



NDYS in Action, Newsletter

Natural Disaster Youth Summit Monthly News

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Vol # 37
July 15, 2009

The VOICE of YOUTH is NEEDED!

Editor: Daniel Paz,
Salta, Argentina



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Wisdom in the world on Disaster Reduction
The actual situation in Africa.

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People manage to make bad effects decrease as better they can.

Heavy rains have caused flooding in Benin, Liberia, Ghana and Gambia since the start of the rainy season in late June according to governments and non-profits. Higher-than-average rainfall is expected this season in the southern Gulf of Guinea zone, including parts of Ghana, Togo, Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Equatorial Guinea and coastal Nigeria said the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Governments and non-profits are responding to floods in the following countries:

BENIN

Heavy rains hit in late June causing heavy flooding in the south of the country, especially in coastal regions. Some 2,000 houses and several schools were submerged, and 13,464 people affected, according to the Benin Red Cross. The government of Benin declared its first state of emergency in recent years.

A crisis coordination cell, led by the government with UN agency and NGO participants, has been meeting daily to monitor the situation. An initial assessment from the Geneva-based UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team estimated 43 of the country's 77 communes have been affected. "We are looking for more information to indicate where we need to go. We are focusing on areas that have not yet been assessed," said the head of the UNDAC coordination team, Ingrid Nordström-Ho, the IFRC, government representatives and NGOs will carry out further rapid assessments on 15 and 16 July.

The IFRC launched a disaster appeal on 10 July to help provide shelter, food, medicines, teaching materials, and construction materials to affected people in Benin. Its partner, the Benin Red Cross, started distributing non-food-items to Cotonou residents on 13 July, aiming to reach 5,200 people.



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GAMBIA

A 2 July storm hit Banjul, the capital of Gambia, destroying hundreds of houses according to the IFRC. The non-profit is providing roofing materials to 150 families for home repairs.

GHANA

June storms killed at 13 and displaced hundreds in the capital, Accra, and the Central and Volta regions, destroying homes and businesses and prompting the government national disaster management committee, NADMO, to respond. But gaps in response have led the IFRC to distribute shelter kits and cooking equipment to 1,000 families in flood-affected areas. NADMO, NGOs and the IFRC are currently assessing the situation to see if further help is needed.

“The government’s emergency coordination mechanism in Ghana is well-established, so this is our response for now, but we may step up depending on whether the needs change,” said IFRC’S West Africa disaster management coordinator, Youcef Ait-Chellouche. NGOs will also be monitoring potential crop damage due to floods in the eastern Volta region said the IFRC.

LIBERIA

Heavy rains in early July displaced hundreds of residents from their homes on the outskirts of the capital, Monrovia, according to the government. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf set up an emergency task force headed by the Ministry of the Interior to lobby for relief assistance. Thus far the government has provided food to those displaced in Monrovia’s suburbs. Two other counties affected by floods are Grand Cape Mount in the northwest on the Sierra Leone border, where 1,500 residents have been displaced in the town Sowie, and Grand Gedeh in the southeast, according to local authorities.

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End of food aid?

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President Barack Obama wants the United States, the world's largest provider of food aid, to focus on agricultural development in the countries it helps support, rather than having them remain recipients. "Quite simply, this change in mindset is that food security is part of national security," said a factsheet issued by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA); this new approach had already begun to unfold in strife-torn, food-deficit Afghanistan and Pakistan. "This welcome and substantial shift of resources into long-term food security programming marks an important break from past policy," said Chris Barrett, an expert on food aid who teaches development economics at Cornell University. This "very important strategic shift" towards supporting agriculture "merits widespread applause".



The idea is completely questionable
but...what is next?

The move comes hot on the heels of the 2008 food price crisis, which prompted the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to call for better governance of food security. The number of hungry climbed to more than a billion in June 2009 while the economic crisis kept reducing the affordability of food, prompting FAO to urge the G8, a group of eight of the world's richest countries meeting in L'Aquila, Italy, to devote 17 percent of their official development assistance (ODA) to agriculture in needy countries.

A similar allocation of funds had led to the successful Green Revolution of the 1970s, which prevented looming famine in Asia and Latin America, FAO reminded the gathering. USDA has appointed agricultural experts to 13 provincial reconstruction teams in Afghanistan since the beginning of 2009, and hopes to more than triple this number if Obama's request for funds is approved by the US Congress.

Political unrest, recurring natural disasters and high food prices in Afghanistan have left 31 percent of the population without enough food, according to the World Food Programme (WFP). Similar events and conditions have also affected food security in Pakistan, where more than 80 percent of the population earns less than \$2 a day. Under a new strategy, led by Obama and US Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, the USDA will help Pakistan and Afghanistan conduct research to improve the production of fruit, nuts, livestock and other agricultural products, and reduce post-harvest loss.

The department will also help develop corridors along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which will not only facilitate cross-border trade but increase the potential for Afghan and Pakistani agricultural products to be exported to other countries.

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At the recent G20 Summit in the United Kingdom, Obama announced that he would ask the US Congress to double financial support for agricultural development in poor countries to \$1 billion in 2010. "A portion of the additional resources [in Obama's proposed support package] is designed to support multilateral efforts to provide rapid assistance for farmers and the rural poor," said the USDA fact sheet.

Since January 2008, the G8 has committed over \$10 billion to short-, medium- and long-term support of food aid, nutrition interventions, social protection activities and boosting agricultural output. The G8 have affirmed their commitment to support agriculture in developing countries and said \$13 billion of the pledged funds had been disbursed.

However, Gawain Kripke, spokesman for the UK-based development agency, Oxfam, said: "We already know that around nine of the \$13 billion they disbursed since January 2008 to tackle the food crisis was nothing more than recycled cash. This is unacceptable when more than 1 billion people are going hungry. This G8 must not be 'business as usual', and take urgent action."



Comments: As we can see the period for disasters in Africa is back and this time I wish things were different but I am afraid not. We have a clear vision which tells us things will get worst if we don't really take actions!

About the idea of making poor countries to develop their own food for me it's good idea, because that creates the sense of "independence", so that people can rely more in themselves.

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"Communication saves lives!"