



OXFAM MEDIA BRIEFING

After the storm

Barriers to recovery one year on from Cyclone Idai

12 months after Cyclone Idai, tens of thousands of people in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi are still struggling to piece their lives back together. Their road to recovery is blocked by an endless cycle of intensifying floods, droughts and storms, ingrained poverty and inequality, and a lack of support to help them adapt to a changing climate or to prepare for and recover from disaster.

Introduction

On Thursday 14th March 2019 Cyclone Idai made landfall in the port city of Beira in central Mozambique. The cyclone – which brought intense rainfall and winds of up to 177 km/h – left a trail of destruction across Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. Less than six weeks later, on April 25, Cyclone Kenneth battered northern Mozambique around 600 miles north of Idai's impact zone. With wind speeds of 220 km/h it was the strongest cyclone on record to hit Africa.

In the space of just six weeks, two of the worst cyclones on record in the southern hemisphere, hit some of the world's poorest countries, leaving 3.3 million people in desperate need of humanitarian assistanceⁱ.

The cyclones were supercharged by an escalating climate crisisⁱⁱ that the people of southern Africa have done little to create. Per capita emissions of the average US citizen are 51 times higher than the average person in Mozambique and 155 times higher than the average Malawianⁱⁱⁱ.

Today – 12 months on – millions of people across Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe are still living in limbo:

- Tens of thousands are still living in destroyed or damaged homes or makeshift shelters – 43,352 people were displaced in Zimbabwe^{iv} and 93,516 people were living in temporary shelters in Mozambique^v at the end of last year.
- 9.7 million people in Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique remain in desperate need of food aid as a result of the cyclones together with torrential rain in parts of the region, an on-going drought elsewhere, as well as localized conflict.^{vi}
- Damaged infrastructure – such as roads, bridges, power and water supplies, latrines, schools, and health centres – is making it hard for people access vital services and for local economies to recover. For example, in February 2020 Oxfam staff reported that there were problems getting heavy equipment for drilling boreholes into parts of Capo Delgado in Mozambique – an area hard hit by Cyclone Kenneth and recent floods – because of damaged bridges.^{vii}

This brief outlines why so many people are still struggling to rebuild their lives one year on. It shows how intensifying cycle of floods, drought and storms; ingrained poverty and inequality; and the failure of the international community to provide the long-term support communities need to adapt to and recover from climate shocks have made it all but impossible for people to rebuild their lives.

Counting the cost

Mozambique: Cyclone Idai affected 1.5 million people including 600 people who lost their lives and 1600 people who were injured. 240,000 homes were damaged or destroyed and 400,000 people were displaced. A total of 2044 fishing vessels were destroyed along with 4309 hectares of farmland in the immediate aftermath of the cyclone – exacerbating existing food insecurities and leaving 1,359,159 people in need of food aid. Twenty bridges and 3490 km of national roads were damaged – 29 percent of the total – while the destruction of schools affected 382,717 children. When Cyclone Kenneth hit northern Mozambique it impacted 74,000 people – damaging or destroying 37,930 homes and displacing 18,029 people^{viii}.

Malawi: The cyclone affected an estimated 975,000 people – 60 people who lost their lives and 86,976 people were displaced. The torrential rains and flooding washed away 109,625 hectares of crops and killed 47,504 livestock affecting the livelihoods of around 308,702 smallholder farmers and undermining food security. Damage to infrastructure was also significant with 1841 km of roads and 129 bridges partially or completely destroyed together with 154 schools, 25 health facilities and 258,000 toilets – significantly impacting peoples access to vital public services and increasing the risk of disease outbreaks.^{ix}

Zimbabwe: Cyclone Idai left 270,000 people in need of humanitarian assistance including 129,000 children. Close to 17,000 households were displaced – many as a result of landslides that wiped away entire villages or neighbourhoods. An estimated 1.4 million hectares of arable land – accounting for one third of national agricultural production – was destroyed affecting 50,000 mainly smallholder farmers and exacerbating already high levels of malnutrition. 865 km of road were damaged– with 95 percent of the road network and at least 10 critical bridges damaged or destroyed in the district of Chimanimani in Eastern Zimbabwe. 294 health facilities were damaged, and an estimated 971 schools were damaged or destroyed, affecting more than 60,000 school children.^x

A cycle of climate shocks

While Cyclone Idai made headlines around the globe, it was just one in a cycle of increasingly frequent and severe weather events to have hit the region in recent years. And with every new shock people's capacity to withstand and recover diminishes.

