Hailstorm ravages Mbarara

MBARARA

By Abdulkarim Ssengendo

Over 700 homesteads in Rubindi sub-county, Kashari North in Mbarara district were hit by a hailstorm on Wednesday.

The hailstorm, which was accompanied by strong winds, killed a number of animals that included cows, pigs, sheep and goats.

The affected seven villages in Karywensanga and Kabaare parishes include Orukiri, Kabaare, Kayonza, Mushunga, Omukarungu, Nsozi and Rwobusisi.

Bazirio Bataringaya, the area councillor, said banana plantations, coffee plantations, potatoes, cassava and several fruit trees were affected.

He said the hailstorm lasted almost two hours. Some residents were left in the cold as roofs of their houses were carried away by the storm. "It is the first time I am seeing a hailstorm of this magnitude. I call on organisations such as Rotary Club and Red Cross to come to the aid of our people," Venansi Bahebwa said.

Wilfred Tumuhimbise, the chairperson Rubindi sub-county, appealed to the Government to provide emergency relief aid to save the people in the affected families who depend on the destroyed plantations as their only source of income.

"Our children might not go back to school because this has been our main source of income. Many of us also have bank loans which we acquired to improve the plantations," Innocent Musiime, a farmer said.



A farmer in Rubare assessing the damage made on his banana plantation by the hailstorm last week. Photo by Abdulkarim Ssengendo

Bucuro sub-county

Meanwhile, over 2,000 people with the majority of them in Bucuro sub-county in Kashari South were also hit by the hailstorm. The storm left several plantations destroyed.

David Kitengye, the area chairperson, said some of the affected villages include Kaziga 1, Kaziga 2, Rwamuganga, Kakondo 1, Kakondo 2, Rubingo and Kagyera.

Last year, the same sub-county was hit by a heavy hailstorm that led to a landslide that destroyed property and food.

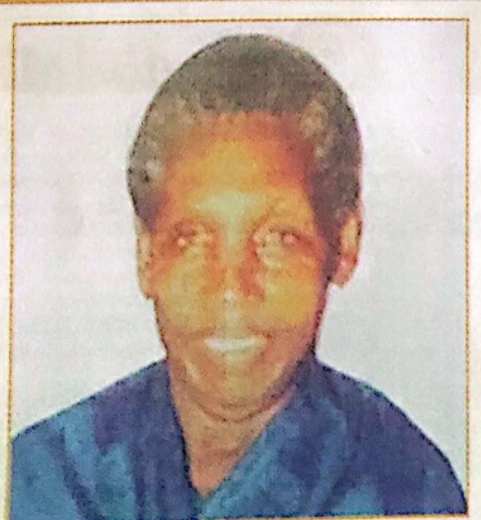
John Kaburabuzo said the disaster hit them at a critical time when people in the area had not yet cleared bank loans.

Leaders in the district have appealed to banks to extend loan payment period for affected farmers.

"It will be difficult for parents to pay school fees in time because there is nothing to sell in the banana plantations," he lamented. Leaders in the two sub-counties appealed to financial institutions to be lenient with the affected farmers and extend the loan repayment period as they try to re-establish their farmlands.

The Bucuro sub-county chief, Edith Tubebamwe, requested local councils to be honest in registering the affected families.

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