

Uganda facing acute food insecurity, says new report

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KAMPALA. A new study commissioned by civil society has revealed that the country is facing biting hunger and malnutrition.

The report conducted by the Food Rights Alliance, Health Promotion and Social Development and Centre for Health Rights and Development, which was launched in Kampala on Monday, shows that 10.9 million Ugandans experienced acute food insecurity between the months of March and November "and 1.6 million were in a food crisis situation".

Increasing

The number is projected to reach 11.4 million by March next year if government does not prevail over the situation.

Explaining the causes of hunger, Mr Jude Ssebuliba, the Food Rights Alliance programme manager, who presented the report, attributed the alarming hunger levels to land evictions, supply of fake seeds and chemicals on the market, climate change and poor farming methods.

"We are concerned about the government's failure to

refrain other parties from interfering directly or indirectly with the people's enjoyment of the right to adequate food. For instance, the continued failure to curb importation, development, sell and distribution of inferior, fake, substandard, toxic, hazardous and unsafe agricultural inputs," Mr Ssebuliba observed in the report.

OTHER ISSUES

Anemia. According to the report findings, levels of anemia were recorded at 53 per cent among children aged between six and 59 months, of which 54 per cent of these were in rural areas and 48 per cent in urban areas with variations in different regions.

Though stunting levels had reduced from 36 per cent to 33 per cent in the country, in some regions such as Tooro, the number of stunted children instead increased to 41 per cent and 29 per cent of all children under five years were reported to be shorter than their age.

"The cost of hunger and

malnutrition to the realisation of right of health was recorded at 44 per cent of all health costs in the country being associated to under nutrition in children below one year," he said.

He said 82 per cent of all cases of children under nutrition and related pathologies go untreated, expanding their tentacles in other health aspects and 15 per cent of all child mortality cases in Uganda are associated with under nutrition.

Mr Ssebuliba added that this has reduced Uganda's workforce by 4 per cent and that anemia has been confirmed as one of the leading causes of maternal death in the country.

The study suggested that 32 per cent of women in the reproductive age of 15 and 49 were found to have suffered a degree of anemia.

The report further established the cost of deficiency in realisation of right to food in other sectors such as education, where 7 per cent of all repetitions were associated with stunting and stunted children having 1.2 years less in school education besides reducing Uganda's workforce by 4 per cent.