

Bududa and Bulucheke Situation in the Camps

The rains that culminated into the Bududa tragedy have not lessened and continue to wreak havoc by destruction of crops, houses, roads all over the Bugisu mountain area. This destruction is worsened in the very steep areas of Bududa and the newly created Bulambuli districts. Vast areas continue to experience flooding especially the low lying areas at the foot of the mountain. The Bududa tragedy pulled the attention of the world to that particular area but there is widespread destruction all over the Mt. Elgon ranges.

In the wake of the tragedy, the media helped in drawing the world's attention to the victims and the area and relief supplies were ferried to the camps housing the survivors and the displaced. These donations came from international agencies like the Red Cross and local businesses, government and individual largesse. Such items included the much needed tents to take care of accommodation, food supplies, sanitary items and medical help. However all that changed when the shock caused by the landslide died down. Once the media moved on to the next big story, the world also moved on and the aid fell down to a trickle, mostly from the government's Disaster Preparedness Ministry.

Months after plans to resettle the displaced people were announced, none have been moved due to a number of reasons. These include reluctance by some survivors to relocate from their area of ancestry, and fear of reprisals from the incumbents in the intended areas of resettlement among others. Teams sent out to evaluate the areas of resettlement in Kayunga and Masindi districts (Central and Western Uganda respectively) came back with more reasons not to move basing on the poor or non-existent social amenities like schools and health centers. The government has promised to construct these in the near future. The government also plans to give each family a piece of land and start-up capital and support to construct houses.

However the conditions in the camps now are as appalling as before especially in the rainy season and this is aggravated by the limited help now flowing in from good Samaritans. The private companies that donated a great volume of much needed resources seem to have been doing so for publicity purposes and are now unwilling to commit funds towards the same. The challenges have not gone away with the passage of time. However the people have settled into a semi-permanent psyche as they await their fate. A school has been built for the Community by the Red Cross which has continued to support the school going children. This is the school ACET Mbale intended to work with in training counselors and peer educators among teachers and students. This was aimed at addressing the psychological challenges in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy. However it was not done because according to the resettlement plans, the people would have moved a few weeks after it had begun. After consultations with Red Cross and the Church of Uganda, it was called off and instead plans were put in place to identify and train counselors after the people are resettled.

Water storage and treatment continues to pose a challenge to the camp residents. Because of the nature of the land and its high water table, water-borne diseases are ever-present in such congested conditions. As a result, plastic jelly cans and water treatment tablets are essential at this stage.

Warm clothing especially for children and women is still a major requirement because of the recurrent rain and cold weather. As reported earlier the whole region has borne the brunt of the rains and that has included the areas of Buwabwala in Manafwa district.

Taxi drivers who ply the Mbale–Manafa–Bududa route on Monday 27th September blocked a 32 kilometer stretch in a demonstration against the already poor and rapidly deteriorating state of the road. A journey that would otherwise take 30 minutes takes 2 hours instead and this affects not only passenger transport but also delivery of farm produce to the main markets in Mbale. This is attributed to the rains which have cut off some areas by sweeping away bridges and collapsing others and has made even community transportation like cycling impossible in some areas. Flooding has also been reported widely as well as drowning, crop destruction and animal deaths.

Urgent needs

- Warm clothing
- Food relief.
- Medical care (antenatal, malaria drugs and mosquito nets etc).
- Water treatment and storage apparatus.
- Psychological care (training counselors and peer educators)
- Scholastic materials
- Brick-making machines (to assist them in house construction when they relocate. This would be much appreciated and would be a nice way to get into the communities and work with them)



The remains of a road that has been washed away by the rains in Bududa. Last week there was a demonstration with roads closed off (by annoyed taxi drivers) because the Government had not given the much needed support to make the passable.