



## Effectiveness of Disaster Management and Disaster Risk Reduction in Uganda. What are the challenges?

### Overview

The Government of Uganda (GoU) through the Second National Development Plan (NDP II) 2015/16 – 2019/20 prioritized reduction on the impact of natural disasters and emergencies through the following interventions:

- Developing a disaster risk profile and vulnerability map of the country.
- Coordinating the development and implementation of disaster mitigation and preparedness plans in all local governments (LGs).
- Coordinating regular disaster vulnerability assessments at community level, hazard forecasting and dissemination of early warning messages.
- Resettling landless communities and victims of disasters.
- Coordinating timely responses to disasters and emergencies, and providing food and non-food relief to disaster victims.
- Coordinating other state and non-state actors in fulfilling their mandates towards disaster issues.

Disaster Management is defined as the organization and management of resources and responsibilities for dealing with all humanitarian aspects of emergencies, in particular preparedness, response and recovery in order to lessen the impact of disasters.

Disaster risk reduction on the other hand is a systematic approach to identifying, assessing and reducing the risks of disaster.

This policy brief examines the effectiveness of disaster management and disaster risk reduction, the challenges

### Introduction

The Department of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees Management in the Office of Prime Minister (OPM) facilitates collaboration among ministries, LGs and communities for disaster preparedness and management. Uganda's disaster risk profile is linked to hydro weather-related hazards (droughts and floods) and acute levels of vulnerability. Civil strife plays a significant role in the displacement of people,

### Key Issues

- Lack of a law to govern disaster risk reduction and management.
- The Contingency Fund has not yet been operationalized since the PFM Act, 2015 was enacted into law.
- The Government is still spending the bulk of its resources on managing and responding to disaster as opposed to managing and reducing disaster risk.
- Lack of funding at LG level directed towards disaster management, preparedness and prevention has rendered the implementation of the District Contingency Plans highly impracticable.
- Insufficient funding has delayed implementation of projects such as construction of resettlement houses for Internally Displaced Persons.

with mismanagement of the environment leading to landslides and degradation. The effects of disasters have been profound on the people, their livelihood and the country's economy.

Being an active partner in the international disaster risk reduction domain, Uganda is a signatory to the Hyogo Framework for Action, the Africa Regional Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy, the IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI) Strategy, the African Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and its Plan of Action (ARSDRR), the East African Community (EAC) Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Strategy (2012-2016), and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015.

This indicated a new era for Uganda and other African states in the management of disasters and their risks. The Hyogo Framework for Action (and now SFDRR) and ARSDRR provided a robust framework which empowered governments to address issues of disaster risk and disaster risk reduction in a holistic and multi-sectoral nature.



However, currently Uganda does not have a national law governing disaster risk reduction and management and its alignment with new international thinking. It has shown significant political commitment to disaster risk reduction and management over the past decade. This is evident in her efforts to mainstream disaster risk reduction and management, and climate change adaptation into her development planning, as well as the adoption of the 2011 National Policy for Disaster Preparedness and Management.

This policy is very tolerant in its provisions for the management and reduction of risk in the country. Its goal is to “establish institutions and mechanisms that will reduce the vulnerability of people, plants and wildlife to disasters in Uganda.” The policy provides for the roles of various Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government in the management of risk.

As this policy undergoes revision to be fully aligned to the Sendai Framework (OPM, 2015), it is imperative that it completely provides the framework for Uganda to completely shift from managing disasters to managing risk.

A significant emphasis on decentralized disaster risk reduction and management in the NDPII is noticeable. NDPII highlights the need to develop and implement robust early warning systems and disaster preparedness plan for resilience building. It makes mention of the Contingency Fund and its purpose in the event of a disaster among others. Several targets of the NDPII include the integration of disaster risk reduction and management practices into development planning.

Uganda among other countries operates under the SFDRR, 2015-2030 which has four major building priority areas and these are: Understanding disaster risk; Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk; Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience; and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. All four priority areas reveal reduction of risk as the principle behind the Sendai Framework of which Uganda has made significant progress as shown below.

A *National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction* is functional and meets monthly. Currently 75% of the districts have functional Disaster Management Committees. An operational National Emergency Coordination and Operations Center (NECOC) is also in place. It has developed and published multi hazard risk profiles and maps for 116 districts in Uganda.

The establishment of the District Disaster Management Committees is instrumental in institutionalizing the early warning systems at LG level. The committees are functional and at the forefront of managing disaster preparedness and prevention in their respective districts.

District Contingence Plans have also been developed as one of the strategies in place to prepare, mitigate and prevent natural disasters. Some districts have mapped common disasters in their areas, and taken action including resettling some of the people from the worst affected areas, as well as soliciting for funds from development partners to fund their risk reduction.

### Disaster Preparedness, Management and Refugees Program financing

From FY 2015/16 to FY 2018/19, the program GoU budget was Ug shs 57.17 billion, of which Ug shs 82.47 billion (144%) was released, and Ug shs 79.94 billion (97%) spent by semi-annual FY 2018/19. The high release and expenditure is due to the occurrences of supplementary budgets in FY 2015/16 and FY 2016/17, and a relocation in FY 2017/18 for procuring relief and food for drought affected areas in the country (table 1).

