

# CYCLONE IDAI AND HUMANITARIAN AID CHALLENGES IN MOZAMBIQUE<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

On the night between March 14 and March 15, 2019, the central region of Mozambique – including the city of Beira and its surrounding areas – was devastated by cyclone Idai, prompting a situation of natural calamity demanding urgent humanitarian aid. This article aims to analyze the extent to which the Mozambican government was able to coordinate actions and protect the human rights of affected populations while facing the challenges inherent in humanitarian aid, such as internal interference. The methodology of the study was deductive, based on the qualitative method and on a case study of the referred phenomenon. Official post-Idai disaster reports and analyses by the specialized literature (namely books and scientific articles) were consulted as sources.

**Keywords:** cyclone Idai; humanitarian aid; Mozambique; natural disaster.

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## *O CICLONE IDAI E OS DESAFIOS DA AJUDA HUMANITÁRIA EM MOÇAMBIQUE*

### *RESUMO*

*Na noite entre os dias 14 e 15 de março de 2019, a região central de Moçambique, em particular a cidade da Beira e regiões vizinhas, foi devastada por um ciclone batizado de Idai, provocando uma situação de calamidade natural e de ajuda humanitária. O presente artigo visa analisar em que medida o governo moçambicano foi capaz de coordenar as ações e garantir a proteção aos direitos humanos das pessoas afetadas e, ao mesmo tempo, se resguardar dos desafios inerentes às ajudas, especialmente a ingerência interna. A metodologia do trabalho foi dedutiva, baseando-se no método qualitativo e no estudo de caso do referido fenômeno. As fontes consultadas se referem aos relatórios oficiais pós-desastre Idai e à análise da literatura especializada, nomeadamente livros e artigos científicos.*

***Palavras-chave:*** *ajuda humanitária; ciclone Idai; desastre natural; Moçambique.*

## INTRODUCTION

On the night between March 14 and 15, 2019, Mozambique's central region, in particular the city of Beira and its neighboring areas, was devastated by cyclone Idai. It reached an intensity of 4 on the Saffir–Simpson scale, with winds in excess of 240 km/h, and was accompanied by intense rains. Making matters worse, extensive rural areas and villages were flooded by the Pungue and Buzi rivers, which flow into the Beira city bay. The balance of the cyclone's passage came to a total of 600 fatalities, accompanied by huge material losses, generating a situation of natural and humanitarian calamity.

In view of the humanitarian crisis in the aftermath of Cyclone Idai and the international community's prompt response, this article aims to analyze the extent to which the Mozambican government was able to coordinate actions and ensure the protection of the human rights of those affected, while simultaneously facing the challenges inherent in aid operations, especially internal interference.

Mozambique is one of the African countries that is most vulnerable to extreme climatic events, namely cyclones, floods and droughts. This makes the government's capacity to respond to catastrophes a critical matter. In fact, economic poverty greatly limits Mozambique's ability to establish effective plans and policies for preventing, mitigating and adapting to climate change with a view to safeguarding fundamental human rights.

From the point of view of international humanitarian law, the responsibility to protect citizens and their rights in the face of a natural catastrophe rests first and foremost on the affected state. If such a state is manifestly incapable of doing so, the solution often entails requesting international humanitarian aid in order to help the victims.

The intensity and magnitude of humanitarian actions in the aftermath of a natural disaster is inevitably a source of coordination problems for the country in question, forcing it, in many cases, to share the leadership and coordination of assistance operations with external actors. In this context, another dilemma arises: having requested humanitarian aid, the state must defend itself against possible foreign interference in its internal affairs.

The general object of this study is to analyze the challenges faced by humanitarian aid while providing poor countries with natural disaster relief. Our specific objects were the Mozambican coordination of aid operations and the challenge of ensuring human rights for the people affected by Cyclone Idai.

The methodology of this study is deductive, based on the qualitative method and on a case study of Cyclone Idai in the context of the city of Beira. Official post-Idai disaster reports and analyses by the specialized literature (namely books and scientific articles) were consulted.

