

# InFocus



A publication of UN in South Africa

Vol 6. Issue 2. December 2022

# SPECIAL COVERAGE



## UN RESPONSE AND SUPPORT TO KZN FLOOD VICTIMS



# KwaZulu-Natal floods: building back better for every child



Destruction by KZN floods (UNICEF South Africa/2022/Matangira)

***In the wake of the devastating floods, UNICEF and partners are providing affected children and families with immediate relief and psychosocial support.***

“Water flooded in through the door here, so we had to break the small window in our bedroom to escape and go to our neighbours who are further down from here,” says 21-year-old Lungelo Sogoni. As she talks, she points out the shoulder-height watermark against the plywood wall of her shack with one arm, while holding her 7-months-old baby, Enkosi, on her hip with the other.

Lungelo is trying to rebuild her life, one month after the devastating floods that hit parts of Durban in South Africa’s KwaZulu-Natal province. She lives in Dakota informal settlement in the south of the city.

“It’s been really tough. Everything has been damaged. We haven’t had water to drink and what was left behind is covered in mud,” she says.

The floods wreaked havoc between in April and claimed more than 430 lives – including 67 children – some 40,000 people remain in community halls and shelters after their homes were washed away. As the waters receded, amongst the debris, death, and destruction a wake of trauma has been left behind and survivors – some of whom are still searching for the bodies of their loved ones – urgently need support.

A few hundred meters from Lungelo’s home is the three-roomed shack belonging to Lufuno Shezi, her disabled father and disabled brother, and her child.

Their home was damaged during the floods and they had to seek shelter elsewhere while they waited for the water level to subside.

Multi-purpose cash grants and psychosocial interventions constitute a significant part of UNICEF South Africa’s response to the crisis. With a partner, Refugee Social Services (RSS), families who have lost everything are provided with cash to cover their immediate needs.



***Lufuno Shezi (24) from Isiphingo, South of Durban, one of the flood victims who received assistance in the form of cash vouchers from UNICEF and Refugee Social Services. (UNICEF South Africa /2022/Matangira)***


“I was able to buy a stove and kettle, as well as food for us all with the voucher I received,” says Lufuno Shezi.

“The money meant that I could at least buy oil, rice and pap (maize meal),” says Honeyck Kandayah, a 34-year-old Malawian who has lived in Isiphingo for four years. “I had to save my life over the things I have,” she adds, looking up towards the hill that he clambered up to escape the raging waters.

“The water came so fast, we just had to run. I’ve lost all my documents and now I’ve also lost my job because my company was also damaged by the floods and had to let some of us go,” says Honeyck.

Honeyck’s phone was also lost in the floods which meant that he couldn’t use e-Wallet to receive the relief cash grants. “We had to quickly change direction to use physical vouchers to ensure that survivors received immediate assistance and could provide a meal for their children,” explains Yasmeen Rajah, the Director of Refugee Social Services. To date, 127 cash grants have been distributed to affected families.

While UNICEF’s partners on the ground continue to monitor the needs of children and families affected by the floods, ensuring that sustained support in helping affected communities to pick up the pieces and build back better is an urgent priority.

Support our flood relief efforts #ForEveryChild. 

# Government and the United Nations join hands to assist local governments

As part of efforts to develop local government districts in South Africa under a “One Plan” approach, the Government and the United Nations recently launched an initiative to raise funds for pilot projects in the three provinces of Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal. The projects, which are in the districts of O.R. Tambo (Eastern Cape), Waterberg (Limpopo) and eThewini (KwaZulu-Natal), are part of the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) signed by the UN and the Government early this year.

The joint approach is intended to incorporate public, private, and civil society participation and investment in an effort to provide support for the development of human capital, improve service delivery and create jobs. The plan also involves visits to the project sites in Waterberg District that have been identified for restoration such as the Thusong Service Centres, which are one-stop centres for service delivery, and Thuthuzela Care Centres, which cater to survivors of gender-based violence.



