

MALAWI: FLOODS

12 March, 2001

preliminary appeal no. 09/2001

situation report no. 1

period covered: 28 February to 9 March 2001

The rains are expected to continue across the region throughout March, and the numbers of flood-affected people are likely to increase. With the dramatic worsening of the situation, the precarious health conditions require emergency action if a catastrophe is to be averted. The proposed plan of action is being carried out with the distribution of relief items, including food, tents, plastic sheeting, kitchen sets, jerry cans, soap, medical kits, jerry cans, mattresses, mosquito nets and clothes.

The context

Some degree of flooding occurs annually in Malawi. While all three of the country's regions (north, central and south) have been affected this year, the southern Lower Shire region which stretches down to the border with Mozambique has suffered most due to its low, marshy terrain and the presence of several rivers flowing into the already swollen Shire River. The heavy rains are forecast to continue through March, and have caused the rivers in the area to burst their banks on at least three occasions, displacing many thousands of people, flooding homes and farmland, and causing severe damage to property and crops. Due to the already high water table, the flood waters are not receding, and with the ongoing rains the threat of further flooding only increases.

Although the loss of life has been minimal in large measure because the majority of people have heeded government warnings, thousands are at risk because of the timing of the floods. February is considered a lean month when most food stocks are used up ahead of the March harvest. With much of the harvest washed away, food is now a priority. The lack of food *and* shelter increases the vulnerability of flood victims, heavily impacting their health and nutritional status. The already serious situation has been compounded by damaged sanitation facilities, contaminated water, and stagnant water the increased threat of cholera and malaria cases, due to - which provides ideal breeding ground for malarial mosquitoes.

Latest events

The latest information reflects the following numbers of person affected in the two main affected districts of Nsanje and Chikwawa within the Malawi Red Cross Society (MRCS) and Federation area of operations:

- **Nsanje District:** total population of approximately 194,000, of which approximately 112,000 people are either displaced or have directly suffered from the floods. Some 308 villages have lost their cultivation plots (gardens) while 217 villages have lost both their houses and their plots. A total of 22,454 families are affected (or approximately over 112,000 people).
- **Chikwawa District:** total population of approximately 342,664 people, of which a total of 11,668 families are directly affected (approximately 58,340 people) and in need of assistance. Some 107 villages have suffered flooding, while some 1,472 houses have collapsed.

The authorities in both districts expect the number of those needing assistance to rise because of continuing rain.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

With the CHF 100,000 allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), the MRCS and the Federation immediately started distributing relief items from stocks remaining from last year's flooding, and procuring additional supplies. Between 28 February -1 March, the following items were distributed in Chikwawa District:

- 2,286 blankets.
- 17,300 metres plastic sheeting.
- 836 cooking pots.
- 189 Jerry cans.
- 4 cartons of chlorine tablets.

Between 1-8 March, the following activities were undertaken by the Geneva FACT team:

- 1 March: assembled in Blantyre - the operations centre for the disaster.
- 2 - 3 March: joint MRCS/FACT team (including two co-opted members of the American Red Cross) carried out an aerial survey by helicopter.
- 4 March: three joint MRCS/FACT surveyed the access roads to affected districts.
- 5 - 7 March: increasing the operational capacity of the MRCS office in Blantyre and the warehouse.
- 8 March: members of the FACT team participated at a meeting convened by the Commissioner for Disaster Preparedness, Relief and Rehabilitation. On the same day, the truck sent from Harare Regional Delegation with relief items was unloaded into the warehouse with: 1,000 blankets; 300 tarpaulins; 98 tents; 354 kitchen sets; 600 jerry cans; 25,000 chlorine tabs.

The MRCS has been making arrangements for the next distribution, in consultation with the Commission for Disaster Preparedness and Relief and Rehabilitation and the District Commissioners from the two Districts targeted for Red Cross and Red Crescent assistance. The FACT team also continued its work in revising the preliminary appeal which will be issued shortly.

Outstanding needs

Please refer to the needs specified in Preliminary Appeal no. 09/01 which remain valid. Three light vehicles (two land cruiser types and one pickup truck) are needed immediately. As the FACT team complete their assignment over the next two weeks, a relief/logistics and finance and administration delegate are now needed for a period of six months.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Cooperation and coordination mechanisms were immediately established by the FACT, and expanded at the Ad Hoc meeting organized and chaired by the Commissioner for Disaster Preparedness and Relief and Rehabilitation. Co-ordination with other UN agencies (UNDP and WFP) and NGOs (Oxfam, CARE and World Vision) was formally set in motion with the formation of the following five sector groups (each headed by a lead agency)

- Water, Sanitation and Health: led by the Ministry of Health and including the Ministry of Water, RC, Oxfam, MSF-France, MSF-Luxembourg, World Vision, UNICEF, and WHO.
- Food: led by WFP, including the Red Cross, CARE, World Vision, FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Shelter and non-food items: led by the Red Cross, including CARE, MSF, World Vision and the Ministry of Housing.
- Infrastructure and weather: led by the meteorological office, including the Ministry of Water, and the army.
- Security: which includes police and the immigration department.

Contact with MSF-France has been particularly useful and co-operative.

Media coverage has been restricted to the national press, with no international journalists present on the ground. However, the arrival of the Regional Information Delegate from Nairobi has helped profile Red Cross activities through the release of press bulletins and subsequent interviews on Malawi national radio. (The Malawi Red Cross press officer has been on an ICRC training course in Harare since the arrival of the Information Delegate, but took part in initial assessments made earlier by the MRCS in Chikwawa.)

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details. In addition, the American Red Cross has made a contribution to support the helicopter survey, and USD 25,000 directly to the MRCS to refurbish vehicles to be used in the operation. The US Embassy, through USAID, has also contributed USD 26,000 to the MRCS for the procurement of aid for the flood victims. These contributions to the appeal will be reflected in the list of contributions in the next situation report to be issued shortly.

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Malawi - floods						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 09/2001		PLEDGES RECEIVED				03/12/01
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						TOTAL COVERAGE
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				2,471,910		2.9%
CASH CARRIED FORWARD						
BRITISH - RC		30,000	GBP	72,300	05.03.01	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				72,300	CHF	2.9%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				0	CHF	0.0%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						