**Table 1: Disaster Preparedness, Management and Refugees GoU Budget allocations and expenditures in Ug shs billions from FY 2015/16 to semi-annual FY 2018/19**

FY	Budget	Release	Expenditure	Supplementary
2018/19	12.18	7.45	6.7	0
2017/18	11.9	13.14	13.12	1.24
2016/17	12.56	36.14	36.91	23.58
2015/16	20.53	25.74	23.21	5.21
<b>Totals</b>	<b>57.17</b>	<b>82.47</b>	<b>79.94</b>	<b>30.03</b>

Source: MFPEP, Vote Performance Reports from FY 2015/16 to FY 2018/19

## Case study: Humanitarian Assistance Project

Since FY 2015/16, the Budget Monitoring and Accountability Unit (BMAU) has been carrying out monitoring activities for the Humanitarian Assistance sub-programme to assess performance. Funds are spent on two main outputs namely: Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) returned and resettled, refugees settled and repatriated, and provision of relief food and nonfood items to disaster victims.

The Government acquired the 2,868 acres of land in FY 2014/15, as part of its 10-year resettlement plan. By April 2019, construction of 101 houses for the relocation of the Bududa landslide victims in Bunambutye sub-county, Bulambuli District were completed. The resettlement of households is ongoing.



Resettled family in Bulambuli District

## Challenges

1) **Lack of a law to govern disaster risk reduction and management:** Currently Uganda does not have a national law governing disaster risk reduction and management, and its alignment with international thinking although a National Policy for Disaster Preparedness and Management exists. All operations geared towards disaster risk reduction and management are currently governed by provisions in different sector laws that are well documented (NECOC, 2015). Uganda's 1995 Constitution under its XXIII social and economic objective provides that "The State shall institute effective machinery for dealing with any hazard or disaster arising out of natural calamities or any situation resulting in general displacement of people or serious disruption of their normal life."

The Uganda National Disaster Preparedness and Management Act, draft Bill is yet to be tabled before Parliament.

- 2) **Disaster Preparedness and Management Commission is not yet operationalized:** Uganda's Constitution (Article 249) also provides for the establishment of a Disaster Preparedness and Management Commission "to deal with both natural and man-made disasters", which is yet to be operationalized. Without a specific law to govern government's work on disasters, the composition of such a committee is not defined and neither are its specific duties
- 3) **Inconsistency in operationalizing the Contingency Fund:** The Public Finance Management Act, (PFM Act, 2015 as amended) establishes a Contingency Fund in Section 26. The Fund must be replenished every year with an amount equal to 3.5% of the Government's annual budget. 15% of the Fund is ring fenced for disaster response and management, although more than this may be used. However, the Fund has not yet been operationalized since the PFM Act, 2015 was enacted into law. Section 26, however, is silent on the use of the Fund for disaster risk reduction purposes. This is one area which might need more attention in a new disaster risk reduction and management bill.
- 4) **Financing disaster more than managing and reducing disaster:** The Government is still spending the bulk of its resources on managing and responding to disaster, as opposed to managing and reducing disaster risk. However, it could also be driven by the perpetual nature of some disasters faced in parts of Uganda such as the floods in Kasese and Teso, the landslides in Bududa and drought in Karamoja sub-region. These naturally occurring hazards continue to affect many Ugandans annually despite their relatively predictable patterns.
- 5) **No direct funding to LGs:** The LGs are at the forefront of dealing with disasters, prevention and preparedness, however, they lack funding specific



to these functions. Those that have some available local revenue often allocate this to respond to disasters, however, since these resources are meagre and the LGs often find themselves reaching out to development partners and OPM for assistance.

The limited funding or lack thereof at LG level directed towards disaster management, preparedness and prevention has rendered implementation of the District Contingency Plans highly impracticable.

### Conclusion

Given the effects that disasters have on economies and individuals, there is need to have disaster risk reduction mainstreamed into government policies, plans and programmes. While this has been attained through policies underpinned by a greater understanding of the effects of disasters on economies and livelihood, Uganda continues to face challenges in managing disasters and reducing risk. At the heart of these challenges are the limited funds.

Advancing disaster risk reduction and resilience in Uganda can only be fully effective if engrained in law, as adopted by the National Policy for Disaster Preparedness and Management.

### Recommendations

1. The OPM should ensure that the draft Bill governing disaster risk reduction and management tabled before Parliament is expedited. A specific Act of Parliament ought to be enacted to operationalize the provision for a National law governing disaster risk reduction and management. The implementation of the various international treaties and frameworks in Uganda should therefore occur through a proper law governing national implementation
2. The OPM should expedite the process operationalizing Uganda's Constitution (Article 249) that provides for the establishment of a Disaster Preparedness and Management Commission "to deal with both natural and man-made disasters".

3. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED), and Parliament should operationalize the Contingency Fund. Provision in the new bill must be made for accessing the Contingencies Fund as per the PFMA. Section 26 needs clarity on how the 15% composition of the Contingencies Fund for disaster preparedness and response can/should be utilized to finance Uganda's Disaster response.
4. The MFPED should allocate LGs a specific grant directed towards disaster. Alternatively, OPM should ensure disaster elements are incorporated into the grant allocation formulae for LGs in order to make mainstreaming disaster preparedness, management and prevention into sector budgets more effective.
5. The MFPED should consider incorporating a disaster prevention component in all conditional grants transferred to LGs. The merit of this approach is that such a criterion in the grant allocation formulae ensures that districts affected by disasters are the main beneficiaries of such financing in light of the limited nature of resources.

### References

1. MFPED, Budget Monitoring Reports, FY 2018/19.
2. The Office of the Prime Minister Ministerial Policy Statement for FY 2018/19
3. MFPED, Performance Reports from FY 2015/16-2018/19
4. National Development Plan (NDP II) 2015/16 – 2019/20
5. The National Policy for Disaster Preparedness and Management, 2011
6. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030)
7. Financing Mechanisms for Disaster Preparedness, Mitigation and Prevention in Uganda; Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG)

Budget Monitoring and Accountability Unit  
Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic  
Development  
Plot 2-12 Apollo Kaggwa Road  
[www.finance.go.ug](http://www.finance.go.ug)