

UGANDA RED CROSS SAYS ABOUT 1,500 HOUSEHOLDS HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE FLOODS

Floods destroy homes, crops in Pakwach

PAKWACH

By Benedict Okethwengu

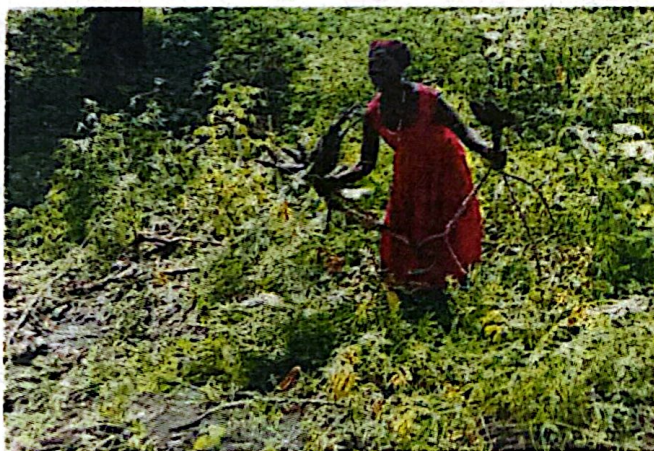
Hundreds of farmers in Wadelai sub-county, Pakwach district are counting losses after floods destroyed over 1,500 hectares of crops on Saturday

The floods have also rendered roads impassable, while residents in some villages have resorted to drinking the contaminated flood water because access to boreholes has also been cut off.

Patrick Keuber, a resident of Wadelai, identified the worst-hit parishes as Pakwinyo, Mutir, and Ragem.

Keuber said the crops destroyed are cassava, millet, sorghum, sim-sim, rice, cotton, maize, potatoes, sugarcane and groundnuts.

He added that the floods



A woman uproots cassava in a submerged garden

have also cut off access to Wadelai Health Centre III, the only health facility in the area.

Keuber said the situation was worsened after River Oraa, which connects to River Nile through the sub-county, burst its banks.

"Wadelai experienced moderate rainfall, this calamity came from River Oraa, which hosts many tributaries from Zombo district and the Democratic Republic of Congo that feed into River Nile," he said.



A man rides a bicycle on one of the flooded roads. Photo by Benedict Okethwengu

Keuber added that residents are afraid that the situation will worsen if the current rain pattern does not change.

Jane Pacutho, the Pakwach Woman Member of Parliament, visited the area on Saturday.

According to Pacutho, the floods also ravaged Dei and Nyamutangana in Panyimur sub-county.

She said some residents took shelter at the nearby school after their houses and toilets were submerged.

Pacutho said she had submitted a report to the Office of the Prime Minister but was yet to receive a reply.

She said the residents needed mobile toilets, adding that

the sanitation was worrying given that toilets had been submerged and people were drinking contaminated water.

Floods are a common occurrence in Wadelai. Last year, the floods destroyed over 1,400 acres of crops in the area and almost prevented pupils from sitting Primary Leaving Examinations.

"We need a permanent solution to this problem. One of the solutions is to build a dam on River Oraa to help control the flow of the water," Pacutho said.

Environmental experts blame it on massive encroachment of the Oraa river banks by the residents.

According to a report by the Uganda Red Cross in Nebbi, about 100 huts were destroyed and 1,500 households have been affected by the floods.

Abdullah Okello, an elder in the area, said this year's floods were the worst and only comparable to those that occurred three years ago.

Alfred Okello, one of the affected farmers, said he lost two acres of cotton from which he hoped to raise school fees.

"I am devastated. I thought I would raise some money from my cotton plantation, but that dream has been shattered by the floods," he said.