

State of emergency in Uganda as floods devastate Teso

Dear Friends of Teso,

Many of you will have received the attached e-mail directly from Margaret Stephens who writes on behalf of our sister charity Teso Development Trust. However there may be Friends of Teso (Uganda) who have not received it and this is primarily forwarded to you for information. TDT will co-ordinate financial donations to assist the people in Teso in the current criais.

We would ask that anyone who feels moved by the current plight in Teso and wishes to send a financial donation should send their contribution directly to TDT. It should be sent to David Watts, TDT Administrator, 24 Sandhurst Avenue, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY9 0XL.

As you will all know, Friends of Teso (Uganda), "our Charity" is a completely separate charity and we will continue to collect much needed goods and raise the necessary funds to purchase the containers and send those goods to Teso. The container sent we sent in June is currently in Kampala and I will send further info as soon as I hear more. It is planed that the next container will leave in the latter part of October hoping that it will provide some help around Christmas time.

Warmest good wishes

Pat Morris

Email from Teso Development Trust

Subject: State of emergency in Uganda as floods devastate Teso

I know that many of you will have already received the letter from Neil Stedman, the Chairman of *Teso Development Trust (TDT)*, telling you about the terrible floods in Teso which have left 275,000 people stranded. They are amongst the most vulnerable people in Uganda anyway - and now even the little they had has been completely destroyed and lost - homes, crops, food and livestock. They are facing starvation and disease. It seems that Teso is one of the worst affected areas in the 17 countries throughout Africa which have been affected by these terrible floods. And the bad news is that things are going to get even worse - the rains are forecast to continue until the end of November. I thought some of you might be interested to have some up to date news about the situation, both from people in Soroti as well as from the Internet. I apologise if some of you may get this email more than once, as you may be on more than one of my emailing group lists.

The main road to Soroti is now impassable due to flooding at Awoja. This means that the only route to Soroti is the much longer route through Ngora, Agu and Brookes Corner, a bad murram road which also passes over a bridge over the swamp. One wonders how much longer this route will be accessible.

Extract from an email from Sam on 15th Spetember:

"Keep us in prayer. The problem of the floods has affected us very much. At home in the village crops have been destroyed. Everything on the ground just rots, including cassava, potatoes, ground nuts, because of the water logging. Most of the sponsored students have been affected, especially those from Amuria and parts of Katakwi. The roads are impassable. Most people have been forced to camps again with nothing to eat. Government intervention is not forthcoming and as usual again many NGOs and partners are rushing to Northern Uganda and little is done about Teso (*NB: This was written 9 days ago - things are now beginning to happen in Teso*). We need a lot of prayer and support. This is what worries us most now."

At this time of Harvest Festivals, and not long after many of us have experienced terrible floods ourselves in England, individuals and churches may want to respond to help the people of Teso specifically. If you would like to make a donation for emergency relief, please make cheques payable to Teso Development Trust and send them to David Watts, 24 Sandhurst Avenue, STOURBRIDGE, DY9 0XL. Please state that your gift is for the flood victims and whether it can be Gift Aided.

Below are seven extracts from various reports etc taken off the Internet.

1. Action Aid:

An estimated 8,500 acres of crop have been affected. "Our joint interventions are not enough," said Harriet Gimbo, ActionAid program officer.

2. Ugandan government declares state of emergency in flood-hit northern and eastern region

KAMPALA, Sept 19, 2007 - The Ugandan government has declared a state of emergency in the northern and eastern part of the country where severe floods have so far killed nearly 30 people and cut off 25 districts from the rest of the country.

3. UGANDA: Schools stay closed as floods hit eastern districts

Thousands of school children have been forced to stay at home as schools remain closed due to flooding in eastern Uganda. More than 150 educational institutions failed to open at the beginning of the new term on 17 September after the floods washed away roads, homes, buildings and crops in the region, especially in the districts of Amuria, Katakwi, Manafwa and Bukedea. ***(This is a critical time in the school year as children are due to take their primary leaving exams, GCSEs and 'A' levels very soon.)***

On 14 September, the Ugandan minister for disaster preparedness, Musa Ecweru, said up to 300,000 people in the eastern and northern regions were in dire need of relief aid after floods swept through villages killing at least nine people and washing away bridges.

The UN World Food Programme said they had secured some boats so that relief agencies could reach the community. "Some people will have to be evacuated and relocated to other areas if the situation persists, but we shall also have to feed the affected communities for almost a year because their gardens have been completely destroyed." Two helicopters, he added, would be made available to help airlift relief services to the affected area, and that a special appeal will be made to cater for the emergency.

Many of those affected are families that had just returned to their villages after years of displacement in camps due to a civil war between the government and the rebel Lord's

Resistance Army (LRA). "The communities that have been affected by the floods are very weak in the sense that they had just returned home from camp life," Ewewu said.