## 1. HEALTH FIRST



Protecting health services and systems

## 2. PROTECTING PEOPLE



Social protection and basic services

The type of delivery system to be used in supporting the districts is based on three key factors that are crucial to the success of the projects. The first is unlocking economic value chains that focus on providing business development services to small, micro- and medium-enterprises (SMMES) with special emphasis on women- and youth-led businesses. The priority in these areas is the just transition to a low-carbon economy, and working with the labour unions to train the local workforce on skills identified for the green economy.

The second factor is to develop human capital and encourage social transformations that would create a sustainable solutions to gender-based-violence and femicide and to develop skills relevant to high-performing district sectors. (Continued on next page)

## 3. ECONOMIC RESPONSE & RECOVERY



Protecting jobs, small and medium-sized enterprises, and the informal sector workers

## 4. MACROECONOMIC RESPONSE AND MULTILATERAL COLLABORATION





(Continued from previous page)

The third factor focuses on improving service delivery through good governance at Thusong Centres, formerly known as Multi-Purpose Community Centres. The community centres play a crucial role in improving citizens's access to public services. They also ensure that economic opportunities are accessible and that they meet the basic needs of people often relegated to the margins of society, by acting as conduits between citizens, government and various social partners. The idea is to decentralize the operations of these centres so they can provide improved, consistent and efficient service delivery to South Africans across the country.

## 5. ECONOMIC RESPONSE & RECOVERY



### PROGRESS AND WORK

There has been notable progress by UN in South Africa thus far in implementing some of the signature projects and related value chains. One of projects is within the Food Waste Sub-Sector for Sustainable Jobs and Inclusive Growth, which has been completed in eThekweni, O.R. Tambo and Waterberg districts. The Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth-not-in-Employment, Education or Training (YNEET) was completed in O.R. Tambo and Waterberg districts. Also completed are the Drought Intervention Project in O.R. Tambo and Waterberg, and the UN Women value chain facilitation in Waterberg.



On-going projects include the second phase of the Rural Television White Space Network Operator Support Programme which is providing support to the SMMEs to bridge the digital divide. Others are the Expansion Programme for Women in Agriculture, Agri-business and Agro-processing; the Farmer Field School approach; the Informal sector and SMMEs Support; the SA Industrial Energy Efficiency Project; the Biogas project; and the project on bridging the gap on linking youth to the Future of Work by closing the digital divide. 🌐





# KWAZULU-NATAL FLOODS: The UN assists victims of the flooding disaster



A woman at a shelter in KwaZulu-Natal Province where most women and children sought refuge following the April/May 2022 floods. More than 400 people died and thousands more displaced by the floods.

The year 2022 will most likely be etched into the memory of many South Africans for mainly two reasons: the return to work and what has been termed the “new normal” in a post Covid-19 pandemic; and the devastation of the floods in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces in April and May that left over 400 people dead and thousands more displaced, affecting the young and old, the rich and poor.

Areas previously regarded as holiday spots known for their pristine beaches and upmarket accommodation such as the Umdloti and Umhlanga areas were not immune to the damage and destruction caused by torrential rains.



A woman weeps as she remembers the devastation and loss she encountered due to the floods.

The United Nations in South Africa and partners on the ground in the affected provinces came together to develop a response to the floods that would not only address the immediate needs but also the post-floods challenges many would feel for months to come. In September this year, a UN team of experts once again travelled to the KZN Province to assess the impact of its response on beneficiaries and partners.

The UN handed out of more than 400,000 rands in cash grants mostly to women affected by the flooding who had taken refuge in shelters, many of whom were single mothers and very often the sole breadwinners.

Sitting with these women, we heard tales of life before the disaster, from their experiences of running their own businesses either selling perfumes and clothes from door-to-door or running take-away food stalls. A common thread among the recollection of their lives before the floods was one of success, happiness and independence – a life of dignity through earned incomes and the ability to look after their families. *(Continued on next page)*





(Continued from previous page)

Many of the women we spoke to talked about their young school-going children and the psychological impact homelessness and destitution had caused. They were grateful that the UN and its partners have been able to provide psycho-social support and continuous access to therapy to assist them to come to terms with their losses. Some of the women said their children ask them to “please hold me when it rains”. Another woman said her child had since developed epilepsy and remains terrified of the storms.

