



Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Uganda

EASTERN UGANDA REQUIRES MORE RECOVERY SUPPORT AFTER FLOODS

Kampala, 11 December 2007 – Ensuring access to food during the extended “hunger gap”, providing safe water and sanitation and making sure that people can see a trained medical staff and receive treatment if needed and further rehabilitating damaged schools have been singled out as the new priorities for the humanitarian response to the floods that swept across parts of eastern and northern Uganda from August to October 2007.

“The first wave of our emergency response has been a success,” said Mr. Timothy Pitt, Head of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Uganda. “We have gotten food to those in need and we have prevented any outbreak of epidemic disease,” he noted, citing other positive results of the initial response such as ongoing distributions of seeds and plants; the vaccination of more than 67,000 children against measles, following an outbreak of the disease in Kumi and Bukedea Districts; support for education that saw all Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) candidates in the affected areas assured the chance of sitting their exams.

On Tuesday, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Uganda released the second progress update on the Uganda Floods response, noting that given the positive impact of the initial response to the emergency, the humanitarian community is shifting its focus to stabilizing the vulnerable population and facilitating community recovery.

For this second phase of the response, the humanitarian community has identified four priority areas for further action: 1) ensuring sustainable food security through support for food production and targeted food distributions; 2) promoting sustainable access to safe water and sanitation through decontamination and rehabilitation of water sources; 3) supporting community health initiatives as a way of ensuring continuing capacity to monitor and respond to emergencies in the health sector; and 4) supporting the reconditioning of schools that reopened without adequate facilities, particularly sanitation facilities.

A fifth priority area for action by the Government is rehabilitation of the roads network in the affected areas. The substantial damage to the road and bridge infrastructure continue to pose a challenge to the passage of heavy trucks, with even light rains creating new bottlenecks and restricting access to low-lying areas. In Katakwi and Amuria Districts, damaged secondary and tertiary roads are hampering the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

These priorities have been identified on the basis of progress monitoring and new assessments conducted in the affected areas. Specifically in terms of food security, new Crop and Food Supply (CFSA) and Emergency Food Security (EFSA) Assessments undertaken in November 2007 show that more than 380,000 people will require assistance through July 2008 due to the extended “hunger gap” resulting from the damage to first- and second-season harvests in flood-affected areas. Populations in Teso, Lango and Acholi will require assistance for the entire period, while those in Karamoja will need assistance from April to July. Meanwhile, the results of the Rapid Nutrition Assessment, also conducted in November, show that malnourishment affects 3.1 per cent of children in the Teso region, while 7.6 per cent risk malnutrition. The situation is considered likely to worsen in a short period of time.

In terms of water supply, regular assessments and water quality testing in Teso and Bugisu regions have indicated that overall water contamination levels in the affected area have been exacerbated by as much as three times pre-flood levels. Out of 345 water sources tested, 197 were highly contaminated and 35 moderately contaminated – in other words, 57 per cent of water sources currently present dangerous levels of contamination.

Additionally, the receding water levels are increasing the concentration of bacteria, thereby further increasing the risk of an outbreak of waterborne disease. Any outbreak of cholera was successfully prevented by quick action to preposition cholera prevention kits and disseminate hygiene information and education materials to the population. A marked increase in malaria and dysentery cases was recorded in August and September 2007, although the caseload has since gone down.

With this second progress report, the humanitarian community requests additional support from donors fully to fund the Flash Appeal for the floods. Originally launched on 21 September 2007, the revised US\$ 39.7 million Uganda Floods Flash Appeal is 35 per cent funded, with \$14 million in commitments, as of 11 December 2007.