

RESETTLEMENT, LANDSLIDES & FLOODS

Improving the success of resettlement through participatory dialogue

POLICY BRIEF



A landslide scene in Nametsi, Bududa district in eastern Uganda



Children in a flooded garden in Butaleja, eastern Uganda

Summary

The occurrence of landslides and floods has increased in Uganda due to climate change. Efforts to mitigate the effects of adverse weather conditions by resettling the affected populations and promoting rational land use have met limited success due to inadequate co-operation from the communities. This policy brief presents evidence that the affected communities can appreciate and support policy interventions better if they are involved in detailed discussions of the problem and its possible solutions.

Introduction

For years, people living in Uganda's mountainous areas and the surrounding lowlands have been grappling with recurrent landslides and floods respectively. Mt. Elgon sub-region is hardest hit, the most notable being the landslide that killed more than 360 people at Nametsi in Bududa district on 1st March 2010. To-date, more than 100,000 people in nine districts around Mt. Elgon face the risk of

landslides. A bigger number of people in over 60 districts of Uganda face the risk of seasonal floods.

Due to population growth and climate change, flooding and landslides are increasing both in frequency and in terms of the number of people at risk^{1,2}. Landslides and floods lead to death, displacement, disease outbreaks, crop destruction, hunger, infrastructure destruction, poverty and further degradation of the environment.



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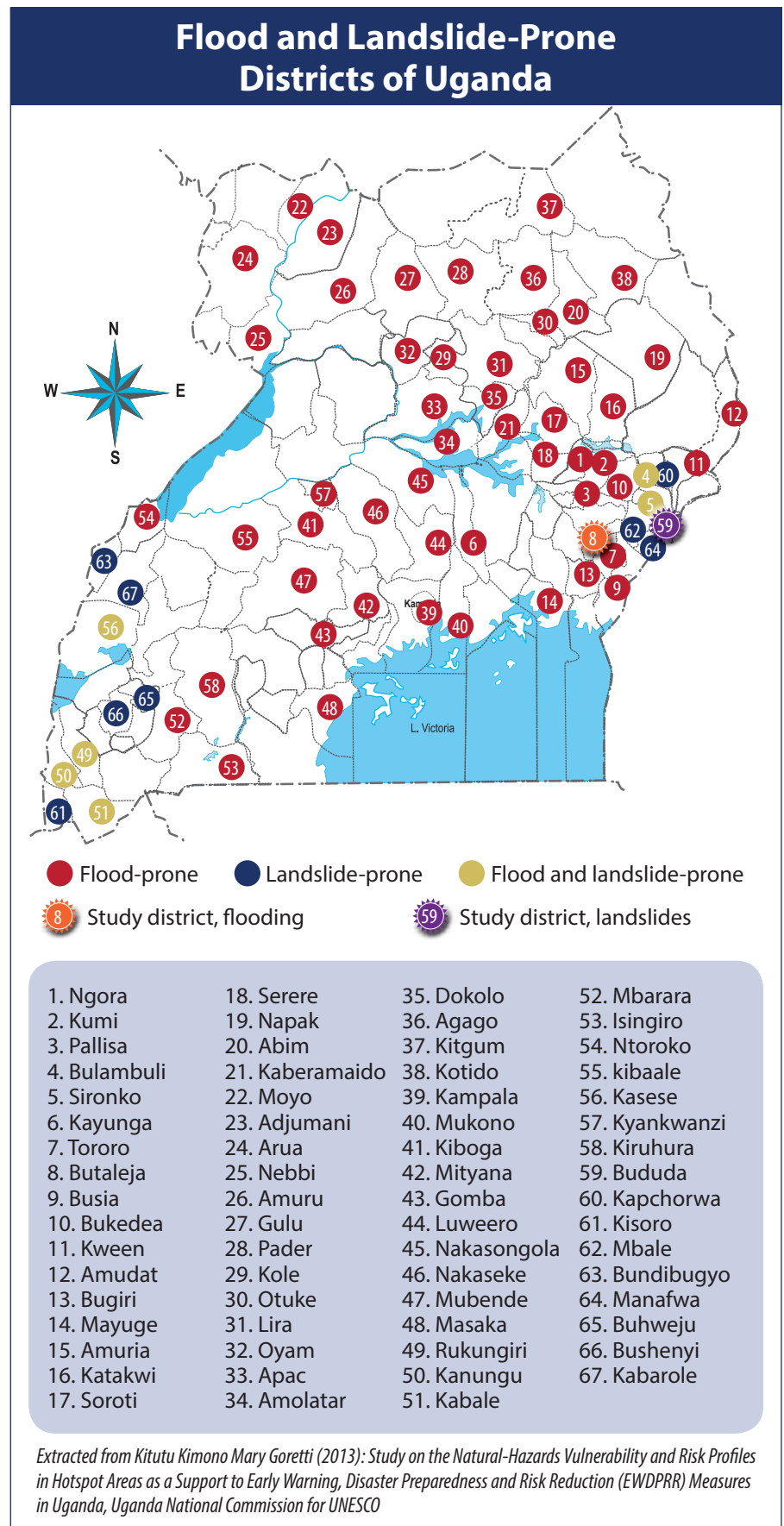
The populations in the landslide and flood-prone areas rely on agriculture for their livelihood. Therefore, policy interventions aimed at mitigating the risks in these areas are based on managing human settlements and land use. Specifically, the Government has implemented or promoted the following measures:

