

Malawi Amoto

'Flames of Fire'



2019 Malawi Floods
Special Issue

Relief aid effectively and efficiently distributed



Efficient Distribution: Violet Katsonya, from EAM, helping with distribution of aid at the Alinafe Camp in Chikhwawa District

For at least the second time in four years, the people living along the East Bank of the Shire River have seen homes and crops destroyed by devastating rains. SIM Malawi, working with the Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM) has started to deliver much-needed relief aid to two camps in Chikhwawa District in which over 220 displaced households are now living. But a lot more is needed

At the beginning of March, a couple of weeks before Cyclone Idai hit Mozambique and Zimbabwe, another, unnamed, Tropical Storm hit the Central and Southern Regions of Malawi. Torrential rain for several days caused devastation on a massive scale as lives, homes and crops were lost in an area covering almost half of Malawi.

In total 17, out of the country's 28, districts were affected, and two major cities, Blantyre and Zomba, also felt the force of the storm. Since that time, 173

SIM Malawi



EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION OF MALAWI
I pray that they will all be one. » John 17:21

SIM Malawi/EAM flood-relief work is supported by SIM Malawi Project #MW96759 Malawi Disaster Relief

emergency camps have been set up to house the almost 87,000 people who have been displaced by the event.

The maize crop, the staple food for most Malawians, was just a few weeks away from harvesting when the storms and floods hit. In some places, people were able to harvest early and so have some, if not the best-quality, maize which will help them in the coming months. But not all people in the affected areas were so fortunate.

SIM Malawi, working with EAM, has started relief deliveries in the Chikhwawa District, and in particular two camps, Phimbi and Alinafe. In these two camps, a total of 225 displaced households are being housed in temporary accommodation. This equates to significantly more than 1,000 individuals.

These are people who have lost everything: house, crops and possessions.

People from Kavalo Village, on the East Bank of the Shire River, are being housed at the Alinafe Camp. Their Group Village Headman, Stephen Nisifolo, spoke about what confronted the people of his village.

"The river rose very quickly and flooded our land and our houses," he said.

"People were having to use boats to rescue others in order to take them to higher ground. We do not know when we will be able to return to our land because it is saturated and, in some places, still flooded."

For Stephen and around 600 of his fellow villagers, Alinafe Camp is home for the foreseeable future, but he is

philosophical about the immediate future.

“We are very grateful that we are able to be at this camp because we are getting help,” he said.

“What has been delivered today will help the people of my village to survive a little longer.”

The first SIM Malawi/EAM delivery of aid to these two camps saw each affected household receiving supplies consisting of:

10kgs maize flour

2kgs beans

1 kg salt

1 litre cooking oil

2 cups

2 plates

1 cooking pot

The families at Phimbi received only the food items above as they had already received the non-food items the day before this visit.

These are very basic food supplies and utensils which are aimed at helping people through the immediate crisis.

But more will be needed in the future. The partnership between SIM Malawi and EAM in this work is built on solid foundations, as Pete Ong, SIM Malawi

Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, explained.

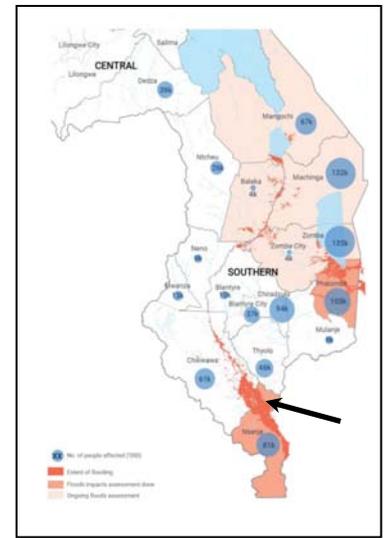
“We have worked with EAM for a number of years, most recently on Youth Pastors’ Book Set Conferences in both Blantyre and Lilongwe,” he said.

“We have always worked well together, so I approached them to see if we could do something together to help those affected by the floods.

The way the partnership operates is that SIM Malawi provides the oversight and the funding through the Disaster Relief Project, and EAM is buying the food and other materials and looking after the distribution on the ground.”

Distribution of relief aid can be fraught with problems, not least that the aid is either misused or does not get to the right people.

EAM has been working hard in the camps since they were set up, to collate lists of families being housed there, looking at their needs in order to put together aid bundles. When it came to the distribution itself, this was handled in a professional and efficient manner.



Affected Areas: Map showing the extent of the flooding and areas affected: arrow shows distribution area (Source: Government of Malawi 2019 Floods Response Plan)

Families were called out in small groups to register and be fingerprinted, and then they went through to receive their aid packages. But why fingerprint people?

“We used fingerprinting to ensure we knew who had and who had not received their aid packages,” said Violet Katsonya who was heading up the EAM Distribution Team.



Fingerprinting: Beneficiaries are fingerprinted by EAM staff to show who had received their aid bundle



Ruined crops: a ruined field of maize that was close to harvesting in Chikhwawa District (photo credit: Ruth Guinness, SIM Malawi)

“It helps us make sure that the distribution is fair, that the people who need the aid receive it, and that we are working in a transparent way. This will help those who are donating in support of this work to know that they can be confident that their donations will be turned into aid, and that aid will be fairly and properly distributed,” she said.

This year’s storms are the second major such events that have hit Southern Malawi in the last four years. In 2015, a similar Tropical Cyclone hit Malawi, with those living next to the Shire River being badly affected. So, this begs the question why do people stay in those areas that are prone to flooding?

The question is easy to ask but is much more difficult to answer.

One of the reasons is that the distance people would have to travel from higher ground to their farms is too far and they would not have as much time to work the land.

Another reason is that people will weigh up the risk and decide that on

balance it is best to stay put because flooding does not occur every year and, also, they have invested in permanent structures and want to protect their investment.

But perhaps the most compelling argument people use for staying in the same place is that this is Ancestral Land and has been farmed and lived on by their family for generations.

Whatever the reason for the decision to stay is, the reality is that right now Malawi is facing a major humanitarian crisis and is looking for help in order to help alleviate the problem.

“We are hoping to deliver another two loads of aid at least, this month,” said Pete Ong.

“Each load costs around 2.5 million Malawi Kwacha, about US\$ 3,400 or thereabouts. We would ask for people to partner with us in this work and help by donating to the SIM Malawi Disaster Relief Fund so that we can help our brothers and sisters in Chikhwawa to recover from this disaster.”



Damaged infrastructure: a bridge has been washed away in the storms

2019 Malawi Floods Facts and Figures

National Figures

(Source: Government of Malawi 2019 Floods Response Plan)

968,900 people affected

86,980 people displaced

672 people injured

60 people killed

3 people still missing

17 Districts and 2 Cities affected

173 relief camps set up

Chikhwawa District

(Source: Evangelical Association of Malawi)

5,881 displaced families

68,456 displaced people

53 Emergency camps

As for what is the most urgent need, both Violet Katsonya and Stephen Nisifolo are of one mind: food.

“Food is the most important need these people have at the present time because they have nothing,” said Violet. “Non-food items, such as those we are distributing are also important, but food will remain the priority for the immediate future.”

There is a quiet dignity about the people in the camps as they wait for their lives to return to some semblance of normality. They are grateful for the help they have and are receiving, but much more is needed to help them to get back on their feet.

If you would like to partner with us in this work and donate to the Disaster Relief Project, please visit www.simmalawi.org/donate and follow the prompts to the relevant page on your nearest SIM site. When donating please quote SIM Malawi Project #MW96759 Malawi Disaster Relief. Thank you for your prayers and your support.