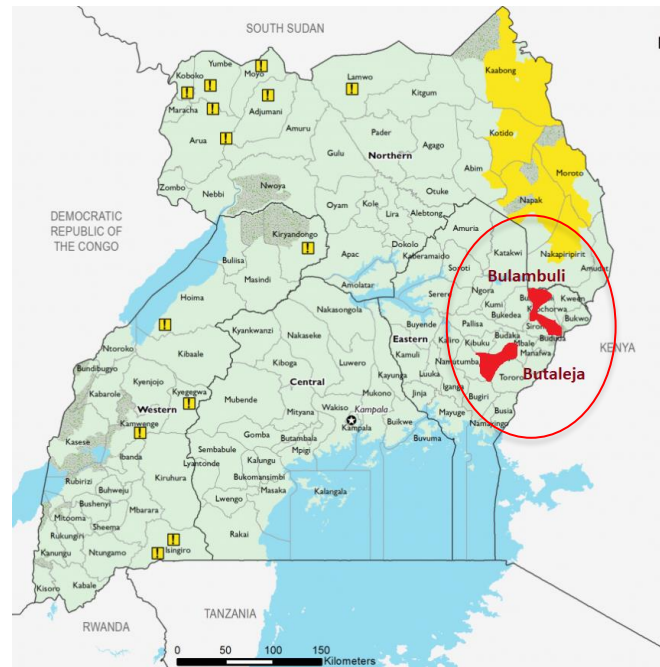


UGANDA

Floods in Bulambuli & Butaleja

Since mid-October, continuous heavy rainfall in Bulambuli and Butaleja districts near Mount Elgon, Eastern Uganda, have caused severe flooding and triggered some mudslides. At least 950 houses have been flooded, leaving more than 4,500 people in need of shelter. Critical infrastructure, including roads, bridges and schools has been damaged and/or destroyed. Some schools have been temporarily closed. Local authorities, communities and some humanitarian (I)NGOs are responding. Priority needs are shelter, food, and WASH assistance.

IPC 2 Food Insecurity Phase (Yellow) in Uganda and flood-affected districts (red) covered in this report



Sources: FEWS NET 09/2019

NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE



IMPACT



Anticipated scope and scale

The most flood-impacted sub-counties in Bulambuli district are **Bulambuli Town Council, Nabongo, and Bwikhonge**; and **Himutu and Mazimasa** in Butaleja district. More heavy rainfall is projected at least until 8 November, increasing the **risk of mud and landslides**. People's coping capacity is reduced due to the impacts of floods since June 2019. Risk of waterborne disease outbreaks, specifically **cholera**, is high due to destruction of WASH facilities and a high likelihood of unclean drinking water.

Key priorities



+4,500
homes destroyed



Flood affected
population in need of food



Destruction
of WASH facilities and risk of unclean drinking water

Limitations

Information on the number of flood-affected people and the extent of damage to critical infrastructure is lacking. National and international organisations have not issued recent reports on their crisis response. Many regions in Uganda have been experiencing floods caused by heavy rainfall since mid-October but this briefing note only focuses on Bulambuli and Butaleja districts.

Humanitarian Constraints



Humanitarian access remains difficult due to flash floods, debris, and ongoing rains. Many bridges have been damaged or are destroyed. Some villages temporarily are inaccessible, mostly in areas where road infrastructure is generally already limited.

Crisis impact

In Eastern Uganda, above-average precipitation rates are marking the peak of the rainy season which normally lasts from mid-August to end November. Continuous heavy rainfall in the past two weeks has caused severe flooding, especially in Bulambuli and Butaleja districts near Mount Elgon (Daily Monitor 28/10/2019; Caritas Uganda 24/10/2019; Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) 23/10/2019, Floodlist 21/10/2019).

After joint initial assessments, the most affected sub-counties in Bulambuli district are Bulambuli Town Council, Nabongo, and Bwikhonge. In Butaleja district Himutu and Mazimasa sub-counties are mostly impacted by floods after the rivers Manafwa and Malaba overflowed (Daily Monitor 28/10/2019; Caritas Uganda 24/10/2019; URCS 23/10/2019; ECHO 23/10/2019). However, due to the lack of reliable data, the lists of most affected districts remain an estimation. It is unclear how many people are in need of assistance in these five sub-counties.

The events mark the third severe flooding in the two districts since June 2019, depleting households' resilience against natural events such as floods and droughts (URCS 23/10/2019; Floodlist 21/10/2019). According to the Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA), who issued flood warning on 25 October for many parts in Uganda, including Eastern region, heavy rainfall is expected to continue (UNMA 25/10/2019). Some sources indicate a continuation until 8 November, raising the risk of additional flooding in these districts (Windy 31/10/2019; NOAA 30/10/2019).

Shelter and NFIs: According to the Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS), floods have destroyed or severely damaged at least 950 houses in both districts. 650 houses in Butaleja district are uninhabitable, leaving around 3,100 people homeless. In Bulambuli districts around 1,400 people are displaced after 300 houses were destroyed (URCS 23/10/2019; Floodlist 21/10/2019). Due to the lack of more comprehensive and recent assessments that are publicly available, the number of people in need of shelter is expected to be higher. Many displaced people are seeking shelter with relatives and neighbours and are in need of NFIs, including blankets, mattresses and cooking utilities (Daily Monitor 26/10/2019).