1. Identifying high-risk areas where settlement is prohibited.
2. Temporary or long-term relocation to gazetted settlements or relatives' homes.
3. Promoting rational land use in areas where controlled agriculture is permitted.
4. Providing early warning for landslides and floods
5. De-silting drainage channels and small river beds.
6. Strengthening local disaster management committees.

However, these strategies have received limited co-operation from the affected populations. For instance, many people have stealthily returned to the landslide-prone areas from which they had been relocated.

The Approach

The ResilientAfrica Network (RAN) at Makerere University School of Public Health carried out a study to establish whether people's acceptance of the Government's interventions would increase if they were adequately involved in discussing the problem and policy options. To achieve this, RAN carried out an innovative form of community consultation process in which representative samples of the population in Bududa



and Butaleja districts were involved in detailed discussions. The approach, referred to as 'deliberative polling', begins with a baseline opinion survey on how communities perceive

the available policy options. Participants then receive detailed information on the merits and demerits of the policy options and engage in peer discussions. After sufficient

discussions, another opinion survey is carried out to assess if the respondents' views and perceptions have changed as a result of the deliberation. This innovative method was developed by the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University, USA.

Key findings

As indicated in Figure 1 (below) and Figure 2 (overleaf), acceptance of most policy options was higher after participatory dialogue than before. Figure 1 shows that in Bududa more people agreed with re-zoning of high risk areas for no settlement, temporary relocation to relatives' homes during heavy rains, creation of safer peri-urban resettlements and marking out places where cultivation is allowed but without settlement. Also, more people agreed that the communities should manage the wetlands during the dry season, including de-silting river beds.

In Butaleja, respondents showed increased support for re-zoning of high risk areas where settlement is prohibited, temporary relocation to relatives' homes during heavy rains and planting trees on river banks (Figure 2). Whereas more people supported community participation in maintaining wetlands generally, the number of people who agreed that the communities should be responsible for de-silting river beds and maintaining drainage channels reduced. Understandably, many thought de-silting river beds and maintaining drainage channels using hand hoes was an uphill task; therefore, they thought the Government should intervene with heavy duty equipment.

On early warning systems, the communities in both Bududa and Butaleja preferred sirens to mobile phone text messages. Whereas in Bududa the communities prioritised roads over bridges, the reverse was true in Butaleja.

Some of the concerns raised by the communities

The participatory dialogue brought out myths, fears and concerns that need to be addressed for the success of any risk mitigation interventions in the area. Below are the main ones:

- Community members were initially reluctant to plant trees because of the false belief that tree planting would lead to more rains and, therefore, more landslides and floods.
- Some had the false impression that all trees belong to the Government and therefore if they planted trees, their land would be gazetted as part of the forest reserves.
- Rice-growing communities in flood-prone areas were concerned that they did not have alternative sources of livelihood.
- Communities expressed concern that they were not adequately consulted on issues of resettlement, for example on where they would be taken.