Several mothers talked about how their children have become quiet and withdrawn. A saving grace to many was that in addition to the cash grants and counselling, they were also recipients of dignity kits and food items which alleviated some of the stress of losing their belongings. Many are slowly rebuilding their lives, despite remaining in the shelters, by resuming their businesses, which range from food take-aways to tailoring. Slowly, life is starting to get better.

While many of the donated items were an immediate response to the needs of the people affected, the UN was cognizant of the fact that the volatile situation could exacerbate other social ills such as conflicts between locals and foreign nationals, domestic violence and gender-based violence as well as the interruption of classes and informal trade. As part of its response, UN is continuing to address these issues through social cohesion programmes and giving the flood victims access to resources and materials on gender-based violence at shelters and other frequented areas.



Children playing in a Shelter in KwaZulu-Natal province for those affected by the floods

UN agencies continue to support affected schools through the provision of building materials and other educational resources. They have also provided support to informal traders in the form of cash grants and business items in partnership with government departments.

The impact of the flooding disaster is still being felt by many both economically and emotionally. However, there remains hope that with resilience and perseverance, people in the affected provinces will continue to build back better. 🌈



One of the women residing in the shelter in KwaZulu-Natal following the floods in May 2022.



United Nations donation of female and male dignity packages to those affected in KZN.



# KWAZULU-NATAL FLOODS: UN Volunteers strengthen capacity in the KZN Province Disaster Management Centres



Lulamisani Chauke, a UN Volunteer, preparing for a meeting on food planning

a workplan based on the gaps and challenges that they have identified and observed from the time they arrived in July. These gaps include specialist teams overseeing disaster management at some municipalities not working properly while others feel they do not participate enough and therefore lack the necessary experience. The departments and municipalities have to be involved in the planning.” The volunteers have since developed a workplan based on the gaps and challenges that they have identified and observed from the time they arrived in July.

Following a three-day visit to the flood-ravaged KwaZulu-Natal Province earlier this year, a United Nations technical team identified the need to strengthen the ability of the provincial and municipal disaster management centres to respond effectively to the National State of Disaster. In response, four UN volunteers were deployed at the Provincial Disaster Management Centre (PDMC) offices to enhance its capacity in supporting 54 municipalities. The four volunteers all hail from humble beginnings in rural or informal areas of South Africa. As a result of their work on nature and agriculture while growing up, it was a natural progression for them to study geography and environmental sciences.

While they each possess different sets of skills, the volunteers’ main responsibility is to add capacity to the Disaster Risk Reduction and Planning Department whose aim is mitigate risks from disasters such as the floods that devastated the province in early 2022. The volunteers work closely with the municipalities and the districts to support disaster management through workshops and awareness campaigns, among others.

Through the workshops, the volunteers aim to dispel some myths on disaster management. As explained by Lulamisani Chauke, one of the volunteers, “There is this concept that disaster management is about giving out blankets and food parcels. While this does form part of the process, it’s not the only part. There is the very important planning phase which sets out the response to a disaster, should one occur, and who is responsible for which roles,” he says.

“In addition, what can be put in place to reduce the risk of a disaster, such as avoiding building on the flood lines, etc. We also conduct awareness campaigns on fires as well as looking at coordinating resources so each department can lead on certain aspects. We know that disaster management is multi-disciplinary and cross cutting so ideally all the departments and municipalities have to be involved in the planning.” The volunteers have since developed

**The volunteers’ main responsibility is to add capacity to the Disaster Risk Reduction and Planning Department whose aim is mitigate risks from disasters such as the floods that devastated the province in early 2022. The volunteers work closely with the municipalities and the districts to support disaster management through workshops and awareness campaigns, among others.**

These gaps include specialist teams overseeing disaster management at some municipalities not working properly while others feel they do not participate enough and therefore lack the necessary experience.

One of the volunteers’ responsibilities is to resuscitate advisory forums or task teams to better prepare municipalities for future disasters. Also, some municipalities and districts do not have disaster management plans at all, which is a concern as there is no “guiding tool to respond,” while other municipalities have outdated plans.

