MADAGASCAR: CYCLONES AND FLOODS

9 March, 2000

Information Bulletin N° 01

The Disaster

In the last four weeks, two cyclones have ravaged the Indian Ocean island of Madagascar. In mid-February, Cyclone Eline passed across Madagascar from the west, before exiting into the Mozambique channel and proceeding on to the African mainland. On Thursday, March 2, Cyclone Gloria followed the same course and was accompanied by heavy downpours, affecting communities already reeling from the impact of Eline. To date, 137 persons have been confirmed dead.

Reports indicate the impact area of the central and northern districts is populated by some 600,000 people, all of whom are suffering from the effects of these cyclones. UNICEF has reported 10,000 people severely affected and/or homeless, while stating that the situation is critical and dramatic. A government appeal for food, medicines, blankets and water purification tablets was issued on Tuesday, March 7.

As many of the affected areas are currently inaccessible, an accurate assessment of the extent of the damage will only be known over the next few weeks. A joint mission including the Minister of Interior and UN agencies is being conducted by helicopter today, with the aim of establishing the urgent requirements of the population as well as accessibility and possible supply routes.

UNICEF is preparing to spend 3 million USD in order to provide urgently required items, such as Emergency Health kits, blankets and water purification tablets. The World Food Program has mobilised a helicopter airlift of 25 mt of food to the Mahanoro region on the central west coast.

Against this backdrop, Madagascar has been struggling to control an outbreak of cholera that has spread throughout the island. In the past year alone, over 1,200 deaths have been reported and 20,000 cases treated - half of these in the past three months. The combination of stagnant pools of water and collapsed latrines has worsened an already preoccupying situation, creating a further challenge to relief and health workers. Urgent priority within the international community is being placed on the provision of clean water and promoting improved hygiene to prevent an escalation in the incidence of waterborne disease.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Malagasy Red Cross has been assessing the extent of the damage. In the northern departments of Andapa, Sambaha, Antalaha, and Vohemar, Diego Province, 70% of homes are reported underwater, with 70% of crops destroyed, raising serious concern regarding the long term food security of the area. The provinces of Fianarantsoa and Majunga are also seriously affected. The National Society is meeting this

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afternoon (Thursday 9 March) to compile and assess the figures received to date from five of the six affected provinces, and to plan an effective response.

The Regional Delegation in Nairobi (RDN) is in regular contact with the National Society and UN agencies, monitoring and coordinating information as it becomes available, and mobilising resources for immediate deployment, pending the preliminary needs assessment from the National Society. Stocks of water purification tablets as well as supplies and pharmaceuticals for use in cholera treatment are available in Nairobi include, and the RDN has a stand-by team ready to intervene if the situation requires.

Needs

Emergency shelter materials will be necessary in the immediate-term. The specific types of items and quantities to meet the needs will be communicated in the update expected to be issued shortly. In addition, based on the emerging needs assessment and ongoing monitoring, longer-term needs such as food, seeds and agricultural materials may also emerge.

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Director
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