

MOZAMBIQUE: FLOODS

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The Disaster

Heavy rains and subsequently severe floods have been affecting Mozambique for over a month. In several districts of four provinces (Tete, Sofala, Zambezia and Manica) along the Zambezi river people have been forced to seek refuge in safer areas by canoes and small boats often leaving part or all of their belongings behind. Helicopters from South Africa and Zimbabwe have also been involved in rescuing people from the most inaccessible areas.

Infrastructure damage is large and as water is now receding from most of affected areas, these are only just becoming accessible.

A joint Regional Federation/Norwegian and Mozambican RCS team has just returned from a first assessment in three of the four provinces (Zambezia was not accessible). From its meetings with local authorities and provincial secretaries of the MRCS, the following preliminary information is provided on affected districts and numbers of people partially or completely destitute:

PROVINCE	DISTRICTS AFFECTED	N° OF PEOPLE COMPLETELY DESTITUTE
Tete	Mutarara	14,000
Manica	Tarubara	15,000
Sofala	Nhamatanda	2,000
	Buzi	12,000
	Chamba	?
	Caria	?
Zambezia	?	?

Needs to be met

As water levels decrease, most people will return to their homesteads, but will not be able to find suitable material for reroofing the rebuild houses. Hence the need for plastic sheeting. There is a further need for blankets, kitchen sets, jerrycans, soap and clothes.

Initial food needs have been met by the Government, but most available reserves in the districts have now been depleted. WFP has been requested for food assistance. This distribution will occur over another four months to those who have lost their crops in the field.

Seeds should be made available for the second agricultural season that starts March/April.

Many water points have been polluted and need to be cleaned. A detailed survey will have to be carried out.

Certain districts have recently been supplied with drugs for three months although first aid kits and certain drugs (for treatment of malaria, meningitis, cholera) will still be needed.

Co-ordination at local level has started and in some districts, solidarity committees have been formed. Nevertheless, there is a need to clearly identify who will be doing what and where.

Government Action

The Government of Mozambique launched an appeal on 24 February 1997 for USD 30 million to assist 300,000 people affected by the floods . The appeal covers both short term needs (food and relief) and medium term infrastructure assistance (roads, bridges).

Provincial authorities have been organising co-ordination meetings and assessment missions into the affected areas.

Red Cross Plan of Action

The provincial branches of the MRCS will complete a detailed needs assessment by 7 March. The information gathered will be used to work out a detailed plan of action, together with the Regional Delegation in Harare. An appeal or special request will follow.

It is felt that the Red Cross support should focus in short term on:

- food distribution
- distribution of relief items (plastic sheeting , blankets, soap, jerrycans, kitchen sets, clothes)
- assistance to government health staff (with staff and drugs).

For the medium term, it has to be determined whether the MRCS should get involved in agricultural support (tools and seeds) and repairing or cleaning up of the water points.

The Federation is preparing to send a relief administrator to be based in Beira.

General Observation

The flooded areas are located in districts that were not priority districts in the programme of the MRCS. The initial response has therefore been slower and also hampered by the fact that most areas were inaccessible.

The first assessment is convinced that the need for relief goods other than food is unlikely to be met if not by the Red Cross.

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