

## **UN LAUNCHES APPEAL FOR FLOOD-AFFECTED BURKINA FASO**

(New York, 11 September 2009): In response to devastating flooding in Burkina Faso, the United Nations and its partners have issued a Flash Appeal for \$18,449,092 for relief efforts to assist 150,000 people for six months.

“I hope donors will respond rapidly to help the survivors of these devastating floods, which have hit many people who were desperately poor to begin with,” said John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. “As the longer-term economic impact is also bound to be serious, assistance now will be crucial for the recovery effort that must follow.”

Since June, heavy rains in several West African countries have caused the loss of almost 160 human lives, and massive destruction of infrastructure. Regionally, some 600,000 people have been affected in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger, Senegal, and Sierra Leone.

While Burkina Faso regularly suffers flooding during the rainy season, the torrential rainfall on 1 September, which caused flooding and widespread displacement within and around the capital, Ouagadougou, was unprecedented.

According to the Government, all five districts of Ouagadougou have been severely affected. Although precise data are hard to establish, the Government estimates that 130,000 people are sheltering in temporary accommodation such as schools, churches and public buildings or living with host families. Destruction or damage has also been reported to the Central University Hospital, bridges, roads, schools, agricultural land and homes. It is estimated that approximately 25,000 houses and 250-300 hectares of cultivated land are destroyed in peri-urban areas of the city. Assessment of affected areas is continuing following reports of significant needs outside the capital.

Most of those affected have lost their homes and other possessions. Even before the disaster, a high proportion were extremely poor, typically earn a living from the informal sector, survive on one meal a day, and now face total destitution. The poorer areas of Ouagadougou, already targeted by a WFP operation in response to the food crisis, have been the worst hit. There has been significant loss of livelihoods, particularly for street traders and small cultivators on the outskirts of the city. They have lost most of their productive assets, and their source of revenue for the coming months has been wiped out.

Immediate needs in Ouagadougou include support for food security, including activities in support of agriculture, health care, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter and non-food items, and education.

In recent years, Burkina Faso has seen a dramatic increase in urban poverty, which doubled between 1994 and 2003. In the last two years, vulnerability has been severely exacerbated in Ouagadougou and other urban areas by the sharp rise in food prices, the cost of fuel, and increased migration. Even before the flooding, more than one in 6 children died before they reached the age of 5.