

Drought in Teso

Dear Gudrun, Martin and all Friends of Aiswamanara in Thuengersheim,

I am writing on behalf of the pupils and teachers of Madera Girls Primary School to thank you very sincerely for the great gesture of love and solidarity that you extended to us for sending us a big donation of Euro 2500 to help us buy food during the time when we are so badly hit by famine in Uganda and especially in Teso region. We all danced with great joy when we saw the food which appeared to us like Manna and Quail (Exodus 16) sent to us from the heaven, via the hearts of loving German friends. We pray for you that God may reward you abundantly because we were very hungry and you gave us food (Matthew 25:35-40) in addition to paying school fees of some of our pupils.

There are many causes of the extreme drought and food shortage in Teso. The main one being climate change. For over six months we have not received any rain in our region. Everything dried up and our animals have died due to lack of grass and water. The extreme climate change has also been mainly caused by the increasing big population of many young people who cut down trees every day for firewood to cook their food and to build their huts. These two factors have made our place, Teso and Uganda to be bare with almost all green gone. The average number of children per woman in Uganda is about 6.5. All these must eat everyday using firewood, since we do not have any other means of energy. The result of that is that almost all the green belt in Teso is gone. Because of the ever increasing desert, we now stay for a very long time without a drop of water. Our people depend only on irrigation from above. On their own, they are helpless since all wells and small rivers dry up. It is painful to see our animals die due to lack of water and grass. Some human being too have also died due to hunger. It is very painful for us parents to watch our children die and we have no food to give them. Normally it is the little children and the sick people and elderly who die first and we have lost a number due to famine.

For us at school, I have been feeding pupils and teachers together mainly on one meal a day. People in Teso are surviving by eating leaves of trees and some edible rats. For us (pupils and teachers of Madera Girls), we have not reached that far due to your continued help. I thank all the friends who have supported us through Aiswamanara. Most of my pupils come from poor families and are unable to pay the annual contribution of about Euro 300 in your currency. I have sometimes sent the pupils home to collect that money from their parents. Unfortunately, many come back to me crying that their parents have no money and instead want to give the little girls away in early marriages so as to earn money through the practice of dowry, which is common here. Out of sympathy and in order to give protection to the little girls, I have been compelled to accept them back to school without any payment and yet at the same time

provide them meals because they come back hungry. We all try to live on the money that we receive annually through Aiswamara contributions, yet we have a big population of 823 girls 26 teachers and 21 non teaching staff, all needing to be fed every day, including their families. I have also a big problem of villagers who are coming to my door everyday to beg for food. I cannot help but give them. In reality you are feeding a very big population which is even very difficult to estimate in number. Can you imagine that every morning as I wake up I find our compound littered with people begging me for food. I go to school, it is the same story! People think that I am their only saviour. That situation has caused me a lot of stress. We are very grateful to every friend that has supported us through this partnership and in that way saved very many lives!

The Uganda government in its budget had prioritized infrastructure. It wanted to build roads, railway and electricity, which are almost non-existent in Uganda. However, they recently told us that some money would be diverted to feed the hungry people especially in Teso and Karamoja, the worst hit places in Uganda. Up till now, we have not seen such help in Madera. Instead help from Germany has arrived! I believe that our government is overwhelmed by the very big number of starving people. Thanks very much for coming to our aid. God reward you abundantly.

Best regards,

Sincerely Yours ,

Elizabeth.