



UGANDA: FLOODS

DREF Bulletin no. MDRUG006

GLIDE no. FL-2007-000138-UGA

7 September 2007

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 185 countries.

In Brief

This DREF Bulletin is being issued based on the situation described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 174,197 (USD 144,802 or EUR 105,959) has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to respond to the needs in this operation. This operation is expected to be implemented over 3 months, and will be completed by 3 December 2007; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation. Un earmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal for East Africa sub-regional programmes (MAA64003): <http://www.ifrc.org/docs/appeals/annual06/MAA64003.pdf>

Background and current situation

The eastern part of Uganda has been experiencing unusually heavy rainfall since July 2007, resulting in massive flooding and landslides. Thousands of people have been affected, with mass displacements occurring. Houses, sanitation systems, roads and bridges have been destroyed while farm fields have not been spared; food crops have either been damaged or washed away. According to findings of assessments conducted by the Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS), it is estimated that over 10,000 households have so far been affected by the flooding in eastern Uganda and parts of west Nile, with the number expected to rise as the rains continue. The affected areas include Amuria, Bududa, Bukedea, Katakwi, Kumi, Nebbi and Sironko districts in Mbale and Teso sub-regions. Some deaths have also been reported; the most recent occurred in Amuria district on 13 August 2007 when a man was swept away by raging waters as he tried to cross a bridge which separates Agonga parish from Aeket in Obalanga sub-county.

An inter-agency assessment¹ conducted in Amuria and Katakwi districts on 7 to 10 August and 16 to 17 August 2007 observed that the humanitarian situation in eastern Uganda is still very bad; since the onset of the heavy rains, not much assistance has been provided to the affected communities. The assessment established that the most affected are the low lying areas of Ngariam, Magoro, Usuk, Omodoi and Katakwi sub-counties in Katakwi district, and Obalanga, Aberilelal, Asamuk, Wera, Acowa, Morugantuny and Orungo sub-counties in Amuria district.

Prior to the flooding, most of the affected districts already had poor road networks; the condition of those roads has deteriorated because of the heavy rainfall. In Katakwi and Amuria districts, many community bridges linking villages have either collapsed or are submerged thereby affecting movement of people and hindering access by humanitarian agencies to the most affected communities. Several camps and settlements in the affected sub-counties/districts are equally inaccessible because of poor roads; bridges and many swamps are filled with water. Schools and health centres have also been cut off by floodwaters.

¹ The assessment was conducted jointly by Action Aid International Uganda, Amuria and Katakwi districts local government authorities, Amuria Development Agency, Catholic Education Research Organization, Christian Children's Fund, Concern World Wide, District Disaster Preparedness Coordinator, Katakwi Children's Voice, Lutheran World Federation, Self Help International Development Initiatives, Soroti Catholic Diocese Integrated Development Organization, Uganda Human Rights Commission, Uganda Red Cross Society and United Nations agencies (Food and Agricultural Organization, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and World Food Programme).

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Traditionally, the months of July and August are relatively dry, with very little rainfall. According to elders in Opeuro Aodot camp in Ngariam sub-county (Katakwi district), the current heavy rains can only be compared to those experienced in 1962 and 1972 when the whole area was flooded. The trend now seems to have changed as the district has been experiencing constant rain. Meteorological reports indicate that the heavy rainfall could continue for some time. It is therefore feared that more areas might suffer the consequences of flooding.

Table 1: Number of households affected by floods in Eastern Uganda (as at 20 August 2007)

District	Sub-counties affected	Households affected	Households severely affected	Total population affected
Kumi	2	2,356	543	6,456
Sironko	5	2,270	650	13,004
Bududa	1	560	220	1,756
Bukedea	1	876	345	-
Amuria	8	2019	943	16,045
Katakwi	6	2112	726	12,897
Nebbi	1	411	411	2,202
Total	24	10,604	3,843	52,360

Source: Uganda Red Cross Society

The Needs

Shelter: The extremely heavy rainfall being experienced in the eastern Uganda has resulted in the destruction of many homes, consequently displacing thousands of people. In Sironko district, many displaced women and children have moved to higher and safer areas near the town council and are now residing with friends and/or relatives. Massive displacements have also been reported in Teso sub-region where numerous homes in Obalanga (Iyalakwei, Amootom, Angica, Osukunya and Aeket camps), Acowa (Akoromit, Akoromit and Akum areas), Kapelebyong (Airabet, Nyada, Okungur, Alalar, Aturukoit, Acegerekuma and Okoboi camps), Asamuk and Abarilela in Amuria district are water logged. The displaced people are now residing in schools, churches and homes that are located in higher areas.

In Katakwi, most of the affected families are in Kapujan, Magoro and Omodoi which are low-lying and neighbour Lake Opetta and Bisina. Other low-lying affected sub-counties are Ngariam and Ongongoja (parts of Aketa, Obulengorok and Milimil) sub-counties which both border Iriirir hills in Moroto and are directly affected by water flowing down the hills.