4. Uganda prepares for the worst

Christian Aid partners in Uganda are preparing for the worst as predictions are the heavy rains will last until the end of November. **Forecasters predict that not only are the rains far from over, they will continue to get heavier and more widespread.**

Flooding across the north and east has already caused devastation for more than 400,000 people. **The eastern regions of Amuria and Katakwi districts are the worst affected where an estimated 275,000 people have lost their homes, livestock and crops.**

People are moving to the towns and the camps seeking refuge but few have access to shelter, clean water or food. Many roads and bridges have rendered large parts of the region unreachable and fears are that as more roads and bridges collapse, those providing relief in the region will struggle to reach those affected.

Christian Aid has sent £51,000 to TEDDO (*the Church of Uganda Development Office through whom TDT also works, having also sent £5000 for emergency relief*) for them to begin their emergency response to the situation. They will be providing blankets, mosquito nets, soap, tarpaulins and jerry cans to 5000 families.

The flooding has longer term implications. As this year's harvests have all been washed away, the World Food Programme estimate that more than 1.7 million people will be in need of food aid within the next year.

The floods come as a double blow to people in eastern Uganda who, after twenty-one years of conflict, were only just beginning to leave the camps and return home. Now many of these people are back in the camps.

'The people who had not yet shed their nicknames (Internally Displaced Persons or IDPs) and who had attempted to go home have once again been forced back in to camp life,' said Sam Okiror, the Director of TEDDO. 'Even those who had accepted and adjusted to camp life are now having to seek refuge on higher ground. All of this just means displacement – it was a word we were trying hard to forget.'

5. Humanitarian community launches US\$ 41 million appeal for Uganda floods

Kampala: 21 September 2007: The humanitarian community in Uganda has today launched an emergency appeal of US\$ 41 million (about £20 million) for urgent assistance for some 300,000 people in flood-affected eastern, central and northern Uganda.

"We are here today as one humanitarian community comprising United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the donor community, and, most importantly, the Government and people of Uganda, to call for support in addressing the devastation left behind by the rising tide of water.," said Theophane Nikyema, United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Uganda, as he **launched the appeal in Soroti – the largest town in the Teso sub-region, which has been hardest hit by the flooding to date.**

"Already we have accomplished a good deal through our joint response," added Mr. Nikyema, noting that shelter and household goods had been distributed to more than 5,000 families, while more than 15,000 households had received assistance for clean drinking water and more than 30,000 people had benefited from food deliveries. Unusually heavy rainfall since July 2007 has led to severe flooding and water-logging across many parts of eastern, central and northern Uganda. **The flooding, which has affected an already highly vulnerable area of the country, has had the most critical impact in the Teso sub-region.**

The Flash Appeal is based on planning for an estimated 50,000 households (300,000 people) being affected by the flooding and requiring humanitarian assistance to varying extents. Amongst the affected population there are 110,000 already vulnerable internally displaced people. Women and children make up the largest percentage of the overall affected population.

Most have been rendered food insecure by the loss of their first season harvest and the delay in second season planting. Whereas a two month "hunger gap" is the norm, this year it is expected to extend up to 10 months.

In addition to damaged homes, water and sanitation facilities have been severely impacted by the flooding, with many flooded latrines having collapsed, leaving the population afraid to use those remaining and facing an increased likelihood for waterborne disease outbreaks as flood waters recede. The incidence of malaria, diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory infections has already increased, reportedly by as much as 30 per cent.

The most affected communities have been entirely cut off by land, and those trying to assist them depend on air and boat transportation for both assessments and aid deliveries.

The humanitarian community in the country has identified **several priorities for the emergency response**, which include **stabilising the initial food security situation, preventing disease outbreaks and ensuring capacity to respond to health emergencies, re-opening schools and ensuring access to primary education, responding to urgent needs for shelter and non-food items, ensuring physical access to the most vulnerable**, and understanding the early recovery needs of the affected population and prioritising recovery interventions.

The appeal was launched today from Soroti by the Humanitarian Coordinator

6. Fresh rain hampers aid delivery in flood-hit Uganda

KAMPALA, Sept 23, 2007 (AFP) - Ugandan authorities said that fresh rainfall on Sunday was complicating efforts to deliver aid to areas devastated by massive floods. "The short dry period we experienced for three days was broken yesterday and it has been raining for the past 24 hours, making all roads inaccessible," State Minister For Disaster Preparedness Musa Ecweru said.

"If the rains continue for the next four days, we do not know what will happen. The routes have been destroyed," he told AFP by phone from Soroti, the northeastern town where much of the relief effort is being coordinated.

Some of the worst rainfall and floods in three decades have swept across Africa in recent weeks, affecting at least 1.5 million people in 18 different countries on the continent. Uganda has been one of the worst affected, with some 500,000 people left without homes or food.

The crisis prompted the government Wednesday to declare a state of emergency, the first time President Yoweri Museveni has resorted to the measure in his 21-year tenure.

"We need air transport to deliver food items to the districts, but we are just praying that it stops raining," Ecweru said.

7. UNICEF Humanitarian Action Update Uganda 24 Sep 2007

Children and women comprise up to 80 percent of the nearly 400,000 people affected by the situation, including approximately 200,000 who require immediate, emergency shelter and household items after being displaced from their homes.
