

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT ON THE OVERFLOW OF RIVER NYAMWAMBA IN KASESE DISTRICT



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While many frameworks have been used to assess resilience, there is no unifying framework for understanding resilience in sub-Saharan Africa. Climate disruptions are having devastating impacts on human lives and livelihoods, and demand urgent and concerted responses. This requires cooperation of local, national and global stakeholders and people from all generations and walks of life. Failure will mean that the young people of today and the generations to follow will face increasingly severe climate disruptions likely to impact every facet of their lives.

Our understanding of climate change must consider its impacts on those most vulnerable to severe climate disruption – particularly young people in Africa. This report documents the diverse livelihood strategies of flood affected community people living in Kasese District, the impacts of climate change on their lives, and the adaptation and mitigation strategies that they have employed to address the crisis so far. By safe guarding views of our respondents, this Report presents a vivid picture of how climate disruptions are already impacting people living in the Flood affected communities. These impacts are set to intensify in the coming decades.

Theory of Change for this Report aims at strengthening the resilience of people and systems in Kasese District by leveraging the knowledge, skilling and creativity that exists across the Foundation to incubate, test and scale innovations that target capabilities and reduce vulnerabilities identified by a scientific, data-driven and evidenced-based resilience framework for Kasese District flood affected communities that reduces vulnerability and increases wellbeing of people.



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Location

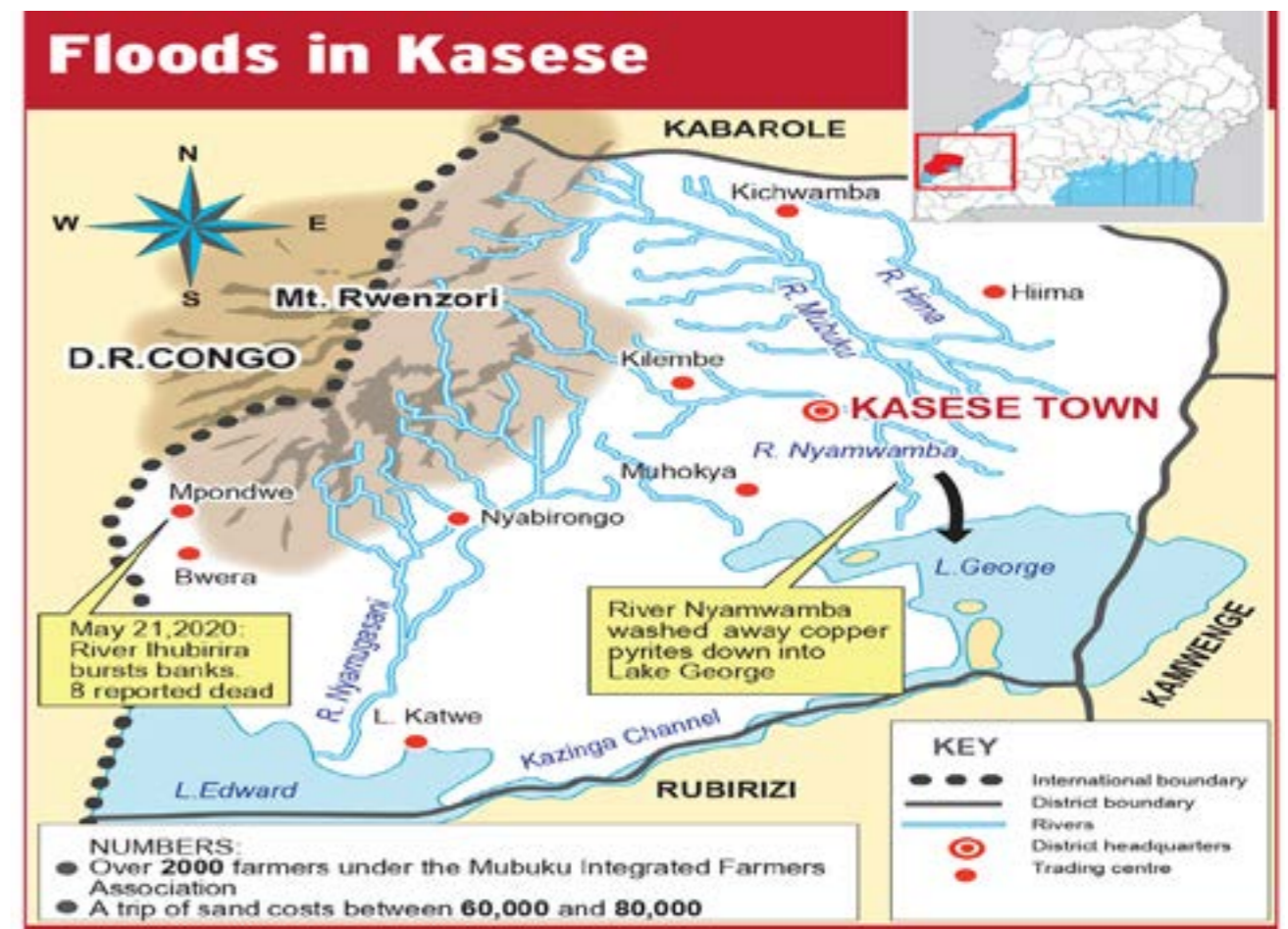
Kasese District is located in Western Uganda and it is bordered by Bundibugyo District to the North, Bunyangabu District to North East, Kamwenge District to the South East, Rubirizi District to the South and DRC to the West.

