

MISSION REPORT TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF FLOODS IN BUDALANGI AND RACHUONYO DISTRICTS IN WESTERN KENYA

During September 24 – 27, 2007, a team comprised of government representatives from the National Disaster Operation Centre (NOC), the Kenya Red Cross Society – Western Region Office, and two UN agencies WHO and UN OCHA, undertook a mission to Rachuonyo and Budalang'i districts for flood assessments. The team met with the local government officials based in Rachuonyo and Budalang'i/ Busia district, NGOs on the ground and also talked to some community members affected by the floods.



Aerial view of the collapse in the dyke in Budalang'i District

The main objective of the joint mission was:

- To assess the humanitarian situation of the communities affected by floods by visiting affected sites to verify the extent of damage, fatalities, displaced populations and response capacity.

I BACKGROUND:

Budalang'i District, (newly constituted) formally under Busia District is located in Western part of Kenya near the shores of Lake Victoria. The entire population of the district is estimated to be 64,000 people. Rivers Nzoia and Yala traverse the district periodically causing floods in lower areas as they enter Lake Victoria. Construction of Dykes on River Nzoia began in 1977 and was completed in 1984. The dykes have a total length of 34.6 km comprising of 16.2 km in the Northern and 18.4 km on the Southern part.

The Southern Dyke on River Nzoia collapsed on August 15th, 2007 at the same point it had broken in December 2006 near Makunda Secondary School. The entire southern part of the district was flooded as a result.

In Rachuonyo, floods have been experienced since 1961, when the first incident of floods was recorded in East Karachuonyo Division after the Sondu Miriu River burst its banks as a result of heavy rains in the highlands of the Rift Valley. Since then, flooding has been experienced on a yearly basis in the District during the months of March - May and October - November rains. Rivers affected include: Sondu Miriu, Awach and Oluch.

In early September 2007, the District experienced unexpected flash flooding when River Miriu burst its banks as a result of heavy rains experienced in the neighbouring Districts of Kericho and Kisii displacing 210 families in two locations.

II CURRENT SITUATION:

Aerial surveys indicated that most parts of Southern Budalang'i are still water logged, despite the significant reduction in water levels. The situation is likely to worsen in the next few weeks depending on the extent of the short rain season which is expected to commence in October 2007. Some of the areas still marooned include: Buwongo Island, Sidukhumi, Rukala, Musoma, Buluani and Bubamba.

Assessments carried out by various stakeholders on the ground reported that about 28,000 (44% of total population) people have been affected by the floods of which ranging between 6,000 to 8,000 are currently displaced and about 2,000 marooned. The displaced persons are staying the

following camps: Mukhobola Health Centre (260 families), Dyke (Bulwangu and Barangasi) – 200 families, Bubamba, Lugare A and B (255), Rukala (73), Sidukhumi (113) and Khundege (25).

Ministry of Special Programmes - NOC/ WHO / UNOCHA / Kenya Red Cross Society



Aerial view of flooded parts of south Budalang'i

Children less than 15 years form 75% Of the displaced population and 3% of the women were pregnant. Both sexes were affected equally including a significant number of adults.

With continued heavy rains in the highland regions of Cherangani hills, Mt. Elgon and Nandi, water levels in River Nzoia are likely to increase in the next few weeks. Furthermore, the broken Dyke has not yet been repaired and chances are high that these repairs will not be made in time to avert another crisis.

In Rachuonyo district, the District Disaster Committee briefed the visiting team of the current situation. The water levels had reduced and the displaced families gone back to their homes. However, the Committee was preparing itself for another phase of emergency when the short rains start in October. Risk mapping had been conducted and problematic areas identified already. The District Commissioner reported that the Government had already stocked some food in their stores and only assistance with non-food items would be needed. The Kenya Red Cross is the lead agency for all sorts of interventions in Rachuonyo District. The visiting team agreed that the situation was under control and more focus should be channeled to Budalang'i.

CORE FINDINGS:

1. Food Distributions:

It was apparent that the Government had issued enough food to cater for all the affected communities. The food is stocked in two stores, one at St. Ann's Secondary School in Budalang'i and at the District Commissioner's Office in Busia District. The package includes: Maize, Beans, Cooking oil, Rice and Green peas.

