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MOZAMBIQUE 211

News reports & clippings

24 January 2013

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NOTE OF EXPLANATION:

This mailing list is used to distribute two publications, both edited by Joseph Hanlon. This is my own sporadic "News reports & clippings", which is entirely my own responsibility. This list is also used to distribute the *Mozambique Political Process Bulletin*, published by CIP and AWEPA, but those organisations are not linked to "News reports & clippings"

Joseph Hanlon =====

Serious floods in southern Mozambique

Heavy rains in southern Africa are causing flooding in southern Mozambique.

On my website tinyurl.com/mozamb I have posted the most recent an excellent and detailed daily river bulletin - this compares present water levels to previous flood years and official

flood levels. I have also posted a very detailed Power Point Presentation by the National Emergency Office Centro Nacional Operativo de Emergencia (CENOE).

I will continue to post the daily river bulletins and other flood documents on a daily basis, as i receive them.

Flooding is serious on the Limpopo River and potentially the Incomati, while the Zambezi seems under control. Heavy rain is forecast over the coming weekend.

And on Tuesday of last week (15 January) Maputo received 158 millimetres of rain in a single day. There were floods and damage to roads, embankments, and electricity lines; 309 houses were completely destroyed and 406 were damaged.

Below are recent reports from AIM:

73113E LIMPOPO FLOOD DAMAGES ELECTRICITY EXPORTS

Maputo, 23 Jan (AIM) – Flooding on the Limpopo River, in the southern Mozambican province of Gaza, has damaged the electricity transmission lines from the Cahora Bassa dam on the Zambezi to South Africa, causing a 35 per cent reduction in the amount of power exported by Cahora Bassa to its largest client, the South African electricity company Eskom.

Two transmission lines run from Cahora Bassa to South Africa, and one of them has been knocked out, according to a Tuesday press release from the dam operating company, Hidroelectrica de Cahora Bassa (HCB).

Torrential rains in the Pafuri region, near the border between Gaza province and South Africa, and the subsequent sharp rise in the level of the Limpopo, led to the interruption of power supplies from transmission line two on Monday afternoon.

The force of the Limpopo flood knocked down one pylon on the line, and when this pylon fell, it dragged four others after it. Parts of several other pylons on line two are now under water, and at risk that they too will be torn from their moorings.

All power supplies from Cahora Bassa to Eskom are now being transmitted along line one, and by what HCB calls “alternative routes” (presumably via Zimbabwe).

But these lines cannot carry the full 1,300 megawatts that Eskom normally receives. HCB has been forced to cut its exports to South Africa by 35 per cent.

An HCB engineering team is putting together the logistics required for an urgent intervention to repair line two, in order to resume normal supplies to Eskom. But HCB warns that this operation cannot be undertaken until the Limpopo drops to its normal level.

(AIM)

Pf/ (283)

74113E AT LEAST FOUR LIVES LOST IN LIMPOPO BASIN

Maputo, 23 Jan (AIM) – The rise in the level of Limpopo has already claimed at least four lives in the southern Mozambican province of Gaza, according to data published by the

country's relief agency, the National Disaster Management Institute (INGC).

In Mabalane district two people died when the walls of a house collapsed on top of them. A further 89 houses built of mud collapsed in the locality of Combumune.

Another house collapse in Guija district took the life of a one year old child, and the same incident injured a child of three. Another child drowned in a well in Mucomane village in Mandlakazi district.

In Chigubo town, which is on the Changane river, a tributary of the Limpopo, 166 houses have collapsed.

In Massingir district, three villages have been isolated by the flood waters, and two primary schools have been inundated.

Even before the flood surge travelling down the Limpopo has reached the city of Xai-Xai, capital of the southern Mozambican province of Gaza, hundreds of Xai-Xai homes were inundated by the torrential rains that occurred between Saturday and Monday.

405 houses were flooded in this period. Outside the city, in Xai-Xai district, five schools were flooded, and an as yet unquantified area of cropland was submerged.

The local government is using tractors to evacuate people and their property from flood prone areas in Xai-Xai District, while in Guija people living in dangerous areas are being urged to move to higher ground, before the main flood surge strikes. On the opposite bank of the river, in Chokwe, some 55,000 people are at risk.

Thanks to the government's contingency plan for the rainy season, drawn up last year, there are 30 boats pre-positioned on the main rivers, ready for any search and rescue operations. Twelve of these boats are on the Limpopo (ten at Chokwe and two at Chibuto).

160 troops of the National Civil Protection Unit (UNAPROC) have been deployed to the river valleys, and 110 of these are in Chokwe.

At 14.00 on Tuesday, the Limpopo at Chokwe was measured at 6.63 metres, more than one and a half metres above the flood alert level of five metres. The main flood surge has yet to reach Chokwe and so the river is continuing to rise.