Fig 1: Percentage support for different policy options in Bududa district before and after intervention

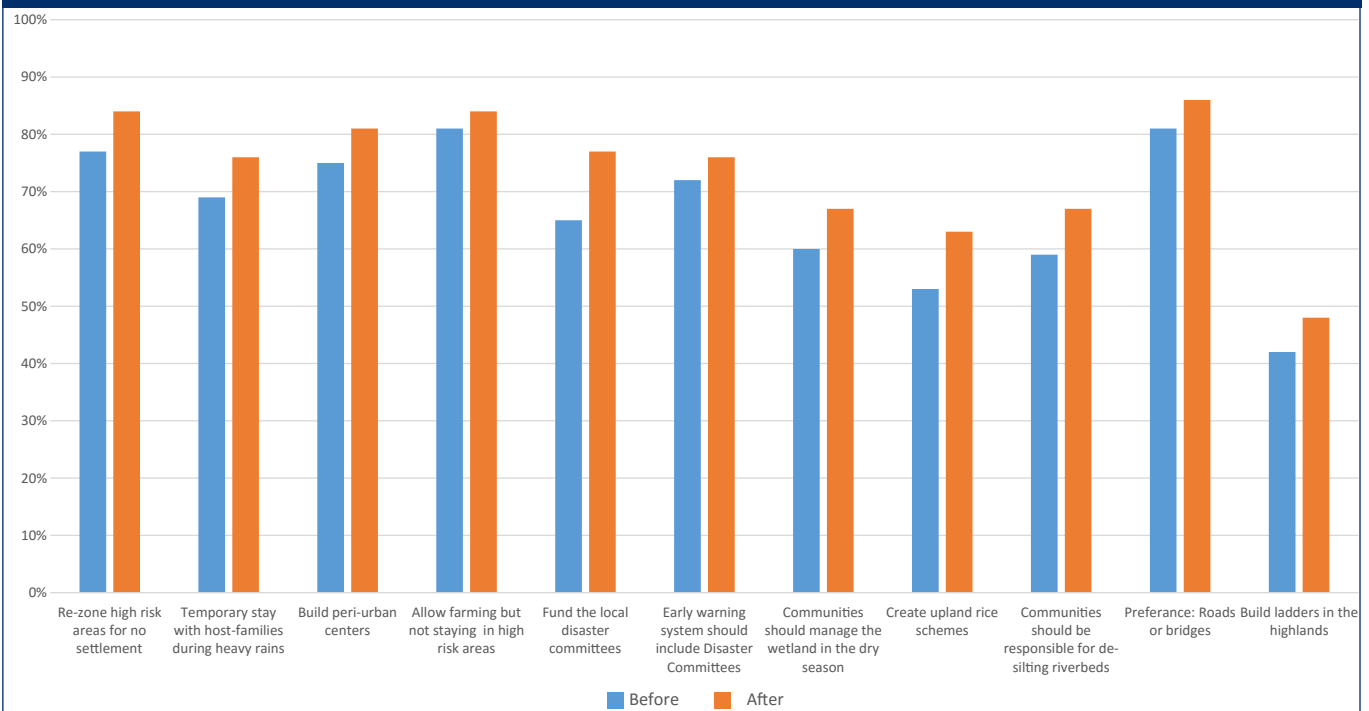
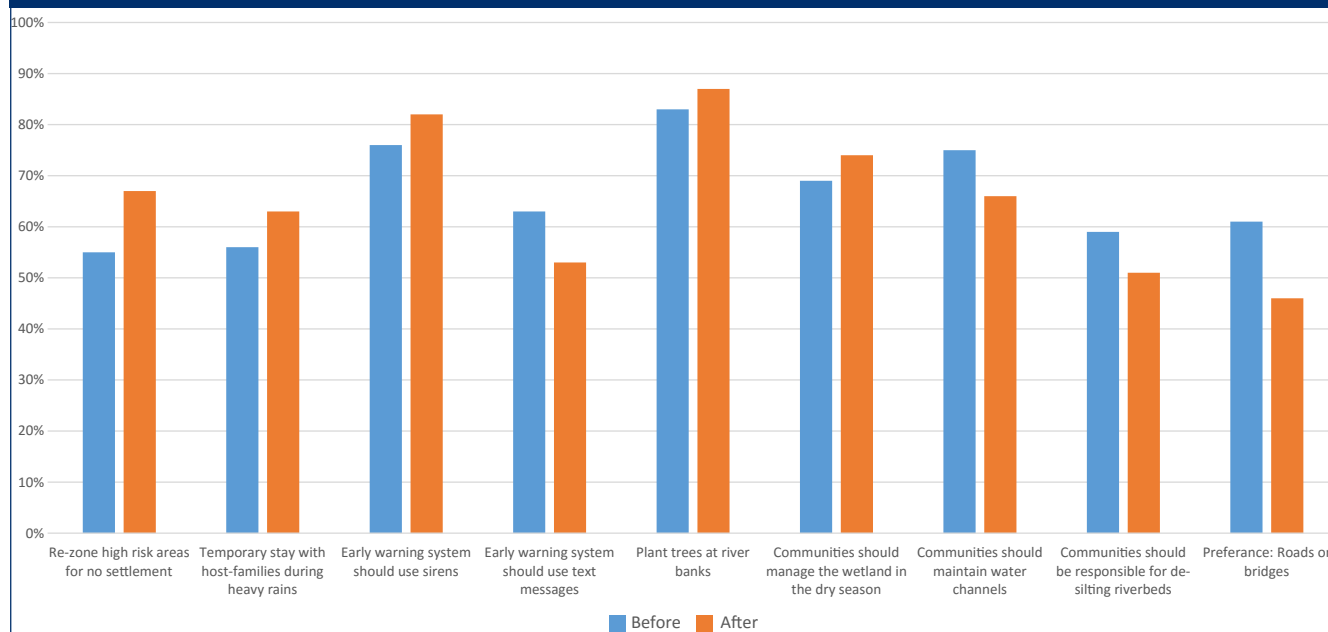


