



drought. Prolonged drought is one of the reasons that has led to food shortage in Kanungu and Rukungiri districts. PHOTO BY ALFRED TUMUSHABE

Five die as famine hits Kanungu, Rukungiri districts

Measures. According to Agriculture minister Vincent Ssempijja, government has come up with crop varieties that are drought resistant, can grow in a short period and have high productivity.

BY MONITOR TEAM
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com



Voices
"By destroying wetlands you are denying the country 40 per cent rain,"
PRESIDENT MUSEVENI



"We do not have any food reserve in the country, even when government is bringing relief, it's also buying from markets like we do,"
KIZZA BESIGYE, FORMER PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

KANUNGU/RUKUNGIRI. More than 900 families in Bwambara Sub-county, Rukungiri District are suffering from food shortage, the sub-county chief has said.

In a letter written last month and addressed to the Rukungiri District chief administrative officer and copied to the LC5 chairperson, Mr Lauben Tucungwire, a sub-county chief said at least five people had died of hunger and many are migrating to different areas searching for food.

The same situation is happening in the neighbouring Kanungu District particularly in sub-counties of Kihhihi, Nyanga, Nyamirama and Kihhihi Town Council.

Mr Nicholas Mugisha, a resident of Kikarara village, Bwambara Sub-county told *Daily Monitor* on Monday that he had spent a week without having a solid meal.

"We are in a very worrying situation, getting what to eat is difficult, we take porridge, eat pawpaws. I have not eaten real food for a number of days and we appeal to whoever can help to bring us food," he said.

Ms Zainabu Kyarikunda, a widow and resident of Kiruruma B village in Kihhihi Sub-county is struggling to feed her six children.

"Gardens dried, I and my chil-

dren are starving, we get some food from well-wishers and leaders but we can spend days without eating," she told *Daily Monitor* recently.

Mr Samuel Tumuramy, a resident of Kibimbiri cell in Kihhihi Sub-county has not harvested anything from his maize garden due to drought.

"For two years, we have not harvested food and it has been worse this season, people are starving. Those who have relatives in other areas (where there is food) have gone but some of us have nowhere to go," said Mr Tumuramy, a father of five.

Dr Aloysius Tumwesigye, Kanungu District production officer, said for the last two seasons, the area registered 60 per cent crop failure because of little rain. The residents grow rice, maize, beans, sweet potatoes and cassava.

Ms Grace Tubashabire, the head teacher of Nkunda SDA Primary School in Nyanga Sub-county, said lack of food is causing absenteeism of pupils.

"We have enrolment of 374 pupils but 40 to 45 pupils are absent everyday because of lacking what to eat at home and school. People had resorted to eating *dipule* (matooke used in making brew) which has never happened in this area but it's also finished," said Ms Tubashabire.

Kinkizi Diocese Bishop, Rt Rev Dan Zoreka, said he recently visited some homes where local leaders had reported hunger-related deaths of children and mothers and found people suffering.

Helping hand
In order to stem the crisis,



Relief. Residents of Bwambara Sub-county take food that was donated to them by FDC on Monday. PHOTOS BY PEREZ RUMANZI

Bishop Zoreka is crusading for donation of food to the starving communities.

"We are appealing to all Christians in areas that are not affected by food shortage to come to the rescue of those suffering," he said.

The diocese had by last week collected food relief, which the bishop said was to be distributed to about 1,000 homes in hunger-stricken families in Kanungu.

Government too, distributed 41 tonnes of rice and when President Museveni visited the area on June 28, he announced delivery of more 55,000kg of posho, 50,000kg of rice and 10,000kg of beans. Also, 55,000kg of rice was sent by the government to residents of Bwambara and Nyakishenyi sub-counties.

The Forum for Democratic Change party supporters on Sunday delivered eight tonnes of po-

sho to the sub-counties of Kihhihi, Nyamira, Nyakinoni and Kihhihi Town Council.

Uganda National Teachers Union (Unatu) on Tuesday also distributed food relief to teachers in schools that subscribe to the association in the sub-counties of Nyanga, Kihhihi and Nyamirama.

Each teacher was given 10kg of posho and five kilogrammes of beans to cater for their families while each school received 10kg of posho to cater for teachers meals. The donation exercise was conducted by Mr James Tweheyo, the secretary general of Unatu and Mr Zadock Tumuhimbise, the union chairperson.

Former Rujumbura MP, Maj Gen Jim Muhwezi, last month donated two tonnes of posho to Bwambara residents.

Blame
While at Rushoroza Seed Sec-

ondary School in Kihhihi Sub-county on June 28, President Museveni attributed the problem of food shortage to reclamation of swamps by residents, which he said are needed for the formation of rain.

"You have disobeyed God, where he put a swamp you turned it into a garden. God had loved this country very much but because of disobedience, he has ignored us now," the President said.

The President added that according to science, 40 per cent of rain comes from wetlands, forests and water bodies within the country while 60 per cent comes from Indian and Pacific oceans.

Mr Elaisha Tumwesigye, a resident of Nyanga village in Nyanga parish concurs with President Museveni.

He said residents have invaded forests and swamps to grow yams and rice.

While donating food in Bwambara Sub-county, Rukungiri District on Monday, former presidential candidate, Dr Kizza Besigye, criticised President Museveni and his government for not doing enough to guard against environmental degradation.

He said while hunger has resulted from environment degradation, including cutting down of trees, wetland reclamation and other irresponsible human activities, "happened while the President is watching and needs to apologise to the nation for failing to stop environment degradation."

Reported by Alfred Tumushabe, Perez Rumanzi, Edson Kinene & Fred Anyine