

MADAGASCAR: CYCLONES AND FLOODS

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The Disaster

Less than a month after Gloria and 45 days after Eline, a third cyclone, Hudah, hit the North-East coast of Madagascar on Sunday night, 2 April. The eye of the cyclone was located between the coastal towns of Sambava and Moroansetra. Satellite pictures indicate that the cyclone covers an area roughly the size of a third of Madagascar, with a diameter of 300 kms and windspeeds of up to 300 km/h. After touching land, the cyclone passed south of the Tsaratamana mountain range (highest point is 2,876 m), and on Monday morning left the island around the coastal town of Analalava, continuing in a westward direction.

Already seriously affected by Gloria, the local population and the local economy and infrastructure in the northern region has again been afflicted by this cyclone. While it is too early to specify detailed figures on damage or casualties, the affected districts in the north-east and north-west are populated by more than 1,200,000 people and the potential for widespread injury and damage is high.

A joint mission, including the Minister of Interior and UN agencies, is planned for today (4 April) to assess the requirements of the population, and to determine access and supply routes.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

CHF 50,000 was released from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on March 3, 2000 to initiate the assessment and assistance operation from the first two cyclones, and the Malagasy Red Cross (MRC), with support from the International Federation, is currently implementing a relief programme in support of the victims of Eline and Gloria. This new disaster is being closely monitored, and as further information becomes available the evolving logistics and distribution plans will be adjusted.

All activities are being co-ordinated with the National Relief Council as well as national and international organisations involved. The MRC has a distinct advantage with its existing branch network and volunteer base throughout the country. In the affected regions the MRC operates 28 branches, however communications with most of these branches remains difficult.

The Federation has a team of three delegates in Tananarivo and the French Red Cross is operational with one delegate. Regular contacts are also maintained with the Federation's Regional Delegation in Nairobi (RDN).

Needs

Responding to the impact of the cyclones and resulting floods, the International Federation launched a Preliminary Appeal on March 17, 2000. Donor support for the appeal has been positive, allowing the MRC to respond not only to the victims of the first two cyclones, but also providing initial support to the latest victims of the third cyclone. A revised appeal is being finalised and will be issued shortly. In view of the evolving nature of the situation and potential further needs, the Federation will continue to monitor the impact and make adjustments as needed.

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