The team participated in a helicopter food drop outs to Buwongo Island and Musoma Primary School, a central area for most of the marooned locations. Five trips were made and a total of 7.5 MT of food air lifted.



Kenya Air Force assisting in relief airlift to marooned people.

credibility is questioned by locals.

Challenges:

- *Logistics:* Flood waters have cut off many areas making it difficult to transport relief aid to those marooned villages. Air lifting of relief supplies is most appropriate although the availability of the Helicopter and high running costs constraint air operations.
- *The Food Committee is not all inclusive:* Some key NGOs have been left out and distributions are mainly conducted on ad hoc basis by Government officials whose

- *Distribution of Non Food Items is not accounted for:* Each NGO is doing its own distribution of non-food items. As such there is no proper recording of who has received what and from whom.
- Poor record keeping and ad hoc distributions give rise to duplications and gaps with repeat beneficiaries.

Recommendations:

- A lead agency to be appointed in agreement of all stakeholders to oversee the distribution of all relief supplies.
- An elaborate assessment data system that is reliable is needed as it is very necessary for successful operation.
- Continued re-stocking of warehouses with both food and non food items in preparation for emergency.
- Logistic support (provision of Helicopter once a week and possibility of stationing 2 trucks at St. Ann's for relief aid distributions)

2. Health, Water and Sanitation:

Budalang'i has one health Centre at Mukhobola and two dispensaries which have been marooned. The new district is also serviced by a Sub-District Hospital situated at Port Victoria about 35 km away for referral cases. MSF – Spain does provide mobile clinic services to displaced families in their respective camps as well. The health situation as analyzed from the health centre records was normal with no alarming cases of outbreaks being reported.

However, Mukhobola health centre has reported an over stretch of its facilities following the settlement of IDPs in their compound. The camp now holds around 260 households in addition to normal usage.



IDPs at Mukhobola Health Centre (Photo by UNOCHA)

Challenges:

Water tank – The tank capacity is small and cannot withstand the increased population.

The inlet has broken and there are leakages and thus the need to upgrade the tank to accommodate a bigger population. Up grading means that a bigger tank be sourced, a generator with a bigger horse power be installed for pumping water into the tank.

The toilets in the hospital were full and there was need for more toilets to be erected. Some toilets had been closed and this posed a risk to the centre staff and families

Referral of patients to Port Victoria is difficult without an ambulance within the centre.

The entire Island of Buwongo does not have a health centre or dispensary and relies on Mukhobola Health Centre for all its medical services. Currently, the Island is cut off from the mainland so inhabitants cannot access medical services.

Measles coverage is only 76%. In case of any outbreaks within the congested environment, the impact could be very severe. Once the water levels have completely receded, cases of malaria, cholera and other water borne diseases are likely to increase.

Recommendations:

- Regular surveys need to be conducted in marooned areas, for proper analysis of the situation.
- A health officer should accompany the airlifts in order to provide services to marooned populations.
- The district should be strengthened in essential primary health care programs to enable them respond to the perennial emergencies. It is also important to strengthen routine services with emphasis on prevention of possible outbreak of communicable diseases. Sanitation measures and health education plans for the displaced is equally important.
- Toilet disinfectant is needed to disinfect the few remaining toilets and the Mobilets in use.
- Heavy duty gloves cited as a need by the Health centre
- Environmental sanitation equipment – including wheel barrows, disposable waste bags, and shovels are also needed
- For vector control, and distribution of ITNs to vulnerable groups and mosquito sprays for stagnant water is required
- Training on how to use PUR and aqua tabs distributed for disinfection of the water needs to be conducted.
- Provide more Mobilets (Toilets) at the Health facility and at the Dyke camps
- Provide an exhaustor to empty the filled up toilets



Discussions on modalities to be used in air lift distributions

3. Coordination:

It was apparent that even though coordination committees existed even at the camp level, they did not function or were not well organized.

The floods committee needs to be activated and meetings to be held twice a week preferably on Tuesday and Thursday for updating and sharing of information. The stakeholders are all expected to attend the meetings including all the government representatives from line Ministries and the Medical Officer in charge at the Mukhobola

Health Centre.