Food: People living in the area are facing Minimal food insecurity (IPC Phase 1). However, the flood-affected population are in need of food assistance (Caritas Uganda 30/10/2019). First reports indicate that many agricultural fields are flooded. The loss of crops will increase people's immediate food needs among communities. Sorghum and millet, mainly harvested in October to mid-November, was expected to reach near-average rates despite the reduced area planted and late start of the season due to the East African drought in 2019 (FEWS NET/USGS 14/10/2019; Daily Monitor 28/10/2019; Daily Monitor 26/10/2019; Caritas Uganda 24/10/2019). A loss of the anticipated harvest is likely.

Livelihoods: The extent of the damage, and consequently the estimated medium-term impact on people's livelihoods due to loss of agricultural yields, still needs to be assessed (Daily Monitor 28/10/2019; Daily Monitor 26/10/2019; Caritas Uganda 24/10/2019). Trade to bigger urban centres and roadside business are halted, especially in Bulambuli District (UBC 30/10/2019).

WASH: Safe drinking water cannot be insured in the affected districts. There is a high risk of waterborne diseases such as cholera and acute watery diarrhoea. Poor hygiene due to flooded and damaged latrines as well as stagnant water bodies constitutes further health risks such as malaria infections, particularly in areas with poor drainage infrastructure (Daily Monitor 28/10/2019; Caritas Uganda 24/10/2019; Key Informant). 24% of rural Ugandan households don't have access to improved sources of drinking water (CIA Factbook, accessed 31/10/2019). It remains unclear how **health** facilities are affected by the floods.

Education: According to local media sources, some schools were flooded (Caritas Uganda 24/10/2019). At least three schools in the affected sub-counties have been closed. Bunabwire, Buwasheba and Bulengeni primary schools in Bulambuli districts have been closed (Daily Monitor 19/10/2019). It remains unclear if schooling has started.

Vulnerable groups affected

Some research indicates that **women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities (PWD)** are generally more at risk of being impacted by floods and landslides in Uganda due to reduced mobility. Warning messages are often distributed via the radios and might not reach everyone. (Namono et al 02/09/2019; UNDP/GoU 12/2014).

Children are especially vulnerable to increased health risks during events of flooding (UNDP/GoU 12/2014). Around 48% of the total Ugandan population are children under 15 years (CIA Factbook, accessed 31/10/2019).

Culturally embedded gender roles put the burden on women and children of cleaning flooded house and debris, exposing them and the children under their care to contaminated wastewater and waterborne diseases. Pregnancy is a further factor of vulnerability during disasters, due to higher risks of complications (UNDP/GoU 12/2014; Oxfarm 08/2018). Research further confirm that only 3% of the men participated in a gender study in Uganda confirmed having participated in unpaid household activities or care activities, compared to 18.2% of women (Oxfarm 08/2018).

More detailed information on the events and the general lack of age- and gender-disaggregated information on the flood-affected populations makes it difficult to assess particular vulnerabilities.

Humanitarian and operational constraints

Humanitarian access remains difficult due to flash floods, debris, and ongoing rains. Many bridges have been damaged or are destroyed. Key roads and bridges from Kampala to Eastern Uganda are not passible, delaying the distribution of relief items stored in the capital city. Some remote villages are inaccessible, mostly in areas where road infrastructure is generally already limited (Caritas Uganda 24/10/2019; Daily Monitor 1/11/2019; Daily Monitor 3/11/2019). It is expected that roads are only impassable for a few days after the floodwater has subsided. However, there are no reports on the extent to which the flooding has affected infrastructure and public facilities. Especially the status of health facilities in the area remains unknown.

Aggravating factors

Rain forecast and rainy season

Uganda is prone to heavy rainfall that often leads to flash floods in the rainy season. The second rainy season in Eastern Uganda runs mid-August to end November (FEWS NET 09/2019). More heavy rainfall is forecast at least until 8 November (Windy 31/10/2019; NOAA 30/10/2019). Continued (seasonal) rainfall is likely to lead to oversaturation of the soil and, consequently, flooding in new areas.

This forecast is largely influenced by the positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), forming cyclone-like storms in the Arabian Sea that are travelling towards East Africa. The events and its relationship to El-Nino are still unclear and remain subject to research. Consequently, long-term prediction cannot be made. The differences in sea temperature, the main driver of the IOD, is, however, the largest since 2001, and continuous wet conditions in East Africa are therefore likely (TNH 22/10/2019; The East Africa 20/10/2019).

Type and location of housing

Houses in rural areas across Uganda tend to be built from a mud and stone (or brick) combination. Housing quality is poor and often built informally due to population growth. The housing structures make them susceptible to heavy damage during strong rains and floods (UN-Habitat 03/2017).

