



Overview - Highlights

After a nearly one-month delay in some southern districts, rains became fully established in late April, promoting intensified cultivation for the first cultivation season for 2000. According to the IDEA Project, crops are reportedly developing normally in southwestern districts, especially those areas affected by poor rainfall last season. Dry conditions in Rakai District affected maize but it is still early to predict crop production. In the eastern districts, crop sowing began nearly one month late; however, the season now looks promising. Insecurity in Katakwi District, due to raiding by the Karimojong, has prevented many farmers from cultivating. The rainfall season in northern and northeastern Uganda began in April, on time or one a week or two late, depending on the location, and this has prompted farmers who have access to land and agricultural inputs, to begin land preparation and sowing cereals, pulses and oil crops. Low soil moisture levels during the first quarter this year delayed dry sowing of millet and sorghum during late February and March, raising farmers' and extension personnel's concern for likely moisture stress during critical crop growth periods. Overall, a generally late start to normal rains in the southern half of Uganda this season and mixed crop conditions in the country warrants close monitoring of the season's performance. FEWS continues to monitor progress throughout the season.

Pasture conditions and ground water sources have also improved with adequate vegetation conditions in the northeastern -- Karamoja region -- and southwestern "cattle corridor" enabling increased livestock access to pastures and browse. No recent or significant outbreaks of livestock diseases have been reported.

In April, the Department of Meteorology reviewed its February forecast, affirming near normal to below normal rains for most of Uganda. The department predicts improvements in the first rainy season, which is expected to extend through mid-June for the southern half of Uganda. A mixed rainy season is forecast for northern areas with districts in central north to the northeast predicted to receive normal to above normal rains whereas poorly distributed rains are expected for the northwest and districts close to the northern shores of Lake Kyoga.

Except for areas affected by civil insecurity and population displacement, crop supply to regional market centers in the country, mostly from trader stocks, appears to be normal with no bottlenecks or unusually high prices reported. Normal seasonal declines have been observed as stocks get depleted and minimal supply is being received from supply regions, which is normal for this time of year. Household access to food from last season's production, markets and other sources remains good.

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Sources and Contributors:

- District Agriculture and Veterinary Officials
- IITA-weekly district market data
- OCHA, WFP - reports, field assessment
- Various NGOs - activity reports

Sporadic Karimojong attacks in Kitgum and Katakwi Districts have led to increased population displacements where a nearly ten and over seventy percent rise, respectively, in the number of displaced was recorded over April. Agago and Chua Counties (Kitgum District) and Kapelobyong and Usuk Counties (Katakwi District) are most affected. Civil security, shelter, water, food, need for improved sanitation and access to medical services remain the main needs of the displaced people. Deployment of Local Defense Units (LDUs) in April in Katakwi District has enabled partial return home of IDPs who moved to trading centers closer to their homes where they may access their homes and fields for food and to cultivate for this season. The government, NGOs and UN agencies continue to provide food and non-food assistance to the displaced persons in Katakwi while plans for further NGO assistance are underway. International Service Volunteer's Association (AVSI) reports that WFP started food distributions, in early May, to the Karimojong displaced people in Kitgum District, although distributions are hampered by uncertain security, mostly due Lord's Resistance Army rebel attacks in the district.

A joint Government of Uganda, UN agencies and NGO assessment of Bundibugyo District in mid-April found that relative calm has returned to the district following extensive government troop deployment since early this year. This has enabled improved road convoy movement along the main roads linking the district to supply areas and within the district as well enhanced the population's access to arable land in areas around the Mountain Rwenzori to cultivate vegetables, root crops, bananas (matooke). Road conditions, however, are fast deteriorating due to heavy rainfall since the beginning of the season. UN agencies and NGOs, including ActionAid, Medicins Sans Frontieres-France (MSF-F), World Harvest Mission are active in the district, providing shelter, health, water and sanitation services, among others, to the IDPs in Bundibugyo District. The World Food Programme continues to provide food to the IDPs, estimated at over 100,000. Sustained limited access to land this season continues to hamper household food production, implying maintained need for food aid by the IDPs, probably until the end of 2000 when the next harvest is due.

