



ONGOING CRISIS

CYCLONE IDAI

actalliance



Everything was covered in **mud**

Cyclone Idai devastated large parts of Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi when it made landfall in March 2019 in the city of Beira, the second largest city in Mozambique. When the cyclone had passed on, much of Beira was underwater and severely damaged. The storm flooded swaths of Mozambique as it made its way into the mountains of Zimbabwe, where it set off landslides that buried and destroyed houses and communities, and into Malawi where it brought strong winds and severe flooding. Over 1200 people lost their lives in the storm, and more than 3 million were affected.

ACT members in all three countries immediately began humanitarian relief operations and launched a regional appeal. The bulk of the work is happening in Mozambique. What follows are stories from three different communities affected by the cyclone in Mozambique, where ACT members are responding to the emergency.

Inhamizua

A short drive outside the provincial capital city of Beira lies the village of Inhamizua, a farming community set back from the highway. Signs of the cyclone remain throughout the community almost five months after Idai made landfall. Young children play on fallen trees, climbing, running, jumping around these obstacles. The church continues to sit without a roof

or back wall, bearing mute testimony to the power of the storm. In addition to the damage to houses and community buildings, the residents of Inhamizua lost their crops to the storm and flooding it brought.

José Samuel Mandava is a 76 year old widower who lives with his two nephews. José worked for 25 years as a driver, and for 15 years as a mechanic before that, but now has problems with his eyes and cannot see well.

His nephew works in Beira to be able to buy food for the family.

When José heard the cyclone was coming, he was in Chimoio, 150km from his home. People told him, "Don't go to Beira!" But he wanted to get back to his family, so he headed home, arriving just as the storm did, at about 3pm on March 14.

Through the course of the night, the storm got worse. Neighbours called him to see trees that had fallen. José and his nephew put stones on the roof to try to stop it from blowing away, but it was still heavily damaged. He was sad and scared, tears flowing down his face during the night.

Water began to flood the house and took five days to recede. So many trees were knocked down that José got lost finding his own house when he ventured out the next day.

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tinued for three days. José visited his neighbours, discovering that everyone was in the same situation- houses damaged or destroyed, food and clothing and other goods destroyed. Those who had some food or other things that survived the flood shared with their neighbours. Everyone did what they could. The first Sunday after the cyclone, the community worshipped in the shelter of a tree near their damaged church building.

It took a month for external help to reach them. José's family was one of 325 that received beans, oil, sugar, salt, rice,

soap and water purification tablets from ACT member Comité Ecuménico para o Desenvolvimento Social (CEDES), enough to last them two weeks, to help speed their recovery.

Today, José still needs construction materials- cement, galvanized iron sheets and other supplies- to finish repairs to his house. He hopes to be able to finish rebuilding, to have enough food to eat, and to be healthy in the months and years to come.

Eva Zuanhanha and her husband Luis

Macig live near José with their two sons and two nephews. Life is difficult for Eva, as both her husband and son are sick and she has to care for the family. She grows crops on a plot of land 10km from their house in Inhamizua, which she walks to and then stays for a week at a time to care for their maize crops.

Eva is able to grow two or three crops a year, depending on what disasters occur. Each crop can feed the family for five-months. She was at the farm when the cyclone warnings began, and she immediately went home. She got there before the storm, but Idai was incredibly powerful and destroyed the roof of their house.

"We hid under a table, all six of us," Eva said. "The door was ripped out of the bedroom wall by the storm." Eva and her family lost their food, their clothes and their possessions.

The next day they began to try to rebuild as the rain continued. Neighbours visited each other, they found many houses destroyed and people huddled together in

the surviving buildings.

Her neighbours helped her by providing galvanized iron sheets for the roof, although these were not in great shape and holes still let rain through into her home.

When she was able, Eva returned to her home in Nhamatanda, but found her crops destroyed. "I was sad and traumatized- the farm is what supports my family. This hit me hard. How will I support my family now? Everything is destroyed- my house, my farm."

Like José, Eva received food and hygiene items from CEDES to help them get through a few weeks, but she still needs seeds to plant, food for the family and most of all, she wants a new roof on the house.





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Bopira

The remote village of Bopira takes about 4 hours to drive to on dirt roads and over bridges that have had to be rebuilt after the cyclone. It is in the region of Guara Guara, which lies on the river plain inland from Beira. Residents of Bopira live in houses made of light wood and thatched roofs. The school is a repurposed street-car, and the teacher calls on students to “get on the learning bus” as they arrive.

