

Southern Baptists respond to critical hunger needs in Kenya

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NASHVILLE—Southern Baptists are responding to critical hunger needs in Kenya, where an estimated 250,000 people have been driven from their homes by violence that broke out after the controversial results of December's presidential elections were announced.

Food packets containing rice, wheat flour, maize meal, beans, vegetable cooking oil and salt will be distributed in seven cities, with the International Mission Board's Baptist Mission of Kenya coordinating the project. Baptist Global Response, a Southern Baptist international relief and development organization, has approved the release of \$25,000 from the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund to fund the relief effort.

"Many displaced people have congregated at safe locations like police stations, Bible schools, Catholic missions and evangelical churches," said Mark Hatfield, director of Baptist Global Response work in sub-Saharan Africa. "This project will assist 2,500 families in seven cities where Baptists have access to centers of refuge."

The turmoil has made travel difficult, so Southern Baptists have worked through Baptist Convention of Kenya leaders to assess the situation on the ground, Hatfield said.

“The goal is to provide families basic food for five to seven days while they search for new places to live,” he said. “A long-term follow-up response will be considered after this initial response is carried out. We’re grateful that Southern Baptists are a people who care so we can reach out in emergencies like this to people in need.”

Churches in Kenya called for a national day of prayer on Jan. 6, and Southern Baptists across the United States joined in asking God to bring peace to the country, which previously has been a model of stability and democracy in the region.

The need for prayer will continue until the election controversy is resolved, Hatfield said.

“Pray that the internally displaced peoples of Kenya will be able to return to their homes or will be able to re-settle their families soon,” he said. “Pray that this food will be a blessing to each family who receives it. Pray for the safety of those who will distribute the food and that spiritual needs will be met as well physical needs. Pray for peace and calm to return to Kenya.”