



# AfReSlide Newsletter

**AfReSlide - Landslides in Equatorial Africa:**  
**Identifying culturally, technically and economically feasible resilience strategies**



Dear reader,

During the last 18 months, the AfReSlide project members have established fruitful collaborations with universities, official authorities and community leaders in Uganda and Cameroon. Field trips in the Mt Rwenzori in Uganda and the Mt Bamboutos in Cameroon helped our researchers to document, together with the local communities, the complexity of landslide risks and their impacts.

Thanks to our multi-disciplinary team of researchers, AfReSlide is moving beyond the identification of the risk to find potential risk reduction strategies. This starts with identifying where and when landslides happen as was done in the Rwenzori in 2014 and is currently being done in the Mt Bamboutos and Mt Elgon. It also includes the characterization of the economic impacts of landslides for small-holder farmers through a large-scale survey conducted early 2015 in the Rwenzori. It requires the investigation of the cultural representations of disasters and the relationship with land tenure by our anthropologist Astrid de Hontheim through meetings with cultural leaders as done in Rwenzori in the last months and soon in the Bamboutos. Finally it involves to look for potential risk reduction strategies, via the implementation of formal policies and community-based actions. This was investigated in the Rwenzori in the fall of 2014 and will soon be researched in the specific case of the risk zones of Limbe city in Cameroon.

This 3<sup>rd</sup> Newsletter highlights the preliminary findings obtained by AfReSlide and the actions coming up in the different study areas. We keep counting on your collaboration to report relevant observations in both Uganda and Cameroon. This will help us to produce accurate and relevant output to, together, reduce landslide risks and improve people's well-being.

Matthieu Kervyn – AfReSlide coordinator

## News flash

- ✎ Large crack development in Muhokya sub-county, Kasese district, Rwenzori Mountains, damaging the local health centers and water supply tank (KRC Uganda, 2015).
- ✎ River Nyamwamba floods in Kasese district on 8<sup>th</sup> of May, 2015, causing blockage of Bulembia bridge and displacing several households (NewVision, 2015)



**Figure 1: (Asiimwe, 2015)**

Provide us with your observations on these or other events in your region!



### We need your input!

In case you have information to share about landslides in Uganda or Cameroon, please contact us!

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## Landslide risk governance in Uganda

Landslides in Uganda are not a new problem. But how does Uganda prepare itself for landslides?

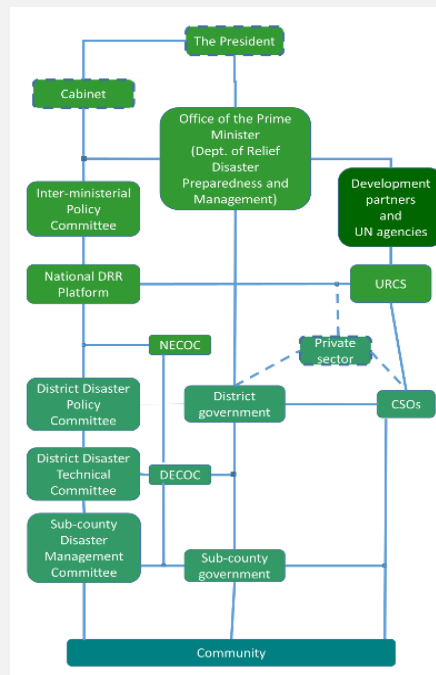
### Disaster Risk Management in Uganda

As often the case in the Global South, Disaster Risk Management (DRM) is at an emerging stage in Uganda. The DRM-cycle has been embedded slowly into Ugandan policy over the past 2 decades. Several laws and policies that are relevant for disasters and disaster management were established (see Table 1).

It is only since 2010 that a National Policy has been drafted for Disaster Preparedness and Management. Formerly an emphasis was put on response and recovery, but with the creation of the National Policy in 2010 the paradigm shifted towards Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). Accordingly the national department for Disaster Preparedness, the national DRR Platform and Disaster Management Committees at district and sub-county levels have been set up (Fig. 2).

