

# UN and humanitarian agencies assessing impact of "horrifying" Cyclone Idai

Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe are all counting the cost after the deadly Cyclone Idai tore through their countries over the past four days. The United Nations is sending in its teams and the Red Cross today reported that they had reached the devastated Mozambiquen city of Beira on Sunday, which is reportedly "90% destroyed".



Aerial view of Tengani, Nsanje, Malawi, affected by floods due to the incessant rains from March 5 to March 9, 2019.

The scale of damage caused by Cyclone Idai that hit the Mozambican city of Beira is "massive and horrifying". This is the initial assessment of a team of International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) aid workers that reached the devastated city yesterday.

Jamie LeSueur, who is leading the IFRC assessment team into Beira, said the following after taking part in a Red Cross aerial assessment: "The situation is terrible. The scale of devastation is enormous. It seems that 90% of the area is completely destroyed."

The IFRC team that arrived yesterday was among the first to arrive in Beira since Idai made landfall on 14/15 March. With Beira's airport closed, the team drove from the capital Maputo before taking a helicopter for the last part of the journey. Roads into Beira have been cut off by flooding.

While the physical impact of Idai is beginning to emerge, the human impact is unclear. "Almost everything is destroyed. Communication lines have been completely cut and roads have been destroyed. Some affected communities are not accessible," said LeSueur. "Beira has been severely battered. But we are also hearing that the situation outside the city could be even worse. Yesterday, a large dam burst and cut off the last road to the city."

## Food aid

According to the World Food Programme ([WFP](#)), preliminary projections indicate that at least 1.7 million people were affected in the direct-path of the cyclone in Mozambique, with a further 920,000 in Malawi.

A spokesperson for [WFP](#) said on Sunday that teams had been active on the ground in all three countries, planning to target around 650,000 with food assistance in Malawi, and 600,000 in Mozambique.

WFP said it would be scaling-up provision of life-saving services for the treatment of moderate-acute malnutrition in children up to 5-years of age, in communities affected by the cyclone. A WFP plane with 20 tons of emergency food assistance arrived this weekend in Mozambique; 30 WFP funded boat pilots were mobilized, and staff and material have been deployed in Beira, Zambezia and Tete.

In the coming days, WFP said it will be able to scale up the response with larger distribution of food.

In a statement, the UN chief has [expressed his sadness](#) at the loss of life and displacement across Zimbabwe, as a result of the deadly Tropical Cyclone Idai, which has pounded Southern Africa in recent days, leaving at least 150 dead in Malawi alone, according to latest news reports.

“The [Secretary-General](#) is saddened by the loss of life, destruction of property and displacement of people due to the heavy rains and flooding,” said a statement from António Guterres on Sunday, passing on condolences to the families of those who have died in Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique.

Following its landfall in Mozambique, Cyclone Idai continued west to Zimbabwe as a tropical storm, wreaking havoc in several districts in the eastern part of the country, with Chimanimani and Chipinge districts in Manicaland Province being the hardest-hit. At least 31 deaths have been reported and over 100 people are missing in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe is the latest country in Southern Africa to be hit by heavy rains and violent winds, after Malawi and Mozambique. The death toll in the three countries is currently estimated at 150. But this number is likely to change as the full extent of the damage becomes clear. More heavy rain is also anticipated and this may lead to further devastation.

IFRC has already released about 340,000 Swiss francs from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund which will go towards an initial response effort for about 7,500 people. However, given the scale of the disaster, more resources may be needed to support Mozambique Red Cross efforts on the ground. Already, the team in Beira has identified shelter, health, and water, sanitation and hygiene as priorities.

*Sources: United Nations; Red Cross; World Food Programme, APO.*