

World Day for Disaster Reduction

Home safe home: Reducing exposure, reducing displacement

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A man flees his flooded house in Lwera, Kalungu District recently.

PHOTO BY SADIAT MBOGO

Floods remain big threat to Uganda

Affected. According to the National Food Security Assessment report, at least 1.6 million Ugandans have nothing to eat due to various disasters such as fire, landslides, floods and political insecurity in the neighbouring countries.

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One in every three Ugandans has food insecurity, indicates the National Food Security Assessment report compiled by an Inter-ministerial team report. The report released by the Prime Minister of Uganda, Dr Ruhakana Rugunda, also indicates that food insecurity has increased from 1.3 million people in November 2016, to 10.9 million people by January 2017.

According to the report, at least 1.6 million Ugandans have nothing to eat due to various disasters such as fire, landslides, floods and political insecurity in the neighbouring countries.

Fire cases have been rampant in urban areas due to lack of proper emergency plans in buildings.

Recently, fire gutted the Ministry of Health and property was destroyed, in March 2015, a local mattress manufacturing factory caught fire and a lot of property was damaged. A

number of game parks and forestry reserves have also been burnt killing a number of animals.

The Office of the Prime Minister in August 2016, reported that in Karamoja sub-region Kaabong, Nakapiripirit, Moroto, Napak, Amudat, Katakwi, and some parts of Serere faced severe food crisis and were depending on porridge or wild roots for survival.

The disasters are attributed to effects of climate changes in the country.

A report released by World Bank in 2013, indicated that 200,000 Ugandans were affected by various disasters annually.

"Households are affected by particular disaster types in Uganda every year. Droughts (55 per cent), floods (18 per cent), rain (5 per cent), 4 per cent (hailstorm), famine (4 per cent) landslides (4 per cent), rainstorm (2 per cent), epidemic (2 per cent) and other disasters (2 per cent)," Ms Magda Lovei a senior environment and disaster management official, at the World Bank, said.

According to the 2012 World risk report launched in Brussels, disasters in Uganda were as a result of the environmental degradation. It indicated that deforestation and poor

land management are the sole causes of landslides and flooding.

Worldwide

A report by PLOS in 2016, indicates that floods and landslides are the biggest disasters registered worldwide with floods claiming lives of 6.8 million people.

It is estimated that Africa and Asia are the most affected countries with Asia responsible for the 50 per cent of the flood deaths.

It also indicates an increase in landslides and floods in East African countries, Uganda being the most affected.

Floods that carried the banks of River Manafwa in 2010, left about 5,000 people displaced and 400 dead.

The report compiled by the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security, shows Uganda has 66.4 per cent vulnerability to disasters.

The same report ranks Uganda 83rd position out of 173 countries that lost one million people as a result of disasters like landslides, earthquakes, floods and tsunamis.

Action

The government has worked hard to resettle a number of displaced people in various places.

In 2016, the government permanently resettled 5,000 Tanzanian returnees and a number of people that had been evicted from forests in Kyenjojo district.

"Every financial year, the Ministry of Finance is expected to allocate about Shs8b to cover both land purchase and resettlement (demarcate 800 plots of 2.5 acres, build two-bedroomed houses, open roads, boreholes, health centres and schools," Mr Hillary Onok, the Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, said. World Food Programme, UNHCR and other NGOs help provide food and other necessities to the victims.

Caution

The Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2006, 9; Section 60, requires that the occupier of any building, to be used as a workplace, should ensure adequate preparedness to any fire and emergency incidents in his or her premises. The occupier is required to put an emergency action plan, which should be communicated to the occupants (workers and visitors) of the workplace effectively.

This communication can be through verbal training, or printed reminders hang in specific high visibility parts of the workplace so that in the event of an emergency, the occupants are deemed ready for the eventualities and their response shall ensure their safety and the safety of their colleagues.

KEY INFORMATION

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People living in hilly areas that are subjected to landslides are cautioned against deforestation as this leaves the soil bare leading to flooding. They are encouraged to mulch and plant trees that will help hold the soil and control soil erosion.