The article is divided into four sections, in addition to this introduction and our concluding remarks. The first contextualizes Cyclone Idai, emphasizing human and environmental damage. The second analyzes government responses in the prevention and adaptation to the climate changes that occurred before the disaster. The third examines humanitarian aid measures linked to Cyclone Idai and the government's participation in their coordination and execution. The fourth deals with challenges and pitfalls of humanitarian aid, understanding the context of the disaster as a source of adversities and problems for actors whose main goal is to save lives and ensure fundamental human rights to those affected.

## **1 CONTEXTUALIZING CYCLONE IDAI: ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN DAMAGE**

In this study, the term 'environmental damage' is a reference to harm caused to the natural, artificial and cultural characteristics of the environment on an individual and collective level. Meanwhile, the term 'human damage' refers to the number of persons killed, injured, made sick or homeless, displaced, missing and generally affected by Cyclone Idai.

Damage varies according to the degree of vulnerability associated with the socioeconomic and environmental frailties of a given region. This very fact allows us to state that, even though they are caused by natural phenomena, disasters are not really natural *per se*: they stem directly from the type of social relations we maintain with nature. Therefore, it is important for this study to contextualize the Mozambican government's planning for potentially catastrophic events. Our provisional argument points out that the absence of efficient planning is particularly damaging not only to the environment, but also to vulnerable groups at risk of human rights violations.

Mozambique is located on the east coast of Southern Africa, bordering the Indian Ocean. It has one of the longest sea coasts among African countries, with an extension of 2,515 km from north to south. Although this is certainly a great advantage in economic and touristic terms, it comes with

trade-offs such as difficult coastal protection and high exposure to meteorological phenomena forming in the Indian Ocean. When these phenomena head towards the continent's southern region, Mozambique's geographical location makes it a gateway for their passage.

On the night between March 14 and March 15, 2019, the central region of Mozambique<sup>4</sup> was hit by Cyclone Idai, with strong winds measuring 180 to 240 km/h and heavy rains in excess of 200 mm/24 hours. On April 25, 2019, some districts in the northern provinces of Cabo-Delgado and Nampula were hit by Cyclone Kenneth. This cyclone was accompanied by gusts of wind measuring up to 220 km/h, but lost its intensity after reaching the land (INGC, 2019).

Among the two cyclones, Idai certainly was the one to cause the most damage in central Mozambique. Wherever it went through, it left a trail of death and destruction which resulted in 600 fatalities, 1,600 injured and 1.5 million affected people, among whom 750,000 required urgent humanitarian assistance. In the aftermath, there were 83,138 cases of malaria associated with the cholera outbreak, leading to 6,727 additional morbidities and 8 deaths. The disaster destroyed 94 health units in the affected provinces. The reconstruction and reinforcement of this sector against future disasters entails an investment of around US\$ 202.4 million (MOÇAMBIQUE, 2019a).

Despite article 89 (right to health) of the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique (2004), which ensures that all citizens have the right to medical and health care, under the terms of the law, as well as the duty to promote and defend public health, the devastating effects of the cyclone led to the worsening of health and nutrition indicators in the affected regions.

Among the total number of people who received assistance, 400 thousand were displaced and around 161 thousand were sheltered in 164 temporary accommodation centers located throughout central Mozambique's four provinces<sup>5</sup> (MOÇAMBIQUE, 2019a).

The housing sector was the most visibly destroyed, given the environmental, social and economic vulnerability of urban and rural settlements. This contributed to the partial or total destruction of 240 thousand houses, in material damages estimated at US\$ 410 million.

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4 Mozambique is a unified state with an administrative division comprised of provinces, districts and localities. The central region of the country includes the provinces of Manica, Sofala, Tete and Zambezia.

5 Among the country's 750 thousand people, 53% are women, 47%, men, 33.8%, children, and 8.4%, are older adults.

According to article 91 of the Constitution of Mozambique, all citizens have the right to adequate housing, and it is the duty of the state, in accordance with national economic development, to create the appropriate institutional, normative and infrastructural conditions. However, the truth of the matter is that the right to housing is among the most affected by natural disasters, especially in countries with poor housing infrastructure, as this makes them particularly vulnerable to environmental risks and disasters.