Over the past five years three severe droughts together with more localized dry spells have led to major food shortages and recurring hunger crises in a region where the vast majority of farms are small family run farms that depend on rain-fed agriculture.

In the five months prior to Cyclone Idai, Southern Africa was experiencing its most severe drought in decades – if not a century – which destroyed harvests and left millions of people without enough to eat. This meant many families were already living on the edge when the cyclone hit, having spent all their savings and sold whatever they had to sell to buy food. Many districts across the region are still suffering from drought conditions today.

The region has also experienced three severe floods in the space of ten years – in 2010/11, 2015 and again in 2019/20. In 2015 Malawi was affected by the worst floods in 50 years – 176 people lost their lives and 260,000 people were left homeless. Between December 2019 and February 2020 torrential rain and flash floods hit communities in the north and centre of Mozambique that were still reeling from the impact of the cyclones^{xi}. According to the Technical Council for Disaster Management more than 160,000 people were impacted and

200,000 hectares of crops totally or partially lost^{xii}. Farmers, who had painstakingly replanted their fields following the cyclone, lost their crops all over again^{xiii}.

Malawi and Mozambique are now also facing an invasion of red locusts that originated in Oman in Asia^{xiv}.

These repeated disasters are in line with findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which has warned that Southern Africa will experience hotter, drier conditions; more frequent droughts; more intense rainfall events leading to more damaging floods; and more frequent and intense tropical storms as the climate crisis escalates^{xv}. The locust swarms have also been exacerbated by abnormal weather conditions associated with the worsening climate crisis with prolonged bouts of exceptionally wet weather in the locusts' normally arid habitats providing ideal conditions for them to breed.^{xvi}

The cycle of disaster

Virginia Defunho is a farmer who lives in Josina Machel village in Mozambique with her husband and seven children. Virginia's family lost everything in the cyclone including their home, crops, chickens and most of their possessions. She replanted her fields in December but her crops have been damaged by another severe flood in January. Oxfam's partner Kulima is providing Virginia with tools and seeds to plant again on a rented plot on higher ground.

"The hardest thing now is the lack of food. Sometimes I go to bed hungry. The child cries, wanting something to eat, and it makes me feel angry sometimes, because the child is crying because he wants food and there is nothing to give.

"Idai has destroyed my mind. I have a child who has succeeded to grade ten, but I don't have the money to pay for him to enrol back at school. If life was normal, I would have some crops to sell and I would get some money and my child would be back at school.

"We are worried about the future because we don't know if the weather is going to be like this or if it will change back to normal like it was before. We worry about another cyclone coming. If it comes a second time, what will our lives be? How is it going to be?"

Poverty and inequality

Poverty and inequality exacerbated the destructive power of the cyclone and continue to be a major barrier to recovery for millions of people.

Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi are amongst the poorest countries in the world^{xvii}. For example in Mozambique almost half of the population (46 percent) live in chronic poverty, 72 percent of people do not have access to basic sanitation, and close to a third of children (32 percent) do not go to school^{xviii}.

Such high levels of poverty mean a country like Mozambique does not have adequate measures in place to reduce the impact of flooding or storms - or the ability to mount an effective emergency response in the aftermath. When a category 5 Typhoon Hagibis hit Japan in October 2019 the impact was less severe – for example 74 people lost their lives compared to 1300 due to Cyclone Idai – a category 3 cyclone - thanks to better infrastructure, early warning systems and evacuation measures, effective emergency services, flood defences and insurance schemes.^{xix}

The same is true within countries – whether rich or poor. When disaster strikes the poorest people are hit harder and recover far more slowly than more wealthy neighbours. In Beira, Mozambique the poorest communities lived in poorly constructed shelters and in areas more susceptible to floods. Wealthier people have houses with concrete walls, stronger roofs and built on higher ground.