The volunteers are supporting municipality teams to develop disaster management plans, review and adapt them to ever-changing risks. As the impact of every disaster differs, the plans need to include all risks and factors.

Terrence Mcineka, a volunteer hydrologist, says his primary job is being part of the team that is developing the flood risk management plan for the entire province, which is closely linked to hydrology. [\(Continued on next page\)](#)



(Continue from previous page)



# WE, THE VOLUNTEERS



UN volunteers on a site visit in KwaZulu-Natal Province

“The province does not have a plan that speaks specifically to flooding disasters. The plan must be a holistic one and informed by local municipalities with their input and involvement as communities in those municipalities are the ones severely impacted when a flood occurs,” says Terrence.

According to Silindokuhle Biyela, another volunteer, some of the challenges they face relate to housing materials in certain locations, including rural areas. She says the concern is that some homes are made from mud and thatch roofing and these are more prone to collapse during the rainy season.

“We have noticed that people in urban areas and roads in well-built areas have been affected where we once would not have thought those houses would collapse such as Umhlanga and Umdloti. We can no longer think that disasters are only affecting rural areas as we are seeing it now impacting everyone,” says Silindokuhle.

“Location of housing structures is very important because if the place is a wetland, then with heavy rainfall, that house is going to collapse. We need to now look at locations of houses more closely because disaster is indiscriminate.”

The fourth volunteer, Bahle Mazeka, a human settlement specialist, added that housing and spatial planning is a challenge as there are homes built alongside rivers and other inhabitable areas. “In 2019, these homes collapsed and now we see them being built in the exact same places and then collapsing again due to climate change. We are reviewing with other stakeholders the impact of these floods and what it means for climate change, spatial planning and how land is used,” say Bahle.

The province has seen heavier rainfall before April but because houses are being built on uninhabitable areas, flooding and landslides have increased. This speaks to land-use management and my primary function is to work in that stream.”

The volunteers have been travelling in and around the province conducting assessments and workshops on disaster management to ensure that by the time they complete their tasks, they would have left behind tangible resources for all stakeholders involved.

According to the PDMC, the UN Volunteers have provided them with support and technical expertise on various activities such as the development and review of the provincial disaster risk profile, technical expertise for the Provincial Post Disaster Evaluation and other related tasks as required.

The UN Volunteers have been instrumental in getting the PDMC to function, more so as the Chief Directorate had 21 vacant posts, which is a clear indication of its human resource capacity challenges. The volunteers have performed over and above the expectations of the PDMC and demonstrated a high level of professionalism and dedication.

Their volunteer programme ends in December 2022. 🌍



UN Volunteers on a site visit.

# Kwazulu-Natal Floods: Meet the UN Volunteers at the PDMC



**Name:** Bahle Mazeka

**Age:** 36 years old

**Originally from:** Bizane, Eastern Cape Province

**Qualifications:** Environmental Management – University of KwaZulu-Natal; Geographic Information Systems – Nelson Mandela University & Master's degree in Urban Development

**Name:** Lulamisanani Chauke

**Age:** 28 years old

**Originally from:** Soshanguve, Pretoria, Gauteng Province

**Qualifications:** Geography and Environmental Studies – North West University; Honours in Disaster Management and Risk Assessment – North West University



**Name:** Terrence Mcineka

**Age:** 30 years old

**Originally from:** Kwamaphumulo, KwaZulu-Natal Province

**Qualifications:** BSC Geography and Hydrology; Master's degree in Hydrobiology

**Name:** Silindokuhle Biyela

**Age:** 35 years old

**Originally from:** Mandeni, Kwazulu-Natal Province

**Qualifications:** Public Administration – University of KwaZulu-Natal; Postgraduate Diploma in Disaster Management – University of Free State







# LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND



Sustainable Economic Growth



Social Transformation



Transformative Governance



Sustainably Managed Natural Resources

The Editor, UNIC Pretoria  
Email: [unic-pretoria@un.org](mailto:unic-pretoria@un.org)  
Telephone: +27 12 354 8507  
Website: [www.southafrica.un.org](http://www.southafrica.un.org)  
   @UNinSouthAfrica  
Designed by: UNIC Pretoria