

Relief Fund Update April - July 2009

The Mothers' Union Relief Fund offers emergency support to families all over the world who have been affected by natural or man-made disaster. The Mothers' Union is well placed within local communities to be able to offer assistance quickly to families whose lives have met with adversity. Emergency supplies of food, medicine, blankets and other essential items can be purchased locally and distributed swiftly to those most in need.

Update from Previous Grants

The first few months of 2009 saw enormous pressure on the Relief Fund, largely as a result of continued fighting from the Ugandan rebel group, the Lords Resistance Army. This caused widespread disruption and suffering across DR Congo, Uganda and Sudan, leaving hundreds of thousands of people homeless across the region. The Mothers' Union Relief Fund supported a total of 10 diocese to an amount of almost £30,000. Late January, rebel leader Laurent Nkunda was arrested and since then, fighting and violence has gradually eased off enabling communities to slowly begin to return home. However, still to this day Mothers' Union are working with victims of the violence throughout health centres and IDP (Internally Displaced Person) camps in the area.



Above are photographs from North Kivu (left) and Muhabura (centre and right) showing the distribution of emergency supplies brought from Mothers' Union Relief Fund grants.

May 2009 - Supporting Victims of LRA Attacks in Sudan



Diocese of Ibba, Sudan

Ibba was the first diocese of Sudan to be hit by LRA attacks as the rebel army crossed the northern border of Uganda.

The Bishop wrote explaining that *"those who survived have all moved to Ibba, no one has stayed behind in the villages. The IDPs have arrived in Ibba empty handed especially those whose houses were burnt to the ground."*

A few months on, when families were beginning to consider returning home, the Bishop requested assistance from the Mothers' Union Relief Fund to aid the diocese to *"focus on a long term solution such that, at the end of this year they will have enough food."* The diocese targeted 25 small groups of five- six people, each group being given five bags of flour, three buckets of beans and 15 bottles of cooking oil to see them through the next few months.



Photographs are taken from Ezo diocese who were also supported by the Relief Fund. They were one of four Sudanese diocese to receive grants after being caught in the fighting.

June 2009 – Overwhelmed Health Centres in DR Congo after Continued LRA Fighting



Diocese of Bukavu, DR Congo

Bukavu, a diocese to the far east of DR Congo yet again faced difficulties from fighting in the region between the rebel and government armies. As always, it was the innocent civilians who were caught in the middle of the fighting and endured the most suffering. 3,000 people were left abandoned after fleeing from villages raided by the rebel army. In search of both safety and medical attention, many of these people fled to Matutira Health Centre run by the diocese of Bukavu. Unable to cope

with the increasing number of injured and the arising of cholera and other related diseases, the Bishop approached Mary Sumner House for assistance.

"Displaced people have been exposed to bad condition of hygiene and health. They can not get any kind of assistance from neither the government nor the NGOs. The emergency aid of medicines offered by Matutira Health Centre is insufficient because of the daily increase of new cases."

previous grant was given to the diocese when fighting first broke out. The Mothers' Union focused their support on those women who had been raped and sexually abused during the outbreaks of violence.

July 2009 – Another Year of Rain Failure in Kenya

Province of Kenya

As early as March this year we began to receive news from various dioceses across Kenya that yet again rains had not arrived and fields were once more left dry and barren.

The diocese of Bondo relayed how *"people have been preparing their farms for the long rain season and have planted at least three times awaiting rains to come, but all in vain."* This meant that not only was there no food to eat, there was also no more seeds to plant if rain did eventually fall. Maseno North also contacted us explaining that *"MU members are donating grains"*

to reach out to the very needy, but it's never enough, for everybody is affected". They had recognized a total of 300,000 households being badly affected by food shortages.

Mberre diocese revealed equally concerning statistics with no good harvest for over two years and a government estimate of over 10,000,000 people 'living under threat of starvation'. The diocese have experienced 95% crop failure with families struggling to find even one meal a day. Pressure to source money for food purchase saw desperate women and girls entering into prostitution in order to support their families. The rise in food prices have added to an already difficult situation.

Realising that the affected area stretched far across the Province, we asked Salome Leipa, the Provincial Worker to look into the situation for us. Devastatingly, Salome estimated a cost of around £200,000 to see the 16 most affected diocese through to the next due rains. Unable to financially support the entire request, an initial donation of £50,000 was made to the Province. The money has been used to support tens of thousands of the most vulnerable people across the Province providing them with necessities such as beans, rice, maize, cooking oil and salt. This has been one of the largest amounts the Relief Fund has ever been requested to meet and shows just how far the fund is needed to stretch to.



Previous food distribution to rural areas in the diocese of Lodwar earlier in 2009.

How you can help...

In order for the Mothers' Union to truly make an impact in such situations, your continued support is essential. Here is how you can help:

Through prayer

Please pray for all the families that have been affected by this disaster, especially for the families who are grieving for lost friends and relatives. Please pray also for all those who are working tirelessly to bring aid and relief to these families.

By giving

The Relief Fund supports vital Mothers' Union work where it is most needed. This relief work is only possible through the continued enthusiasm, financial and prayer support of our members and friends around the world. By making a donation to Mothers' Union Relief Fund you can make a real difference to vulnerable communities across the world by enabling us to send help immediately as an emergency arises.

Call 020 7222 5533 now to make a donation over the telephone using a credit or debit card, or send a cheque made payable to "The Mothers' Union Relief Fund" to: Mothers' Union, 24 Tufton Street, London, SW1P 3RB. For more information about the Mothers' Union Relief Fund, please visit the Mothers' Union website www.themothersunion.org or e-mail worldwide@themothersunion.org

A BIG THANK YOU!