

# Alert

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## Liberia

### For Combating Army Worm Invasion in Liberia

Geneva, 29<sup>th</sup> June 2016

#### 1. Brief description of the emergency and impact

On June 19, 2016, life has become unbearable for people in Zota District in Bong County as thousands of very dangerous and destructive insects called army worms invaded towns and villages resulting in the destruction of crops, contaminating drinking water and causing residents to flee. So far, according to information gathered, 12 towns have been affected. Agricultural activities have ceased in these towns, as the people are unable to carry out their farming activities due to the overwhelming presence of these worms; more specifically, people who have contact with the worms develop abscesses (skin sores). If nothing is done to contain the spread of these worms, it can be expected that food insecurity and malnutrition will result because the affected towns and communities will not be able to carry out farming activities this year.

This is the second time army worms are invading this area. The first time was in 2009 when the entire district was affected. The Lutheran Development Service in Liberia along with other national and international non-governmental organizations collaborated with the Liberian Government to combat these dangerous worms at that time. With funding provided by Diakonie and EED, now merged with Bread for the World, LDS-Liberia, was able to provide new hand pumps and rehabilitated ones requiring new parts in the communities where they were working in the District.

#### 2. Why is an ACT response needed?

There is a great need for an ACT response because the invasion of the army worms is seriously affecting the local population. The affected communities no longer have access to their farms and livelihoods; this dire situation is further aggravated by the fact that these communities also no longer have access to safe drinking water as the fresh water creeks have been contaminated by the worms. Moreover, the crops (banana, plantain, rice, cocoa, etc.) in these villages are actively being destroyed.

#### 3. National and international response

The Liberian Government through the Ministries of Health and Agriculture, in collaboration with other national and international organizations, has carried out assessments and held meetings to see how to most effectively intervene in this unfortunate situation so as to best support the local inhabitants. (See assessment report.)

On Friday, June 25, 2016 two members of the ACT Alliance Liberia Forum including the Lutheran Development Service in Liberia and the Lutheran Church in Liberia visited one of the towns called Shankpallai to assess the situation. The worms were seen actively destroying surrounding vegetation.



During a conversation with the Town Chief of Shankpallai, Mr Anthony Seeyala, he stated “the situation in the area is very serious. We cannot go on the farms to continue our farming activities. If non-governmental organizations and the Liberian Government cannot come to our aid, people will die because we do not have safe drinking water.”

#### **4. ACT Alliance response**

ACT has not responded in this emergency. This alert is in preparation for a response to be followed by a Rapid Response Fund request.

#### **5. Planned activities**

1. The Lutheran Development Service in Liberia will work along with the Lutheran Church in Liberia and other interested ACT Alliance Liberia Forum members to collaborate with the Government of Liberia through the Bong Health Team to combat the army worms in the affected District.
2. Help improve sources of safe drinking water by construction of hand pumps and repairs of old hand pumps.
3. Help to provide food items because it is now difficult for the inhabitants to go to the villages in search of food.
4. Help to stop the spread of the worms by using low-impact insecticide spraying in the affected communities
5. Brush under the dahoma trees (the worms’ breeding ground) and to burn the eggs of the worms and the living ones.

#### **6. Constraints**

Some of the main constraints include logistics, resources and bad roads.

#### ***Liberia ACT Forum Contact Information***

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