Elaboration of a National Disaster Preparedness Plan

Earth tremors whose impact has been felt in Nairobi has triggered a reflection on national preparedness and capacity in the event of a major disaster.

A team of Geologists from the University of Nairobi travelled to Ol Donyo Lengai near Lake Natron, believed to be the epicenter of the tremors for a fact finding mission. The experts surmised that the tremors could be caused by either a gradual release of pressure in the volcano, other seismic activity or movement of the earth’s crust.

National capacities to respond to a major earthquake are currently inadequate. In this regard, government authorities through the Ministry of Special Programmes have embarked on a national preparedness exercise which involves both Government and non-government entities in strengthening structures and mechanisms for disaster management in the country.

A smaller committee was constituted to develop an action plan. The members of this committee include the Department of Geology, Kenya Armed Forces, National Disaster Operation Centre (NOC), World Vision, Kenya Red Cross, UNICEF, UN OCHA and St James Ambulance Service as well as other line Ministries. Several meetings have been conducted since early August and the team is now in the final stages of preparing for a National Contingency Plan Retreat which will involve partners from all sectors and line ministries. The retreat is expected to contextualize existing disasters in Kenya, build scenarios and elaborate emergency response mechanisms for sudden-onset and slow onset disasters as well as conflicts.

In addition, the National Disaster Operation Centre and members of the Committee have organized several missions to regions recently affected by emergencies in order to understand underlying causes and recommend appropriate interventions.

Other assessment missions have been undertaken to flood prone area of Budalangi and landslide affected areas of Kakamega, Busia and Kerio Valley. The National Disaster Operation Center has been in the forefront in responding to all these crises.

1This report is prepared based on information received from UN agencies in Kenya, International NGOs, the Kenya Red Cross Society and other humanitarian agencies in the country.
Floods in Western Kenya

Following heavy rains in Western Province and within the adjoining highlands of Cherangani, Nandi and Mount Elgon; Nzoia River broke its banks on Wednesday 15 August 2007 causing flooding in the lowland areas of Busia District and Budalangi in particular. Five deaths were confirmed and nine sub-locations affected of which 7 were completely marooned resulting in the displacement of a total of 18,000 inhabitants. According to reports by the National Disaster Operation Centre, there has been considerable damage to infrastructure as 2 main roads and 2 bridges were damaged; 3 schools and 4 health centres were also damaged while others were used as relief centres.

The government through the National Disaster Operations Centre (NOC) is coordinating the response which is mainly being implemented by the Kenya Red Cross, MSF-France, MSF-Spain and World Vision International. Other partners active in the response include the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Water with donations from WHO and UNICEF. The government provided a helicopter to facilitate the airlifting of food and other relief items; the Kenya Red Cross received contributions of cash and in kind which are being distributed jointly with government stocks. Initial gaps in the response were mainly for sanitation supplies and equipment such as chlorination tabs and mobile toilets. There are worries about the health consequences of the floods in this highly malaria prone region where cholera has been a persistent problem over the past several months.

On Saturday August 18th, the Sabwani River in Trans Nzoia District also burst its banks and caused the displacement of 2,610 people. The response was led by the district authorities and the situation was quickly controlled.

In the event that rainfall continues as projected by the Meteorological Department, continuous monitoring and a assessment are needed in these flood prone areas in order to mitigate further damage to infrastructure and human suffering.

The Government has established a Ministerial Committee consisting of Ministry of Water, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Special Programmes etc; who are expected to analyze the situation and come up with amicable solutions to be undertaken by the Government. World Bank has donated 10 million towards this effort.

