

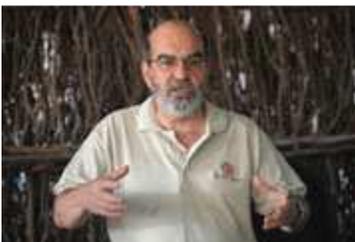


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UN says Somali famine over, but warns action needed to forestall new crisis



FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva talking to farmers and pastoralists in Dollow, south Somalia. Photo: FAO/Simon Maina

3 February - The United Nations declared an end to famine conditions in Somalia today, but warned that the crisis in the Horn of Africa is not over and requires continued efforts to restore food security and help people resume normal lives.

The number of people in need of emergency humanitarian assistance in Somalia has dropped from 4 million to 2.3 million, or 31 per cent of the population, according to a new report by the United Nations and the United States Government. Additionally, 325,000 children are acutely malnourished.

“Long-awaited rains, coupled with substantial agricultural inputs and the humanitarian response deployed in the last six months, are the main reasons for this improvement,” José

Graziano da Silva, Director-General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), told a press conference in Nairobi, Kenya, after visiting southern Somalia.

“However, the crisis is not over,” he added. “It can only be resolved with a combination of rains and continued, coordinated, long-term actions that build up the resilience of local populations and link relief with development.”

A severe drought ravaged the Horn of Africa last year, causing food shortages that claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people in Somalia and led to the declaration of famine by the UN in six areas of the country. At the height of the crisis,



750,000 people in the Horn of Africa were at risk of death.

A famine is declared when the following measures of mortality, malnutrition and hunger are met: at least 20 per cent of households in an area face extreme food shortages with a limited ability to cope; acute malnutrition rates exceed 30 per cent; and the death rate exceeds two persons per day per 10,000 persons.

The number of people still requiring emergency assistance in Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti, according to FAO, stands at 9.5 million – down from 13.3 million in September last year.

The FAO-managed Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) and the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS NET) of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) attributes the improved situation in Somalia to a combination of adequate rainfall in late 2011 and substantial humanitarian assistance.

This allowed farmers to produce and buy more food, according to a news release issued by FAO, which as part of its emergency response, distributed seeds and fertilizers to Somali farmers. The agency also rehabilitated 594 kilometres of irrigation canals and treated 2.6 million livestock at risk of diseases and infections associated with drought.

In the last six months, FAO, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also operated cash-for-work and food-voucher programmes, instead of relying only on food and input handouts.

“While sustained humanitarian efforts and a good harvest have helped to mitigate the crisis, we must not forget that the progress made is fragile,” warned UN humanitarian chief Valerie Amos.

“Without continued and generous support from the international community, these gains could be reversed. Continued conflict and lack of access to people in need remain major operational challenges,” added Ms. Amos, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and UN Emergency Relief Coordinator.

“We also need to focus on building up people's ability to cope better with future droughts and food crises. We must keep our attention firmly focused on Somalia and ensure that we do not fail the most vulnerable.”

The UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Mark Bowden, voiced similar concern that the country could “easily slip back into very severe conditions,” unless the current levels of assistance and support are maintained.

“We mustn't give the impression that we've solved the problem,” he told UN Radio. “What we've done is actually reduced the very high levels of mortality and malnutrition which caused so much suffering. And we are now in the position to make even further progress to help people get back to normal lives. But we've still quite a long way from a return to normal and secure situations.”

Meanwhile, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported today that expectations of upcoming seasonal rains and improved farming prospects in parts of Somalia have prompted some 7,000 Somali refugees in Ethiopia and Kenya to temporarily return home.

“Some told us they were going back to Somalia to take advantage of upcoming seasonal rains to resume farming in their villages,” UNHCR spokesperson Adrian Edwards told reporters in Geneva. “They also say they left their women and children in the refugee camps but plan to rejoin them once the harvest is over, as they fear it is not safe to stay in Somalia.”

UNHCR stressed that any return to Somalia must be well-informed and voluntary, and that the country's situation is not yet conducive for organized repatriation. “While famine and drought conditions have eased across Somalia, insecurity continues to cause displacement within the country,” noted Mr. Edwards.