At Combumune, on the upper Limpopo, the river is now falling. It reached a historic high point of 11.88 metres on Tuesday morning, but by midday had fallen to 11.6 metres.

Another flood surge is moving down the Incomati river in Maputo province. At the town of Magude, the Incomati rose from 4.45 metres on Sunday, to 6.63 metres on Monday and 7.53 metres on Tuesday. The alert level at Magude is also five metres.

On its lower reaches, the Zambezi River is now dropping but is still above alert level at Caia and Marromeu. The Cahora Bassa dam is cushioning the impact of heavy rains in the upstream countries. Although the dam lake is receiving an inflow of 4,800 cubic metres of water per second, less than half of that is being released through the dam wall. The dam

was discharging around 2,200 cubic metres a second on Monday, but on Tuesday reduced this to 1,900 metres a second.

The Cahora Bassa lake is 63.4 per cent full, and so still has room to store water surging into the lake from the Kariba dam on the Zambia/Zimbabwe border.

69113E SEVERE FLOODING LIKELY IN LIMPOPO BASIN

Maputo, 22 Jan (AIM) – As heavy rains continue to fall over southern Mozambique, serious flooding in the Limpopo Valley is feared.

From Sunday to Monday over 184 millimetres of rain fell at Combumune, on the upper Limpopo, and 163 millimetres at Xai-Xai, capital of Gaza province, near the mouth of the river.

According to the data from the National Water Board (DNA), the level of the Limpopo at Combumune rose from 6.34 metres on Sunday to 8.02 metres on Monday – over 3.5 metres above flood alert level.

At Chokwe, in the heart of the largest irrigation scheme in the country, the river also rose sharply, from 3.3 to 5.63 metres. Flood alert level here is five metres.

To make matters worse, the two main dams in the Limpopo Valley have greatly increased their discharges. The Massingir dam, on the Elephants River, the main tributary of the Limpopo, increased its discharges a hundred fold, from a mere 30 cubic metres a second on Sunday, to 3,000 cubic metres a second on Sunday. The Massingir reservoir is now over 81 per cent full, and the forecast for Tuesday is that discharges from the dam will rise to 4,000 cubic metres a second. All this water is heading for Chokwe and later to Xai-Xai.

A short distance upstream from Chokwe, the Macarretane dam, originally built to guarantee the flow of water for the irrigation scheme, is releasing even larger amounts of water. On Tuesday, to cope with the rush of water from Massingir and Combumune, the outflow from Macarretane is expected to reach 5,000 cubic metres a second.

Several villages in Chokwe district are in danger of being swamped by the Limpopo flood waters. The National Emergency Operational Centre (CENOE) has dispatched 100 troops from the National Civil Protection Unit to Chokwe to assist the district government and the Local Disaster Risk Management Committees (CLGRCs) in relief work.

On Monday, the Gaza provincial government, after an emergency meeting in Xai-Xai, sent a team to Pafuri, a locality in Chicualacuala district on the upper Limpopo, where the Mozambican, South African and Zimbabwean borders all meet, which is now completely isolated. The team is carrying foodstuffs, medicines, and chlorine to disinfect water supplies.

The other major river in southern Mozambique, the Incomati, is also rising. At Ressano Garcia, on the South African border, the river rose from 5.49 metres on Sunday to 5.77 metres by midday on Monday. Flood alert level at Ressano Garcia is five metres.

Further downstream, at Magude, the river rose in the same period from 4.45 to 6.98 metres

– almost two metres above the alert level.

The Corumana dam, on the Sabie River, a tributary of the Incomati, is now 91.6 per cent full, and on Monday was obliged to increase its discharged from 4.43 to 36.37 cubic metres a second.

On the Save river, which marks the conventional boundary between southern and central Mozambique, the level measured at Vila Franca do Save fell from 6.49 to 4.85 metres, well below the alert level of 5.5 metres. But this could easily be reversed in the coming hours, since 103 millimetres of rain fell at Massangena on the upper Save on Sunday and Monday.

The threat of a major flood on the Zambezi, in the centre of the country, seems to be receding. The river is falling at Mutarara and Caia (although, at 6.41 metres on Monday, it was still considerably above the five metre alert level at Caia). At Marromeu, nearer the mouth of the river, the Zambezi is continuing to rise and was measured at 6.3 metres on Monday. The alert level here is 4.75 metres.

The Cahora Bassa dam on the Zambezi reduced its total discharges from 2,335 to 1,900 cubic metres a second from Sunday to Monday. The Cahora Bassa reservoir is currently 63 per cent full.

The National Meteorology Institute (INAM) warns that heavy rains will continue in southern Mozambique, particularly Gaza and Inhambane provinces, on Tuesday. Rainfall could reach over 50 millimetres in 24 hours, accompanied by winds of up to 70 kilometres an hour.

