

Thousands displaced after Tropical Cyclone Eloise hits Mozambique



Eloise ruined 136,755 hectares of crops, destroyed nine schools and damaged 17 other schools and 11 hospitals. (Photo: Reuters)

Maputo, January 24 (RHC)-- Heavy rains and flooding have forced thousands to flee their homes in Mozambique after Tropical Cyclone Eloise brought wind gusts of up to 150 kilometres per hour (kph). Eloise struck Mozambique's Sofala coastal province on Saturday morning before weakening and heading inland to dump rain on Zimbabwe, eSwatini – formerly known as Swaziland – and South Africa.

On Sunday, Mozambique's National Institute for Disaster Risk Management and Reduction (INGD) said investigations had shown Eloise had displaced 6,859 people. The region's Buzi district had been particularly hard hit with severe winds. "Families are in urgent need of essential supplies like food, water, blankets and shelter," Marcia Penicela, project manager at ActionAid Mozambique, said on Sunday. "With high floodwaters and power lines down in Buzi, the challenge will now be reaching people most in need," she added.

Eloise ruined 136,755 hectares of crops, destroyed nine schools and damaged about 17 other schools and 11 hospitals, according to INGD. It had completely destroyed 1,069 houses, partially destroyed 3,343 and flooded another 1,500, the agency said.

After weakening and being downgraded to a tropical storm, Eloise moved on from Zimbabwe to dump heavy rain on some areas of South Africa's Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal provinces, authorities there said.

"So far the highest amount that we've recorded is somewhere between 115-128 mm of rainfall in Limpopo, especially in the northeast," Puseletso Mofokeng, a senior forecaster at the South African Weather Service, told Reuters news agency.

Floods had hit the lowveld of Limpopo and Mpumalanga, and winds had blown the roofs of houses and knocked down trees, blocking roads, he said. Certain parts of the affected provinces were likely to see another 100mm of rain tonight and more expected rain on Monday, Mofokeng said.

Heavy rains were also recorded in eastern and southeastern parts of Zimbabwe on Saturday, filling most dams and flooding some rivers. At least three people were swept away when they tried to cross flooded rivers in eastern Zimbabwe, authorities said.

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