that we allow peace to spread throughout the world. Today, we focus on one fundamental concern. As His Holiness Pope Leo XIV recently reminded us, increasing food security is foundational to peace. He said, “If hunger is defeated, peace will be the fertile ground from which the common good of all nations will spring” (16 October 2025). These words remind us of the positive impact that food security can have in our world. They also confront us with the truth that hunger is a humanitarian crisis, is a reflection of a moral failure that undermines peace and stability.

We live in a world of contradictions. There is enough food to feed every single person on this planet, yet millions still go hungry. Nearly 673 million people suffer from chronic hunger. It should give us pause to think how it is possible that there is hunger in a world of abundance. Of course, hunger is not random. Human choices create the inadequate distribution of God’s bounty. Human choices create food insecurity. Human choices create the hunger, which disproportionately affects women, children, elderly, Indigenous peoples, migrants and marginalized communities. Human choices ignore the avenues to respond to the impacts of the environment or natural disasters.

In other words, food insecurity is not simply about a lack of resources; it is about systemic injustice. If we are serious about ending hunger, we must therefore confront its root causes - poverty, discrimination, exclusion, war, climate change, etcetera - through a development that is both integral and authentically human, as Catholic social teaching calls us to pursue.

Integral human development places the dignity of the human person at its very center. It seeks to nurture the whole person in every dimension: physical, spiritual, economic, social, and ecological. True development is therefore not merely concerned with material progress; it is about enabling every individual and community to flourish fully, in harmony with others and with creation. And for that flourishing to occur, even basic

needs are taken into the vision of the whole. With the end in sight, integral human development begins by addressing the most pressing needs of the human person. Today, we look towards the foundational concern of nourishing the body with healthy and nutritious food. Because without food, dignity cannot thrive.

Ensuring food security is among humanity's greatest responsibilities. And it is a mission in which the Church at every level has historically played, and continues to play, an essential role. Through advocacy, solidarity, and concrete action, the Church has been at the forefront of efforts to combat hunger and to promote justice.

The good practices selected for the Seeds of Hope project represent a powerful testimony to this commitment. They showcase the remarkable work that the local Church has been doing for decades, a work that not only addresses immediate needs but also integrates food security into the broader processes of human and community development. These initiatives remind us of the great richness present within the Church and the diversity of experiences dedicated to supporting the most vulnerable. This wealth of experience is not only a sign of resilience and creativity but also a source of inspiration for others. The Seeds of Hope project offers practical models that can be adapted and replicated, fostering collaboration and information sharing across communities and regions.

As we reflect on food security, we cannot ignore the indispensable role of women. Women are responsible for about half of the global food production, and in developing countries, that figure rises to between 60 and 80 percent. Women are essential to small-scale agriculture, agricultural work, and to sustaining the livelihoods of families and communities. Their roles are critical and multifaceted, yet their contributions are often undervalued and face significant barriers.

By highlighting these good practices and recognizing the central role of women, we affirm that food security is not just a technical challenge, it is a matter of justice, dignity, inclusion and care for life as well as for creation.

Hunger in a world of abundance is not inevitable. For us, who have ears to hear (cf. Matt 11:15), it is a call to action. Each of us has the power to make a difference, to transform systems of injustice into pathways of hope. In this Jubilee Year of Hope, we are invited to pause and rediscover the meaning of renewal and reconciliation. Let us then work together, guided by solidarity and care for creation, so that every person can live with dignity and every community can flourish. The seeds we plant today will become the harvest of justice tomorrow.

Thank you very much.