

MAJOR INCIDENTS FOR YEAR 2001

- | | | | |
|-----------|------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. | Flooding: | Mash Central
Mat North | February-March
2001 |
| 2. | Fire Emergency | Mat North Province
Elephant Hills Hotel | 24th July 2001 |
| 3. | Road Traffic Accident | Mash Central | 16th June 2001 |
| 4. | Veld Fire | Manicaland Province | 26th August 2001 |
| 5. | Marooned Families | Masvingo Province | Mid December 2001 |

1.0 FLOODING EMERGENCY: FEBRUARY 2001

Background

The 2000 –2001 rainfall forecast predicted a high probability of normal to above normal rainfall conditions over the northern half of the country and normal to below normal for the southern half .By the end of December, northern areas had received above normal rainfall whilst the southern areas had below normal rainfall as had been forecasted.

Flooding Emergency

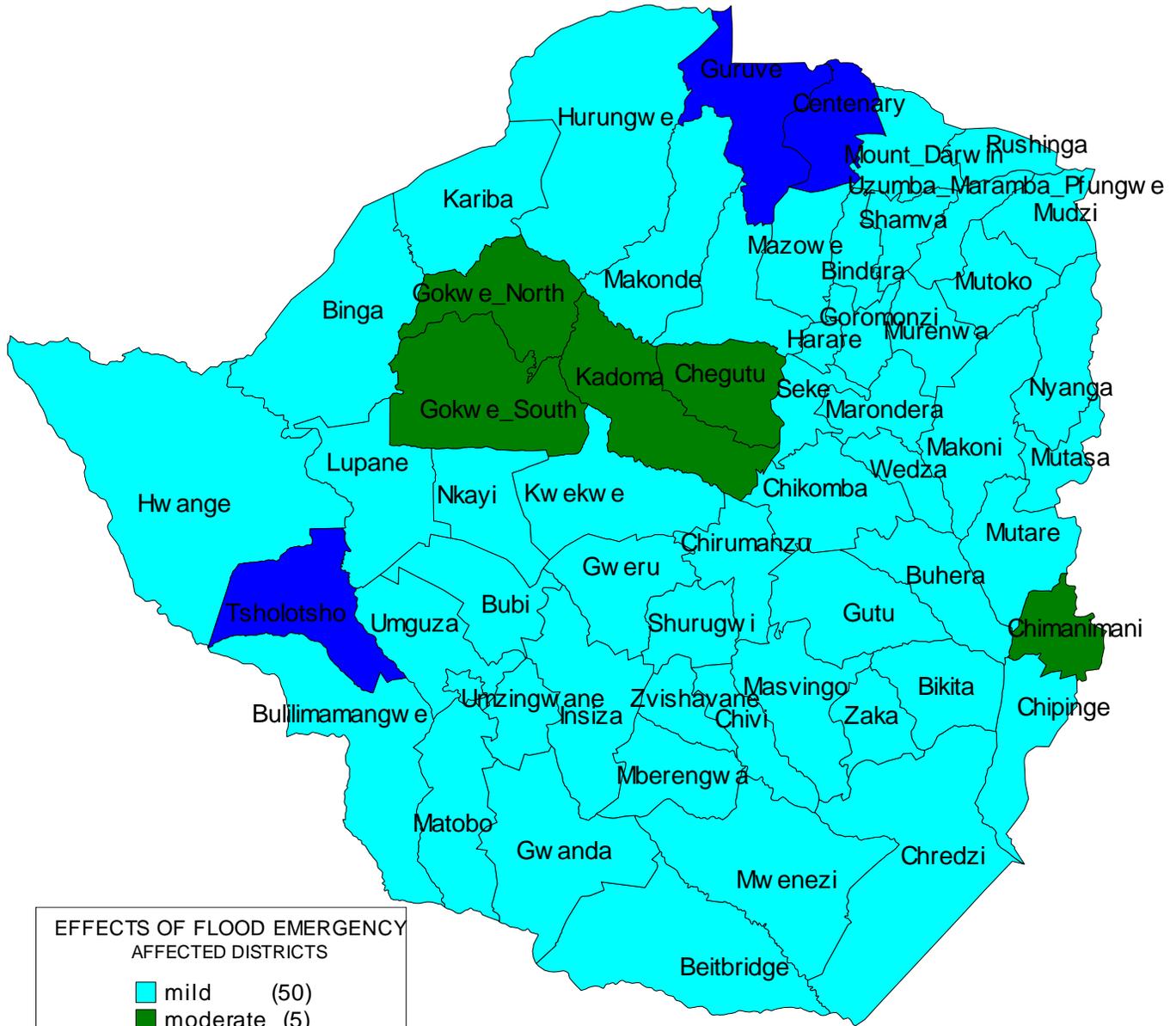
Whilst the Nation was still battling to recover from year 2000 devastating Cyclone Eline Flooding Disaster, the country experienced yet another serious flooding emergency. The flooding situation resulted from the incessant rains experienced early February 2001. From early February the rainfall situation progressively improved and quickly reached above normal distribution in some parts of the country leading to sporadic flooding. The north-east pockets of the country suffered the worst due to its proximity to the major river systems of the Zambezi and its tributaries namely Angwa, Musengezi, Nzoumvunda, Manyame etc and the back flow from Lake Caborra Bassa in Mozambique. Kariba Dam has had two of its flood-gates open for over a month and this exacerbated the situation in the same areas.

