

Flood waters subside but leave substantial damages to infrastructure; Some 8,490 people have been affected

Flood waters are slowly subsiding around the country including at the worst affected spot, Beitbridge where transportation came to a stand still and operations at the border crossing had to be halted on 19 and 20 January. The heavy downpours across Zimbabwe have destroyed road networks, houses and schools; in the worst instances floods have claimed lives through collapsing building, drowning and vehicles being swept away. Police say at least 86 people have drowned and 38 others killed by lightning since the onset of the rainy season in September last year. On 22 January, three children died when the house they were sleeping in collapsed after heavy rains and gushing flood waters.

While the rains are slowly subsiding, February is the peak rainy season and the Department of Civil Protection (DCP), has already warned that "there is a lot of backflows in the Mzingwane, Shashe and Bubyie River as a result of high flows in the Limpopo River leading to the major tributaries failing to discharge into the Limpopo. All areas around the confluence are under threat of major flooding." Discussions in the DCP and with partners are ongoing about possible evacuations for communities in flood-prone areas.

The Department of Civil Protection (DC) has been leading assessments with NGO partners. It is now estimated that 8,490 people have been affected, out of which 4,615 are requiring humanitarian assistance in the form of emergency shelter and/or non-food items (blankets, clothes, cooking utensils, hygiene packs). On 22 January, OCHA held a meeting with cluster leads and several NGOs to gauge level of preparedness for response, availability of emergency stocks as well as facilitating information flow to enable a coordinated response in support to the Government. IOM is leading the coordination of NFI distribution and coordinating with OCHA on gaps and resource mobilisation.

The major damages have been in the infrastructure sector with roads, bridges being washed away, cutting off communities from their day-to-day access to social and economic activities.

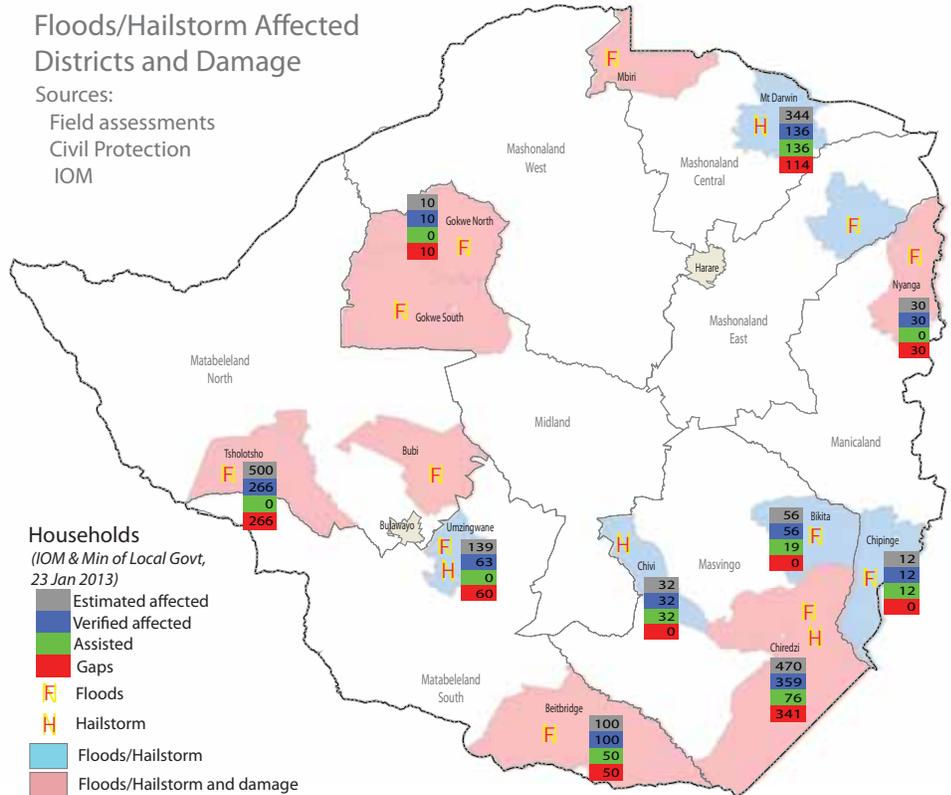
There are mounting concerns that the aftermath of the heavy rains may have health, water, sanitation and hygiene impacts as health and sanitation conditions deteriorate in the rainy season. The Environment Health Alliance, in support to the Ministry of Health are vigilant and are maintaining high surveillance networks for water borne disease outbreaks.