More than 293,000 Somali refugees fled conflict and famine into the neighbouring countries of Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Yemen since January last year.



UN-backed court sentences key Khmer Rouge figure to life in prison on appeal



Kaing Guek Eav, alias Duch, appears before the Supreme Court Chamber of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. Photo: ECCC

3 February - The appeals chamber of the United Nations-backed tribunal in Cambodia trying cases of mass murder and other crimes committed under the Khmer Rouge regime today sentenced the former head of a notorious detention camp to life in prison, upholding an earlier conviction and extending the existing jail term.

The Supreme Court Chamber of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) upheld the conviction of Kaing Guek Eav, alias Duch, and ordered that he be jailed for life, the maximum sentence under the law for crimes against humanity and grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

The court quashed the 35-year sentence handed down by the trial chamber on 26 July 2010 for war crime and crimes against humanity. It also overturned the trial chamber's decision to grant Mr. Kaing remedy for illegal detention by the Cambodian military court between 1999 and 2007.

The prosecution had argued in its appeal that the earlier judgement gave "insufficient weight to the gravity of Duch's crimes and his role and his willing participation in those crimes." The court dismissed Mr. Kaing's own appeal in which he argued that the ECCC had no jurisdiction over him.

Mr. Kaing headed the S-21 security prison in Phnom Penh, where numerous Cambodians were unlawfully detained, subjected to inhumane conditions and forced labour, tortured and executed in the late 1970s. A minimum of 12,272 people died at S-21 over a period of three years.

"The crimes committed by Kaing Guek Eav were undoubtedly among the worst in recorded human history," said Judge Kong Srim, the president of the ECCC's Supreme Court.

"They deserve the highest penalty available to provide a fair and adequate response to the outrage these crimes invoked in victims, their families and relatives, the Cambodian people, and all human beings."

The court rejected claims for reparation either because they would be unenforceable, or due to the fact that implementing them would require Mr. Kaing, who is indigent, to pay, or place the compensation obligation on the State.

The ECCC is a hybrid court set up after a 2003 agreement between the UN and the Cambodian Government with the aim of trying those accused of the worst crimes during the Khmer Rouge regime.

As many as 2 million people are thought to have died during the rule of the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979, which was then followed by a protracted period of civil war in the South-East Asian country.

For World Cancer Day, UN stresses early diagnosis to reduce mounting deaths



IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano speaks at World Cancer Day 2012 event. Photo: IAEA/Dean Calma

3 February - Early diagnosis is the key to reducing the nearly eight million deaths caused by cancer across the globe annually, the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) said today, stressing the importance of screening programmes for healthy people to detect the disease promptly for easier treatment.

To mark World Cancer Day, which is observed on 4 February every year, WHO reminded the world that cancer is responsible for close to 13 per cent of deaths globally, accounting for 7.6 million deaths in 2008.

The theme of this year's Day is 'Together It Is Possible,' with WHO and its partner, the

International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), focusing on screening and vaccination. Increased access to cost-effective vaccinations to prevent infections associated with cancers and cost-effective cancer-screening programmes can help to reduce the number cancer deaths, the agency stressed.

Vaccination is available against cervical cancer, which is caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV) and liver cancer, which results from infection with the hepatitis B virus (HBV).

The UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), for its part, highlighted the important achievements over the past year in efforts to fight cancer in developing countries, and featured activities of the agency's Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT).

With almost two thirds of all cancer deaths occurring in developing countries, the IAEA supports countries by helping increase patients' access to improved radiotherapy services and by strengthening medical training.

At IAEA headquarters yesterday, Director General Yukiya Amano said a shortage of about 5,000 radiotherapy machines in low- and middle-income countries means that hundreds of thousands of patients miss out on early diagnosis and treatment that could save their lives.

"PACT, as well as various other departments at the IAEA, have been working hard to try to make radiotherapy services available in all countries," he said.