The ability to access official help is skewed by inequality – help goes to those who are easiest to reach and this is rarely the poorest. Generally, if you go into a disaster with some level of assets you have more chance of survival and more chance of rebuilding your life. Poor families in remote rural areas will have less access to official help than wealthier families living in more accessible areas; poorer families don't have savings or insurance which ensure wealthier families can rebuild their homes and businesses after a disaster; poorer farmers lack the irrigation systems and drought resistant crop varieties that keep their wealthier farms going through drought.

Gender inequality

Poverty is predominantly female and rural in Southern Africa. Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe all rank in the bottom fifth of countries in the UNDP Gender inequality index and women face high levels of social and economic discrimination^{xx}. For example, despite the fact that women produce 80 percent of household food in Malawi^{xxi} they own just 17 percent of documented land in the country^{xxii}.

Such ingrained inequality makes it harder for women to get back on their feet after a disaster. For example, while women are responsible for much of the agricultural production in Mozambique, they often don't have the legal rights to the land they farm because men are far more likely to be registered as landowners. In the four provinces worst impacted by Cyclone Idai – Sofala, Manica, Tete and Zambezia - just 25 percent of official land titles are held by women^{xxiii}. As a result, women who were displaced from their land are less able to protect their property and land for their return – and are at the back of the queue when it comes to accessing alternative plots of land.

Failure to take account of women's needs in the design of relief and recovery programmes can lead to further impoverishment and marginalisation of women. Just 0.17 percent of Mozambique's reconstruction funds have been allocated to programmes that specifically target the needs of women. In Mozambique, many female headed households have been relocated to displacement sites far from their land and support networks and face the difficult decision of whether to leave their young children in the camp in the care of siblings or neighbours while they make the journey home replant their fields – or stay with their children.

Humanitarian Response

As of 28 February 2020, just US\$ 193.4 million – 43 percent - of the \$450.2 million sought by the UN to provide humanitarian assistance to communities in Zimbabwe and Mozambique affected by Cyclones Idai and Kenneth had been secured. The majority of this funding was committed in 2019 – with just \$42,000 committed in the year to date.^{xxiv} The knock on impact of the lack of funding is already being felt with the World Food Programme highlighting that food assistance will be partially discontinued or interrupted in several central provinces of Mozambique at the end of February 2020.^{xxv}

While the humanitarian response ensured millions of people had access to food, shelter, clean water and sanitation, and other basic needs in the aftermath of the cyclones there were gaps. For example, some of the poorest and more remote communities were unable to access assistance^{xxvi} and tens of thousands of people in Zimbabwe and Mozambique remain in temporary shelter in camps that in some cases are still without effective clean water supplies or adequate toilet facilities as the relief effort has been hampered by recent floods.

There remains an urgent need to repair or rebuild essential infrastructure such as schools, health centres, water supplies, roads and bridges so that people can access basic services and local economies can start functioning again. In addition much more support is needed for farming and fishing communities to get production back on track and adapt to the changing climate – many small holder farmers had to wait months for the floodwaters to recede while fishing communities have lost their boats and nets.

Oxfam's cyclone response

Oxfam and our partners raised over €14 million to help 788,168 people across Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe - including communities in remote and difficult to reach areas.

In the initial aftermath of the cyclone we provided emergency assistance including cooking utensils, blankets, hygiene kits and food aid or cash transfers that enable people to buy food and other essentials. Oxfam also installed latrines and water pumps in temporary camps, provided advice on how to maintain hygiene and prevent the spread of disease, and organised awareness-raising sessions on gender equality to address issues such as gender-based violence, which often spikes after a disaster.

Oxfam is working with communities over the long term to help them adapt to changing the climate – for example helping smallholder farmers diversify their crops and adapt their farming techniques.

Fatima Zuze and her family live in Mlolo village in Malawi. They lost everything in the floods that followed Cyclone Idai but are slowly getting back on their feet. Fatima has been able to harvest 20 bags of sweet potatoes from the vines she received from Oxfam – a resilient plant, which matures rapidly and has a ready market. Fatima is hoping to raise US\$300 from the sale of her crop to pay for her daughter's school fees, buy other household necessities, and invest in her farm. She is inspiring other families in her area to follow her lead: "I encourage fellow villagers to diversify their agricultural practices as we recover from the loss of crops due to the floods. What Oxfam gives us should empower us to have enough food to eat and sell."