Kasese district has suffered brunt of occurrences of landslides and floods. The latest incident happened on May 10th 2020 and due to the increased rains that have been experienced in the areas in the last two years, River Nyamwamba including other rivers in the area have burst their banks leading to occasional flooding and landslides in the mountainous areas, the boulders of Kilembe mines hospital were destroyed, buildings and a total of 15 schools were destroyed, roads both tarmac and gravel were destroyed, Nyamwamba small hydro- power project camp was shuttered , numerous domestic water supply systems such as boreholes, protected springs and water treatment plants were destroyed.

Pit latrines and handwashing facilities were washed away which is a recipe for public health disaster, health facilities were completely destroy, this resulted into internal displacement of persons, scattered and hosted at various Institutions-schools and churches, and some with relatives. Until of recent the people of Kasese area have entirely depended on the river as the main sources of water for both agriculture and domestic use, people get water from the river for irrigation of their subsistence farms.

Whereas local governments have tried to provide some aid to the communities, the Foundation is committed to aid the communities to ensure sustainability of the communities.

Wilmat Development Foundation as an organization that operates in various communities of Kasese district as part of the areas of operation carried out a mission to the vulnerable communities that are frequently affected by floods every time heavy downpour occurs to carry out an assessment of the situation.



Population Within The Nyamwamba River Area:

The population along River Nyamwamba is estimated at 64,100 according to Uganda Bureau of Statistics report in 2020 with 31,000 males and 33,100 females not considering the population increase from refugees' host communities.

General Objective of the Assessment:

The field mission was aimed at carrying out an assessment of the current state of the vulnerable communities as a result of the catastrophic floods due to the overflow of River Nyamwamba along with the need to understand the impact of the existing relief in place that is provided by various stakeholders to communities in the event that flooding and landslides occurrences as lives and properties have been lost along with businesses disrupted hence increasing poverty levels and vulnerability in the district.

Specific Objectives of the Assessment:

- i. Observe the state of the river banks and the surrounding community settlements.
- ii. Ascertain the Socio-Economic and demographic information within the affected communities around River Nyamwamba.
- iii. Assess the preparedness of the communities to handle flooding and other disasters are frequent in the area.

Mobilization Strategy:

The Wilmat Development Foundation (WDF) working together with the village leaders reached out directly to the affected communities during the mission. During the site visits, the villages that were assessed included but not limited to; - Kanyangeya, Nyakasanga, Saluti, Nyakatozi, Kibenge, Kizungu, Acholi Quarters, Road-Barrier, Rukoki, Kyondo, Kilembe, Katiki, Karusandara that are mostly affected by the overflow of River Nyamwamba during and after heavy downpour.

The village leaders were focal in mobilizing respective correspondents for this engagement who wholeheartedly showed willingness to participate in the quest to find community led approaches in solving the challenges at hand.



State of the river bank:

From the field mission, we observed that a small section of the Nyamwamba River bank was built with gabions (rocks piled vertically) aimed at stopping the flooding. We however noted that this was done only at the sections where there is a public infrastructure such as Main Road (Kasese – Fort Portal Road), schools, although not all infrastructure was protected by this initiative. From our engagement with the local leaders, this was done by the local governments within the area.



Figure 1: Gabions along some sections of the banks of River Nyamwamba



Figure 2: Open banks of the River Nyamwamba



SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

During the field mission, we note the following:-

i) Limited water supply;

There is limited supply of clean water within the communities. One tap stand serves a population of over 400 people and the neighboring community. The water source is located far. It was also noted that on various water sources, the water quality is highly affected by the microbial pollution with the occurrence of physicochemical parameters and heavy metals above the permissible standards make it unsafe for drinking. This has greatly affected human health in the affected communities and has led to the outbreak of water borne diseases like typhoid, cholera, dysentery, acute gastroenteritis and hepatitis A.

Such pathogenic agents are directly transmitted to human beings when fiscally contaminated water is used for drinking, preparing food, domestic or recreation purposes. The situation has been worsened by the presence of Covid-19 pandemic that has increased pressure on the existing limited resources that the affected communities are striving to survive on from time to time without proper plans for sustainable usage.



