

NorthernExtra

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MINISTER DIRECTS ON DRUGS

Anja RDC Peter Debele (left) examines drugs delivered by National Medical Stores recently. The State minister for Health in charge of Primary Healthcare, Dr Joyce Munda, on Monday has directed district leaders to do more to stop theft of drugs from government health facilities. [Felix Warim

Okello]



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TOURISM

The beauty of Murchison Falls

Uganda Wildlife Authority officials, journalists and police officers at the top of Murchison Falls. Government is to build a bridge at this spot to ease transport with the aim of promoting tourism in Murchison Falls National Park.

PHOTO BY STEPHEN WANDERA

Land mines, bombs disrupt farming in northern Uganda

Casualties. Many people have been injured while others have been killed by unexploded ordnance (UXOs) such as land mines, grenades, mortar and artillery shells.

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GULU. One morning in 2010, Esther Lakari, a resident of Panyul Village in Agago Sub-county, Lamwo District, set off to her farm to harvest food for her family. She had no idea that tragedy awaited her.

Lakari says she was walking to her garden when she had a blast and became unconscious. She later woke up at Kitgum Hospital to find her right leg amputated. She had stepped on a land mine that maimed her leg.

Lakari, a mother of five, was later abandoned by her husband and is now struggling to raise her children on her own.

Lakari's case is not isolated in northern region which was ravaged by a two-decade Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency.

Many other people have been injured while others have been killed by unexploded ordnance (UXOs) such as land mines, grenades, mortar and artillery shells.

These grim leftovers from the war between government forces and LRA rebels continue to ravage residents of northern Uganda several years after the LRA were defeated and fled to neighbouring DR Congo and Central African Republic.

Because of fear of being harmed by unexploded ordnance, many people have abandoned their gardens.

Residents and northern Uganda leaders have called upon the government to expeditiously remove unexploded ordnance from the affected areas to enable former internally displaced people settle down and engage in agriculture.

They say failure to urgently resolve

LRA

The Lord's Resistance Army was formed in Uganda more than two decades ago, and claimed to be fighting to install a government based on the Biblical 10 Commandments.

It operated mostly in the north, where hundreds of thousands of people were displaced by the conflict.

the issue of unexploded ordnance is hindering recovery of the region where agriculture is the main economic activity.

They say cultivation of food crops is also being hindered, causing food shortage.

"Last year, I hired a big plot for cultivation but we have halted all the activities for fear of being hit by the land mines," says Susan Amono, a resident of Koro Sub-county in Omoro District.

Ms Amono says she can start cultivating the land only after government has checked and declared it safe.

Kitgum Municipality MP Beatrice Anywar says: "There is need to have people's land free from the UXOs, so that they can make use of it to carry on meaningful activities."

In 2009, the government conducted a baseline survey to assess the needs of people in areas where

briefly

New project launched

GULU: A total of 10,000 pupils and students from 20 schools within Acholi Sub-region are set to benefit from a \$22,000 project launched to empower and train youth as lead agents for peace building and sustainable development. The project will be implemented by Uganda National Commission for UNESCO (UNATCOM) in partnership with Uganda Episcopal Conference with funds from UNESCO. The project was launched on Friday in Gulu District. It will target pupils and students in Lamwo and Amuru districts. It is aimed at ensuring inclusive social development, fostering dialogue and promoting peace. [Julius Ocului]

Lorry kills 24 head of cattle

PADER: A lorry has rammed into a herd of cattle killing 24. The incident happened on the Kitgum-Gulu highway in Juka Village, Angagura Sub-county, in Pader District at the weekend. Witnesses said the cattle were knocked dead by a speeding truck loaded with gravel. Residents rushed to the scene and shared the meat of the dead cattle. Aswa Regional police commander Bosco Otim said preliminary investigation indicates that the truck had a mechanical breakdown prompting its breaking system to fail. He blamed the herdsman for moving with too many animals on the road. [Julius Ocului]

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Land mines, bombs disrupt farming in northern Uganda

Voice

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"As usual, I set off to work in my garden but opted to use a shorter route. But the next morning, I found myself in Kitgum hospital after a grenade blast that left my right limb off."

ESTHER LAKARI,
RESIDENT OF PANYUL
VILLAGE



"As army, we can only come in when police calls us. We pledge our full support and we are always available on call."

CAPT LAWRENCE
DRAGA, UPDF 4TH
DIVISION PUBLIC
RELATIONS OFFICER

"Last year, I hired a big plot for cultivation but we have halted all the activities for fear of being hit by the land mines."

SUSAN AMONO,
RESIDENT OF KORO
SUB-COUNTY IN
OMORO DISTRICT.

LRA rebels operated and identifying service gaps in northern Uganda.

Disability-related services and potential providers in mine-affected districts were mapped but there is unsustainable support to victims.

Although international charity organisations provided support to the victims and also conducted UXOs sensitisation campaigns, they have since withdrawn from the region.

Local charity organisations, such as Landmine Survivors Association (ULSA), Casualties and Victims Assistance that are currently conducting education on unexploded ordnance and providing support for those injured unexploded ordnance, have called for assistance from government.

They say more financial help and other assistance are needed to rehabilitate those maimed by unexploded ordnance.

Mr Vincent Ocaya, a cultural leader in Pader Town, says government should take over from where international charity organisations stopped and continue educating people about land mines and other unexploded ordnance.

"They (UXOs) are in many cases discovered by children who mistake them for toys since they do not know. Unfortunately organisations that used to distribute UXO warning stickers everywhere are no more," Mr Ocaya says.

The Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) 4th Division public relations officer, Capt Lawrence Draga, says the responsibility of clearing the affected areas of unexploded ordnance falls under the docket of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) in conjunction with the Uganda Police Force.

"As army, we can only come in when police calls us. We pledge our full support and we are always available on call," Capt Draga says.

He adds that with instructions from the OPM, the 4th Division's Tactical Field Engineering Unit together with Combat Engineering Department in Gulu have destroyed dozens of UXOs.

briefly

South Sudan