Launched in 2004, PACT is an IAEA initiative that helps low- and middle-income nations in their efforts to tackle the growing cancer crisis, by raising awareness, assessing needs and mobilizing resources. It builds on IAEA expertise in radiation medicine to help countries develop sustainable and comprehensive cancer control programmes.

Mr. Amano said IAEA is supporting more than 130 projects in cancer diagnosis, management and treatment. Oncology and radiotherapy centres are being established in countries such as Afghanistan, Eritrea and Mozambique, while national capacity in radiotherapy is being strengthened in Albania and Kenya, he added.

UN voices concern over fresh round of killings in South Sudan



3 February - The United Nations human rights office today voiced concern over a cattle raid in a northern state of South Sudan earlier this week, which has led to 78 deaths and numerous injuries among civilians, most of whom were women and children.

"We call on all relevant authorities to ensure that urgent measures are taken to help secure the economic and social rights of those affected by the attack [in Warrap state], which was reportedly carried out by men from the neighbouring Unity state," said Rupert Colville, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) at a press briefing in Geneva.

More than 70,000 cattle were looted during the attack, according to OHCHR.

"This is extremely worrying because an exclusively pastoralist economy means that around 40,000 people have now been left without a livelihood," Mr. Colville said, stressing that those displaced by the attack, mostly members of the Luac Jang tribe, are now facing shortages of water, food, shelter and medicine.

Mr. Colville noted that details of the incident are still unclear as the attack occurred in a remote area of Warrap, and he said that OHCHR and the UNMISS will continue their investigations.

Reports so far have stated that 78 people died, nine are missing and 72 were wounded. Most of the killing appears to have been inflicted with machetes.

In a separate incident in Unity state's Mayendit county on Wednesday, a shooting took place during a mediation meeting

that had been held in a bid to calm ongoing ethnic tensions.

A member of the UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was injured in the shooting and an unknown number of people were killed, UN spokesperson Martin Nesirky told reporters in New York.

Before the shooting, seven UNMISS staff members, along with a series of state officials, had been meeting with the Mayendit county commissioner to investigate recent inter-communal violence along the border between Warrap and Unity. Armed men then arrived in four pick-up trucks and started shooting indiscriminately.

A UN staff member was wounded in the crossfire, and is now in Juba, the national capital, undergoing medical treatment. UNMISS has urged the Government to investigate the incident and to bring the perpetrators of the attack to account.

The attacks in Warrap and Unity appear to be unrelated to recent incidents in Jonglei state, where tens of thousands of civilians have been displaced in the past two months due to deadly clashes between the Lou Nuer and Murle ethnic communities.

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos, who visited Jonglei this week to assess the humanitarian situation, voiced her concern over the impact that the violence has had in the state.

In an interview with UN Radio, Ms. Amos stressed that the humanitarian and development challenges are still significant, and expressed her concern about providing aid before the start of the rainy season to ensure access to the population.

In addition, she emphasized that the main objective is not to provide aid, but to help the South Sudanese become self-sufficient.

“Ultimately people don’t want to be dependent on international food aid from international agencies. They should only be a stop gap. But this is difficult given the conditions in Jonglei.”

During her visit to Jonglei, Ms. Amos met with some of the 140,000 people affected by the recent communal violence. “I met a lot of people who continue to be fearful about returning to their homes, saw many villages that have been burned to the ground. It’s extraordinarily difficult to know when people will feel secure enough to return,” she said.

Ms. Amos noted that UNMISS will continue to work with authorities at a national and state level to encourage reconciliation discussions between the warring parties so the violence can end.

As floods continue in Fiji, UN stresses need to boost preventive measures



Curfews in place as flooding continues in Nadi, Ba, Fiji. Photo: ISDR/Courtesy of Anglican Church

3 February - The United Nations disaster risk reduction agency stressed today the need to boost preventive measures in Fiji, as heavy rains are predicted to occur more frequently in the archipelago nation, which has been ravaged by severe floods over the past week.

A 15-day state of emergency has been declared in Fiji’s west coast areas, and a flood watch is currently in place as more rains are expected to hit the country. Population in vulnerable areas have been advised to evacuate.

“These types of events are likely to continue to occur,” said Angelika Planitz, sub-regional coordinator for the Pacific for the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR).