Areas affected

Mashonaland Central	:	Centenary and Guruve
Mashonaland West	:	Kadoma, Chegutu, Hurungwe and Makonde
Midlands	:	Gokwe South
Mat South	:	Umzingwane and Insiza
Mat North	:	Tsholotsho
Masvingo	:	Mwenezi, Gutu, Chivi, Chiredzi
Manicaland	:	Chimanimani and Chipinge

The Districts that were mostly affected were **Guruve** and **Centenary** in Mashonaland Central Province and **Tsholotsho** in Matabeleland North Province. Refer to the District map shown below.

FEBRUARY - MARCH 2001



EFFECTS OF FLOOD EMERGENCY
AFFECTED DISTRICTS

■	mild	(50)
■	moderate	(5)
■	severe	(3)

Extent of Devastation

The floods had devastating effects on communities, crops, livestock, infrastructure and the environment

The total of 13 deaths caused by drowning, collapsing of buildings and the collapsing of mine dumps was recorded. Preliminary number of people affected by the floods in one form or another was estimated at 22 912. At least 65 houses/huts and in excess of 35 latrines were destroyed. Livestock in the form of cattle, sheep, goats and pigs were also consumed by the flooding.

Response Activities

In general, response to the flooding emergency had the following components;

- * Rescue of the marooned
- * Provision of basic needs
- Rehabilitation

The Provincial and District Civil Protection Committees swiftly reacted to the emergency and necessary human and material resources were mobilised. The first priority was to **rescue** the marooned people, which was complementary to the supply of relief food. Access to some of the affected areas by road was highly limited due to the disruption of the road network. As a result, helicopters and rescue teams from Air Force of Zimbabwe and ZRP Sub- Aqua were dispatched to effect the rescue of the marooned people in Muzarabani, Guruve and Tsholotsho. The helicopters were also used for aerial surveillance and airlifting food-stuffs

.

Relief

Evacuees immediately required supplies of food and to this effect Government together with NGOs, Private Sector and individuals provided relief items to the flood victims. To mention a few, South Korean government donated US\$10 000 and locally, Save the Children Fund (UK), Red Cross, World Vision, Kingdom Financial Holding, the Commercial Farmers Union, and Hwange Colliery contributed towards the relief of the affected communities.