In this sense, Cyclone Idai was detrimental to human rights as a whole, with grave effects over, but not limited to, the right to life (considering the widespread mortality); the right to housing (with many houses utterly destroyed); and the right to health and dignity (with damages to hospital facilities and the proliferation of diseases).

There were other types of damage, especially environmental ones: loss of biological diversity and soil degradation; destruction of crops and access roads; loss of biomass, given the destruction of trees with ecological and economic value and a decrease in the country's mangrove area, which contributes to carbon sequestration.

Ecological conservation areas such as the Gorongosa National Park, besides other natural reserves and safaris, did not suffer significant damage. However, the cyclone may have caused the forced dislocation of animals from their respective habitats to less appropriate ones (MOÇAMBIQUE, 2019b).

There were damages and losses in other relevant sectors, such as culture – including man-made heritage, archaeological and historical sites, public spaces, cultural collections and the associated creative industries. These heritage spaces and objects have great significance in the cultural life of communities and individuals. The cost of the rehabilitation and restoration of cultural spaces is estimated at US\$ 3.86 million.

In addition to these damages, Cyclone Idai destroyed several components of the country's infrastructure, making the population virtually isolated from the outside world. The city of Beira, the second largest in the country, was the most heavily affected, suffering serious material damages against its urban structure.

The increased flow in rivers Púngue, Búzi, Muda and Metuchira, which cross the country's central region and flow into the Indian Ocean, caused floods in vast areas of Nhamatanda, Tica, Búzi, Dondo and the city of Beira. National Road number 6 (EN6), which connects the provinces

of Sofala and Manica to neighboring Zimbabwe, was blocked at several points, due to collapsed bridges and the progressive erosion of surrounding terrain.

The transport sector suffered the heaviest economic losses, valued at US\$ 442 million. It is followed by the real estate sector, at US\$ 133.5 million, the environmental sector, at US\$ 80 million, and the agricultural sector, at US\$ 48 million. Total economic losses are estimated at more than US\$ 1.4 billion (according to pre-disaster prices) (MOÇAMBIQUE, 2019a, p. 19).

In the education sector, 1,372 school facilities in the provinces of Sofala, Manica, Zambézia and Tete were partially or totally destroyed. The financial costs of these losses amount to US\$ 20.4 million. Due to the high number of public schools and their deficient physical conditions, the public sector suffered more damage and losses than the private sector (MOÇAMBIQUE, 2019a).

Losses for the productive sector reached US\$ 115.3 million, notably due to the destruction of industrial warehouses, other industrial facilities, and offices.

A preliminary balance of the cyclone's passage listed the following damages:

- a) General interruption of power supply in the city of Beira and its surroundings;
- b) General interruption of water supply in the city of Beira and its surroundings;
- c) General interruption of telecommunications between the city of Beira and the rest of the world;
- d) Isolation of the city of Beira in respect to the rest of the country due to the collapse of bridges and traffic interruptions in the EN6;
- e) Many destroyed homes, schools and hospitals;
- f) Operational collapse of the banking system;
- g) Diminished stocks of fuel and other essential products;
- h) Cholera outbreaks due to the sewage system's obsolescence.

Mozambique's degree of vulnerability to extreme weather events would require effective measures and policies to mitigate the impacts of climate change and strengthen population resilience. Internal responses, therefore, include actions and resources employed in the context of crises by formal and informal institutions and by individuals who live or temporarily reside in the area of the event.

## **2 INTERNAL RESPONSES: PREVENTION AND ADAPTATION POLICIES AND MEASURES**

In the 1980s, the Mozambican government established the Department for the Prevention and Combat of Natural Disasters. This organism brought together different ministries and was tasked mainly with the distribution of aid among the affected populations. Throughout the period, the government noticed a need for organisms aimed not only at solving momentary problems, but also creating a technical and institutional structure able to prevent the overflow of negative climatic effects into the well-being of populations. Thus, in 1999, the National Institute for Disaster Management (INGC) was established. It became responsible for directing mitigation efforts, carrying out prevention campaigns and coordinating disaster response, in addition to rehabilitating infrastructure affected by disasters (ABDULA; TAELA, 2005).