I. Weather, Rainfall and Vegetation Conditions

Rainfall: After a nearly one-month delay in some southern districts, rains became fully established in late April, promoting intensified field activities for the first cultivation season of 2000. For northern Uganda the rainfall season began in April -- on time or one a week or two late, depending on the location -- and this has prompted farmers to begin sowing crops. Select areas in central, eastern and southern districts and Lake Victoria Basin continued to suffer below average rains, resulting in lower than normal monthly rainfall totals thereby limiting farmers' activities -- field preparation and crop sowing -- in these areas.

The normal season in northern and northeastern Uganda -- Kotido and Moroto Districts - - began in April where well-distributed rainfall was observed. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), an NGO working with farming communities in Moroto District, reports that April rains replenished soil moisture and ground water sources, promoting crop cultivation and pasture growth as well as providing water for human and livestock consumption in the district.

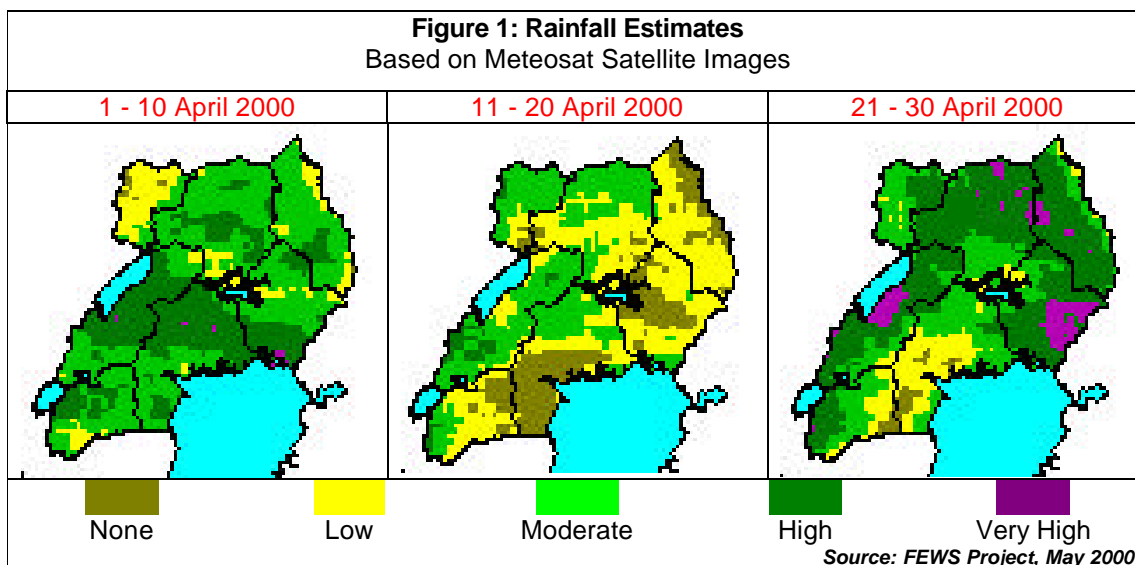


Figure 1 above is based on *Meteosat Satellite imagery* and shows the spatial distribution of rainfall across the country over April. The imagery confirms reports by district agriculture officials and NGOs of average to above average rainfall in western, southwestern and high altitude areas in eastern Uganda during April.