**Table 1: Laws and policies relevant for DRM in Uganda (Bamutaze, 2015)**

Law and Policy
The Ugandan National Climate Change Policy, 2012
National Policy for Disaster Preparedness and Management, 2010
The Uganda National Land Policy, 2011
The National Development Plan, 2010-2014
The Land (Amendment) Act, 2010
The National Land Use Policy, 2007
Hilly and Mountainous Areas Management Regulations, 2000
The Local Government Act, 1997
The Constitution of Uganda, 1995
The National Environment Management Policy, 1994



**Figure 2: Institutional framework for DRM (OPMRU, 2010)**

The National Policy is built on the acknowledgement of a shared responsibility between government and the citizens of Uganda and has been clearly driven by the international Hyogo Framework for Action agenda that was set in 2005.

### Landslide risk governance

At national level, the lead institution for landslide risk reduction is the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA). The specific policy actions that are promoted in the National Policy (2010) are to gazette landslide-prone areas, resettle all persons living in landslide-prone areas, promote afforestation, enforce relevant laws and policies, apply appropriate farming technologies and land use practices, and promote research.

Our field research in western Uganda shows that at the district level, the established disaster Management Committees are largely non-functional and meet only haphazardly due to a lack of priority, funding, expertise and political power for lobbying. Disaster Management Committees at sub-county level do not exist at all, although some efforts are taken to revitalize them in disaster-prone sub-counties.

While currently more focus is still put on response and recovery at the various administrative levels, some promising efforts are taking to focus on prevention and preparedness, e.g. community-based projects of the Ugandan Red Cross and drafting of contingency plans.

Although DRM is still at an emerging stage in Uganda, and the results of the new DRM approach will take time, a structural and strong legislative institutional basis has been created.

## Collaboration with Dschang University in the Bamboutos

In May 2014 Astrid, Olivier and Kewan first met with staff of the geological department of Dschang University to discuss of a possible collaboration with the AfReSlide project. This first contact was very fruitful, as the welcoming was very warm and a lot of expertise on landslides already exists at Dschang University. The staff of the university took the time to show us several landslides in the region, as well as the Anthropological museum, thereby demonstrating a great

understanding on landslides in the region and the multidisciplinary character of the AfReSlide project. This collaboration has been formalized by an agreement through which joint fieldwork will be organized, as well as rainfall and landslide will be continuously monitored in the next three years. Currently, one of the AfReSlide members, Liesbet Jacobs, is performing fieldwork in the Bamboutos in collaboration with Dschang University.

## Meeting cultural leaders of the Rwenzori Mountains

Two anthropological fieldtrips took place in the Rwenzori mountains, Uganda. During the first fieldtrip from December, 2014 to January, 2015, the research focused on the relationship between the Rwenzururu royalty, the cultural understanding of justice - more specifically when related to land issues - and ritual activity explicitly performed by the royal family to solve calamities and to ensure peaceful harmony within the kingdom. Several meetings and interviews have been organized with his Majesty Charles Wesley Mumbere, as well as with her Majesty the Queen, her Majesty the Queen Mother and several royal Ministers.

The second fieldtrip occurred between May and June, 2015. The research was mostly conducted with *abathahwa* (traditional healers by birth in connection with spirits), *abahande* (same as previous without any use of psychoactive substances to induce the connection) and *abahangyi* (rain and sunshine makers) to precise the role of cultural beings in triggering disasters and misfortune, the human wish of ascendancy over phenomenon understood by science as natural, as well as cultural means to arrange a compromise with the invisible world in a context of calamities. As cultural personalities are traditionally responsible for land rights, conflict management and ritual responses to natural

hazards, an extensive work has also been done with traditional leaders (ridge leader *isemalhambo*, traditional landlord *owukulhu wawulambo*) in Mahango sub-county and Kasese and Bundibugyo districts. An investigation of 40 plants has been realized that are used in the prevention and the mitigation of disasters, especially landslides.



