
MERS Workshop: CASE STUDY VASUNDA FLOODS

You have been asked to design a program activity/approach using direct implementation or facilitated approaches that addresses the crisis based on relevant MERS standards, actions, indicators and guidance notes, while keeping in mind lessons learned from previous floods.

Country Context

Vasunda is a small, landlocked county with a temperate climate. The country is home to a high mountain range that runs the length country. The foothills of the mountains give way to fertile, low-lying plains. The population is 25 million, with 44% of the population living below the international poverty line of \$2 per day. Forty percent of the population is under the age of 40, and life expectancy is 66 years. The region's economy is largely dependent on agriculture and tourism. Seventy six percent of the population in Vasunda does agricultural work, eighteen percent are employed in services (mainly hospitality) and 6 percent are employed through manufacturing and crafts.

Vasunda is a parliamentary monarchy, the royal family conducts official ceremonies, while governance is mainly conducted by a house of parliament. Corruption is a significant issue in the parliamentary system. Men and the religious majority make up the bulk of MPs, while religious minorities, women and marginalized populations have little to no representation. Women, girls and youth are subject to discrimination in almost every walk of life.

The majority ethnic group in Vasunda is Xio; the Xio clan also makes up a large minority in Vasunda's neighboring countries, where they have faced persecution from authorities and local populations for years. Over the last two years, partly due to rising food prices and partly due to increased separatist politics, the Xio have been crossing the border into Vasunda, and two camps have been set up for them – one near a border crossing at Leku in the north and the other in the capital Chuko. However, because of the close ethnic ties, many Xio have chosen to live with extended family members or friends rather than in the camps, particularly in urban areas. This has created a strain on public services, and has made it harder to register incoming refugees or address any potential protection issues.

The Crisis Context

Recently, the low-lying flood plains along the northern border of Vasunda experienced the worst flooding in a 75-year period. Deforestation, glacial melt due to higher temperatures and an intense monsoon rains contributed to the floods, which affected 35 districts in the northern region of the country. A total of 1.7 million people are reported to be affected, of whom nearly 461,000 people, or 91,400 families (many accompanied by livestock), have been displaced from their homes. This number includes 26,000 from Leku camp. Large numbers of people displaced by the floods are staying outdoors in exposed areas, while others are making their way to the capital to seek out family and friends, or move closer to the resources available at Ezha camp in the capital. The Ezha camp is far over capacity, and new arrivals are finding water shortages and poor sanitation facilities. There is also a sizeable proportion of refugees with disabilities currently residing in Ezha camp who require even more extensive and tailored support in order to overcome specific barriers to livelihoods, employment, and services.

Present Situation

Many roads have reopened and the regional airport is now operational during daylight. Most of the roads in the affected area are dirt and gravel, and are largely cut off; there is one paved road that runs northwest to southeast, and the Transporters Union reports that parts of the road are intact. Markets along the main paved road are functioning, although getting supplies beyond those markets is difficult, taking twice as long as usual. In total, there have been 160 reported deaths, along with 43,400 destroyed homes and 191,700 others partially damaged. Staff based in Leku camp have radioed that about half of the area of the camp remains underwater, although it does seem to be receding slowly, leaving behind the detritus that washed through with the flood, and the remains of tents. The Humanitarian Country Team launched its Joint Response Plan, and raised US\$41.4 million to provide humanitarian assistance to 1.7 million people comprising health, water sanitation and hygiene (WASH), food security, nutrition, shelter, livelihood, protection, education and early recovery support for the coming six months.

Livelihood Impact – What is Known

Xio are known for their farming skills throughout the region, and sixty-three percent of the flood-affected population earn income from smallholder farms growing staple crops of rice, maize, millet, wheat, and barley. Crop income is supplemented through a vibrant livestock (dairy) market among many households. Culturally women are responsible for smaller livestock, while men are responsible for larger animals. Smallholder farmers sell their produce through Regional Cooperatives which help ensure transparent market prices; though some farmers sell crops directly to buyers. Family food and nutrition needs are met through small garden plots, family chickens and purchasing supplemental foods at local markets. The majority of farmers' land is flooded and inaccessible.

In a rapid assessment it was found that the majority of households interviewed participated in some form of agricultural work in Vasunda. Agricultural work continues to be the most common and most desired form of work for these households, but individual refugees with disabilities more commonly reported livestock raising and petty trade as their preferred livelihood options.

- 25% of the household interviews reported having at least one member who had taken a vocational training course. Of these households, 25% reported having used the skills gained from that course to earn income.
- 68% of interviewed households believe that they need additional training to pursue their desired livelihood options, while only 17% consider vocational training to be currently available to them.
- Lack of access to start-up capital was the most commonly reported barrier to desired livelihoods as well as a commonly reported reason why more people did not attend vocational trainings. Lack of accessible land, lack of confidence, and lack of skills and education were also commonly reported barriers to desired livelihoods.
- Agriculture was the dominant sector in the surveyed areas outside of the camps and included 57% of all surveyed employers, with hospitality being the next most prominent industry (16%), and a small but

stable agricultural service industry (9%) that support smallholder farmers through tool sales and repair, seed selling, transport, and labor.

- 29% of employers surveyed either currently hire or have previously hired people with disabilities. 34% of respondents would be prepared to hire people with disabilities in the future.
- 57% of employers surveyed have hired refugees, while 60% have hired migrants. The most common type of work for which refugees and migrant workers are hired is low-skilled agricultural labor followed by low-skilled manual labor in construction and the manufacturing industry.

For better and worse, the harvest was completed a few weeks ago for the ‘large’ planting season, and the ‘small’ planting season is due to begin in 2-3 more weeks (planting in some areas can be extended to 3-4 weeks, but it risks a reduced harvest). Grain storage facilities in the worst hit areas—generally household level storage, but in some larger towns and peri-urban areas there are communal storage areas-- have been fully to partly destroyed.

Last year, an HEA (Household Economy Analysis) was done that included more than 60% of the areas now affected by flooding. The HEA provides detail how different households live, including detailed intra-household analysis of access to food, cash income, expenditures, and basic services pre-crisis. World Bank statistics indicate that per capita income was \$963 pre-crisis, and the average family (5-6 people) has only one wage earner. Most households in the affected areas lost 50-60% of their livestock, which averaged .45 TLU (Tropical Livestock Units) prior to the flooding. (TLU conversion= cattle (0.5), buffalo (0.5), sheep and goats (0.1), pigs (0.2), poultry (0.01)). Farmers with small landholdings (under .5 ha) kept 35% of the livestock, while those without any land, including refugees, keep 19% of livestock.

Your Assignment

Your supervisor has brought to your attention a recent report that provides lessons learned from flood responses around the world, the lessons from which could be incorporated into your response. The report lessons learned include:

1. Needs assessments should incorporate existing knowledge and be flexible.
2. Floods are not short-term events
3. Disasters create opportunities for disaster risk reduction.
4. Economically vulnerable people are most at risk of death during flooding.
5. Engagement with local authorities is critical.
6. Engagement with the affected population is critical.
7. Simply replacing assets may perpetuate or even increase existing inequities.
8. Decisions about restocking must be made with careful attention to the context.

You have been asked to design a program activity/approach using direct implementation or facilitated approaches that addresses the crisis based on relevant MERS standards, actions, indicators and guidance notes, while keeping in mind lessons learned from previous floods (above).

You should plan to report out using a format that includes the following information (feel free to add additional information you feel is relevant):

Issue/Concern	Standard(s) that apply	Activity or Action(s) to be taken