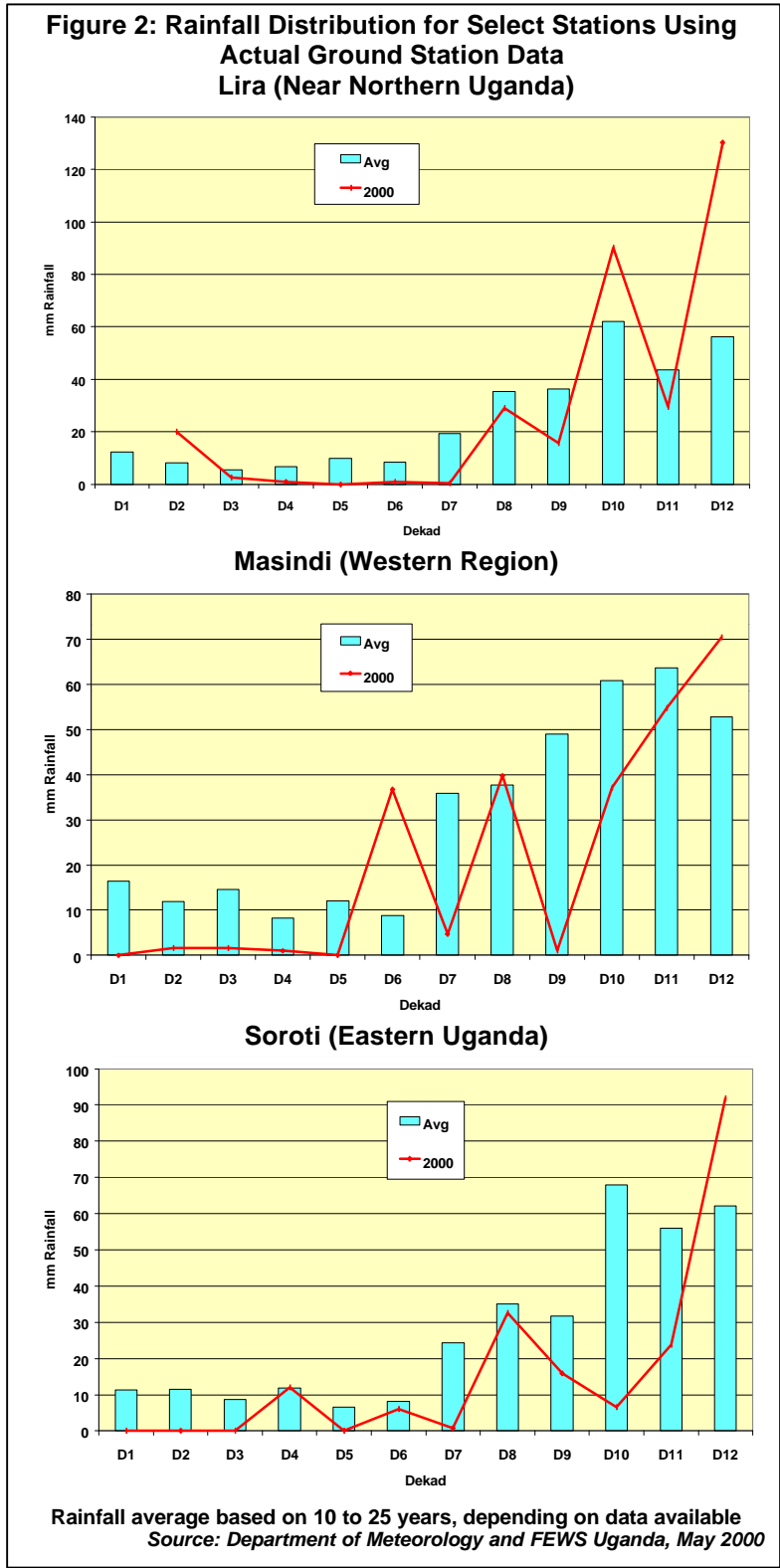
Climate Forecast: In April, the Department of Meteorology reviewed its forecast issued in February 2000, affirming near normal to below normal rains for several districts of Uganda. However, the first rainy season in the southern half of the country is now expected to extend through mid-June with rainfall performance predicted to improve starting in April (see Figure 2, next page). The rainy season in northern and northeastern Uganda, which began in April, is forecasted to be mixed. Normal to above normal rains are expected for districts in central north to the northeast whereas poorly distributed rains are forecasted, through late May, for the northwest and districts close to the northern shores of Lake Kyoga.

The department attributes delayed stability in first season rains and generally lower than normal seasonal totals in the southern half of the country to persistent variations in Sea Surface Temperatures (SSTs) over major oceans, particularly the Pacific Ocean, that determine the weather in the Equatorial region (including Uganda). These conditions are reportedly responsible for an over all poor long rain season in East Africa (March to May), especially for poorly distributed rainfall during March as experienced in Uganda this year.

Pasture and Livestock Conditions: Vegetation conditions in the northeastern pastoral Karamoja region -- Kotido and Moroto Districts -- have improved since April following the start of normal rains that led to sprouting of fodder and browse. This has increased livestock access to pastures -- subsequent to their return from dry season grazing areas in neighboring districts -- after the extended dry season experienced in 1999. LWF reports that relative civil security has been enjoyed in the district since late March with isolated incidents of cattle rustling observed.

Access to pastures and browse by livestock continues to be good in the central and southwestern "cattle corridor", favored by sustained

precipitation in the region that has also enhanced increased supply of ground water. No recent or significant outbreaks of livestock diseases have been reported.