Landslides

In addition to floods, heavy rains experienced in Western parts of Kenya resulted in landslides affecting Khuvasaali village in Kakamega North, Busia district and Kerio Valley. A total of eight people were killed and 49 families displaced in Kakamega north. Rescue operations were hugely hampered by the incessant rainfall and lack of proper rescue equipment. Kenya Red Cross worked with the district authorities to provide relief assistance to the affected population. The OCHA and WHO team that visited the area proposed a Risk and Vulnerability Assessment to be conducted with the assistance of UN. The Government policy on protected forest land areas should also be revisited to avert illegal land ownership in forested areas. The Government should highly consider resettlement of those people settled on mountain slopes.

On Saturday September 8th, three people were injured and more than 500 displaced following a massive landslide in Keiyo Valley in Rift Valley Province. An unknown number of animals were buried in the slides while several hectares of crop were destroyed. In addition six schools in the area have either been submerged by water or swept away by landslides affecting more than 100,000 students. Transport operations along the Valley were also paralyzed after the Iten-Fluospar road was damaged. According to the area District Commissioner, Mr. Peter Kinuthia, these landslides are a result of destruction to the vegetation along the escarpment loosening the soils i.e. through charcoal burning or engaging in agricultural activities along the escarpment.

Meanwhile in North Rift, reports indicate that the unusual and irregular heavy rains currently experienced are destroying maize and wheat crops. Farmers have expressed concern as they may incur poor harvests this season as a result. This could have a negative impact on food security in the country considering that the Rift.

In Njoro, hailstorm left a train of destruction on farms, shredding maize leaves and flooding big portions of wheat and barley.

Geologists warn that due to above normal rainfall and saturated soil, more landslides can be anticipated. As a safety measure, people living on lower slopes are encouraged to relocate to safer areas, not higher on the slopes.
Humanitarian Support Unit to the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator (OCHA Kenya) is located in Block P, United Nations Office in Nairobi, Gigiri, P.O.Box 30218-00100 Nairobi, Kenya. Tel: (254-20) 7627627552 and 7625155. Fax: (254-20) 7624661. Email: Jeanine Cooper at cooper1@un.org, Dijana Duric at dijana.duric@undp.org or Mercy Manyala at manyalam@un.org for more information.
Kenya receives USD 3 million from the CERF

Kenya was awarded a grant of USD3 million through the Under-funded window of the CERF following consultations with IASC principles. The Refugee programs in Kenya were identified as being chronically under-funded. Refugees are in dire need of urgent assistance.

The UNCT deliberated on which projects would receive priority and then proposals were drafted and forwarded to CERF Secretariat. Once approved, it’s hoped that the funding will improve and address nutritional needs at the refugee camps. Projects were submitted mainly to address inadequate food intake, emergency nutrition, health, hygiene, water and sanitation and protection.

The government would protect them from further losses.

Fatal lightning strikes

On September 1st, 2007, 18 people were killed in western Kenya by a lightning strike during a rainstorm. In the days that followed, 3 more people were killed in Kisii district bringing the total fatalities to 21. Affected areas include Lurambi in Kakamega District, Kipsagum in Trans Nzoia District and Kisii.

Foot and Mouth disease

Despite a ban on livestock sale following an outbreak of foot & mouth disease, several traders were dispersed by armed police at Mulot trading centre in Narok South where they had gathered to sell off cattle.

According to media reports, one person is capable of affecting 10 people at a time. Therefore everyone has been advised to seek immediate medical attention if infected with a cough which lasts for more than two weeks. Other symptoms of MDR-TB include: night sweats, tiredness and joint pains. People are advised to avoid crowded places conducive to disease spread.

Tuberculosis

The Ministry of Health has issued a warning over the new strain of Tuberculosis (Multi Drug Resistant TB), which is believed to have no cure at the moment. So far over 200 people have been infected with the possibility of spreading to more people before the end of the year. The Ministry says that studies are underway to identify the cure, although it will be very expensive to manage the few already infected.

Humanitarian Action in August

- The food pipeline for EMOP districts has been good comprising a full basket of cereals, pulses and vegetable oil. Approximately 11,400 MT of food commodities was distributed to some 800,000 beneficiaries in July. Currently heavy rains Moyale, Marsabit, Isiolo and Samburu are rendering roads impassable and slowing down deliveries.