ACT member CEDES works in Bopira and other communities in Guara Guara providing agriculture training and self-help groups, which encourage community

members to each contribute a bit of money to a communal pot that is then lent out to members of the group as micro-credit loans to help them build businesses, buy seed, etc. The interest charged is less than half of what the money lenders demand in the community, and the groups decide among themselves who will receive loans from their funds.

When Cyclone Idai came ashore, the rainfall from the storm turned the river valley into a giant lake about 3m deep. 20 year old Joaquim José climbed a tree to stay out of the water, with her 3 year old

daughter on her back and her mother in law, Marta Manuel and the other members of their family close behind her.

They spent three days and nights in the tree. "I was very frightened that the tree might fall," Joaquina recalls. "We had nothing to eat. We just held the tree. We did not sleep for three days."

When the waters receded finally, they were able to climb down to higher ground where the water was only knee deep, but it was a further two days before they could return to the site of their home. "Everything was covered in mud," Joaquina says. "The house was gone. The crops were gone. We had to eat rotten maize to survive."

In the third week after Idai, a helicopter brought biscuits and flour. CEDES pro-

vided the community with food and water purification supplies, and taught them about hygiene and water purification. They have dug a new well for the family, but the water needs to be purified before it can be drunk, using Certeza provided by CEDES for the purpose.

CEDES will also provide seeds and farming tools for the next growing season, which begins in August and September, to families like Joaquina's.

"I hope to get back to farming," she said. "I want to raise chickens and goats, so we can sell them to improve our lives."





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We cried out for help, but there was no place to go
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Chidzizina

Maria Baptista, a 25 year old mother who is expecting her fifth child, and her husband both work as farm labourers on others' farms to earn money to supplement the maize and rice they grow to support their family. They live in Chidzizina, a farming village that abuts the main highway from Beira to Chimoio.

“When Cyclone Idai arrived,” she says, “we ran to the school to shelter. But the school began to flood, and the roof blew off. So we ran to the government office, but it also flooded. We returned to the school, and sheltered in a classroom that still had some roof.”

The water was chest deep on Maria. A number of her neighbours also sheltered in the classroom. They put smaller children onto the few desks that had survived the storm in order to keep them above the water. And they waited, with no food and no sleep. They thought they would die.

Three days later, the waters receded, and they were able to leave the school. Their house was almost destroyed, and they lost all their belongings, including their stored seed for planting. Maria received maize meal, beans, oil, salt, sugar, a bucket and water purification supplies from ACT member CEDES to help them survive in the weeks after Idai. She also received training in hygiene and water purification.

Today, she says their family needs galvanized iron sheets to rebuild the house, seed to plant, and clothes and beds for the family.

Further into the village lives Assumane Agy, with his wife, son-in-law and two grandchildren. 86 year old Assumane has trouble standing or walking far, and his wife supports the family by working in the fields of nearby farmers. They also have their own crops 15km away, where they grow maize, potatoes and sesame on three acres of land.

During the cyclone, Assumane could not leave as his neighbours were doing. Instead, the Secretary (a local government official) carried him up to the highway, which was fortunately above the flood level from the storm. Assumane endured three days in the rain and flood with his family. There was no food at all. "We cried out for help, but there was no place to go," he says.

"We will not forget Cyclone Idai," he continues. "We remember it whenever the wind picks up, and we are afraid."

After the flood waters receded, he was told to go home again, but his house was gone. Neighbours contributed food to help Assumane and his family survive. ACT member CEDES provided food, hygiene and water purification supplies to

help as well.

Fortunately, his extended family who live outside the flood zone heard about what happened and came to help rebuild a house for Assumane and his family. Assumane is now supervising younger men with stronger legs than his who are making bricks to continue to reconstruct his home.

Life is starting to get back to normal in Chidzizina. Assumane's granddaughter works on her homework sitting on a mat on the ground. "Students are back in school," he says. "But they are studying outside, or in classrooms in the damaged school building."

Continued Response

Through the appeal, CEDES, LWF and FCA will continue to respond to the humanitarian needs in Mozambique. Support through food, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, livelihoods, and psychosocial support will continue to be provided to thousands of households by the ACT members working in response to Idai in Mozambique.

The full ACT appeal for Cyclone Idai response in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe can be found [here](#).



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ACT Alliance is the world's largest network of Protestant and Orthodox churches and agencies engaged in humanitarian, development and advocacy work, with over 150 members and 30,000 staff working on a wide range of activities in more than 125 countries.

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