II. Crop Calendar and Production

Despite lower than normal seasonal rainfall totals in parts of Uganda that continued to hamper proper cultivation, limiting area planted and affecting crops in the field, overall improvement in rainfall recorded during April favored enhanced field activities and crop growth across the country. Well-distributed rainfall was observed for western and southwestern districts, promoting proper crop development.

The IDEA Project, a USAID funded project promoting the production and export of non-traditional export crops, reports that except for Masindi District which experienced predominantly scanty rainfall up to mid-April, other western Districts -- Kasese down to Kabale -- have had relatively well distributed rainfall since the beginning of the season, providing favorable crop growing conditions. Districts of southern (Masaka, Rakai), central and eastern Uganda have had mixed rainfall conditions. Rakai District particularly has experienced mainly dry conditions, which affected maize growth -- although it is still too early in the season to determine production -- while Mubende and Mityana in central areas have had better rainfall distribution that promoted bean and maize growth. Farmers in parts of northern Kamuli and Iganga Districts only began sowing crops in April due to delayed rains that forced them to hold off cultivation. Nevertheless, crops in other areas of the districts -- where rainfall has been received since March -- are more than four weeks old.

Extension officials in eastern Districts of Kumi, Pallisa and Soroti indicate increased field activities since April where farmers are busy sowing cereals and pulses as well augmenting their sweet potato and cassava plantings. However, limited cultivation is reported in eastern Katakwi District, which experienced extensive displacements due to civil insecurity and population displacement caused by Karimojong attacks in February and March.

In northern Uganda, well-distributed April rains enabled increased land opening and sowing by farming households with access to arable land. Civil insecurity due to continued rebel activities experienced since late 1999 in Kitgum District as well as recent population displacement caused by Karimojong attacks in eastern Kitgum and Lira Districts in February and March 2000 limit households' access to land for crop cultivation. In Apac and Lira Districts as well as parts of Gulu District, farmers are busy sowing cereals, such as millet, maize and sorghum, pulses -- beans, pigeon peas -- and oil seed crops, mostly groundnuts, simsim (sesame) and sunflower. Extremely low soil moisture levels during the first quarter this year delayed dry sowing of millet and sorghum during late February and March, leading to increased concern by farmers and extension personnel for likely moisture stress during critical crop growth periods that may result in poor yields and production. Cultivation in northeastern Uganda -- Kotido and Moroto Districts -- is underway with the start of the seasonal rains. In Moroto District, LWF reports that farmers have intensified sowing and tending their sorghum crop planted in early April. Rainfall through June is necessary to ensure the crop's proper development for a good harvest.