- UNICEF is working closely with the MoH and NGOs to expand their implementation capacity for supplementary feeding programmes in 10 arid districts.

- The Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) has spearheaded emergency relief efforts, conducting assessments, distributing food, medical supplies and other non-food items to affected families for floods & mudslides.

- A joint WHO and UN OCHA team visited the landslide site in Khuvasali to assess the consequences of the landslide and examine response capacity.

- The team also met with the local authorities (District Commissioner, Area Chief, Disaster Management Committee, and Provincial Health Officer) and Red Cross representatives on the ground and discussed technical aspects of risk analysis, hazard mapping and opportunities for UN intervention and response in the area.

- The government through the National Disaster Operations Centre (NOC) is coordinating the response to the Budalangi floods, which is mainly being implemented by the Kenya Red Cross, MSF-France, MSF-Spain and World Vision International. The government has provided a helicopter to facilitate the airlifting of food and relief items which it has also provided; the Kenya Red Cross has received contributions of cash and in kind which are being distributed jointly with government stocks. No major need for air evacuations has been noted.

- Vice President Moody Awori received & dispatched food and other relief materials donated by Christian Relief Aid for Budalangi’s flood victims.

- The World Bank and the GoK will spend more than Sh.58 billion on flood control activities in Western, Nyanza and Rift Valley Provinces. Mr. Bartholomew Wanyama the Project Manager from Ministry of Special Programmes said that the Bank had already released Sh 6 billion to kick start the project in September. Areas to benefit include: Siaya, Bondo, Busia, and 4 other districts in Rift Valley.

- The bi-annual Long Rain Assessment was conducted from July 23rd until August 10. The final report of the mission is under discussion and its recommendations will be presented at the Kenya Food Security Meeting (KFSM) to be held on September 19th 2007. The report advocates for medium to long term interventions considering that there has been great improvement in food security and that most areas are now in recovery phase and not emergency.
Food and Livelihood Security

There has been additional improvement in the food security status in the country after the 2007 long rains especially in Lake basin and coastal marginal agricultural; agro-pastoral and eastern pastoral livelihood zones. In the northern and eastern pastoral; eastern and parts of coastal marginal agricultural livelihoods, the marked improvement in both crop and livestock production during the successful short rains season lessened the negative outcome of the poor 2007 long rains season. Households in all these livelihood zones continue to recover from the adverse effects of a succession of poor seasons before the 2006 long rains. Another good short rains season is critical in reinforcing the recovery process.

Current food security Status

Most of the interventions proposed after the short rains assessment in April that were aimed at supporting the recovery of the vulnerable livelihoods have not been completely implemented. There is a high probability that any new shock could erode the remarkable gains in food security for most households in the country in the past three seasons. It should be reiterated that this is the right moment for Government and partners to seize the opportunity and implement transitional activities for medium term recovery to increase their resilience before the next shock, while pursuing and supporting the long term policies and strategies aimed at addressing the root causes of food insecurity in the most vulnerable livelihoods.

Reconstruction, asset building, preparedness and contingency planning, can limit the magnitude and break the vicious cycle of relief assistance whenever there is a shock.

Insecurity: Tana River, Marsabit, West Pokot and Turkana districts

Fresh clashes hit Tana River during the first days of September, resulting in the death of four people. According to the Coast Province Provincial Police Officer, occasional conflicts are spured in the area over water wells after a minor understanding. The police have however disputed the deaths figure saying that only one person had been killed.

The residents of Bura held a peace meeting where they surrendered eight firearms to the police. Two AK-47 and six G3 rifles were surrendered.

Two herders were killed during a morning rid in Marsabit district. The attack which occurred on Monday, August 27th occurred near Moite village in Loiyangalani division is suspected to have been carried out by people believed to be from the Turkana community.

