

INFORMATION BULLETIN



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

ZAMBIA: FLOODS

27 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

This Information Bulletin (no. 1/2004) is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 20,000 has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). The Federation does not anticipate further needs. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed. This operation will be reported on through the DREF update.

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

Zambia, Botswana and Namibia experienced heavy rains during the months of January, February and March 2004. The Zambezi River rose to extremely high levels, posing a danger to lives of people along the banks of the Zambezi and its tributaries. The districts of Sesheke in Western province, and Zambezi and Chavuma in the North Western province were the most affected. Western and North Western provinces experience "normal" seasonal floods, when communities living on the Zambezi River plains migrate to higher lands. Rains in this current season have been described as above normal. Government authorities and community members reported an early rise in water levels of between one to two metres in affected areas; this surpasses normal levels by about 1.2 metres.

Approximately 20,000 people have been displaced and are currently accommodated in local government schools and churches. Local authorities have reported two deaths, and 13 people have been admitted in Chavuma district hospital. Some women and children have remained in the flooded lower lands looking after their remaining assets. They have no access to clean or safe water, to toilets, habitable shelter nor to adequate food. This raises concerns that there will be a rise in malaria and water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea.

The extent of the floods is said to cover the whole west bank of the Zambezi River (lower than the east bank) adjoining the Caprivi region, and has submerged all the maize, cassava and rice fields. Crop loss is estimated to be 90-100%. In Senanga and Chavuma districts, primary schools and government clinics have been closed; they are partially submerged in water and pose a hazard to the community.

The grazing lands have equally been destroyed; most people in the affected communities have relocated to other areas in search of grazing pastures for their animals. With the high incidence of Contagious Bovine Pleural Pneumonia (CBPP) and over crowding of animals in the few available grazing lands, it is possible that CBPP will spread, thereby compounding the food-insecure situation that already exists in these districts. This situation will most likely get worse in the coming two to three months: agricultural production from the eastern bank will not be able to sustain the food requirements for the western bank. The affected households have been forced to prematurely harvest their crops in an attempt to salvage them from total destruction. Most farmers depend heavily on the wetlands – now flooded - where they cultivate rice, cassava and maize. The damage to field crops is coupled with the fact that current food stocks are also depleted. Malnutrition especially among the under five children appears imminent.

Road access has also been impacted by the flooding. The western bank cannot be accessed by road, cutting it off from the eastern bank. Accessibility by water is also difficult; pontoons in Zambezi and Chavuma are not operational. The roads leading to these districts are passable but in poor condition. The road network is only operational on the eastern side. None of the districts has motorized water transport. Six six-wheel-drive trucks are able to reach some of the isolated areas. (These trucks fall under the Transport Support Package between WFP, Norwegian Red Cross and the Federation. For background, please refer to [Emergency Appeal 15/2003](#) and its [Operations Update no. 2 dated 30 October.2003](#)).

The health status of the majority of the affected people may get worse since sources of safe water are flooded and contaminated. Latrines are also flooded and are causing contamination. Due to the lack of clean drinking water, most people are now consuming untreated water collected from the river raising fears of a looming epidemic.

According to government and local Zambia Red Cross branch officials, continued rainfall in Angola and the Zambezi River tributaries will cause water levels to rise more, resulting in greater numbers of affected people.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The [Zambia Red Cross Society](#) has been implementing community health, water and sanitation (WatSan), HIV/AIDS, food security and branch development activities in high risk areas. National Society branches in the targeted areas have reliable volunteers; they were successfully engaged by WFP and the government for general food distribution in the provinces during the recent 2002 – 2003 food security programme.

The Zambia Red Cross allocated an equivalent CHF 2,400 of their emergency funds and dispatched an in-country Regional Disaster Response Team (RDRT) to implement an impact and needs assessment in the affected districts and communities. The assessment mission, completed on 7 April, was planned together with the Government of Zambia Disaster Coordination Unit, the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU – reporting to the Office of the Vice President), and the Federation. The team visited Sesheke, Senanga, Kalabo and Lukulu districts in Western Province, and Zambezi and Chavuma districts in North Western Province. These districts lie on the Zambezi River and border Namibia and Angola.

The Zambia Red Cross, with support from the Federation, have released 100 blankets, 23 tents, and 205 collapsible jerry cans from its Lusaka warehouse. The national society has also set up an operational structure; volunteers are being trained in distribution management in the targeted districts of Sesheke, Zambezi and Chavuma.

The Federation has allocated CHF 20,000 from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to implement activities and procure additional emergency items (see below). The Zambia Red Cross / Federation intervention will focus mainly on non-food items distribution and hygiene promotion. The Government of Zambia is already providing food parcels to the displaced families.

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The following relief items are urgently required to support the families in the short term (initially 3 months).

- 10,000 Blankets
- 1,100 Family latrines(170 rolls Plastic sheeting,)
- 2,000 Insecticide Treated Mosquito Nets (ITN)
- 60,000 250 g soap
- 50 Tarpaulins
- 4,000 Jerry cans
- 1 New Emergency Health Kits
- 270,000 Water purification sachets
- Poles and grass for thatching (shelter)

The Zambia Red Cross will continue to work closely with the office of the Vice President, the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit, the District Disaster Management Committee and other agencies to ensure proper coordination of activities targeting vulnerable people affected by floods.

The Federation Southern Africa Regional Delegation in Harare will provide support, in particular with WatSan needs and through careful monitoring of the situation.

All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>.

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's [Annual Appeal for Zambia, no. 01.19/2004](#).

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