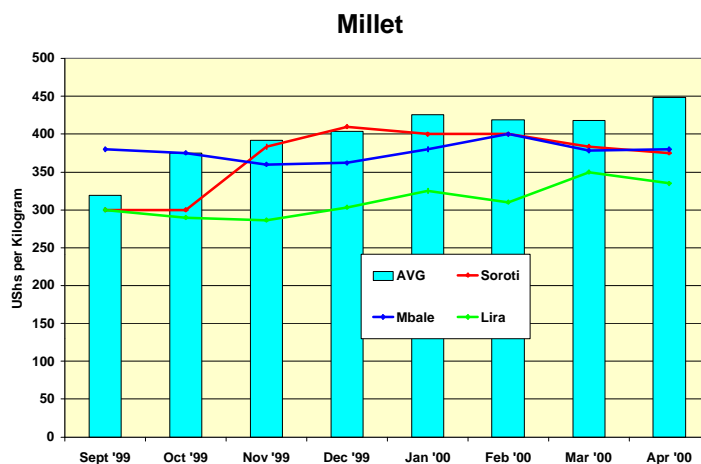
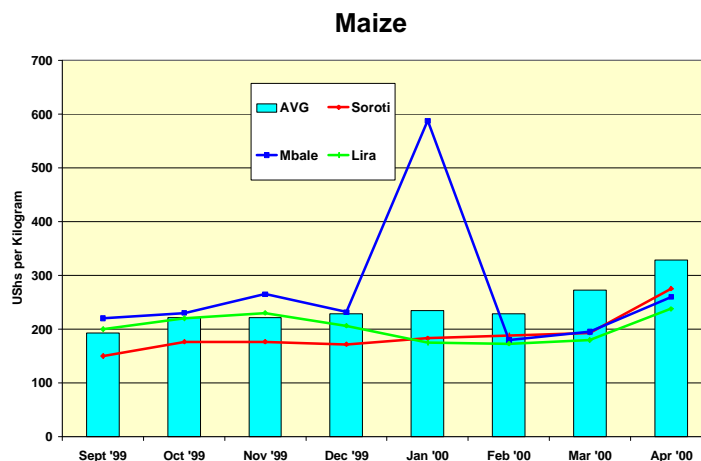
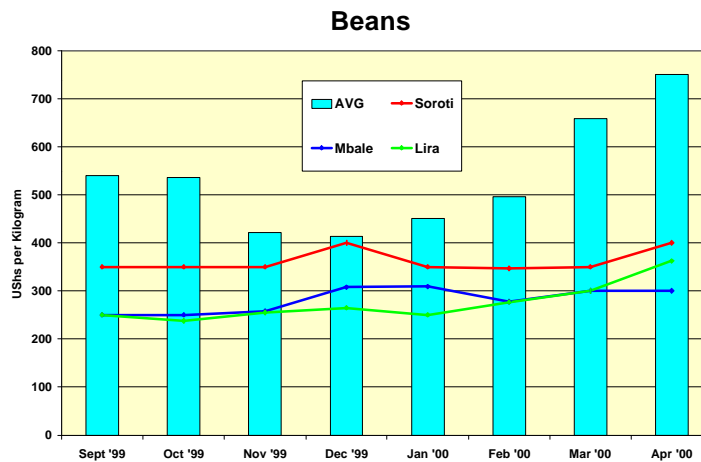
Overall, a generally late start to normal rains in the southern half of Uganda this season and mixed crop conditions in the country warrants close monitoring of the season's performance. FEWS continues to monitor progress throughout the season.

Banana (Matooke): Rains received in banana growing areas of western, central and southwestern districts of Uganda since March have enhanced production of matooke in the regions. Continued ample rains are necessary for improved performance of the crop, which suffered stress and reduced production last year when extended dry periods were experienced leading to much below normal production, and return to normal production.

III. Market Trade, Food Availability and Access

Except for areas affected by civil insecurity and population displacement, food supply to regional market centers in the country appears to be normal with no bottlenecks or unusually high prices reported. Household access to food from last season's production, markets and other sources remains good. Anecdotal information received by FEWS from the Market Information System of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (MIS/IITA) and IDEA Project and major commercial traders in the country indicates that supply of cereals -- maize, millet and sorghum -- and beans continues to be adequate, mostly from trader stocks. Normal seasonal declines have been observed as stocks get depleted and minimal supply to replenish them is being received from supply regions. Overall, commodity prices for the first four months of 2000 remained lower than a three-year average calculated for September to

Figure 3: Comparative Monthly Bean and Dry Maize, Millet Grain Wholesale Prices for Eastern Markets, Sept. 1999 to Apr. 2000



3-year average used for Sept. to March of 1996-'97; 1997-'98 and 1998-'99.
Source: The Market Information System, IITA and FEWS/U, May 2000

March of 1996-'97; 1997-'98 and 1998-'99 although seasonal rise trends have been observed for beans and maize (see Figure 3 above).

The supply of staple crops to markets in Moroto and Kotido -- northeastern region -- remains poor and largely dependent on inflows from neighboring district markets. According to LWF, uncertain security on the roads and supply routes impedes inflow of crops, such as maize and sorghum, to markets in Moroto town and other weekly markets around the district and has led to increases in commodity prices. For example, the price of maize and sorghum rose by approximately US\$ 70/=, from US\$ 330/= to 400/= per kilogram between March and April. High prices limit households' access to markets in a region where food stocks are severely stressed due to much below normal production last year.

In Kampala, large purchases during April, including purchases to cater for relief needs in Uganda and the Great Lakes region led to a temporary short period rise in wholesale commodity prices although prices remained below normal levels for this time of year. On average, beans sold for US\$ 37,800/= per 100 kilogram bag, 86 percent higher than the price in March 2000. A 100 kilogram bag of maize cost approximately US\$ 26,100/= in Kampala during April, 68 percent higher than the cost in March. Prices are expected to return to normal seasonal trends within the coming weeks.

