

# Locusts Invasion Emergency



Since January 2020 there has been a terrible invasion of locusts in the Horn of Africa which worsened towards February. Vast swarms of locusts have devastated crops and vegetation first in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya and, in the last week, also in South Sudan, Djibouti, Uganda and Tanzania. The Cottolengo communities operating in central eastern part Kenya, Gatunga and Mukothima, where the sisters run Health Centres, health care facilities with a first aid shelter, a clinic, maternity, an analysis laboratory and consultations are involved.

Cottolengo runs a centre for disabled children and a Health Centre in Tuuru, a hospital and centre for disabled adults in Chaaria.

The commitment of the nuns in support of welfare and schooling is notable, especially in support of people with disabilities according to the spirit of the founder St. Joseph Benedict Cottolengo.

According to the UN, this is the worst locust invasion in 25 years. They cover over 150 kilometres and their destructive potential is enormous: a 1-square-kilometer swarm of locusts can eat the same amount of food consumed in a day by 35,000 people. The mass of locusts originated in Yemen went through the Red Sea and then landed in East Africa.

“The grasshopper swarms have started laying eggs and a new breeding phase will increase their numbers,” said Keith Cressman, senior officer of FAO’s Locusts Prevention Service. “Urgent action is needed to prevent them from increasing to protect the livelihoods of farmers and pastoralists.”

In Tharaka sub-counties alone, pests have destroyed crops and vegetation in 7 villages: all farms, green areas, trees, especially the thriving crops of corn, millet and sorghum.

Without these crops, the inhabitants of the affected areas will soon have to deal with the hunger that will cause increase in diseases, endangering children, the elderly and people with diseases in particular.

The sisters assist hundreds of poor families daily, in particular their work is concentrated in the Area of Gaceuni, one of the poorest and underdeveloped, where drought is frequent: right there in one night the locusts devoured everything. The locusts from the north have reached the communities of the Cottolengo Sisters, hitting the villages where the nuns operate bringing concrete aid to the people. In particular, health care providers are not only providing care to the sick, but have become a real reference centre for a large area.

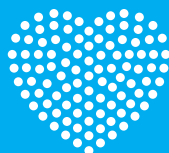
In a context of villages scattered throughout the territory it is often impossible for the population to go to health facilities to get treatment, especially if diseases are underestimated. For this reason, it is the medical centers that go to patients through the mobile clinics that regularly move to the villages visiting the sick and providing basic health education to families.

## IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN OFFER YOUR HELP!

### DONATE AND SUSTAIN

1. The purchase of seeds: corn, millet, beans and sorghum to replenish farms of the crops now destroyed.
2. The purchase of medicines: for the groups most affected by food shortages and malnutrition: children, the elderly and people suffering from severe illness.
3. Food packages for poorer families living in the villages on the outskirts 17 km from the Centres.





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