Many houses are built on hillslopes in the valleys around Mount Elgon. Volcanic activity around Mount Elgon over thousands of years led to weak and porous soils. This has made the area prone to landslides, exacerbated by the deforestation and overpopulation in recent years (Daily Monitor 15/10/2018). The risk of landslides following rain is increased, exposing people living on hillsides. (Namono et al 02/09/2019). Estimates on people at risk of landslides in the two districts are not available.

Heightened vulnerabilities due to past floods and landslides

After long dry spells in the first half of 2019, Eastern Uganda region has experienced above-average rainfall. Since June, rivers have been overflowing and flash floods occurred regularly around Mount Elgon, including at least in Bulambuli district. Even though the extent of the impact remains mainly unassessed, people's livelihoods were likely impacted due to loss of seeds, crops, or food stored, increasing their vulnerabilities to new shocks. Floods are common after severe and long spells as the soil cannot absorb high amounts of water.

Floods since June 2019: Heavy rain caused a river to overflow triggering a deadly landslide in Bulambuli District, damaging many houses and interrupt and delayed crop planting. At least one person died and five people went missing. Occasional flooding and landmass movement continued throughout August in the region (Floodlist 31/08/2019; New Vision 30/08/2019; UGRC/IFRC 18/06/2019). As of 2 September, several landslides and flooding across Bulambuli district resulted in at least one death and 10 people missing (ECHO 02/09/2019). Many people have not yet recovered from damages and losses previous flood and mudslides have caused (Key Informant).

Landslides October 2018: The region around Mount Elgon experienced heavy rains in October 2018 that triggered many mud- and landslides. The extent of the damage remains mainly unknown, especially for small mudslides that have caused no fatalities. In neighbouring Bududa district, at least 41 people died in floods and due to a series of landslides on 11 October 2018 (Act Alliance 15/10/2018; The Guardian 12/10/2018). The displaced population are still waiting for aid promised by the central government (Daily Monitor 10/06/2019). The risk of mud- and landslides in the area remains extremely high.

Risk of Cholera outbreak

Since June 2019, the Ministry of Health declared a cholera outbreak in Bududa district, neighbouring to Bulambuli district with at least 66 cases reported (as of 2 September) (MoH, accessed 31/10/2019). As the disease is present in the area, standing water bodies and the lack of unsafe drinking water increases the risk of disease spread.

Key characteristics

- **Demographic profile:** Butaleja district: 278,000 people
 - Bulambuli district: 208,500 people
- **Food security figures:** Butaleja and Bulambuli districts face Minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity outcomes in October 2019.
- **WASH:** Access to improved drinking water (national): 79% total 96% urban 76% rural
- Access to improved sanitation facilities (national): 19% total 28.5% urban 17% rural
- **Health:** Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births): 343
 - Infant mortality ratio (per 1,000 infants): 49
- **Lighting and cooking sources** (national): 94% of the households used firewood or charcoal for cooking
- **Literacy levels** (national): 72.2% (of the population aged 10 years and above)

Source: World Factbook 2018; FEWS NET 09/2019; UNHCR projections 2018 after Census 2014; UNFPA 2017

Response capacity

Local and national response capacity

Generally, the response capacity is strong in Uganda, with organised and experienced local and national organisations in place. The Uganda Red Cross Society plays a key role in the local response. However, funding gaps from international donors as well as the lack of (financial) support by the central government might cause constraints.

The Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA) issued a heavy rainfall warning alert over most parts of Uganda between 26 to 30 October. It remains challenging to reach people in rural areas with awareness raising programmes due to poor communication facilities and lack of programmes. Early warning alerts, often distributed via radios, might not reach all households at risk (Key Informant).

The Ugandan government announced on 28 October that it has distributed relief items to several parts of flood-affected regions, including tons of rice, bales of blankets, jerrycans and sleeping-mats among others (Xinhua 29/10/2019). However, as many parts in Eastern and Western Uganda are affected by floods it remains unknown which region and how many people are supported if the provided humanitarian items are addressing people's needs.

The Bulambuli district health officer in cooperation with village health teams, made up of volunteers, have distributed water tablets to the locals as a precautionary measure (Daily Monitor 26/10/2019). Local authorities are further encouraging the at-risk population to dig drainage channels to divert river water to nearby streams (Daily Monitor 26/10/2019).

International response capacity

International organisations have not issued recent reports on their crisis response. Among others, Caritas Uganda and Plan Uganda are involved in responding to the floods (Caritas Uganda 24/10/2019).

Information gaps and needs

- Numbers of people in need of humanitarian assistance are unclear. Age- and gender-disaggregated data on the affected population is lacking.
- The number of houses destroyed, as well as people who are temporarily displaced remain estimations.
- Impact on critical infrastructure, especially which roads are impassable and destroyed bridges is lacking. Information on the status of health facilities in the flood-affected areas is not known.
- Most information for this report is based on local media and social media outlets from national and international NGOs. Triangulation, especially for numbers was not possible.
- Medium- and long-term impacts from past flood events from 2018 and 2019 in the two districts are not known.
- **It is unclear if more detailed assessments are planned.**