

OPERATIONS UPDATE



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

NAMIBIA: FLOODS

5 April 2004

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

Appeal No. 09/04; Operations Update no. 1; Period covered: 1 to 5 April 2004; Appeal coverage: 0.0%.

Appeal history:

- Launched on 1 April 2004 CHF 797,000 (USD 629,201 or EUR 511,688) for five (5) months to assist 50,000 beneficiaries.
- Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated: CHF 60,000.

Outstanding needs: CHF 797,000 (USD 629,201 or EUR 511,688)

Related Emergency or Annual Appeals: N/A

Operational Summary: The water levels of the floods which hit the Caprivi Strip in Namibia are rising. More people have been displaced and some clinics have reported cases of water-borne diseases such as malaria and bilharzias as well as other related infections. There is looming fear of an outbreak of cholera due to the poor water and sanitation conditions. The [Namibia Red Cross Society](#) has commenced its relief operations and is delivering the much needed assistance. At the same time, the national society is involved in discussions with other players including the government and UN agencies in an effort of arresting the situation. Already, the national society has distributed tents, jerry cans and mosquito nets. Food relief is anticipated to be commenced very soon.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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Background

Following heavy rains during the months of February and March 2004, the Zambezi River started rising to dangerous levels. Although flooding was reported in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, the worst hit is the Caprivi Strip in North Eastern Namibia. Authorities have confirmed that it is the worst floods in the area since 1958.

The water level in the Zambezi has been increasing every day and eventually broke the 7-metre mark above normal level on Saturday 3 April, which is the highest level recorded since 1966. The most affected areas are the Kabbe and Katima rural constituencies, located in the low-lying areas along the Zambezi. Each constituency has a population of 15,000 people. It has been confirmed that some 98 percent of Kabbe and 50% of Katima rural are severely affected by the floods; approximately 20-25,000 people are currently at risk.



As the water level continues to raise, the constituencies of Sibinda, Linyandi and Kongola may also be threatened. Previous severe flooding in the area in May 2003 left 12,000 people displaced, but more areas have been affected now than in the last year's floods. There are fears that the situation will deteriorate further as the water levels usually peak around the end of April which marks the end of the annual rainy season; the worst may be yet to come.

Some of those affected have been shifting their belongings from flooded areas to higher ground. There is limited shelter currently available for these families, who are temporarily settling in the open, underneath trees, with very little protection from the heavy rains. Many schools have been caught in the mishap, and authorities have decided to close at least six that are worst off, as it is hazardous for both the students and teachers who might have to commute to and from schools either by foot or canoes. Other schools have requested tents so that teachers and students can be accommodated on their premises.

The Caprivi district experiences some flooding at the end of the rainy season every year and, traditionally, people shift their accommodation to higher ground with their livestock during that time. This time round, majority of the people have been reluctant to leave their homes for higher grounds for fear of detachment from schools and clinics within their vicinity. Many villagers have already brought their cattle to the inland grazing areas, leaving women and children behind. However, they are also faced with a shelter problem due to the unusual heavy rains. The floods this year have left thousands of people, mostly women and children, stranded in submerged villages and in urgent need for assistance.

Water and sanitation in the region has highly worsened jeopardizing the lives of the people. The flood waters which the community depend on is contaminated with human and cattle waste. Clinics have reported high rise in malaria cases, skin infections, scabies, snakebites, bilharzia and diarrhea. Authorities also fear that cholera may break out, and are monitoring the health situation carefully. It is crucial that the affected people constantly have access to clean water, blankets and protection from mosquitoes. Most of the population of the area relies on subsistence farming and chronic food insecurity prevails in the region. The floods have destroyed large parts of this year's harvest, increasing the food insecurity of the affected population.

Operational developments

The Namibia Red Cross received CHF 60,000 allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to commence its relief and assessment activities. A Regional Disaster Response Team (RDRT) consisting

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of three members from the national society and a member of the Baphalali Swaziland Red Cross supported by the regional disaster response officer and information delegate, has been operational on the ground since 29 March 2004. The team has visited most of the worst affected areas by road, where it has been possible as roads have in many places been cut off by the swollen river, boats or helicopters. The floodwater is rapidly closing in on more and more areas situated far off from the normal riverbanks.



The Namibia Red Cross has already given 107 tents, 50 jerry cans and 52 mosquito nets from the warehouse in Windhoek, through the assistance of the National Emergency Unit. All the 107 tents have already been distributed. The first batch of tents was distributed in Schuckmansburg (40 tents) and Kasika (23 tents) on Friday and on Sunday in Impalila island (44 tents) by helicopter and cargo plane with the support of the Zimbabwe Air force.

The local government in the Caprivi district is evacuating people who have lost their homes or are

at risk. Four evacuation sites have been identified on higher ground; Lusese, Kabbe, Schuckmansburg and Impalila Island. The government will also accommodate students and teachers at those schools which will remain open, so that they will not have to commute back and forth to their villages – many of which are affected by the floods. Health authorities have confirmed that clinics in the affected areas have enough of the necessary medicine to serve for the next three months, and there are plans to provide back-up services by placing more nurses on duty. Mobilization of mobile clinics is also being discussed. Food insecurity is chronic in the district, and the government is already engaged in food relief in the area due to drought. Part of that consignment will be used for people affected by the floods.

A consignment from the Southern Africa regional delegation disaster preparedness stock in Harare left by road for Caprivi on Monday 5 April and is expected to arrive in Katima Mulilo on Tuesday night. The relief goods include 500 family tents, 150 rolls of tarpaulins, 1,000 jerry cans, 2,000 blankets, 35 rolls of plastic sheeting and water and sanitation equipment to provide safe water to evacuation sites. The relief goods in the DP stock in Harare and Windhoek need to be replenished.

Whereas there needs for this operation are seemingly on the increase, there has been a downbeat response to the appeal. However, the Swedish Red Cross has made a pledge of CHF 100,000 which is to be officially documented. We appeal to donors to give funds to support this operation.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action - objectives, progress, impact

As relief goods have not reached Caprivi, there is not enough information to report on per activity. This will be provided in next Operations Update.

Federation Coordination

The RDRT team is participating in daily coordination/task force meetings at the Caprivi Governor's office together with governmental divisions and UN organizations. The task force has been divided in five working groups responsible for relief, resettlement, and logistics; members of the RDRT have been assigned as team-leaders in all the groups. One Namibia Red Cross RDRT member was part of an assessment team from the Namibia Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC) and worked with government officials and representatives from UNICEF and WFP. The Federation disaster management officer has also taken the lead in establishing an information/operations centre where all information on the progress of the situation and relief operation are gathered and updated.

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The Namibia Red Cross and the Federation is working in collaboration with the National and the Regional Emergency Management Unit to ensure that shelter, food and safe drinking water will be accessible to the floods victims; the national society's regional officer is chairing the National Land and Shelter Committee.

Communications – Advocacy and Public Information

The Secretary General of the Namibia Red Cross has attended on daily interviews to BBC, Reuters, IRIN, SABC and local media, updating them on the unfolding situation on the floods.

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