Climate Finance

The failure of the international community to provide the long-term support needed for Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi to adapt to a changing climate and prepare for disasters – and to support poor countries to recover from loss and damage resulting from climate fuelled disasters is another key factor holding back recovery in the region.

In 2016/17 – the latest period for which data is available – rich polluting countries committed an average of US\$120.46 million per year for bilateral programmes in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi that primarily aimed at supporting adaptation, and a further \$275.93 to projects where adaptation was at least one of several aims. Multilateral channels including the development banks and dedicated climate funds committed US\$45.3 million per year to adaptation projects in the region. The funding covers a wide range of projects including the establishment of coastal defences and support for smallholder farmers adapt to more extreme and erratic weather. A breakdown of funding for Mozambique Zimbabwe and Malawi are given in the table below.

While the funding for adaptation is significant it is just a fraction of the \$5.2 trillion the international community spent on subsidies for the fossil fuel industry in 2017^{xxvii} – and a long way from what is needed to ensure that poor communities in Mozambique are able to withstand increasingly frequent and severe climate shocks. The United Nations Environment Programme estimates that, by 2030, annual costs of adaptation in the developing countries may rise to \$140-300 billion a year.

The cyclones caused an estimated US\$370.5 million of loss and damage in Malawi^{xxviii}, US\$767.08 million in Zimbabwe^{xxix} and *US\$3.2 billion* in Mozambique^{xxx} – equivalent to roughly half of Mozambique's national budget and equivalent to the impact of 23 Hurricane Katrina's hitting the United States^{xxxi}. Despite this there are currently no dedicated funds to help countries recover and rebuild from climate impacts they can't adapt to. As a result, Mozambique – the world's sixth poorest country – was forced to take on additional debt with a \$118 million loan (albeit interest free) from the International Monetary Fund to begin the rebuilding process^{xxxii}.

Rich polluting countries have been resisting poor countries' calls for proper financing mechanisms to help countries recover from loss and damage for over a decade. The UN Climate Summit in Madrid at the end of last year further kicked the decision further down the road with a request for the Green Climate Fund – the main multilateral climate fund – to explore the issue.

Average yearly adaptation funding for Cyclone impacted countries (2016/17 annual averages, in 2016 US\$ million)	Mozambique	Zimbabwe	Malawi
Bilateral funding provided for projects where climate adaptation was the primary aim	50.26	14.91	55.29
Bilateral funding provided for projects where adaptation was among several objectives	146.20	19.91	109.82
Adaptation funding from multilateral climate funds	22.47	5.16	13.57
Adaptation funding from multilateral development banks	22.82	17.24	163.21

Source: OECD data on climate-related development assistance.^{xxxiii}

Conclusion and asks

Millions of people across Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe are desperately trying to rebuild their lives despite ingrained poverty and inequality, repeated climate shocks, and patchy support from the international community.

Rich polluting governments and national governments have a critical role to play in removing the barriers to recovery and ensuring communities are well prepared for when the next cyclone hits.

The international community – and particularly rich polluting nations must:

- Close the humanitarian funding gap to speed recovery across the region. All donor countries must increase their contributions to the humanitarian appeals – which have received less than half the funds requested.
- Demonstrate how climate finance provided by developed countries will reach the promised level 100bn a year by 2020, and in particular substantially increase grant-based support for adaptation, both in 2020 and beyond.
- Establish a new funding mechanism to help poor countries recover and rebuild from the loss and damage caused by climate fuelled disasters despite best efforts to adapt.
- Commit to more ambitious and urgent cuts in emissions by 2030 in order to keep global temperatures from rising above 1.5 degrees. Rich polluting countries must take the lead.

The governments of Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique must:

- Ensure humanitarian aid and funding for climate adaptation is channelled according to needs, and that all members of the community – particularly vulnerable groups such as women and girls - have a real say over how and where the money is spent.
- Invest in helping communities adapt and prepare for more erratic and extreme weather – for example by investing more in flood protection measures or by supporting farmers to adopt climate-smart agriculture practices. Particular attention should be given to the most vulnerable people in society – including women smallholder farmers.
- Tackle poverty and inequality by investing in universal, high-quality and gender-responsive public services such as healthcare and clean water supplies - such measures would help reduce people’s vulnerability and speed their recovery when disaster strikes.