“Scientists are exploring the evidence that climate change and developments in low-lying flood-prone areas such as Nadi and Ba are contributing factors. In the interim, improved preparedness and early warning, two important elements of disaster

risk reduction, will have to remain important and urgent priorities.”

According to UNISDR, eight people have died and there have been 51 reported cases of water-related diseases, including diarrhoea and typhoid, as a result of the floods. In addition, some 1,300 have been evacuated from their homes, and the damage caused is estimated to be about \$30 million.

A recent publication produced by UNISDR and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) warned that in western Fiji, high-intensity floods would become more frequent. In the Nadi area, for example, these type of floods used to occur every 190 years, but by 2100 it is projected that they will occur every 25 years, making it essential for the Government to prepare.

Two of the affected cities, Nadi and Ba, are participating in UNISDR’s ‘World Disaster Reduction Campaign – Making Cities Resilient’ – an initiative to reduce urban risks from climate-related disasters.

“In Nadi, an Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) helps to reduce the risk of flooding from low- to medium-intensity rainfall. Mitigating impacts from intensive rainfall, however, remains a challenge,” said Ms. Planitz.

“More low pressure systems are likely to approach Fiji in the coming days. It will be important to warn already affected populations of the potential threats. Getting the messages out to remote areas which are still out of electricity is an important priority,” she added.

The IWMP is funded by UNDP – Global Environmental Facility (GEF) with support from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

After ferry sinking in Papua New Guinea, UN agency voices deep sympathy

3 February - The head of the United Nations International Maritime Organization (IMO) today expressed deep sympathy to the victims of a ferry sinking off the coast of Papua New Guinea that may have claimed more than 100 lives.

MV Rabaul Queen sank yesterday, shortly after being hit by large waves while en route east of the town of Lae, according to media reports.

About 360 passengers and crew members were aboard, and around 250 are understood to have since been rescued. Search operations are still under way for the remaining passengers and crew.

In a statement, IMO Secretary-General Koji Sekimizu offered his condolences to the families and friends of those caught up in the sinking.

Mr. Sekimizu thanked all those involved in rescue efforts, include Papua New Guinean and Australian rescue personnel, the Papua New Guinea Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre and merchant ships travelling in the area.

The Secretary-General also said that IMO would offer any technical assistance that Papua New Guinea might require in dealing with the disaster, especially concerning domestic ferry safety.



Koji Sekimizu, Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization.
Photo: IMO

UN alarmed by reported new atrocities against displaced civilians in DR Congo



A Congolese woman washes clothes at a hillside camp for the internally displaced in North Kivu's Masisi District. Photo: UNHCR/S.Schulman

3 February - The United Nations refugee agency said today it is alarmed by recent reports that displaced people have been tortured and killed in their camps by armed elements in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

“Displaced Congolese are constantly threatened by various groups and militias who accuse them of collaborating with one armed group or another,” said Adrian Edwards, the spokesperson in Geneva of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The agency reported that since the last quarter of 2011, armed groups have been intruding on camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in North Kivu province, violating their civilian character.

The main affected camps are in Nyanzale, Mweso and Birambizo in the Masisi territory, about 90 kilometres north-west of the provincial capital of Goma.

Mr. Edwards said that seven IDPs were beaten to death on 13 December because they had refused to take part in forced labour imposed by the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR). UNHCR has also received reports of IDPs being tortured, he added.

The ongoing violence is also hindering humanitarian access to the camps and preventing aid workers from protecting and assisting the displaced people. Currently, only eight IDP camps out of 31 are accessible to humanitarian workers without military escort, said Mr. Edwards.

“UNHCR calls on all parties to respect the civilian character of IDP sites in North Kivu. We are appealing to provincial authorities to increase security in and around the camps,” he stated.

The agency is also liaising with the UN peacekeeping mission in DRC, known as MONUSCO, to increase the presence of security forces in areas most in need of protection and to ensure the safety of civilians living in the IDP sites.