Figure 3: water source and women sharing a jerrycan of water to wash their hands

ii) Shortage of Food Supply;

The occurrences of floods washed much of the crops, livestock and hundreds of homes when River Nyamwamba that flows from Rwenzori burst its banks ravaging property in the Kilembe Valley area.

After devastating floods, affected communities in the district are still grappling with a severe drought that has damaged food crop production and supply.

Local Leaders especially in the visited communities of the district at the foot of Rwenzori are more concerned about the fluctuating food supply chains, the existence of food shortage and the resultant hunger.

Children, mothers, and adults are spending days on empty stomach, and this may result into malnutrition or death. This is as a result of destruction of the houses, crops and other sources of income due to floods and landslides.

iii) Lack of Sanitary Pads for Women and Girls;

In Uganda, as with many other countries around the world, Covid-19 has resulted in an increased rate of teenage pregnancy.

In order to gain basic necessities like sanitary towels, girls have engaged in transactional sex with men who take advantage of their need for money. This comes down to limited income as these are unaffordable to the communities especially the vulnerable girls and women.

This has resulted into increased absenteeism of girls from schools and others end up dropping out. For some, the inconvenience of menstruation causes them to drop out of school altogether, making them far more likely to end up in early marriages or become teenage mothers. Often marriage is seen as the best solution for coping with the expense of managing periods.

iv) Inadequacy in supply of both Laundry, and liquid soap;

Floods damage, isolate and disrupt people's standards of living more so without proper response and management of affected communities from stakeholders.

With thousands of households still displaced in overcrowded resettlement camps in Kasese District in western Uganda due to the floods that hit the area, many of these households do not have access to relevant basic skills of life.

This is attributed to unaffordability and it has resulted into poor sanitation and hygiene within the communities.



Figure 4: Destroyed households in Kanyangeya Community, Kasese District.

v) Inadequacy in both household and farm tools like pangas;

It is worthy noting that most of these displace persons are subsistence farmers, growing crops for consumption. The destruction of their property including crops has greatly retarded their subsistence farming.

Provision of tools to aid their resumption of activities will not only provide food but also enable them earn some income from the sale of the surplus produce

vi) Limited lighting in the communities;

Since 2013, the district has been grappling with floods that often cause river banks to burst. The increase in heavy rainfall is attributed to the changing climate patterns and rapid loss of forest cover, due to trees being cut down to be used as fuel.

The rate of forest cover loss in Uganda stands at 2.6% annually, one of the highest in the world. According to the 2016/17 Uganda National Household Survey, more than 80% of Uganda’s rural households use firewood for cooking.

The high demand for wood fuel and limited access to energy saving alternatives means that forest cover is at risk of continued degradation.

There is limited lighting within the affected communities partly due to destruction of power lines by floods, absence of power and unaffordability of Pico solar lighting.



Figure 4: Destroyed power lines in flooded area and People trying to divert flood water from their compounds and houses in Kasese District, Western Uganda.



i) River bank stabilization;

The open river banks should be stabilized through tree planting along the entire banks. These will reduce the flood velocity and facilitate run off penetration into the ground as well as reducing the impacts of the drain on the ground. Tree planting will also be carried out on the raised areas to stabilize the soil and prevent landslides. The fruit trees planted will also be a source of food once mature and fruiting to the communities.

ii) Training in Climate Smart Agriculture;

As a result of land fragmentation within the communities, not large enough pieces. This therefore calls for effective sustainable agriculture on the available small pieces of land say through training on back-yard farming, vertical gardening among other simple approaches. This can be achieved through training and provision of good quality inputs such as seedlings and manure.

iii) Provision of water harvesting equipment;

In order to address the challenge of limited water supply, there should be provision of water harvesting equipment like tanks for people to diversify their water sources by collecting some from the rain.

iv) Provision of Pico solar light for home use;

In order to address the issue of darkness, there is need to provide these small home use solar lights to the vulnerable communities. These are affordable and readily available on the market.

v) Training in reusable sanitary pad making;

Since one of the difficulties vulnerable young girls and women face is the lack and unaffordability of the sanitary pads, it is important to train and teach girls within the communities on how to make re-usable sanitary pads to enhance their sanitation. This again will further promote the economic standing of the communities as these can be sold to earn a source of living.

vi) Training in liquid soap making;

Liquid soap making will not only enhance the sanitation and hygiene of the displaced camps but also be a source of income to the communities through the sale of the soap.

vii) Revival of Community Disaster Management Committees;

Community Disaster management committees have been dormant for long without proper capacity building on information management, dissemination, rescue and case by case handling. These need to be revived and set in motion through the new efforts by the Foundation with close relations with the district management Committees and Parish teams.



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