Rehabilitation

Tents were dispatched to the displaced people for temporary shelter. The medium to long- term strategy envisaged the reconstruction of permanent homesteads, granaries and blair toilets as well as the supply of safe drinking water.

It is important to point out that in the reconstruction phase, some of the homes will have to be relocated to higher and firmer grounds away from the flood plains. An estimate of 3000 homes needs to be reconstructed preferably on higher ground.

Constraints

The flooding emergency once again coincided with erratic fuel supplies in the country. This rendered difficulties in assessing the extent of damage and conveyance of relief items to the affected communities.

Damaged road networks have also rendered some places inaccessible hence difficulties in undertaking needs/damage assessments.

Recommendations

- Relocation of homesteads and fields to higher grounds,
- There is need for Provincial and District Civil Protection Committees to budget for disasters,
- Flood prone areas should be mapped and made known to the communities,
- Provincial and District Emergency Preparedness plans should be reviewed and updated.

2.0 FIRE EMERGENCY AT ELEPHANT HILLS HOTEL: 24TH JULY 2001 : MAT NORTH PROVINCE

Alleged Causes

The incident happened on 24th July 2001 when a fire broke out in the laundry section of the hotel at around 11 00 Hrs. It was alleged that the fire was started during routine maintenance work that involved welding. Sparks from the welding area were said to have been sucked by the central air conditioning system and a fire was started above the sprinkler system that had been activated.

Damages Caused

There was a large number of residents and guests when this incident occurred. Some of the guests lost their belongings and the fire caused extensive damage to the hotel infrastructure and it was a big blow to the Tourism Industry. The actual value of the damages caused was estimated at about \$500 million.

Alert System

A feeble alarm started at 1100Hrs. Guests at the Hotel wondered what the sound was all about. The sprinkler system in most of the rooms was not activated. An alert guest at the Hotel went out to investigate what was going on. On noticing that the hotel was on fire, he alerted other guests to vacate the building.

Response

Workers at the hotel assisted by the guests and some passers by retrieved a lot of valuable property. The Victoria Falls Fire Brigade, which arrived 30-30 minutes after the fire had started found a lot of problems in accessing the hotel grounds. This was mainly due to the siting and the plan of the hotel. The small and ill-equipped fire tender was overwhelmed by the mammoth task and disimally failed to cope.

More help came in the form of another fire tender from the Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe and later on another fire tender from Livingstone in Zambia joined the furore. By the time the fire was brought under control, it had nearly destroyed half of the building and damaged a lot of valuable property.

Major Problems

The fire alarm was very week and as a result did very little to alert the people.

The hotel did not have an emergency plan.

No effort was made to establish a command centre.

Fire hydrants had low pressure to assist in fire fighting.

Municipal fire tender is outdated and can no longer cope with fire fighting.

Following the fire incident, the Department of Civil Protection organised for a two days workshop. Participants were drawn from the hospitality industry, Hwange District Civil Protection Committee and some members from Matebeleland North Civil Protection Committee. The overall aim of the workshop was to map up ways of improving and strengthening emergency preparedness and response within the hospitality industries.

Recommendations

Victoria Falls town requires fire fighting equipment to replace the old fire tender.

The town should develop an emergency plan and a system to mobilise emergency teams during emergencies.

All water hydrants in the town should be tested regularly.

Grass used for thatching should be rendered fire proof.

All hotels should develop emergency preparedness and response plans.

There is need to prepare for an EPR plan for Victoria Falls Town. Command posts should be set up immediately after an emergency / disaster has occurred. Fire experts should carry out a fire survey in the seven hotels and commercial areas in Victoria Falls. Hotel Fire teams should be trained in fire fighting.

3.0 ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Several road traffic accidents occurred country- wide during the period under review, causing loss of lives and injuries. The most serious road accidents occurred along the major highways and involved public transportation. Some serious road traffic accidents involving public transportation were also common along major roads, which link the Capital City and the rest of the high-density residential suburbs and other surrounding satellite towns such as Chitungwiza.

