

MOZAMBIQUE, BOTSWANA, SWAZILAND, ZIMBABWE: FLOODS

3 March, 2000

appeal no. 04/2000 (revision 2)

situation report no. 03

period covered: 22 February - 2 March, 2000

Appeal 04/2000 was originally launched on 11 February 2000 for CHF 2,800,000. Responding to the evolving nature of the disaster, Revision No. 1 was issued on 25 February, 2000, focusing particularly on Swaziland and reflecting a revised total budget of CHF 4,667,312. With the situation in the region continuing to worsen, Appeal 04/2000 Revision No. 2 was issued on 2 March, 2000 reflecting a total revised budget of CHF 11,346,464.

Responding to widespread criticism over the pace of the rescue and relief operation, the growing frustration of the victims (particularly in Mozambique), and the possibility that a new cyclone (Gloria) was hovering in the Indian Ocean and threatening to bring more rains to the region, donors and relief agencies announced renewed or increased efforts to deliver assistance, and to boost the fleet of aircraft struggling to save the thousands of people still stranded and left homeless by the flooding.

The prospect of even a much reduced storm is considered catastrophic for the region, particularly Mozambique. The floods that began over three weeks ago are known to have killed 350 people in Mozambique, South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe, though aid workers believe the real toll is in the thousands. While there are no hard figures available, estimates are that up to 10,000 people could still be clinging to life in trees and on rooftops.

The disaster

The two cyclones which hit southeastern Africa produced heavy rains and strong winds throughout the region, causing overflowing rivers and pressure on dams, and resulting in widespread flooding in large areas of Mozambique, Swaziland, Botswana, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. While the process of gathering accurate information to assess the extent of the damage has been impeded by a lack of access

to the area, some 900,000 people are estimated to have been affected, with hundreds of thousands left homeless or destitute. Main road and rail lines have been severed, with widespread damage to other infrastructure. While the relief response from government and other agencies was mounted, the size and scope of the disaster has been overwhelming. In each of the affected countries, the Federation is coordinating the relief response with the respective National Societies, as well as with UN agencies and NGO's.

Mozambique was first hit by torrential rains at the beginning of February. The areas worst affected were Maputo City, Maputo Province and Gaza Province. The cyclone continued inland, causing severe flooding in the Northern and Mpumalanga Provinces of South Africa, around Francistown, and the eastern corridor of Botswana and Swaziland. On 21 February, a new cyclone hit the eastern coast of Mozambique, and affected Zimbabwe where torrential rains caused widespread flooding in Manicaland, Masvingo, Matabeleland South and Midland Provinces. Cultivated land was destroyed and it is feared that severe food shortages will occur in the longer term.

The first priority in the affected countries has been to rescue marooned people, then to provide basic relief assistance. To respond to the disaster, the Federation launched an appeal on February 11 for Mozambique and Botswana, and later extended (revised) to Swaziland and Zimbabwe following a dramatic expansion of the affected area. The evolving nature of the situation together with the management and co-ordination requirements in the region have now escalated to such an extent that additional support is urgently needed. Also, with flood waters making access to the affected areas impossible and presenting critical logistics constraints, the only viable way to rescue people and to deliver assistance is by helicopter and air drops, dramatically increasing the transport costs of the operation.

Latest events

Responding to widespread criticism over the pace of the rescue and relief operation, the growing frustration of the victims in Mozambique, and the possibility that a new cyclone (Gloria) was hovering in the Indian Ocean and threatening to bring more rains to the region, western leaders and relief agencies announced new aid shipments to boost a fleet of about 30 aircraft struggling to save the thousands of people still stranded and aid 1 million left homeless by the flooding. The prospect of even a much reduced storm provoked renewed fears of a total catastrophe for Mozambique. The floods that began over three weeks ago are known to have killed 350 people in Mozambique, South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe, though aid workers believe the real toll is in the thousands. While there are no hard figures available, aid workers estimate that up to 10,000 people could still be clinging to life in trees and on rooftops, where many have survived since Sunday. Survivors recounted stories of many having drowned during the long wait as dead livestock floated in the swirling muddy waters.

