

# ***UGANDA: FOOD SHORTAGES***

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## ***The Disaster***

Some 156,000 people in North-eastern Uganda are in need of food assistance to help them survive the last quarter of 1997 and the beginning of 1998. Due to a combination of low rainfall, cassava virus, shortage of good seeds, and reliance on traditional agricultural techniques and crops, the upcoming harvest will be only 25% of normal.

There has been a considerable drop in the number of pupils attending primary schools in the regions worst-hit by the drought. The majority seem to be staying out of classes as they are too weak to walk the long distances required. Health units in the region, where patients are asked to contribute part of the cost for health care they receive, are also reporting worryingly low attendance figures, particularly among pregnant and lactating mothers.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

Ugandan Red Cross Society (URCS) intends to provide emergency relief food to the most vulnerable population in Eastern Uganda. It should be stressed that food aid is only a temporary solution. A medium-term solution must be sought and in light of this, URCS proposes to provide certain areas with farm implements.

URCS/Federation have been formally approached by the Government of Uganda, WFP and the European Union to serve as the primary implementing agent for WFP and EU Commission assistance. URCS/Federation have identified areas around Lake Bisina in Kumi and Katakwi districts, Moroto and Kotido districts and the southern parts of Busia and Bugiri districts (close to lake Victoria) as most vulnerable. The 156,000 targeted beneficiaries are children, elderly, lactating mothers and their immediate families. The proposed 5,665 MT of cereals, pulses and vegetable oil, donated by EU and WFP will be sufficient to cover the minimum subsistence requirement of 156,000 persons for one months' full ration — 400 grams of maize grain, 60 grams of pulses and 20 grams of vegetable oil per person per day. Contingent on sufficient food stocks, the programme will last three months.

ICRC is undertaking a similar survey in the region, with special emphasis on Kotido and Moroto districts which are conflict zones.

**Government, other Agencies' Action •**

As an emergency measure the Ugandan Government released 550 MT of maize for 92,000 people for free distribution, following an official Government appeal to the donor community for food assistance for 800,000 persons.

In July 1997, the European Union carried out a food security assessment mission in north-eastern Uganda, and called for 4,666 MT of food. In other districts affected in northern Uganda, World Vision, Action Aid and Care are carrying out food aid programmes.

**Co-ordination •**

Co-ordination of the operation will involve key agencies and government ministries at headquarters and district levels. URCS/Federation will work in collaboration with the Central Government officials and the local authorities, District Disaster Management Committees, WFP, EU and NGOs operating in the drought area. As the implementing and executing agency URCS/Federation will to call and/or attend co-ordination meetings at district level.

## *Needs*

An estimated 5,665 MT of food is required based on a full ration of 400 grams of cereals, 60 grams of pulses and 20 grams of vegetable oil per person per day. The European Union has committed itself to fund the provision of 4,665 MT of the required food, while World Food Programme will cover the remaining 1,000 MT. The total cost of the operation comes to CHF 3,041,121, of which CHF 2,919,528 is being met by EU and WFP. Donors are asked to contribute the CHF 121,593 needed to meet the balance.

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