One of the most fatal incident which was reported occurred in Mashonaland central province in Bindura District. The accident happened on 16th June 2001 when there was a head on collision between a Kombi and a coca cola truck. The incident happened along Nyava – Harare road at Mupandira.

Eighteen people were involved in the accident and out of the 18 people 10 died. Casualties were referred to Bindura district hospital and those who were seriously injured were referred to Harare Hospital.

Response

The Zimbabwe Republic Police of Bindura district attended to the scene and ferried the casualties to Bindura hospital. There was no detail on how the incident was handled. However it was reported that ZRP, Health , council officials and the community reacted to the incident swiftly.

The Coca Cola company contributed \$100 000 towards funeral expenses for the deceased with each bereaved family receiving \$10 000.

Recommendations

- There is need to improve coordination in disaster management,
- The Bindura District Civil Protection Committee should be reactivated and meetings should be held regularly,
- The District Civil Protection Plan should be reviewed and updated.
- The Chairman of the District Civil protection Committee should be informed of any occurrence of serious emergency in time.

Another similar incident occurred during the festive season in Beitbridge where 10 people died after an empty bus rammed into a cross border minibus at the 239 Km peg along Masvingo – Beitbridge road. Within the same period another nine people were also killed in Kadoma when a lorry on which they were travelling plunged into a river. Other minor incidents were also recorded country wide especially during the festive season.

4.0 FIRE TRAGEDY: 26TH AUGUST 2001

A fire tragedy happened in Manicaland Province at Manhinga village situated 42Km from Rusape in the south - western part of Nyanga. The village is an Orphanage that was established by Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe.

The orphanage looks after 92 children of between three and eighteen years of age who were registered through the Department of Social Welfare. A mishap occurred on 26th August 2001 when the village was gutted by fire following a veld fire. A total of 9 huts were destroyed and property worth about half a million dollars was destroyed.

The Nyanga Civil Protection Committee visited the place to undertake needs assessment and it was established that the immediate requirements were as follows;

- Clothing
- Food
- School fees
- Medical care

The medium to long term requirements included the rehabilitation of the destroyed huts.

There was no information on response to the requirements by the fire victims. No recommendations were put forward to guard against future occurrences or to reduce the impact.

5.0 MAROONED VILLAGE: MASVINGO PROVINCE: DECEMBER 2001

Fifty-eight people from nine families who had settled on Zindimo Island in Chatikobo communal lands were marooned when Mutirikwi river burst its banks in mid December 2001. The flooding incident was caused by heavy and incessant rainfall that was received in the Mutirikwe river catchment area.

Rescue Operations

Rescue operation were launched on 15th December 2001 when Air force of Zimbabwe sent helicopters to evacuate stricken villagers after being marooned for more than seven days. A total of nine families were air lifted to Chatikobo Primary School and their livestock was left behind.

The Provincial and the District Civil Protection Committees coordinated the management of the emergency.

Relief

The District Civil Protection Committee managed to source food - stuffs for the flood victims, which would however last for ten days only.

Recommendation

It was recommended that the villagers should be resettled on higher and firmer grounds in order to avoid similar incidents in future and to this effect, the families voluntarily concurred to oblige.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The current trend of disasters that are affecting the country is showing that flood related emergencies / disasters are on the increase since the occurrence of the devastating Cyclone Eline induced flooding disaster of year 2000. As a result there is need to intensify risk assessment and planning in line with the risks associated with flooding. Proactive measures such as **identification** and **relocation** of the high risk communities would be the best way of mitigating against the problem. To this effect, the Department of Civil Protection should in collaboration with other relevant ministries and organisations undertake an intensive Hazard Analysis and Mapping exercise preferably along the major rivers and streams where most people have traditionally settled in search of water and fertile soils.

Compiled by
L Betera
Civil Protection Department
Jan 2002