There are sporadic and localized conflicts over resources in northern pastoral and agro-pastoral areas of Kenya. In West Pokot and Turkana districts, there is tension and migration away from the pasture areas near Uganda due to security operations in Uganda that sometimes spill over into Kenya. Cattle rustling have also resulted in tension in the dry season grazing areas of Samburu, southern Turkana. In Moyale and Marsabit low level tension in some areas is due to lack of adherence to the provisions of inter-community peace negotiations and/or displacement. There many households still displaced from their productive farms in generally high food secure Mount Elgon area.

17 donors sign onto the KJAS for the period 2008-2012

A group of 17 donors and the Ministry of Finance launched the Kenya Joint Assistance Strategy which is expected to channel money for development through existing structures within the Government.

This document is the first attempt towards a collective strategy of most members of the international community to work in partnership with the government of Kenya to help deliver on the development priorities set by the Kenyan people, including achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It recognizes the progress that the government has made in many areas.

The donors offer support to enable Kenya to make faster progress in areas that are important for growth and poverty reduction. As partners with not only the government but also, and ultimately, with the people of Kenya, the donors recognize that their role is also to support Kenyans in realizing their own goals in delivery of health, education, justice, security, and other public services.
Up date on Mt. Elgon

In the wake of recent escalations of insecurity in Mt. Elgon, the District Commissioner (DC) has spearheaded peace building efforts which resulted in a ceasefire. Two prayer meetings were held one with women & children and the other with clan elders and religious leaders. In addition to the ceasefire, it was agreed for disarmament to occur and de-oathing of those members who will not comply with the agreements. The DC is also conducting Barazas at the grass roots level where he is advocating for peace through dialogue. Reports indicate that the District Disaster Committee is in the process of organizing for a youth football tournament that will involve youths from both clans and will strengthen peace building and conflict management.

Recently, Mt. Elgon residents have been living in fear of intimidation and attack by the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) and unknown bandits. According to a recent report published by MSF Belgium, the only international aid actor with constant presence in the area, it is an oversimplification to limit this conflict to a dispute between two clans of Soi and Ndorobo over land. Other factors beyond clan divisions need to be considered including settlement of old scores, social tension between the haves and have not’s, cultural practices of revenge and retaliation and historical trends for land division. Furthermore, the situation is exacerbated by violence between the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) and the strong police operations, resulting in deaths, burning of houses and further displacement of inhabitants of the land.

The violence of the past few weeks has raised the total figure of deaths since the clashes began to over 250 with thousands more displaced. Some 2,000 families have taken refuge on higher slopes of Mt. Elgon and in the forest but most have moved to towns where they rent lodgings or stay with relatives and friends. Insecurity is restricting movements and access to medical care in certain areas. Although the insecurity has affected food production and overall access to food there has not been a significant increase in malnutrition rates compared to the similar period in previous years.

A recent multi-sectoral joint mission assessment to Mt. Elgon report was presented at the UNCT meeting held on August 21st and the UN Joint Team on Humanitarian Response and Disaster Management was tasked to:

- Propose ways to deepen our understanding of the underlying causes of the crisis;
- Propose ways in which the UN and partners can strengthen and support dialogue between the communities and between the different branches of the government;
- Identify gaps in the humanitarian response and ensure response for the most pressing humanitarian needs;
- Advocate with relevant government bodies against excessive use of force by the Police and security personnel in their operations.

It was agreed that as an initial measure, the UN could convene a meeting with the two national coordinating structures: the National Disaster Operations Centre & the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management and other stakeholders to discuss a coherent approach for both short and long term interventions.