There are almost 79,000 displaced Congolese currently living in 31 IDP camps in North Kivu. Many of them cannot go home due to continued insecurity and renewed fighting between armed groups and the military in their villages.

North Kivu is home to more than 600,000 IDPs, over one third of the 1.7 million displaced across the country.

In Côte d’Ivoire, UN mission to decide on election certification next week

3 February - The head of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) said today that he hopes to decide next week on the partial certification of parliamentary elections held in the West African country near the end of last year.

Bert Koenders, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Côte d’Ivoire and the head of UNOCI, held a meeting today in Abidjan with the chairmen of the Constitutional Council and the Independent Electoral Commission.

Mr. Koenders, who is tasked with certifying the polls after their conclusion, said the three men discussed all elements still unresolved.



Special Representative Bert Koenders. Photo: UNOCI

He said the partial certification would take place with a view to moving the electoral process forward in Côte d'Ivoire.

“We shall thus be able to move ahead with other things,” he said. “There has been progress and that is positive.”

Elections for the 225-member National Assembly were held on 11 December, just over a year after Alassane Ouattara won a disputed presidential run-off election that led to months of deadly violence when the incumbent and runner-up Laurent Gbagbo refused to concede.

UN court rules against Italy in case over Nazi compensation claims

3 February - The United Nations International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled today that Italy has violated its obligation to respect Germany's immunity under international law by allowing civil claims seeking reparations for Nazi war crimes to be brought against it in Italian courts.

Germany filed the case in December 2008 after a court in Italy ordered Berlin to compensate an Italian civilian sent to a German labour camp in 1944. Germany had claimed that the ruling failed to respect the jurisdictional immunity that it has a right to under international law.

It had also claimed that it had already paid reparations under international treaties with Italy and argued that as a sovereign State it has immunity in Italian courts. At the same time, it fully acknowledged the untold suffering inflicted on Italians during the war.

“The Italian Republic has violated its obligation to respect the immunity which the Federal Republic of Germany enjoys under international law by allowing civil claims to be brought against it based on violations of international humanitarian law committed by the German Reich between 1943 and 1945,” the ICJ, also known as the World Court, stated in its judgment.

Italy has also violated Germany's immunity by taking measures of constraint against Villa Vigoni, German State property situated in Italian territory, and by declaring enforceable in Italy decisions of Greek civil courts based on violations of international humanitarian law committed in Greece by Nazi Germany.

The Court added that Italy must ensure that the decisions of its courts and those of other judicial authorities infringing on Germany's immunity “cease to have effect.”

Germany has paid tens of millions of dollars in reparations, under various agreements, for crimes committed during the Second World War.

Established in 1945, and based in The Hague in the Netherlands, the ICJ settles legal disputes between States and gives advisory opinions on legal questions that have been referred to it by other authorized UN organs.



President of the International Court of Justice Hisashi Owada (right), reads out the Court's Judgment in the case between Germany and Italy. Photo: ICJ/UN, Capital Photos/Frank van Beek

Philippines: UN and partners seek more funding to help tropical storm survivors



A mother in Mindanao, Philippines, feeds her baby with high-protein paste during a feeding programme for survivors of tropical storm Washi. Photo: IRIN/Jason Gutierrez

3 February - The United Nations and humanitarian partners today revised upwards an appeal for funding to continue relief work for six months among the more than 300,000 people in the Philippines island of Mindanao who were affected by last year's tropical storm Washi.

The revised humanitarian action plan for Mindanao seeks \$39 million, a \$10.6 million increase over the \$28.4 million requested in December, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported.

"I have been tremendously encouraged to witness the tireless efforts of the Government, aid organisations, civil society and the affected communities themselves to provide vital assistance to hundreds of thousands of Sendong survivors," said Jacqui Badcock, UN

Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Philippines. The storm was also known locally as Sendong.

"Sustained, generous financial support is crucial to enable provision of basic goods and services and the rebuilding of resilient communities," she said.

The tropical storm lashed Mindanao and neighbouring areas from 16 to 18 December last year, bringing torrential rains which triggered flash floods and landslides.

Nearly 48,000 houses were damaged and the livelihoods of as many as 625,000 people were affected. More than 550,000 were forced out of their homes.