In face of economic poverty, the Ministry for the Coordination of Environmental Action was also created. Its mandate was to implement the Environmental Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Mozambique and for the Eradication of Poverty. The ministry defined the main areas of said implementation, including institutional development and public policies, management coordination of resources available naturally and in the urban area, integrated management of coastal areas, and environmental education.

To advance the eradication of poverty, the technical secretariat for food and nutritional security and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development were created, aimed at developing activities to mitigate the effects of drought on the country's populations.

In terms of political instruments, Resolution n. 18/99 of June 1 approved the Disaster Management Policy. One of its objectives was to avoid the loss of human lives and destruction of property by natural disasters or by man (MOÇAMBIQUE, 1999, p. 23, our translation).

International commitments on the prevention and management of natural disasters were also approved, such as Agenda 2025<sup>6</sup> for Sustainable Development, whose objective no. 11 aims to make cities and urban settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. This objective is in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which

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<sup>6</sup> Despite formally ending in 2025, Agenda 2025 is effective until 2030, when monitoring and assessment of compliance will be carried out.

declares that “enhanced study to reduce exposure and vulnerability, thus preventing the creation of new disaster risks, and accountability for disaster risk creation are needed at all levels”.

Mozambican national instruments regarding this matter are also reinforced by other devices, such as the master plan for risk and disaster reduction 2017-2030, a national strategy for adaptation to climate change introduced through Law 15/2014 (July 20), which establishes the legal regime for managing disaster risks<sup>7</sup>.

Law 15/2014 deals with disaster risk management, including the prevention and mitigation of the effects of disasters and the development of relief, assistance and recovery actions in affected areas. This law expanded the concept of calamity to include fires, forest fires, epidemics, erosion and oil spills, ensuring a greater scope to the Master Plan by prohibiting the construction of housing in areas vulnerable to calamities, besides ensuring the mandatory development of Operational Readiness and the government’s obligation to have a Contingency Plan and to effectively observe disaster alerts (MOÇAMBIQUE, 2017, p. 17).

The National Strategy for Adaptation and Mitigation of Climate Change (2013-2025) was developed with the same aims, seeking to build actionable guidelines for the creation of resilience and for reducing communities’ climate vulnerability, promoting a green economy. Likewise, Mozambique’s Five-Year Plan 2015-2019 presented priorities regarding the search for solutions in this field. It regarded cyclones as obstacles to national development, since they directly affect the state’s capacity utilization.

In this way, the aforementioned plan establishes the goals of disaster risk management integration and climate change adaptation, emphasizing the protection and empowerment of women, children and vulnerable groups and the reduction of communities’ vulnerability, ranging from economy and infrastructure to climate risks and natural disasters (MOÇAMBIQUE, 2017, p. 18).

The government has mobilized this normative, political and technical framework to tackle various extreme weather events, including Cyclone Idai. As such, the National Emergency Operations Center (CENOE) was assigned to coordinate the national emergency activities and operations in response to the two cyclones (Idai and Kenneth).

In Sofala province, the Emergency Operations Center (COE) was

<sup>7</sup> Available from: [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org). Access on: 02/25/2020.

created. The government established three disaster risk management organisms: 1) the Disaster Management Coordination Council, led by the Prime Minister, which included all members of the Council of Ministers; 2) the Technical Council for Disaster Management, led by the director-general of the National Institute of Disaster Management and national directors from other relevant sectors; and 3) the National Emergency Operations Center, with a multisectoral coordination in addition to four coordination hubs in the regions affected by the cyclone, so as to facilitate operations and the exchange of responses.

This enabled the Mozambique government to undertake immediate rescue and humanitarian aid operations. To this end, on March 19, 2019, it declared a state of national emergency. On March 26, it established the Post-Disaster Recovery Programme (PREPOC), in which the following measures were adopted: approval of a reconstruction plan based on a pragmatic and community-based approach in areas containing public and private buildings, equipment and roads; gradual reconstruction of houses through the action of partners and civil society. Medical care and drug distribution were conducted via the regular network of the national health system and via the provincial health directorate of Sofala and partners, with the aim of ensuring primary care for victims.

