Famine Situation in Karamoja

In the last few days we have been blessed by rain and we hope that this is the beginning of rainy season which will eventually bring food. However, at the moment the hunger situation on the ground is very unbearable.

The draught went on for far too long. The people were already becoming restless due to the prolonged draught and the unusual hot temperatures. The elders offered several sacrifices for the rains therefore the coming of rain is a big relief.

Coping mechanism
The coming of the rain is a blessing and we hope and pray that it will continue. In the short term the rain is going to help with coping mechanism and in the long run we hope that it will solve the problem of hunger. In the short term there going to be plenty of wild vegetables and fruits which will go a long way in supplementing the food. With the rain also a lot of people will be hired as casual labourers in the farms of those who are better off. As casual labourers they will earn one meal per day. The sale of charcoal and firewood will also go up. Therefore those who are in good health should be able to cope with the hunger.

Challenges
Unfortunately, the current household coping mechanisms are not sustainable. In the short term they will provide the most needed relief but in the long term it will keep majority of productive people in the cycle of food insecurity. Those who are hired as casual labourer in other people’s farms will not cultivate their own farms. Those who resort to sell firewood and charcoal too will have no time to cultivate their farms. Unfortunately the coming of rain also does come with high vulnerability to diseases. The possibilities of outbreak of disease like Cholera during rainy season are high. This is due to poor hygiene and poor nutrition. Therefore there is still need for external aid to help people bounce back to normal livelihoods.

The beneficiaries of our food aid are people whose situation is dire.
They are mostly old men and women, HIV/AIDS positive people, malnourished people and extremely poor households. As much as the coming of rain is a relief, these people will still need support. All along these people have been forced to share the food they receive with their relatives. In fact, for some, we had to resort to giving them their ratio daily just to make sure that they have something to eat. Otherwise their relatives would eat all their food in just few days.

We are also helping some who are extremely malnourished to receive medical care and taking care of some orphans whose parents died due to diseases and hunger.

It is our hope that by July the situation would have started to change for the better. Ideally by that time the beans should be ready and by August the sorghum should be ready.

On behalf of the beneficiaries I say thanks to SPICMA and to all the donors. Your donation has helped to save lives. The situation is bad but with your help it has become bearable to some people who would be dead by now.

Sylvester Odhiambo
Panyangara Catholic Parish