





RAPID AID TO MOZAMBIQUE

By Ulrik Norup Jørgensen, Danish Red Cross
Photo by Danish Red Cross

At the beginning of this year, massive flooding destroyed homes, fields and livestock – and as a result, forced thousands of people to seek refuge in Mozambique. Shortly after the disaster, the Red Cross sent aid to the African country – which included support from the Kjaer Group.



Every year, Mozambique is plagued by flooding. However, weeks of unusually heavy rainfall at the beginning of the year resulted in the worst flooding since 2000. Hundreds died, and 61,000 people were forced to abandon their homes. All in all, as many as 285,000 people were affected by the flooding.

"In such a situation, it is all-important that aid is sent as quickly as possible. When people have lost their homes, food, clothing and access to potable drinking water, the situation can become catastrophic very quickly if aid is not sent," says Danish Red Cross Disaster Manager Birgitte Ebbesen.

Harsh working conditions

The first team of Danish aid workers flew to Mozambique a few weeks after the disaster hit. One of them was John Kalhøj, who led a logistical disaster team. Shortly after his arrival, he recounted the following via satellite telephone: "The conditions in Mozambique are extremely difficult right now. It is extremely hot down here, with high humidity, so our people are having a hard time. We have already had cases of salmonella and malaria among our aid workers."

The logistics team ensured that the aid arriving to the country from all over the world was registered and transported to the people in most need of aid. The extremely difficult working conditions in Mozambique led the Danish Red Cross to send a tent camp for the aid workers to the disaster area – a base camp, where Red Cross staff from all over the world can live, eat and work.

Rapid response

At base camp, there are beds for approximately 40 people, offices, kitchen and bath facilities and electricity, making the camp a central part of the aid process. As Birgitte Ebbesen suggests, "If our people in the disaster area are to provide an optimal effort, it does not help anything if they go down with illness or burn out too quickly. At the camp, they can get clean drinking water, something to eat and a tent to sleep in."

"Rebuilding takes time – we are speaking in terms of many months," says Fernanda Teixeira, General Secretary of Mozambique Red Cross."

The base camp was stored at Kjaer Group's warehouse in Svendborg.

"This made it possible for us to send the camp quickly. In disaster situations, time is such an important factor, so it is extremely helpful to us that we have the opportunity to have the camp and other equipment stored and ready," explains Birgitte Ebbesen.

Food, medicine and blankets

One of the greatest priorities for the Red Cross in Mozambique during the flooding was, somewhat ironically, to supply more water to the flooded areas – potable drinking water. Potable drinking water is always one of the most important things after a disaster and is especially important to hinder the lightning-fast spread of diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea. As well as this, the Red Cross ensures that food, medicine, blankets, and shelter is quickly provided to the thousands that lost everything. Many families had nothing left after the flooding and it is a long, hard road to help them get back on their feet once more.





Still a long way to go

Today, the water has receded in Mozambique and water levels in the Zambezi River are getting back to normal. But this does not mean that the humanitarian crisis is over. The year's harvest is destroyed and thousands have lost their homes. In many places, the fields are still submerged in water and the crops destroyed. This has created problems for the more than 100,000 people that have sought refuge and now live in camps. One of the greatest

challenges is to assist the many refugees in returning to their villages and to begin the rebuilding of the many destroyed houses.

Over time, the International Red Cross and Mozambique's Red Cross will ensure that the refugees receive assistance by resuming agricultural activities in places where the crops are currently washed away. This will be partly done by ensuring that the refugees have the right tools, techniques and seed grain when they return to their fields.



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