With Decree no. 26/2019 of April 11, the government created the Post-Cyclone Idai Reconstruction Office, based in the city of Beira. Ephemeral by definition, this Office was tasked with coordinating damage assessment, besides elaborating the reconstruction program and monitoring its application (MOÇAMBIQUE, 2019b, p. 16).

These are the crucial measures advanced by the government in order to care for victims and mobilize resources for dealing with primary necessities. However, policy compliance in Mozambique has always faced budgetary difficulties and institutional and technical weaknesses. In addition, the impact of Cyclone Idai has compromised the already limited reaction capacities of this economically poor nation. Aware of these weaknesses and orienting itself through the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment Methodology (PDNA), the government mobilized the Post-Idai Reconstruction Office in order to request the support of the World Bank, the United Nations, the European Union and the African Development Bank in the design and implementation of an evaluation and humanitarian assistance program for the affected regions. Meanwhile, several countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations voluntarily offered assistance to the

country in terms of transportation means for air, land and water rescue, emergency kits, field hospital assembly and medical teams. These issues are further explored in the following section, which characterizes international responses in the context of a natural disaster.

### **3 INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE: ACTIONS AND HUMANITARIAN AID**

Humanitarian aid constitutes a set of reactions, actions and distribution of resources by multiple international actors with the aim of saving lives, alleviating suffering, and maintaining and protecting human dignity during and after emergencies (GHA, 2012).

Responses to humanitarian crises encompass material assistance and services (accommodation, water, medicines); emergency and food aid (short-term distribution and supplementary feeding programs); coordination of relief, protection and support services (coordination, logistics and communication). They also include the reconstruction and rehabilitation of affected regions (GHA, 2012).

These actions and resources aim to ensure human dignity in the face of tragedy and are crucial to ensure that, once rescued, people can resume the development of their potentialities and rebuild their communities. For this reason, one of the objectives of humanitarian aid is to reduce “reduce vulnerabilities and strengthen the capacity of people and their communities” (GÓMEZ-GALÁN; SANAHUJA, 1999, p. 34, our translation).

In fact, the aforementioned forms of aid have a commitment to the concept of a social or existential minimum, which defines the baseline conditions for the maintenance of a dignified life. Therefore, the protection for people affected by disasters is in line with the objectives of the “Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response,” which guarantees their right to live. According to this view, aid constitutes the primary dimension of humanitarian actions because it contributes to the maintenance of people’s dignity, allowing them to come up with ways of solving individual and collective problems.

The degree and volume of humanitarian aid varies according to the event’s magnitude and the vulnerability of the affected country. It is short-term by definition, with the purpose of preserving life and alleviating the suffering of a disaster’s direct victims. In this sense, the effect of aid on the country’s condition is influenced by the contribution of other factors essential to sustainable human development.

Aid resources come from governments, institutions, private contributions from foundations, companies and individuals. These are channeled through NGOs, United Nations programs and Red Cross activities, and sent to countries facing complex crises caused by conflicts and natural disasters. These funds and resources are distributed to affected countries by means of various forms of transaction. For instance, they can be transferred by a donor government to a recipient government (public sector), and this form of transaction may involve institutions from both the donor country and the local government, besides multilateral organizations and other supranational institutions, in addition to NGOs (local and international) and civil society organizations. Specific actors can then pass on the fund to local organizations, so they can to implement the necessary actions (GHA, 2012).

The rules of behavior in humanitarian actions follow the principles of impartiality, independence and neutrality, anchored in the substantive principle of humanity, which aims to prevent and alleviate suffering, protecting the human rights of those affected. According to this premise, actions must be carried out with impartiality and resources must be distributed without deference to criteria of class, sex, race, nationality, religion or political ideal. Moreover, aid should not be an instrument of foreign policy aimed at achieving the pragmatic interests of donors (GÓMEZ-GALÁN; SANA-HUJA, 1999).

