

Mozambicans get help from neighbours in Zimbabwe

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Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano visited Harare in March, buoyed up by the recent successes of a joint Zimbabwe-Mozambique military offensive against the South African-backed MNR (Renamo) guerrillas fighting to topple his government. *writes Ivan Farai from Harare.*

But his visit came at a time when the havoc the MNR have wreaked in Mozambique has never been greater. The economic and social fabric of Mozambique has disintegrated, leaving in its wake up to 4m people without food, clothing, shelter or medical care.

Mozambique is a desperate country. According to the United Nations, emergency relief worth US\$200m is needed this year to help 4 million affected people – a third of the country's population. At least 1m of these people are displaced from their homes.

The UN appeal calls for about 670,000 tonnes of grain worth about US\$170m for the agricultural year 1987/88. Transport is also needed to move the food to affected parts of the country.

Other forms of emergency aid needed are logistical support, health care, water supplies, relief and survival items, and agricultural inputs costing more than US\$33m. By early March, about 350,000t of grain had been pledged by the international community.

Some donors in the European Community and Australia have bought Zimbabwean maize for shipment to neighbouring Mozambique to help the famine relief effort. But more is needed. Talk of another "Ethiopia" – reference to the massive famine-relief effort launched by the international community for Ethiopia's drought stricken people in 1984 – is gaining momentum.

But Mozambique's problems are largely man-made. The United Nations says the drought in that country is not the main cause of the desperate situation prevailing there. The Meteorological Service of Mozambique recently reported that rainfall in almost the entire country was within or above normal levels.

The MNR have systematically destroyed schools, clinics and other administrative structures in the outlying areas. Mozambique now has one of the highest infant-mortality rates in the world: between 325 and 375 infants and young children per 1,000 die every year. In 1980, the rate was 150 per 1,000.

The "bandidos armados", as the guerrillas are popularly referred to in Mozambique, have transformed village populations into displaced people. They have disrupted agricultural production in the fertile belts of Zambezia and Tete. They have cut off transport networks and have destroyed the economic infrastructure. In one attack alone, the MNR recently destroyed plant and equipment worth US\$30m at a tea factory.

Industries are lacking raw materials. Vital exports cannot be transported owing to a lack of facilities and destroyed networks. Production at the Moatize coal mine in Tete has stopped because of a stockpile of coal worth about US\$25m which they cannot evacuate. In Zambezia, tea worth US\$14m is deteriorating because the area is cut off by MNR activity. Factories are operating at a fraction of their installed capacity.

Zimbabwe has become the chief ally of the embattled country. More than 5,000 Zimbabwe National Army troops have been deployed in Mozambique to guard vital trade transport routes and an oil pipeline. The troops have expanded their role to help Frelimo troops flush out the guerrillas, and recently a number of key



Zimbabwe's Prime Minister Robert Mugabe, left, gave Mozambique's President Joaquim Chissano a floral greeting on his arrival in Harare in March.

administrative centres and a vital bridge taken by the MNR have been recovered by Mozambique. Tanzanian troops are now being deployed to help in the fight.

Zimbabwe has set an example. Ordinary Zimbabweans have joined the relief effort. More than 90,000t of food has been raised for Mozambique, and more than Z\$100,000 in food, medicines and clothing has poured in from ordinary people and companies.