Zimbabwe, despite experiencing intermittent rains, is trying to tackle the aftermath of the heavy storms and rains, with the many areas affected by the flooding now becoming accessible, allowing a further assessment of the damage. Large areas of Mozambique remain flooded and rising rivers still threaten to further inundate the four southern provinces of the country. Immediate rescue remains a priority there, while at the same time attention to the needs of the thousands of displaced flood victims is essential.

Mozambique •

The International Federation and British Red Cross are coordinating efforts to set-up a sub-delegation in Beira. The sub-delegation, operating under the Federation's authority, will be supplemented by a British Red Cross assessment and implementation team consisting of a team leader, a logistician, a relief delegate, and a finance administration delegate. In addition, to begin the work of assessing the longer-term rehabilitation needs, the Federation has despatched a staff person from the Relief Support Service to develop terms of reference for the rehabilitation assessment and to prepare the needed technical expertise.

Gaza Province

With a population of 1.2 million, all of Gaza Province was flooded and an estimated 70,000 people are still in need of rescue. In spite of the evacuation of approximately 2,000 people per day, the rescue operation is struggling to reach all the victims. However, the Department for International Development (DFID), USAID, and Oxfam are providing boats to augment the operation. Fuel for vehicles and aircraft remains a major concern. Three temporary shelter camps have been set up south of the Limpopo River. The estimated population of the camp in Chacalane is 26,000 (as of 1 March). Food supplies are being provided by WFP, who also report that 60,000 people are accommodated in Macia and Chilambene centres, including many unaccompanied children. At Xai Xai, river levels of 9.88 metres (5 metres above alert) were measured on 29 February. The Red Cross Provincial Delegation has been severely damaged, and there is no electricity or fuel.

Inhambane and Sofala Provinces

The situation is critical around the Save river as well, with flooding in the provinces of Inhambane (Govuro) and Sofala (Machanga). In the Save River valley, 30,000 people were in need of rescue -- some waiting for over two weeks. Children in particular were in bad condition. As helicopter rescue was mainly concentrated in the Limpopo Valley and not further north, many people died or disappeared. Since the first floods hit, approximately 19,000 people have been sheltered in temporary accommodation centres. An estimated 25,000 people south of the Save river and 35,000 north of it have been affected. As is the case all over the country, damaged roads and washed away bridges prevent access. Accommodation centres have been set up in Save (Govuro), Mahave (32 km from Save) and Pande (Inhassoro). Food is being supplied to 19,000 people in Buzi, 5,000 in Chibabava and 11,000 in Machanga.

Botswana •

The heavy flooding is estimated to have affected some 115,000 people and rendered 32,000 homeless, mainly in the eastern southern, central and northern regions. According to the BRCS, some of the displaced families previously housed in schools and community centres, have now returned to their original homes while others still remain with their relatives in safer areas. The situation is normalising and meteorologists predict dry conditions in coming days mainly in central regions whereas skeleton showers are still experienced in the northern part. Both rail and road transport have been restored and construction of bridges has begun.

Swaziland •

While the weather and flooding situation in the country has improved, the need for assistance for relief and recovery persists among the most affected population. In addition, the risk of outbreaks of water borne or sanitary diseases is on the increase. The Government has indicated that it supports the Baphalali Swaziland Red Cross Society (BSRCS) intervention in health education. A major concern is the increasing number of displaced Mozambicans who have been entering the north of Swaziland since last week. The BSRCS Secretary General and Government representatives have visited the areas on 2 March in order to assess the evolving situation, and a more extensive update will be provided in the next situation report.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Mozambique •

Approximately 400 tents have been distributed in Maputo City, and 76 in Gaza Province. Some 1,488 jerry cans, 226 kitchen kits, 1,700 blankets, 10 hand pumps, 16,000 chlorine sachets, and 2 mobile water plants were also distributed in Gaza Province, as well as miscellaneous food, clothes, and medicines. Mozambique Red Cross Society (CVM) volunteers are assisting relief efforts in all provinces, participating in rescue work, warning people of flood risks, providing first aid, health education and purification of water assistance. A Federation Relief Administrator Delegate arrived in Mozambique on 29 February on a six month assignment.

Maputo City

The CVM is continuing assistance to the 14 temporary shelter centres, and is assigning volunteers to make door-to-door visits to provide health education (especially cholera prevention) in the suburbs. Forty-eight 48 volunteers assisted some 4,640 people last week.