Food and agriculture: Most crops have been destroyed at a time when the population expected to register bumper harvests. Tubers (cassava and sweet potatoes) and legumes (groundnuts) are the most affected; most tubers and legumes are virtually rotten while sorghum, millet, maize, green grams and beans are also getting rotten because of excessive moisture. There is little or no sunshine to dry/preserve the little harvests, a situation which has been aggravated by continuing heavy rains. In Sironko, Kumi and Kapchorowa districts, there is evidence that many households also lost food reserves which were in their houses (which are now water logged). Food shortages have already been seen in many homes and are expected to escalate.

Water and sanitation: Many water sources, mainly shallow wells and springs, in the affected districts have been contaminated by floodwater thus limiting access to clean water. In Teso sub-region, some water sources – especially shallow wells – have been contaminated to the extent that the water has become brownish in colour. Water from open sources such as spring wells, as reported in Katakwi and Amuria, contains worms and is likely to cause other health complications. The situation has been made precarious by the fact that the number of boreholes in use in some sub-counties is limited and cannot meet the water needs of the affected populations. Very long queues at the boreholes have forced many people to collect water from contaminated and unprotected sources for domestic use.

As regards sanitation, many pit latrines are filled up with water and those constructed on loose soils have collapsed, leaving the population with no option but to relieve themselves in the nearby bushes. With several latrines having collapsed, sewage is being carried freely by running water, thus contaminating water sources used by the communities. If the situation is not addressed urgently, the contamination might cause very serious health complications.

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Health: Cases of severe malaria have been reported, especially in Sironko district, and health officials in the affected districts are predicting outbreaks of waterborne diseases – especially cholera – if urgent action is not taken to address the situation. Besides, the flooding has greatly affected the operations of the few health centres in the affected sub-counties. Some health centres are flooded and have been rendered temporarily non-operational.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Action

The Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) participated in a coordination meeting called by the Office of the Prime Minister. The meeting was attended by UN agencies, other humanitarian organizations and staff from government line ministries. In that meeting, it was resolved that the emergency response phase should start immediately to deliver assistance in Teso and Mbale sub-regions. The emergency phase is expected to last between six and eight weeks. The mid-term intervention, which will start thereafter, is expected to run up to 15 May 2008 and will include maintenance of roads, re-construction of bridges, distribution of seeds and farm implements, restoration of water and sanitation facilities, reconstruction of schools and environmental protection.

The Government of Uganda has assigned specific roles to humanitarian actors, with the URCS tasked to provide non-food items (NFI). The National Society has 150 NFI kits in stock, which are due to be dispatched to Sironko district to assist some 650 affected households. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has provided an additional 500 NFI kits to the National Society.

Coordination

The government assigned specific roles to UN agencies and humanitarian organizations, which will work in close collaboration with local government authorities at the district level, as follows:

- NFI – Uganda Red Cross Society and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF);
- Food – World Food Programme (WFP) and Office of the Prime Minister;
- Health – Ministry of Health, WHO and UNICEF;
- Education – Ministry of Education, UNICEF and the cluster for emergency education;
- Water – Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment and UNICEF.

UNICEF has donated 2,693 NFI family kits for distribution by the URCS in Teso and Bugisu districts. The supplies will be delivered directly to URCS warehouses in the two districts. Additionally, UNICEF has released 3,843 insecticide treated nets to accompany the family kit distributions as the incidence of malaria is growing alarmingly in the flood-affected areas. UNICEF and the Ministry of Health have also begun to run radio spots to educate communities in eastern Uganda on the likelihood of waterborne and water related disease outbreaks due to contaminated and stagnant water.

Christian Children’s Fund (CCF) has 200 additional NFI kits in Teso for particularly vulnerable cases that it may identify through its protection programmes. CCF will coordinate with URCS to avoid overlapping of activities. Due to the high levels of water pollution, Population Services International (PSI) has agreed to conduct distribution of jerry cans, soap and water purification tablets, complete with community hygiene sensitization and monitoring, for 15,000 families. PSI will also coordinate with URCS to avoid duplication. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has already distributed 200 tarpaulins in Amuria district (30 pieces per camp).

Proposed Plan of Action

The Uganda Red Cross Society will distribute non-food items to communities in all affected districts of eastern Uganda, i.e. Sironko, Bududa, Bukedea, Katakwi, Nebbi, Kumi and Amuria. The distribution exercise will involve verification of affected households, registration of affected communities, preparation of beneficiary lists, distribution of NFIs, post-distribution evaluation and reporting. All activities will be implemented by regional teams, branch field coordinators and Red Cross volunteers, with supervision from URCS’s national headquarters.

Goal: The effects of floods on affected communities in eastern Uganda are mitigated.

Objective: To respond to the floods disaster in Mbale and Teso sub-regions in eastern Uganda by assisting 3,843 affected households with essential household items over a 3-month period.

Expected result: The living conditions of 3,843 flood-affected households have improved.

Key activities:

- Carry out verification exercises;
- Register affected households;
- Prepare beneficiary lists;
- Purchase 2,000 kits of essential household items;
- Distribute essential household items;
- Carry out post-distribution evaluation.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief* and is committed to the *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere)* in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Federation's Global Agenda

The International Federation's activities are aligned with under a Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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