

STORM DISPLACES THOUSANDS IN PALLISA

By Lawrence Okwakol

Over 1,000 residents of Omukulai and Opogono wards in Kibale town council, Pallisa district, were left homeless after a storm that struck on Saturday afternoon stripped off roofs, flattened houses and destroyed crops.

What began as a light drizzle at around 2:00pm quickly intensified into a violent storm that ripped off iron sheets, cracked walls, uprooted trees and banana plantations, and destroyed cassava gardens. Two children reportedly died, while more than 70 people sustained injuries.

Grace Anabo, a resident of Omukulai 'B' cell, said the iron sheets on her house were blown about 800 metres away, leaving her and her children exposed as the walls nearly caved in.

She said the storm destroyed crops and killed goats, sheep and chickens, forcing families to seek shelter in neighbouring homes as their bedding were soaked.

"I risked growing rice for four years in a swamp as people were denied to



Residents and administrators inspecting a classroom block which iron sheets were ripped off by the heavy hailstorm on Saturday

cultivate in wetlands to buy the 25 iron sheets, but the devil has again come to blow it off. I am a widow with seven children, how shall I re-roof my house?" Anabo said.

Angela Asige, a single mother from the same village, said her retail shop was razed down and goods including sugar, soap and biscuits were soaked.

"I had gone to Mukongoro town council in Kumi district to mourn when I got a call that my two children were feared dead as they couldn't be traced. I came worried only to get them under a nearby tree where they ran to take shelter," Asige said.

Assistant Resident District Commissioner Lious Patrick Okia,

PHOTO BY LAWRENCE OKWAKOL

APPEALING FOR SUPPORT

Angela Asige, a single mother and resident of Omukulai 'B' cell, said: "I just need the Government and any well-wisher to revamp my business and help me re-roof my two-bedroomed house."

Lambert Okurut, the director of Rev. Kajas Okurut Primary School in Ogasian cell, Opogono ward, said half of the roof for his four-classroom block was blown off while he was inside one of the classrooms, exposing a teacher and 71 pupils to rain. To rehabilitate the school, Okurut said he needs sh50m.

"I only need assistance of sh50m because I have to buy furniture, replace the damaged books, roof the structure and buy cement. I invested over sh500m in this project, which is not only benefiting me but the community as well," Okurut said.

Emmanuel Tukei an affected-resident, said over 70 patients with injuries were rushed to Kibale Health Centre III and nearby clinics. "People are talking of the rescue from the disaster preparedness ministry, but I highly doubt whether they will intervene. We have had disaster before but no assistance has ever been given to us since Dr Stephen Malinga, our former MP, died in 2013," Tukei said.

said a formal report had been submitted to the Office of the Prime Minister, and Alex Felix Majeme, the chief administrative officer, would co-ordinate an assessment.

"The disaster committee will sit to

scrutinise the magnitude and ensure our people get the necessary help they deserve," Majeme said.

Kibale MP Richard Osekue said he would rely on the availed assessment expedite the process.