

Food Situation in Karamoja

The drought situation remains of concern across East Africa. However, in Karamoja it is critical. We were very much relieved in late May when the rains finally started in Karamoja after a waiting for long. The people started cultivating and planting. The once brown parched bare land started turning green and the people were once again happy that they could get some green leaves for vegetables to supplement their meagre diet.

Unfortunately, the rain so far has been very little. The crops are wilting and dying off. The general weather condition is not promising. The high wind normally associated with the dry season is blowing. The water table is going low hence more boreholes which are the only source of clean water are running dry and causing serious water shortage. The wild animals from the nearby Kidepo National Park are now wandering far outside the park, doing a lot of damage to the little crops that are growing. The people are restless and worried. The elders are once again resorting to seeking divine intervention. They are offering sacrifices to the gods but nothing seems to change.

In the mission there are always people coming to seek food relief. Unfortunately, we cannot give to all people. We restrict our food distribution to the helpless elderly people, the sickly people, and malnourished children. However, other people are not doing well either.

A poor lady who did not qualify as a beneficiary of the food relief narrated to me that in the villages they only eat once in the evening. They mainly eat green vegetables that they pick from their gardens or from the trees. When they have money they buy some maize flour and beans.

People get money through selling firewood or charcoal. During this time of cultivation a number of young people are hired to cultivate the farms of those who are well off. As hired labour they are paid UGX 2000/= per day. Another source of income is fetching water for employed people like the nurses, teachers, police and social workers. In this job they are paid between UGX 200/= or 300/= per 20 litre of container of water.

During this month the government have come in with some relief food. However, their food could not serve everybody. They served ten people per village with the food ration maize flour only. They gave the beneficiaries 25 kg each. The World Food Programme have also been distributing some food relief to a restricted number of people. They are also supplying food to the health centres for the malnourished children.

We are grateful for the help we are getting from SPICMA.

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