The 'tyre tube ferry system' invented to ferry passengers and goods in Nyanga. Photo Courtesy of OCHA

Floods/Hailstorm Affected Districts and Damage

Sources:
Field assessments
Civil Protection
IOM



Matabeleland North

According to information received from the Ministry of Local Government and DP Foundation, there are between 266 and 299 homesteads that have been destroyed in Tsholotsho. Long term solutions are required to build better and stronger structures. Some fifteen boreholes are also urgently required to provide safe water for domestic use to the affected families. DCP has facilitated the repair of one borehole so some families can access clean water. MSF provided tablets to treat water for domestic use and IOM is working with local authorities to assess income generating projects as most families lost their livestock- a main source of livelihoods. The Zimbabwe Red Cross Society has provided emergency shelter kits. There is still a need for some NFIs. The affected wards are Mafila, Mbamba, Mahlaba, Mathonsi Ward, Ward 22, Hluhonjana, Mbute ward and Masekesa.

Matabeleland South

The Matabeleland Humanitarian NGO Forum met on 24 January to assess humanitarian response and share information on the flood situation. The forum noted that there are challenges with accessing some villages in Beitbridge because of road networks that have been rendered impassable after heavy rains. There was an agreement for NGOs to conduct three-day joint assessment under the leadership of World Vision after consultations with the DCP.

Masvingo

In Chiredzi, some 283 households in Triangle, Mpapa and Zororai still require some NFI assistance as district authorities have provided some food relief to the families that are sheltering at Zororai community hall.

In Masvingo province, 23 schools have been affected in five districts, according to an initial assessment conducted by Plan International. The DCP reports that the bridge across Bubi linking Chiredzi and Chikwalakwala has been swept away.



The 'tyre tube ferry system' invented to ferry passengers and goods in Nyanga. Photo Courtesy of OCHA

Manicaland

Ruchera ward in Nyanga remains cut off after the Nyangombe bridge, that connects it to the rest of Nyanga, was destroyed by heavy rains around the 17 January. No assessment has been conducted as the area is inaccessible by road. The estimated population in Ruchera is 600 families or 2,400 people. According to the District Administrator (DA), about 86 people in need of anti-retrovirals (ARVs) were also affected. Health personnel have however managed to deliver the medicines through the community who have devised means to cross the river using tyre tubes tied to ropes operated by young men ferrying goods and people for a nominal fee.

Most children in Ruchera attend school in Mapako situated across the river and an estimated 150 primary school children are now temporarily living with families in Mapako to avoid crossing into Ruchera. A borehole that was serving about 48 families was submerged when the river burst its banks and affected households have resorted to using water from the river.

In Chimanimani nine schools were affected, with the worst being Chimanimani Government Primary School where a dormitory that housed 44 girls collapsed on 11 January. The school has temporarily converted its staff room, a spare room in the head master's house and a classroom into temporary shelter. Learning activities have been disrupted as classes are being combined to cater for pupils whose classrooms have been converted into temporary shelter. At there other schools, report are that toilets collapsed and some rood tops have been blown away.

Agriculture has also been affected as some people with fields across wards cannot access them or ferry inputs such as fertiliser. However, community members have opted for the only means possible to cross the river to access their fields which is through the tyre tubes that young men are operating. It is risky and expensive, costing \$5 per trip to help ferry individuals while charges for parcels is negotiated separately. It is difficult to get supplies across so prices of basic food stuffs in Ruchera have gone up with mealie meal (the staple) costing \$5 for 2Kg which in 'normal' times is the price for a 10Kg bag.

Floods have also destroyed canals at Nyanyadzi (Ward 8) and Tonhora (Ward 20) irrigation schemes. This has disconnected farmers from the water supply and disrupted agricultural activities. The number of affected farmers is yet to be ascertained.

Due to its steep gradients and mountainous terrain, Chimanimani is prone to landslides. The district experienced a number of these, with boulders falling onto the roads and posing a danger to motorists. However, there was a rapid response from the private sector, with Border Timbers, a private company, availing its equipment to clear the roads every morning.

For further information, please contact:

Paul Thomas, Officer in Charge, thomasp@un.org, Tel. (+263) 772 125 303

Thandie Mwape-Villadsen, HAO, mwapet@un.org, Tel. (+263) 772 125 274