By Jejje Muhinde;

Amid widespread food shortages across Africa, the World Bank has approved a $2.3 billion program to help tackle affected countries in Eastern and Southern Africa.

The bank said in statement, as many as 66.4 million people across Africa could be affected by the escalating food shortage crisis.

Rwanda Dispatch understands the money would be disbursed under the World Bank's Food Systems Resilience Programme.

The 11 countries that are set to benefit are: Ethiopia, Madagascar, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo and Lesotho. Others are Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, South Sudan and Mozambique.

The banks say the funds would be disbursed in two phases.

During the first phase, Ethiopia and Madagascar will receive a total sum of $788 million. At least, 2.3 million are expected to benefit from the financing package.

The remaining 9 countries will participate in the later phases of the food security resilience programme.

The Bank further explained that the programme is mainly aimed at enhancing African countries' inter-agency food crisis response strategies, including by strengthening early-warning systems and rapid-response planning, and boosting emergency support for food producers. It will also entail the creation of food reserves and other measures.

The program is reported to have come at a right, since African countries have been grappling with food insecurity challenges caused by both natural and man-made factors such as drought, wars, the pandemic and most recently, the war in Ukraine.

The World Bank warned as many as 66.4 million people across Africa could be affected by the escalating food shortage crisis.