Fig 2: Percentage support for different policy options in Butaleja district before and after intervention



Why Displaced Persons Return to Risky Areas

The participatory dialogue provided an opportunity to hear from the communities why some had returned to landslide-prone areas from which they had been relocated, despite being aware of the risks. Below are some of the quotes from different respondents:

“We were born here and we must be buried here.”

“My former land is very fertile and supports any crop with little effort.”

“I am used to living in a mountainous area where I see the villages below.”

“I was an LC chief, but in my new settlement, I am no longer near to those who elected me.”

“Who owns the land we were resettled on and the one we were displaced from?”

“What guarantee do we have that someone will not settle where we have been displaced from?”

“If resettled, what are the compensation terms for the losses and how much will I receive as compensation?”

“Relocation is good, but you may leave behind property worth a million shillings and they give you something worth five hundred thousand shillings and it disturbs you.”

Whereas some of these views may appear flawed, they should not be ignored. Through participatory dialogue, both valid concerns and misguided complaints can be addressed to achieve better co-operation from the affected communities.

Policy Recommendations

The above findings show that communities are more likely to appreciate and support government interventions if they are adequately involved in discussing the problem and policy options. Therefore, the Government should employ participatory dialogue with the affected communities to re-zone the high-risk areas, negotiate resettlement and implement sustainable land management practices with the help of extension workers and other stakeholders. Going by the findings of this study, resettlement should be in an agreeable place within the same geographical area so that the displaced persons can be allowed to access their land only for farming using sustainable agricultural practices. The Government should be clear about ownership of the land where they are settled. It should also be clear on whether the relocation is temporary or permanent and assure the displaced persons that the land left behind still belongs to them. The affected persons should be involved in selecting the relocation site, including taking their representatives for an assessment visit beforehand.

Endnotes

1 National Environment Management Authority 2010: Landslides in Bududa district, their causes and consequences, March 2010. Available from: http://www.nemaug.org/reports/Current_reports/Bududa_report.pdf

2 Uganda Ministry of Water and Environment 2015: Economic Assessment of the Impacts of Climate Change in Uganda: Case-study on agricultural production in the Karamoja region, October 2015