

# **MADAGASCAR: CYCLONE GRETELLE**

10 July 1997

*appeal no. 03/97*

*situation report no.2*

*period covered: 15 May - 30 June 1997*

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*This programme is coming to an end, with elements of the food security programme expected to be completed by late July. The Federation is examining the possibility of further supporting the Malagasy Red Cross Society in Disaster Preparedness and capacity Development..*

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## ***The context***

Cyclone Gretelle tore through south-eastern Madagascar on 24 and 25 January 1997, affecting approximately half a million people, 42,000 of whom were among the poorest inhabitants of the mountainous Midongy and Befotaka districts. Roads and bridges were washed away, preventing access by land. Those affected could not harvest their crops in March as fields were under water, while other crops such as coffee, cassava and breadfruit — used to generate additional income to assure the tide-over between the two crop seasons — were also partially destroyed.

The Malagasy Red Cross Society (MRCS) requested the Federation to launch an appeal for CHF 885,000 to assist Befotaka and Midongy. This initial appeal was increased to CHF 1,534,000 at the beginning of April in order to respond better to the victims' needs. Forty-seven per cent of the appeal has been covered to date, mainly by the European Community via the French Red Cross and several other National Red Cross Societies.

## ***Latest events***

As roads and bridges were destroyed during the cyclone, emergency aid had to be delivered by air. After initial problems with inclement weather, the operation functioned well and aid was successfully delivered to beneficiaries. Food assistance will continue until the end of July. Alongside food aid, MRCS/Federation is also distributing rice seed, soap, blankets and clothing, in preparation for the forthcoming rainy season when temperatures fall to a cool 10°C.

*Midongy •*

The road to the coast has reopened for light vehicles which has helped to normalise conditions. The rice harvest, which started during the reporting period, is encouraging, with high quality rice being harvested alongside beans, cassava and potatoes. The price of rice and other foodstuffs has dropped, following steep rises after the cyclone. A road rehabilitation project, run by Care, is also helping to relieve the economic situation.

***Befotaka •***

Access to the town is still difficult but a MRCS/Federation/Care food-for-work programme is underway, aiming to repair 45 km of road and 42 bridges. Care is supplying the labour and materials, while MRCS/Federation supplies food. The situation in this district is now much as it was before Gretelle struck.

***Malagasy Red Cross/Federation action***

The first phase of the operation — emergency relief — has been covered in situation report 03/97.01. The second phase, food distribution to 20,000 most vulnerable is proceeding smoothly and will be finished at the end of July. By this date, over 42,000 people will have received assistance from MRCS/Federation — including food, seeds, shelter, clothing and hygiene items.

On June 13 the Red Cross emergency nutritional centres, which had been providing food for 600 children and 1,400 of their family members were closed according to schedule.

The capacities of the Red Cross branches in Farafangana, Vangaindrano and Midongy have been considerably strengthened during the programme. The National Society has also set up a Disaster Preparedness Programme to enhance intervention capabilities for future cyclone seasons. The Federation is investigating the possibility of placing a disaster preparedness and development delegate on the island to assist MRCS with its plans.

***Farafangana and Vangaindrano •***

In these coastal towns the harvest is good and the situation has reverted to normal, as evidenced by the sharp drop in numbers attending feeding centres. Nutritional problems remain; a Care survey showed a severe malnutrition rate of 1.93% among the population, regarded as the norm for this area, where malnutrition is endemic. On the health front there is still a lack of basic medicines and the financial means to buy the limited stock available.

***Food distribution: all areas, 15 May 12 June (13,104 beneficiaries)***

<i>Items distributed</i>	<i>Quantities</i>
Rice	40,407 kg
Beans	10,267 kg
Oil	5,598 Lt
Seeds	1,625 kg
Soap	156 boxes (702 kg)

***Red Cross nutrition centres at Vangaindrano and Farafangana for the period  
15 May 12 June (approximately 2,000 people)***

<b><i>Items distributed</i></b>	<b><i>Quantities</i></b>
Rice	7, 760 kg
Beans	2,075 kg
Oil	1,216 Lt
Corn Soya blend (CSB)	1,500 kg
Soap	1,807 bars (542 kg)
Clothes	35 bags

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details. For more information please contact the East Africa Desk, on ++4122 7304316.

## ***Conclusion***

Both the emergency relief and food security part of this revised appeal went well, and the programme will end as planned in late July. However, there is an urgent need for developmental follow-up due to the recurrent and endemic challenges facing the population of Madagascar.

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