(AIM)

Pf/ (670)

72113E FLOODS: RED ALERT FOR SOUTH AND CENTRE

Maputo, 22 Jan (AIM) – The Mozambican government on Tuesday declared a red alert for the southern and central provinces of the country, following alarming rises in the levels of several of the major rivers, threatening serious flooding.

The decision was taken in Maputo, at an extraordinary session of the Disaster Management Coordinating Council. Although Prime Minister Alberto Vaquina is over 1,000 kilometres away, in Caia, on the south bank of the Zambezi, he was able to chair the meeting by video-conference.

According to a spokesperson for the country's relief agency, the National Disasters Management Institute (INGC), Rita Almeida, the continued heavy rains within Mozambique and in neighbouring countries, have raised the main rivers to above critical level.

The red alert means total activation of the National Operational Emergency Centre (CENOE) and of the National Civil Protection Unit (UNAPROC) to coordinate search and rescue operations for people at risk, and to ensure more coordinated and effective harmonisation of the activities of the government's various partners in humanitarian aid.

The government has urged the public to remain calm and to obey in detail all the warnings and alerts issued by the relevant authorities. Local governments, community leaders and the Local Disaster Risk Management Committees are being urged to continue to mobilise

people to move away from flood-prone areas and seek higher ground.

Perhaps the most serious situation is in the Limpopo Valley in the southern province of Gaza. For much of its length, the Limpopo is above flood level, and the rising waters are threatening many villages in Chokwe district, which is at the heart of the county's largest irrigation scheme.

The INGC puts the number of people at risk of flooding in Chokwe at 55,252. Eight neighbourhoods in Chokwe town, and 12 villages in the district could be inundated.

The flood alert level of the Limpopo at Chokwe is five metres, and at 18.00 on Monday the river was measured at 6.03 metres. The forecast for the next 48 hours is that the river could rise to between 6.8 and eight metres. In the catastrophic Limpopo flooding of 2000, the level of the river at Chokwe reached 10.54 metres.

This could be reached again. At the Combumune measuring station on the upper Limpopo, the river stood at 11.88 metres at 07.00 on Tuesday, considerably higher than the maximum figure reached in 2000 of 10.97 metres. (Flood alert level at Combumune is a mere 4.5 metres).

Water is pouring from the floodgates in the two major dams in the Limpopo basin. The discharges from the Massingir dam on the Elephants River, the major tributary of the Limpopo, reached 4,000 cubic metres a second on Tuesday, while the Macarretane dam, a few kilometres upstream from Chokwe is releasing 5,000 cubic metres a second.

To support the evacuation of people from high risk areas ten boats and 110 UNAPROC troops have been sent to Chokwe. Given the dangerous situation, people who refuse to leave these areas may be evacuated by force.

"Our operations in the Limpopo basin are centred on Chokwe, where the situation is worrying, but that doesn't mean we are ignoring other areas", said Almeida. "On Tuesday morning, a boat was sent for rescue operations in Massingir district, and we also have boats positioned in Chibuto and Guija".

In the locality of Pafuri, in Chicualacuala district, on the upper Limpopo, at least 2,000 people have been isolated by the floods. Almeida said the Gaza provincial government has sent teams to assist them to check on the situation.

The Incomati river is continuing to rise and at Magude, in Maputo province, it reached 7.53 metres (over two and a half metres above alert level) on Tuesday morning.

The largest river in the country, the Zambezi, remains above alert level on its lower reaches, and the Pungoe river, at the Mafambisse sugar plantation in Sofala province, is also in flood.

"Although there has been a reduction in the rains, flooding will continue in Gaza and Inhambane provinces in the south, and to some extent in the central provinces", said Almeida. "When the conditions of all the river basins were analysed, the conclusion was reached that the government should activate a red alert, not only for the situation in Chokwe, but for all the basins in the south and centre of the country".

In all, the torrential rains across the country have caused 40 deaths, while 25,557 people are classified as “affected”, of whom 8,500 are in the accommodation centres the government has established. 5,230 houses have been destroyed or damaged, as have 79 classrooms.

According to the National Meteorological Institute (INAM), between 11 and 21 January over 200 millimetres of rain fell in parts of Gaza and the neighbouring province of Inhambane. In Chigubo, in the Limpopo basin, an area which is normally semi-arid, 334.9 millimetres of rain fell. For Panda, in Inhambane, the figure was 295.4 millimetres, and for Xai-Xai, the Gaza provincial capital, it was 272.6 millimetres.

Heavy rains are predicted to continue throughout Tuesday in Gaza, Inhambane and parts of the central provinces of Manica and Zambezia. In some areas, the rainfall could reach 50 millimetres in 24 hours.

The forecast for the period from Wednesday to next Monday is that Inhambane, Manica and the far south of Gaza (that is, the area near Xai-Xai) will continue to experience intensive rains, with between 100 and 200 millimetres falling in the five day period.

(AIM)
Pf/ (911)

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