The committee is expected to set up a priority list of requirements. All the technical people are expected to attend and minutes forwarded to the National Operations Centre at National level. The technical personnel will include Non Government Stakeholders such as Kenya Red Cross, Action Aid, MSF Spain, Catholic Justice Peace Commission (CJPC) and World Vision.

Red Cross and Action Aid were to liaise with District Officer for the coordination on the ground. This was to include among other things, working with the existing agents for Red Cross and the Community Resource Persons.

Recommendations:

Set up two Committees to coordinate the following areas:

- Basic health and social services – (Water Health and Sanitation sub committee)
- Food distribution committee – No distribution should take place without the knowledge of the lead agency.

4. Education:

Reports indicated that 11 schools were still currently affected by floods forcing students to relocate to neighbouring schools which were not affected straining the available resources. At St. Ann's Secondary School for example, three schools are sharing the available facilities. Schools affected include: Lugare Primary, Bubamba Primary and Secondary, Makunda Secondary, Rugunda Primary, Musoma Primary, Budala Primary, Iyanga ECD school, Maduwa Primary and Runyu Primary. Total number of students affected is 4420.

Interviewed teachers expressed concern for those students expected to start their National Exams towards the end of this month. Appeals have been made for possible assistance of housing the candidates in tents in those non-flood affected schools. This will reduce the frustration experienced in travelling back and forth in flooded areas and from already negatively impacted homes.

Recommendations:

- Support to be given by providing tents, blankets, mattresses, treated mosquito nets, soap etc for these displaced students/pupils.

5. Shelter:

The tarpaulins that had been distributed so far were few in number and the size too small for family use. It was agreed that a descent shelter should be made with at least 3 tarpaulins per family. Most of the families were erecting shelters with only one tarpaulin and this led to over crowding. (Red Cross indicated that they had no tarpaulins left since all their stock had been sent to Uganda to the flood victims). MSF Spain distributed about 400 family kits. The World Vision stock could not be ascertained immediately either but they have done some distributions on behalf of UNICEF as well.

It was also noted that families with children above the age of 15 years be considered for additional tents for separate shelter for their daughters and sons. This was in observation to the cultural aspect where children as early as 13 – 15 years are not supposed to share the same roof with their parents.

6. Roads and Bridges:

The following roads have been rendered impassable:

Ruambwa – Maumau (completely cut off)

Maumau – Runyu road (6km)

Makunda – Bubamba road

Mubwayo – Buwongo road

Khayinga – Sigiri road

Ndekwe and Runyi Bridges collapsed.

Water ways damaged include: Ndekwe and Nakhayira

Most parts of southern Budalangi remain inaccessible. The only mode of transport is by small boats.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen local coordination capacity through training and also posting of two Senior Officers to the ground from NOC and UN to assist in establishment of disaster coordination structures with linkages to the existing National structures.
2. Establish and strengthen the early warning systems within the community.
3. Strengthen dyke management committee through trainings so that they can assist in digging up of more canals to control the flow of water
4. Build the capacity of communities in disaster management through community based trainings on mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery activities.
5. Relocate the IDPs presently taking refuge on the dykes to another area.
7. Carry out a feasibility study by engineers from Ministry of Road and public works ,DOD and Youth service whether they can carry out repairs while the river is still over flowing .

Long term interventions:

1. Construction of strong dykes on the river banks to prevent water spillage is a priority as it serves immediate and long term needs.
2. Construction of dams upstream to regulate the flow of water.
3. Resettlement of the most vulnerable communities to higher grounds and convert flood prone areas into agricultural land for irrigation
4. Dig a diversion channel

Immediate Needs:

1. Non-food items such as tarpaulins - 3 per family (2,000 more tarpaulins needed)
2. Water tanks - 10 in total (10,000 litres)
3. Mobilets - 15 Mobilets required

4. Water purifiers i.e. aqua tabs
5. Jerricans - 2 per family (1,200 families)
6. For vector control, Mosquito sprays for the stagnant water is required
7. Assorted drugs or medications especially infusions
8. Sanitary towels for girl students in schools
9. Stationary for affected schools.
10. Exhauster from nearby towns
11. Fogging machines



About one thousand displaced people cautiously camping on the tip of the broken dyke.



The displaced people camping within the Mukhobola Health centre

More pictures:



Helicopter air lift of relief aid from St. Ann's School



Flooded crop near the dyke



Musoma Primary school pupils