

ACT members help to rebuild the country

Along the road from Maputo to Chokwe, evidence of the damage caused by the floods that raged through Mozambique in February and March this year is still visible. Roads that were in ruins for weeks are being repaired, allowing access to places that had been cut off for months. But large areas of land remain submerged under stagnant pools of water, transforming them into high-risk malaria zones. Southern Mozambique has turned into a land of numerous lakes. "It might take two years for the water to disappear, and for now that land cannot be used, even though some of it is fertile and always produces a good harvest," a local trader says, pointing out to the area where she used to have a maize field. She, like many others, has to walk a considerable distance to find good soil and sufficient land with which to support her family.

The floods hit one of the poorest countries in the world that is still grappling with a 43-year life expectancy and a literacy rate of 40 percent. The provinces of Sofala and Gaza were severely damaged, resulting in over 500 deaths and 80 disappearances. Gaza, which is on the Limpopo Valley in the south of the country, lost most of its schools and clinics in the lower-lying villages. Roads also have to be repaired so as to allow people to transport their agricultural goods to markets. The province had an irrigation system of good quality, but 90 percent of it now lies in ruins. In areas inaccessible by road in Gaza province, ACT distributed seeds by airdrops in April. In Sofala, the disaster was exacerbated when the winds of cyclone Eline followed a week after the floods, sweeping away whatever the floods had left behind. Sofala is dry and sparsely populated.

The floods caused a 20 percent rise in inflation and a hike in prices. The problem is exacerbated by expensive transport costs. Many people, especially women, rely on their cattle to carry harvested products from the fields to the homes and the nearest markets. A loss of 20 000 animals has turned the situation into a desperate one. Most schooling is now conducted in tents and under trees. During the floods, roofs on schools and other public buildings became the only refuge for people and as a result were severely damaged. At Bairro Primary School in Chokwe, 450 people sought refuge from the rising water, causing the roof of three classrooms to cave in. Only 300 of the 1086 pupils take lessons in the three remaining classrooms.

The people of Mozambique are getting a new lease on life after surviving the floods which affected over 2 million people and are estimated to have caused damages of up to \$500 million. Through the Lutheran World Federation, a member of the ACT alliance, work to repair schools, clinics and roads will soon commence with a particular focus on the worst-affected areas. ACT members

worldwide have been responding to the ACT appeal for the Mozambique floods for \$8.9 million. So far, over 300 000 people were reached and supplied with basic survival kits, which included plastic tarps, kitchen utensils, food aid and seeds. ACT member work to rebuild schools, clinics, roads and supply of clean water will benefit 457,000 people.

Access to water has also proved to be a major problem with women having to complete trips as long as 50 km to collect 10 litres of water. Even in areas where water pumps work, people still have to walk for 10 km. To minimise the spread of disease such as cholera, clean water has to be supplied. A total of 80 000 people will benefit from the ACT water projects.

“Many people helped each other during the floods by sharing whatever food could be found. We now hope that communities can transfer that sense of unity to the rehabilitation work. We want to help them in making the transition from disaster to development very smooth,” says Michael Hyden, Programme Co-ordinator at Lutheran World Federation.