### **MSF improves people’s access to healthcare in conflict-hit Mozambique in wake of cyclone Chido**

Doctors Without Borders (MSF) has launched an emergency response, alongside the Ministry of Health, to ensure people have access to healthcare in the most affected area of northern Mozambique, following the devastation caused by cyclone Chido. The cyclone, which made landfall on 15 December, has affected hundreds of thousands of people and further damaged the health system in the conflict-hit southern African country. MSF calls on donors and other humanitarian organisations to quickly mobilise support to respond to people affected by this emergency.

MSF mobile teams will focus on providing mental health care and logistics support. In the main health centre in Mecufi district, Cabo Delgado province, MSF staff will also help to continue to run the emergency room, the paediatric and maternity wards, provide general and sexual and reproductive healthcare, treatment of HIV, TB, and chronic diseases, and assess for malnutrition.

“Since the onset of the cyclone, we have mobilised teams already present in other areas of Cabo Delgado, amid the ongoing conflict, to assess the impact of the storm in the affected districts of Pemba, Metuge and Mecufi,” says Jacinta Francisco, head of the assessment team. “All the health centres visited in Metuge and Mecufi were damaged by the cyclone, with services currently being provided from makeshift tents, and health staff overwhelmed by the workload and loss they have endured.”

The cyclone has compounded existing challenges in Cabo Delgado, where the health system was already severely weakened by the conflict. Beyond the need for structural repairs, basic services such as clean water and electricity have also been disrupted in many health centres, further limiting the provision of healthcare. This situation is exacerbated by the general lack of attention to the province, reflected in a reduction of donors and funds, making it increasingly difficult for other actors to respond effectively while already operating with limited resources.

As of 23 December, 622,610 people have been affected across northern Mozambique, predominantly in Cabo Delgado, but also in Nampula and Niassa provinces. In total, 116 people have died, 877 have sustained injuries, and 140,000 homes, 250 schools and 52 health facilities have been either completely or partially destroyed.[[1]](#footnote-1)

These figures are expected to rise as ongoing assessments provide more data. Most homes, constructed from clay and bamboo, proved highly vulnerable to the storm.

“People are now torn between seeking food and rebuilding their lives,” says Francisco. “Many survivors have lost family members, homes, and livelihoods. Mental health support is crucial, not only for affected communities but also for exhausted health professionals with limited resources to respond to the current situation.”

Over recent days, MSF teams donated to the Ministry of Health medicines, such as antibiotics, and emergency kits, including items to treat wounds, suture material and infusion sets.

MSF has also donated and installed a tent to serve as the maternity ward at Nanlia health centre and to support the infrastructure in Mecufi health center, and fixed the cable connection between the power generator and the building of the health centre in Metuge town, making the operating theatre functional again.

Mozambique is a country very vulnerable to the climate crisis and often faces the risk of cyclones during this season. The storm has impacted people’s access to clean drinking water, which increases the risk of waterborne diseases.

“We are particularly concerned about the potential emergence of diseases such as cholera, which is endemic in the region,” says Luisa Suárez, MSF medical coordinator in Mozambique. “Or an increase of malaria, of which we were already seeing a high number of cases in our supported health facilities before the cyclone.”

Cyclone Chido has added a new burden to Cabo Delgado, where according to the UN 576,000 people remain displaced in different parts of the province due to the conflict that started in 2017. A further 630,000 have returned to areas previously affected by the violence.

“This natural disaster comes on the top of the man-made crisis leaving people in northern Mozambique, who were already in a fragile situation due to violence, yet more vulnerable,” says Suárez. “It is crucial to mobilise support from other humanitarian organisations to respond to this crisis quickly.”

*MSF has been running medical and humanitarian activities in Cabo Delgado since 2019 to assist people affected by the conflict, through community services and in support of health centres and hospitals. We run projects in Palma, Mocímboa da Praia, Mueda, Muidumbe and Nangade districts, and are providing mental health support, improving water and sanitation systems, offering sexual and reproductive health consultations, and assisting people living with HIV and tuberculosis, among other activities.*

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1. According to data from Mozambique’s National Institute for Natural Disaster (INGD) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)