ⁱ <https://reliefweb.int/report/malawi/2019-flood-response-plan-and-appeal> (Malawi), <https://reliefweb.int/report/zimbabwe/2019-zimbabwe-flash-appeal-january-june-2019-revised-following-cyclone-idai-march> (Zimbabwe), <https://reliefweb.int/report/mozambique/2018-2019-mozambique-humanitarian-response-plan-revised-following-cyclones-idai> (Mozambique)

ⁱⁱ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-47638588>

ⁱⁱⁱ Average CO2 emissions of citizens - in metric tons per capita - in countries most vulnerable to climate change impacts - Mozambique (0.3), Malawi, (0.1), and Zimbabwe (0.9) pale in comparison to the average emissions of a person in the U.S. (15.5), Canada (15.3), Australia (15.8), or UK (6) <http://civilsocietyreview.org/report2019/>

^{iv} <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/zimbabwe-%E2%80%94-tropical-cyclone-idai-%E2%80%94-baseline-assessment-round-3-december-2019>

^v https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/dtm/mozambique_-_cyclone_displacement_report_12_20_december_2019.pdf

^{vi} OCHA SOUTHERN AFRICA Humanitarian Snapshot - Jan 2020.

^{vii} Oxfam Situational Update on Macomia District, Capo Delgado, Mozambique Mozambique, 16 February 2020

^{viii} <https://www.unocha.org/southern-and-eastern-africa-rosea/cyclones-idai-and-kenneth>

^{ix} <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Malawi%202019%20Floods%20Post%20Disaster%20Needs%20Assessment%20Report.pdf>

^x <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Zimbabwe%20RINA%20report%206-20-19%20web.pdf>

^{xi} <https://fews.net/southern-africa/mozambique/food-security-outlook/february-2020>

^{xii} <https://fews.net/southern-africa/mozambique/food-security-outlook/february-2020>

^{xiii} Anecdotal evidence from EFSVL team in Buzi, February 2020

^{xiv} http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-02/24/c_138814485.htm

^{xv} <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/explore/southern-africa>

^{xvi} http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-02/24/c_138814485.htm and <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/locust-swarms-and-climate-change>

^{xvii} 2019 UN Human Development Index <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/2019-human-development-index-ranking>

^{xviii} Integrated Household Survey 2016/17 quoted in <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/closing-divide-malawi>

^{xix} <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/10/15/asia/japan-typhoon-hagibis-aftermath-intl-hnk/index.html> and <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/10/10/national/government-preparing-typhoon-hagibis/#.XmDsnKgzZPY>

^{xx} <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index>

^{xxi} <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Malawi%202019%20Floods%20Post%20Disaster%20Needs%20Assessment%20Report.pdf>

^{xxii} <https://landportal.org/news/2018/09/malawian-women-struggle-land-rights-despite-equality-drive>

^{xxiii} Mozambique Government - World Bank post disaster needs assessment (page171)

^{xxiv} <https://fts.unocha.org/emergencies/808/summary/2020>.

^{xxv} <https://reliefweb.int/report/mozambique/wfp-mozambique-situation-report-21-january-2020>

^{xxvi} <https://insight.wfp.org/we-take-thousands-of-aerial-photos-and-run-them-through-a-big-computer-ff08eb096351>

^{xxvii} IMF 2019 Working Paper - <https://www.vox.com/2019/5/17/18624740/fossil-fuel-subsidies-climate-imf>. The \$5.2 trillion figure includes the costs of climate damage which society has to pay for such as health costs of air pollution and forgone income where fossil fuel income is not properly taxed.

^{xxviii} <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Malawi%202019%20Floods%20Post%20Disaster%20Needs%20Assessment%20Report.pdf>

^{xxix} <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Zimbabwe%20RINA%20report%206-20-19%20web.pdf>

^{xxx} <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-cyclone/mozambique-needs-3-2-billion-for-post-cyclone-reconstruction-local-media-idUSKCN1SL29F>

^{xxxi} <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620870/mb-who-takes-the-heat-230919-en.pdf>

^{xxxii} <https://africatimes.com/2019/04/27/activists-say-imfs-118-million-idai-loan-is-unfair-to-mozambique/>

^{xxxiii} <http://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/climate-change.htm>