Strengthening protection & care for IDPs in Kenya

As a follow up to the IDP training conducted in March 2007 by the NRC for UN Agencies and NGOs, a focal team was established to look at ways of addressing the chronic problem of IDPs in Kenya. Despite several studies conducted around the subject, no comprehensive information exists on the exact number of IDPs in the country at the moment. It’s with this understanding that the focal team decided to organize for a stakeholders Forum on IDPs in Kenya to be held in October 2007. The forum is expected to bring together the Government, Civil Society and the United Nations Agencies to discuss and establish collaborative and comprehensive frameworks for addressing issues affecting IDPs in the country.

The issues identified are:

- Documentation through profiling survey of IDPs in Kenya.
- Review of relevant national legal and policy standards applicable to the protection and care of IDPs.
- Mechanisms of pre-empting displacements, responding to the emerging human rights violations and humanitarian crisis.
- Training on the Guiding Principle on Internal Displacement,
- Awareness raising initiatives on IDPs, Enhancing synergy among the State and Non State Actors working on the IDP agenda among other interventions.

So far, the Ministries of Lands, Justice and of Special Programmes have expressed commitment to collaborate in seeking a lasting and comprehensive solution to address the problems of forced displacement and chronic landlessness. It is hoped that partnerships between all stakeholders and other line Ministries in Government will be established as discussions continues.
UN Joint Team on Humanitarian Response & Disaster Management activities in August

The joint team on Humanitarian Response and Disaster Management has endorsed the TORs and finalized it’s composition. Priority areas of focus for last quarter of 2007 and 2008 have also been identified. The joint team is now working to elaborate a logical framework for joint programming even as it continues to cooperate for joint actions.

The following priority areas have been identified:

- Addressing the needs of four priority vulnerable groups: IDPs, Refugees & host communities, Pastoralists and the Critically Poor in Urban Areas;
- Strengthening coordination and implementation of response to sudden onset disasters and conflict;
- Enhancing Disaster management capacity at local and district levels especially for prevention/mitigation, emergency preparedness and early recovery for all disasters;
- Enhancing the protection and care of IDPs
- Support to national coordination mechanisms such as the National Disaster Operations Centre and the National Steering Committee for Peace building and Conflict Resolution
- Impact analysis of violence against women in Kenya.
- Supporting conflict management initiatives at local and district levels;

BEST PRACTICE FEATURE ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION:
Kenya Government Study Tour to India

In June 2007, UNDP Kenya organized a study tour on disaster management to India as a capacity building exercise for Kenyan government officials. The main purpose was to exchange ideas between the two countries in the area of disaster risk reduction and response to incorporate lessons learned in future institutional development of Kenya.

Learning activities were concentrated on institution- and capacity building at national, state, district as well as community level throughout various regions in India. At national level, the Kenyan Delegation gained an overview of the legal and policy frameworks for Disaster Risk Management (DRM) in India. Ideas were exchanged on National and State Capacity Training Programmes on DRM already underway in India, and about possibilities to hold future training for Kenyan government officials. Further discussions were held on drought and flood management. The India Meteorology Department highlighted the crucial link between weather reports and forecasting of natural disasters. All national institutions work in very close collaboration with each other, under the oversight of the National Disaster Management Authority.

In Uttar Pradesh, the state level DRM strategy was presented and discussed. The relevance of mainstreaming DRM in the education curriculum and construction of earthquake resistant school buildings became apparent and was particularly highlighted. At district level, the governing head has an institutionalized information flow from his office to all the disaster affected villages and can send out Early Warning Alarms as needed. At village level, the Kenyan delegation participated in simulation drills for communities and industries, which were triggered through the Early Warning Alarm from the Emergency Centre.

Finally, the UNDP India Programme on Disaster Risk Reduction, which is one of the essential pillars of the DRM development within the country, was presented. This institutional and inter-governmental sharing of disaster risk management strategies is a key component of capacity building and comes at the time when the government of Kenya is designing its own programmes for DRM. Lessons from Study Tour will be incorporated in a new Annual Work Plan 2007/8 for “Strengthening National Level and Community Capacity for Disaster Management” in Kenya.