

PRESS STATEMENT: Lusaka, Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024

## **URGENT CALL FOR GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN THE FACE OF DROUGHT**

Caritas Zambia, a leading organization committed to social development and justice, expresses deep concern over the prevailing drought situation in the country, impacting agricultural communities and threatening food security. The 2022/2023 rainy season witnessed normal to above normal rainfall leading to widespread flooding and significant damage to essential infrastructure, including schools, clinics, and homes. The 2023/2024 rainy season, however, has presented a contradictory scenario. In October 2023, the Meteorological Department issued a warning about the impending El-Nino, indicating an adverse effect on the 2023/2024 Rainy Season. Unfortunately, this warning came too late for most farmers, as they had already invested in inputs. The Ministry of Agriculture's response has been inadequate in guiding farmers on necessary response and mitigation measures to the drought.

The consequence of the inadequate information is evident, with over 200,000 hectares of crops in Central Province alone drying up. Notably, farmers employing traditional seed varieties and agro-ecology practices have shown more tolerance to the harsh conditions. Caritas Zambia urgently calls upon the Government to address the following:

- Share a comprehensive plan on how the current drought situation will be addressed.
- Detail immediate actions the Government will take to assist affected households.

- Ensure measures are in place to prevent the entry of GMOs into the Zambian market due to the prevailing desperate situation.
- Invest in modern equipment for the Meteorological Department to enhance early warning capabilities.
- Implement timely sensitization programs to farmers by the Ministry of Agriculture on appropriate seed varieties and land preparations.

Caritas Zambia encourages the Government to explore and adopt agroecology as a sustainable methodology to support small-scale farmers in planting and growing crops even during challenging conditions, thereby contributing positively to the country's food security. In conclusion, as the affected provinces, including Eastern, Southern, Central, Western, and Lusaka, grapple with the impact of the drought, Caritas Zambia urges the Government to prioritize swift and effective interventions to safeguard the livelihoods of the affected communities.

Yours in Faith

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