Maputo Province

Some 63 volunteers have been working in 18 centres assisting 2,174 people. The water and sanitation situation has stabilised, and locating other viable water sources is being actively pursued. Latrine construction is progressing satisfactorily.

Gaza province

Red Cross activities in southern Gaza are currently concentrated around Chacalane where 14 volunteers are working in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. Ten complete Afridev pumps have been provided by the CVM in addition to other supplies. By 1 March, 5 hand pumps had been repaired and two shallow wells chlorinated. Latrine construction work had started. The CVM has employed two water and sanitation technicians to assist in operation in the province.

Sofala Province

The results of a 3-day assessment mission undertaken by the CVM Director of Programmes and a Health Officer are expected shortly. Some 47 volunteers have assisted 11,997 people in 13 temporary shelter centres.

Botswana •

The BRCS is creating awareness among the affected communities on public health and hygiene, the risk of potential outbreak of diarrhoea diseases and the danger of malaria. Public awareness campaigns have been intensified, with BRCS volunteers focusing efforts on the areas of Buchudi, Francistown and Kgatleng.

The BRCS will also strengthen the skills and roles of the volunteers, thereby building capacity especially amongst the youth. A strategy for volunteer involvement at all levels is being outlined by the Departments of Youth and First Aid.

Swaziland •

The BSRCS continues to report that it has been and remains extremely difficult to estimate the number of people who have been affected by the flooding. This is due to the fact that many people evacuated their homes and were accommodated with relatives in non-flooded areas. Currently, however, taking into account its capacity, the Society is targeting assistance to 10,000 of the most vulnerable people, primarily by distributing relief items (food from the Government of Swaziland and tents donated by both the Swiss Red Cross Society and the Chinese Government).

An increase in the number of malaria cases is anticipated, as well as outbreaks of epidemics due to the overflowing of latrines. Public health education on malaria and the prevention of diseases is being given by volunteers who are also distributing chlorine tablets for water purification. The BSRCS is emphasising the need for supplementary training of volunteers in the areas of needs assessments, distribution, and health education.

In addition, another major concern to the BSRCS is the growing influx of displaced flood victims from Mozambique to the north of the country.

Zimbabwe •

With the Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated to begin assistance operations, the procurement of food and non-food items has been initiated with a total of approximately CHF 40,000 spent on food, 2,000 blankets purchased (of which 1,000 have been distributed in Manicaland and 500 in Masvingo and Matebeleland South). The Zimbabwe Red Cross Society (ZRCS) is working on a plan of action which will guide the operation. Training of volunteers is being carried out in health education,

first aid and other areas. The National Society is also taking this opportunity to create a database of trained volunteers enabling an overview of volunteer profiles now and in the future.

The ZRCS is playing an important role both in the affected provinces and in Harare where planning and co-ordination of the general operation is taking place. So far the Red Cross is the only organisation active in all the affected areas. At a co-ordination meeting on 2 March organised by UNDP, ZRCS emphasised its commitment to sustain its activities in all areas.

Harare Regional Delegation •

Co-ordination of relief activities within the region has required intense communications with affected National Societies, and the deployment of regional delegates to both Mozambique and Botswana to assist with assessment and planning. In Zimbabwe, an experienced Red Cross consultant has been employed to work with the Zimbabwe Red Cross in planning and implementing the appeal.

A Regional Relief Co-ordinator is being recruited to strengthen the capacity of the Regional Delegation to support the flood operations and to co-ordinate the activities and assistance of Participating National Societies.

The logistics capacity will be increased to deal with the increased demands. Reserve relief stocks (plastic sheeting and water purification tablets) located in Harare have been sent to the field.

A telecommunications expert has been assigned to the operation to provide assistance to radio communications facilities and to help in upgrading them in three of the flood affected countries. For communications between National Societies and the Regional Delegation and, in turn, Geneva, the Canadian funded LISN project is proving its worth with functional e-mail connectivity.

Outstanding needs

Please refer to the detailed cash and in-kind needs reflected in Revision 2 of Appeal 04/2000 issued on 2 March, 2000. In addition, the Federation seeks to strengthen its capacity through the recruitment of experienced delegates.

Contributions

Please refer to the List of Contributions included with Revision 2 of Appeal No. 04/2000 issued on 2 March, 2000. The latest contributions will be reflected in the next situation report to be issued early next week.

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