

# INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## **MOZAMBIQUE: CYCLONE**

6 February 2003

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*Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) allocated: CHF 70,0000*

*This Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 70,000 has been allocated from the Federation's DREF, and based on further updates and details from assessment reports, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation may consider international support through an Appeal.*

### ***The Situation***

Tropical cyclone Japhet made landfall in Mozambique on 3 March after looming off the coast for three days, causing heavy rainfall and strong winds in the southern and central provinces of the country. Its unpredictable nature provoked grave concern as it changed course several times before continuing on the same track as the devastating cyclone Eline in 2000 (which killed more than 700 people and displaced 544,000 people). While there has been minimal damage so far, the threat of floods still remains as the excessive rains continue.

Initial reports from the national disaster management institute indicate that some 23,000 people have been affected by the cyclone in the district of Vilanculos in Inhambane province - which seems to have been hardest hit. Four people are now reported to have died, ten were injured, and seven more are said to be missing in Sofala province. Many roads in Inhambane and Manica provinces were blocked by uprooted palm trees or were submerged by water in some parts. The provinces experienced some power cuts and some damage to water supply systems as well as to telecommunications have been reported. Some schools in Vilanculos (25 classrooms) have been partially destroyed and one health clinic damaged, but it seems that little damage was done to buildings and infrastructure apart from makeshift houses. There have been some reports of damage to crops - washed away by the rain - but the extent of the damage is not yet clear.

The Mozambique media states that water levels in rivers is constantly rising, and river control in the south and central region also indicates that water levels have increased considerably, especially in the Gorangoza river basin. However, the provinces affected by the cyclone - Sofala, Inhambane, Gaza and Manica - have recently been suffering from drought. Unlike the situation when cyclone Eline struck the same area, the ground seems to have absorbed the excessive rainfall - downgrading the threat of floods. According to the most recent report from the Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC) - introduced at an UN interagency meeting on 5 March - some 660,000 Mozambicans are in need of assistance due to the drought situation, and the effect of cyclone Japhet could only aggravate their situation.

### ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

When the cyclone warning was issued on February 27, the Mozambique Red Cross automatically went into an emergency mode. A task force was immediately convened at the Maputo headquarters, and a few hundred staff and volunteers at the provincial branches in Sofala, Manica, Inhambane, Gaza and Maputo were put on 24-hour

alert. The national Red Cross is coordinating with governmental disaster management institutions as well as with the Federation's Harare regional delegation - which is also on 24 hour standby, monitoring the situation.

In Inhambane, approximately 100 Red Cross volunteers were on duty throughout the disaster, working side by side with local authorities, providing whatever necessary assistance to the population. The situation remained calm in the other provinces which all had their Red Cross volunteers on standby, ready for immediate action if needed.

On 4 March, four RDRT trained people were sent to Inhambane, which is the hardest hit province, for initial assessment - one each from Disaster Management, Logistics and Telecommunication Departments later joined by a health technician from the provincial branch. Initial findings of the team indicate that the situation is under control, and no major damage was caused by the cyclone. Some thirty emergency kits are stored in Red Cross warehouses in the province as well as tents and tarpaulins, to be used for immediate assistance. The local RDRT team is expected to make recommendations on further Red Cross actions soon. Funds may be needed at a later stage to replenish the Red Cross branch contingency stock.

Disaster preparedness and early warning systems in place played a major role in minimizing the effect of cyclone Japhet. The authorities, backed up by provincial Red Cross staff and volunteers, issued the warnings in time and frequently updated the public about the situation - resulting in only few casualties.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

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*All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.*

*For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>*

*For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.*

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