**Figure 3: Astrid de Hontheim with his Majesty Charles Wesley Mumbere, the Prime Minister Enoch Muhindo and Eri Thembo Nyakango, the Minister for Congo**

## Impacts of landslides in the Rwenzori Mountains

Together with 15 (former) students related to MMU, Kewan Mertens has implemented a structured household survey in 7 sub-counties of the Rwenzori district between January and March 2015. The main purpose of this survey was to acquire quantitative information on the social and economic impact of landslides on smallholder farmers in that region. The fieldwork lasted for more than two months and comprised a training of 15 former students related to MMU, several weeks of intensive fieldwork with these students in the hills around the Rwenzori Mountains and one week of data entry on the computers of MMU. In total up to 455 households have been interviewed and approximately 700 plots have been mapped with GPS. This would not have been possible without the active participation of the MMU staff and students involved in the project.

Together with the qualitative information collected during a previous fieldtrip the data collected in the beginning of 2015 will allow to understand which farmers are most likely to be affected by landslides and what are the impacts of landslides on household welfare and well-being. Also bottlenecks in the adoption of possible

resilience strategies at household level and possible interference with land market development will be investigated.



**Figure 4: Part of the team during fieldwork in Mahango (Mertens 2014)**

All the enumerators having successfully participated in the training, the fieldwork and data entry have been given a 'certificate of participation', which could be useful for their future job applications.

Results from the analysis of this survey will be reported in the subsequent newsletter thanks to the collaboration with the local population.



## Upcoming missions & conferences

In the following months, research is planned in Uganda and Cameroon:

- Liesbet Jacobs: fieldwork in Bamboutos caldera, Cameroon, in May until July 2015 and internship in Perugia end of 2015.
  - Jan Maes: fieldwork in Limbe city, Cameroon, from August 2015 until September 2015 to investigate risk zonation policies.
- In addition, Astrid de Hontheim will present at the conference of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) in Denver, USA, from November 18 to 22, 2015. "Coping with the Invisible: Some Bakonzo Cultural Responses to Natural Disasters in the Rwenzori".

## Scientific output

### 1. Publications

Jacobs, L., Dewitte, O., Poesen, J., Delvaux, D., Thiery, W., Kervyn, M., 2015. The Rwenzori Mountains, a landslide-prone region? Landslides. [I.F. 2.814]

### 2. Conference presentations

Research of the AfReSlide project was presented:

At the European Geosciences Union General Assembly, Vienna, 13-17 April 2015:

- ✎ Maes, J., Kervyn, M., Vranken, L., Dewitte, O., Vanmaercke, M., Mertens, M., Jacobs, L. and Poesen, J. Landslide risk reduction strategies: an inventory for the Global South
- ✎ Jacobs, L., Dewitte, O., Poesen, J., Sekajugo, J., Maes, J., Mertens, K. and Kervyn, M. A first landslide inventory in the Rwenzori Mountains, Uganda.

At the PhD workshop of the Belgian Association of Agricultural economics on 29<sup>th</sup> of April, 2015:

- ✎ Mertens, K., Maes, J., Jacobs, L., Kervyn, M., Kabaseke, C., Vranken, L. The differential impact of landslides on smallholder farmers in the Rwenzori Mountains, Uganda.

At the PhD workshop of the Italian Association of Agricultural economics on 8<sup>th</sup> of June, 2015:

- ✎ Mertens, K., Maes, J., Jacobs, L., Kervyn, M., Kabaseke, C., Vranken, L. The differential impact of landslides on smallholder farmers in the Rwenzori Mountains, Uganda.

## AfReSlide extends to Mount Elgon



A new PhD. researcher is involved in the AfReSlide project, Joseph Tamale. His research will be on the landslide risk assessment of Mount Elgon, integrating the hazard analysis and the consequence analysis of the elements at risk as part of the TEAM VLIR project in Mount Elgon.

So far, Joseph has been preparing a detailed doctoral research plan at KU Leuven based on a detailed literature review and has started to map landslides and environmental characteristics in several districts of the Mount Elgon zone.

## Thank you note

We would like to thank all of you for your cooperation. This project would not be possible without the input of many participants during the extensive fieldwork. It is vital to this project that all different views are included. Our research team also wants to show their gratitude to the host families in Kasese and Bundibugyo districts as well as in the Bamboutos. Their hospitality has made our stay a pleasant experience by introducing us into Ugandan culture. Our gratefulness also goes to cultural leaders and traditions specialists who agreed to dedicate time to improve our understanding of the involvement of cultural beings in local explanations of disasters. Special thanks also goes to the researchers of Dschang University.