

Matebeleland South Province Field Monitoring Visit

Mission Participants: LameckBetera (Department of Civil Protection), Regina Gapa (UNOCHA), WonesaiSithole (IOM), BoikethoMurima (UNICEF), Justice Zvaita (EMEUS – only in Mangwe)

Sites Visited

Ward 23 West Nicholson, Gwanda District, Ward 6 and 7 Matobo District, Lamawe Village, Mangwe District, Ward 23 Mtsuli Village.

Observations

- Visible damage from a strong wind force included uprooted trees, completely destroyed houses, broken window panes and blown off or perforated window panes.
- Narrations from members of affected households suggest a rapid onset of hailstorm and windstorm which lasted for about 30 minutes. None of the affected had experienced such a phenomenon in their life-time. Affected were largely women and children as these are high migrant sending districts. Gender disaggregated data was not provided.
- The only early-warning noted were families in Matobo District who received phone calls from relatives in South Africa alerting of a storm approaching southern Zimbabwe. No related preparedness action was taken. It was noted that residents in these areas have no reception of Zimbabwe electronic media (radio and television).
- Households affected generally had poorer structural mitigation measures than their neighbors e.g. poor workmanship, quality of roofing material, siting of the homestead, presence of wind-breakers, relative design of structures versus air spaces.
- At community level, in Matobo District there was high density vegetation which is linked to enforcement by traditional leadership of tree conservation by-laws which attract a fine of 50 USD. It is likely that this reduced the effect of strong winds on homesteads due to minimum damage. Mangwe District with similar homestead structure suffered more extensive damage due to sparse vegetation in affected area.
- Most of the affected households have been reached by assistance including some temporary shelter and hygiene non-food items. Agencies engaged in the shelter response (IOM, Red Cross, UNICEF) did not have adequate contingency stocks for affected households. It is clear that partners have exhausted their contingency capacity in shelter.
- Voluntary community participation was very high in Gwanda where poles were provided in the construction of emergency temporary shelter.
- There was a gap across board in terms of the immediate food needs. It should be noted that areas are also currently experiencing a drought and most had lost the 'green harvest'. Food is available but not likely accessible given competing demands for reconstruction.
- Reconstruction was already in progress in some homesteads visited. Remittances in these migrant sending districts appeared to play a significant role in recovery and reconstruction.
- Household residents expressed shock and fear of future storms - indicating need for follow-up psychosocial support. The procedure for this emergency intervention is not immediately clear.
- The flow of communication was reasonable and assessments were done by Districts within 24 hours. However depending on subject matter and experts available for assessments, certain technical areas (e.g. WASH, health, nutrition, food, education) did not to share sectoral reports on the assessments – could be related to structure of the reports.
- Districts expressed limited capacity for complete assessment and response in emergency in general.

Recommended Actions

- UNOCHA to co-ordinate mapping of progression of the storm.
- Opportunities for food assistance could be exploited
- Analysis required on rural building by-laws.
- Technical advice on re-construction to be provided by public works department and partners for building back better houses. Should include public awareness on recommendations.
- EMEUS to co-ordinate with Bulawayo NGOs Forum on additional psychosocial support (to update at Meeting on the 7th of June).
- DCP and UNOCHA to develop a plan to share with districts the standard multi-sector assessment tool.
- UNOCHA and DCP to take the lead on capacity strengthening of Districts on multi-sector assessment.
- DCP and Partners to support requested Disaster Risk Management (DRM) training for Matobo district.
- DCP to mobilise for lessons learnt workshop for affected districts for information sharing and development of appropriate recommendations at district levels.