IV. Humanitarian Update, Current Interventions: IDPs in Eastern and Northern Districts; April Assessment in Bundibugyo District

Eastern and Northern Districts Population Displacement: According to district authorities in Kitgum and Katakwi Districts, the number of displaced persons due to Karimojong related security problems had risen from approximately 73,000 and 35,000 to 80,000 and 60,000, respectively, by the end of April 2000. Agago and Chua Counties are the most affected in Kitgum District while Kapelobyong and Usuk Counties have suffered the most, in that order, in Katakwi District. Isolated attacks by Karimojong raiders in the districts have continued to plague the counties, leading to new population displacements and increase in the numbers of IDPs in the districts.

Security, shelter, water, food, need for improved sanitation and access to medical facilities remain the main needs of the displaced people. Since early April, Local Defense Units (LDUs) have been deployed in Katakwi District, enabling partial return home of some IDPs who moved to trading centers closer to their homes. This provides a possibility for the IDPs to access their homes and fields for any little remaining food and to cultivate crops for this season although not much of a harvest may be expected due to loss of farm implements, limited seed and late planting. Supply of water and food remain critically low. Apart from assistance provided by the Department of Disaster Management to the displaced people in Katakwi District, several NGOs have been actively involved in rendering food and non-food assistance to them. ActionAid and Medicins Sans Frontieres-Holland (MSF-H) have been involved in providing water to the IDPs with the former also building a settlement in Katakwi town as well as helping in distribution of food provided by the World Food Programme. In April, Adventist Relief Agency (ADRA) delivered clothing to the displaced people in Katakwi and there are plans to provide more clothing, much needed by the IDPs. The Uganda Seed Project through its Seed Industry Rationalization Programme (SIRP) supplied 34.4 MT and 18.6

MT of maize and bean seed, respectively, to be distributed to the displaced persons for planting this season. International Service Volunteer's Association (AVSI) reports that WFP started food distributions, in early May, to the Karimojong displaced people in Kitgum District, although distributions are hampered by uncertain security, mostly due Lord's Resistance Army rebel attacks in the district.

Displacement of households caused disruption of the communities' social structure and leading to closure of services, including schools, and causing the population to suffer traumatic experiences. The large number of displaced people, including school age-going children, is overwhelming and limits effort of the districts' administration to provide services within available facilities, such as integrating children in other schools and providing counseling. Malaria, diarrhea, vomiting, upper thoracic infections, skin and eye infections are the main diseases reported among the IDPs. A few cases of cholera have been reported in Lira District, however, no widespread outbreak of serious epidemics has been observed in the crowded IDP settlements although sanitation levels are continually deteriorating.

Assessment of Bundibugyo District: In mid-April, the UN-OCHA - Human Coordination office led a joint Government of Uganda, UN agencies and NGO assessment of Bundibugyo, Kabarole Kasese where they visited several displaced people's camps to acquaint themselves with living conditions. The mission aimed to determine water and sanitation conditions, incidence of diseases, food and non-food needs of the IDPs to help in evolving means to address these needs through a concerted humanitarian agencies effort using combined resources. An estimated more than 100,000 people remain displaced in Bundibugyo District.

The mission found that following extensive government troop deployment since early this year, relative calm has been established in Bundibugyo District with only pockets of insecurity and population displacements observed. Security in the district has enabled increased movement along the main roads linking the district to supply areas, mostly in neighboring districts, and within the district as well as enhancing the population's access to cultivable land in areas around the Mountain Rwenzori to cultivate vegetables, root crops, bananas (matooke). Heavy rainfall since the beginning of the season is reportedly limiting road access.

Several NGOs, including ActionAid, Medicins Sans Frontieres-France (MSF-F), World Harvest Mission are active in the district, providing shelter, health, water and sanitation services, among others, to the IDPs in Bundibugyo District. Action Against Hunger - USA, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and OXFAM-UK plan to return to the district. MSF-F is involved in providing medical, water and sanitation services in Bundibugyo town and other centers around the district. UNICEF plans to assist in primary school education and emergency school shelters were delivered in early April. The World Food Programme continues to provide food to the IDPs. However, sustained limited access to land this season continues to hamper household food production, implying maintained need for food aid by the IDPs, probably until the end of 2000 when the next harvest is due.