Seven weeks after the disaster, some 21,900 survivors remain in overcrowded evacuation centres in the cities of Cagayan de Oro and Iligan, and more than 400,000 people are housed in makeshift shelters by host families in their areas of origin.

Some people have returned to their damaged houses in highly hazardous and disaster-prone areas, recently declared by the Government as 'no-build' zones.

Some \$9.6 million has been received in response to the appeal, including \$3 million disbursed from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), which is managed by OCHA.

UN political team to visit Maldives for talks on democratic transition



Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Oscar Fernandez-Taranco. UN Photo/Evan Schneider

3 February - A United Nations political team heads to the Maldives next week for talks on how to help support the Indian Ocean archipelago in its transition to democracy.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's spokesperson Martin Nesirky told reporters today that a mission from the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA), headed by Assistant Secretary-General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, is slated to arrive in the Maldives on 9 February.

The mission will meet with Government officials, opposition leaders and civil society representatives to both discuss the current situation and identify opportunities to support the democratic transition, Mr. Nesirky said.

In November last year UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay visited the Maldives and said the country had

made “significant advances” during the first few years of its transition, but a gap still existed between the rhetoric and the reality on the ground.

Multi-party presidential elections were held for the first time in 2008, ending 30 years of one-party rule, and the country has ratified six of seven core international treaties.

UN backs vaccination campaign after yellow fever outbreaks hit Cameroon and Ghana

3 February - The United Nations is backing a mass vaccination campaign under way in northern Cameroon, where a new outbreak of yellow fever has killed at least seven people.

The vaccination campaign, which began late last month in eight districts, aims to eventually protect more than 1.2 million people considered at high risk of contracting yellow fever, which has no cure and is spread by mosquitoes.



UN Photo/Marie Frechon

The UN World Health Organization (WHO) reported today that the vaccinations are aimed at areas not covered in a previous campaign in 2009 because they have no history of yellow fever outbreaks or circulation of the yellow fever virus.

Since October last year at least 23 cases have been recorded in Cameroon, with tests confirming the illness was yellow fever rather than dengue fever or West Nile virus.

WHO said it is working with Government health officials in Cameroon to assess the extent of the outbreak and confirm the cases.

The UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the International Coordinating Group on Yellow Fever Provision (YF-ICG) – which includes WHO and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) – and the public-private partnership known as the GAVI Alliance are funding the vaccination campaign..

Meanwhile, in Ghana, two people have died since October and another case has been confirmed in an outbreak of yellow fever in the country’s upper eastern and mid-western regions.

YF-ICG, working with the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), is planning a vaccination campaign for more than 235,000 people starting on Monday. Pregnant women and children aged below one year are the key targets of that campaign.

An estimated 200,000 cases of yellow fever are recorded worldwide each year, with as many as 30,000 deaths reported. Patients experience jaundice, as well as other symptoms such as fever and vomiting.

The vaccine against yellow fever is considered to provide effective immunity within a week for about 95 per cent of people.

Mozambique: UN agency begins food distribution to flood victims



A woman in Maputo province of Mozambique looks out on to farmland which has been flooded as a result of recent tropical storms, Dando and Funso. Photo: WFP/N. Scott

3 February - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has begun distributing rations in Mozambique, where an estimated 70,000 people are in urgent need of assistance after the country was pounded by two tropical storms.

Distributions began yesterday in flood-hit Zambezia province, with almost 6,000 people in the province's Maganja district receiving enough rations of flour and other basic supplies to last a month.

The agency reported that it eventually hopes to provide emergency food rations to 65,000 people across Zambezia and another 6,500 in Maputo province, which surrounds the country's capital.

Working with other UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), WFP has been helping the Mozambican Government to assess the scale of the crisis and the needs of those affected by the storms and subsequent floods.

At least 32 people are reported to have been killed since tropical storms Dando and Funso struck Mozambique last month, and about 100,000 hectares of farmland are no longer in use.

WFP said there are fears that people living in storm-affected areas will have no crops to harvest, jeopardizing their food security in the coming months.