

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

FLASH APPEAL LAUNCHED FOR FLOOD VICTIMS IN UGANDA

(New York, 21 September 2007): The humanitarian community in Uganda today launched a \$41 million Flash Appeal, in support of the Government, for urgent aid to hundreds of thousands affected by floods in a highly vulnerable part of that country. The flooding in eastern, central and northern Uganda, caused by unusually heavy rainfall since July 2007, has affected many households already dependent on subsistence agriculture and basic services, with the situation being particularly critical in the Teso sub-region. The Flash Appeal is based on requirements for an estimated 50,000 households (300,000 people).

Of those affected, women and children make up the largest number. Most have been rendered food insecure by the loss of the first season harvest, which would have been due in July and August. With the delay of the second planting season, the next successful harvest cannot be expected before February 2008. If the heavy rainfall continues in the most affected areas, it will be further delayed and the standard two-month "hunger gap" could extend up to 10 months. It will take at least two harvests for affected households fully to recover their losses.

"I welcome the active government role in responding to this disaster," said John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. "They have not only dispatched multiple joint Government-UN-NGO assessment missions to the affected areas, but are making Government assets, such as helicopters, available for the response. They have also sent much needed medicine to treat malaria, as well as food."

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. With heavy rain forecast throughout the month of November, the floods may spread, increase the adverse impact on the population already affected, or both.

Many flooded latrines have 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.

Roughly half of the funding from the Appeal will be allocated to food aid, of which most will be channelled through the World Food Programme. Other funding from the Appeal -- sought by other United Nations agencies, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHRC), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) -- will help the humanitarian community and the Government of Uganda meet urgent needs for shelter and non-food items, prevent disease outbreaks, and ensure capacity to respond to health emergencies. Another portion of the funding will go towards to re-establishing food security, re-opening schools, ensuring access to primary education. Humanitarian organizations will also offer support for early recovery over the coming six months.

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