**Mozambique: MSF wraps up three-month emergency response to Cyclone Chido**

**When Cyclone Chido hit Mozambique’s northern province of Cabo Delgado on 15 December 2024, extreme winds and flooding caused widespread destruction, prompting teams from international medical organisation Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) to launch an emergency response. Three months on, we look at the impact of the cyclone on people’s lives and on the region’s struggling health services, neglected after seven years of conflict.**

**Deaths and destruction**

Cyclone Chido brought severe weather conditions to northern Mozambique, killing at least 120 people and injuring 898. According to local authorities, almost 700,000 people were impacted by the cyclone, most of them in Cabo Delgado province and the remainder in neighbouring Nampula and Niassa provinces.

According to official data, in Cabo Delgado’s Mecufi district, 99 per cent of houses were destroyed. Metuge and Chiure districts also recorded critical levels of damage.

MSF teams, already responding to the ongoing conflict in Cabo Delgado province, launched an emergency response in late December.

**Psychological trauma**

While extreme weather events like cyclones are becoming more frequent and intense in Mozambique, most people in Cabo Delgado had never experienced anything like this. Cyclone Kenneth passed through the province in 2019, but its impact was far less severe compared to the devastation in Sofala province. Many thousands of people were left traumatised by the experience of losing family members, homes and livelihoods.

A key component of MSF’s response was helping people access emergency psychological care. MSF teams trained local Ministry of Health staff and community health workers in providing psychological first aid and counselling. They also provided 320 individual counselling sessions and counselled 4,962 people in groups in various locations across Mecufi and Metuge districts.

“In the aftermath of the cyclone, we witnessed a devastating scenario where thousands of people struggled to sleep, let alone rebuild their lives,” says MSF nursing activity manager Ana Mafalda. “The trauma was widespread. Most people had never had a psychological consultation and did not realise that many of their feelings had a psychological origin. Because of the scale of people’s needs, our teams doubled their efforts to provide large-scale psychological counselling tailored to the reality and conditions of these individuals.”

**Fragile health system**

**Even before Cyclone Chido many people in Cabo Delgado province did not know where their next meal was coming from. This state of pervasive food insecurity was worsened by the cyclone, which** destroyed thousands of hectares of agricultural fields as well as stocks of food in people’s homes. The extreme weather also damaged the province’s water and sanitation system, destroyed two health facilities and partially damaged eight more.

The MSF teams focused on keeping essential medical services running at two of the province’s main health centres in Mecufi and Metuge districts, where Nanlia health center is located. Between 24 December and 7 February, MSF teams provided 6,847 general medical consultations and helped deliver 73 babies. Most consultations were for malaria and diarrhoeal diseases, related to the flooding and lack of clean drinking water.

In the past three months, MSF water and sanitation engineers provided 85,000 litres of clean water. They also repaired five latrine blocks and installed three emergency bathrooms and 15 handwashing platforms in both health center. The MSF team also distributed 200 bed nets to pregnant women to protect them from malaria, which is spread by mosquitoes which breed in stagnant water. In both health centers of Mecufi and Nanlia, our logistics team repaired the roofs of the maternity ward, consultation room, and vaccination area, ensuring the community's continued access to healthcare. They also donated medications and medical supplies to both rehabilitated health centres.

**Aid response falls short of people’s needs**

After seven years of conflict in Cabo Delgado province, thousands of people have been displaced from their homes and live in makeshift shelters made of branches and straw. Shelters in 10 camps for displaced people were completely destroyed by the strong winds, leaving large numbers of already vulnerable people homeless and destitute. Many are still desperately short of food and clean water, while aid agencies are struggling to meet their needs.

“People in Cabo Delgado province are beginning the arduous task of rebuilding their lives, but it is clear that the physical and mental impact of the cyclone will persist for some time to come,” says Ana Mafalda. "While the emergency phase is over, it is essential to continue channelling humanitarian aid to the cyclone victims, enabling them to rebuild their lives in a more resilient and dignified way."

*On March 10th, Mozambique was hit by Cyclone Jude, primarily affecting Nampula province. MSF teams are currently assessing the situation to determine the need for a new emergency intervention.*

ENDS