### **3.1 Post-Idai humanitarian actions and aid**

After Cyclone Idai, Mozambique received support from multilateral organizations specializing in disaster relief: The World Food Programme (WFP) carries out emergency and development actions with a focus on food aid, in order to reduce the vulnerability of the affected people and communities, while the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) works in collaboration with partner governments to reduce the vulnerability of women and children in the context of natural disasters, ensuring protective conditions for health care, education and housing.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provides governments with technical assistance, strengthening their institutional capacities and natural disaster-related policies. The United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-HABITAT) is dedicated to promoting socially and environmentally sustainable cities, seeking to provide adequate shelter for all residents.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) promotes agricultural development, encouraging its member states to improve their nutritional system and national food security. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) supports countries in the development of policies to reduce poverty and promote gender equality. Other international non-governmental organizations have been important in helping and assisting the populations affected by Cyclone Idai, especially Doctors Without Borders and Save the Children.

The concrete data on financial resources received by Mozambique is inconclusive. This stems from the government's difficulty to characterize the different modalities and levels of international aid transactions, and also from the fact that the country's populations continue to receive international resources. However, in December 2019, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) submitted a report indicating that up to that point the amount of humanitarian assistance provided to Mozambique had reached US\$ 300 million.

Around 1.9 million people received food assistance and more than 704 children underwent screenings for acute malnutrition. More than 765 thousand families were assisted by programs providing access to drinking water and sanitation. Approximately 464,000 children received education services and 386,000 women and girls were provided with programs for the reduction of gender-based violence (OCHA, 2019).

These resources were divided among priority nuclei devised by the government and international partners. The education nucleus received only US\$ 1.6 million, 4% of the requested amount (US\$ 39 million). It should be noted that this nucleus still needs US\$ 8.1 million for continuing its activities, especially the provision of temporary learning spaces and basic teaching materials (OCHA, 2019).

The food security nucleus received US\$ 133 million, 39% of the requested amount (US\$ 336.6 million). It still requires US\$ 32.7 million to implement urgent food assistance measures and strengthen further subsistence-support activities (OCHA, 2019).

The health nucleus received US\$ 1.5 million, only 4.9% of the requested amount (US\$ 30.7 million). An additional US\$ 4 million was requested to meet the recurring demands of 250,000 affected people, via the implementation of community disease surveillance and measures for basic access to health (OCHA, 2019).

The nutrition nucleus received US\$ 10.2 million, 31% of the requested

amount (US\$ 32.9 million). More than \$3.3 million are still required, in order to provide over 3,000 children and pregnant women with acute malnutrition screenings and nutritional supplements (OCHA, 2019).

The first emergency actions advanced by the humanitarian aid effort included the following areas: sanitation (construction of artesian wells, treatment and supply of drinking water and construction of latrines); housing (inauguration of resettlement neighborhoods with houses and temporary shelters); infrastructure (rebuilding of schools and health facilities, construction of more field hospitals and delivery of medicines to isolated or difficult-to-reach areas).

Subsequently, there were measures to strengthen population resilience and promote sustainability, namely: chicken farming activities based on an associative model; production of community-owned, environmentally sustainable stoves; opening of community agricultural fields for the production of vegetables and corn; opening of microcredit systems and saving accounts based on associative models; experimental implementation of clean and renewable energy (solar panels) in resettlement neighborhoods.

These actions undoubtedly had an important role in helping the victims of Cyclone Idai. However, to what extent was the Mozambican government able to coordinate them and ensure the protection of human rights and security of the affected people?

#### **4 THE CHALLENGES AND PITFALLS OF HUMANITARIAN AID**

When assessing the effect of humanitarian aid on a catastrophic event, one must focus on the relief of human suffering and the prevention of large-scale human losses. In other words, if the humanitarian aid effort is able to save lives, it is understood to have achieved positive effects in regards to its initial objectives. We then go on to examine the conditions in which lives were saved and how people are living in the post-event period, with a view to understanding whether the humanitarian aid action was consistent with the principle of ensuring fundamental human rights (since, otherwise, the effect of aid on the country's recovery would have to be regarded as limited).

Humanitarian aid reveals huge inequalities between providers – usually rich countries – and recipients – usually poor countries. Despite the observance of humanitarian aid's behavioral principles, this is not an entirely selfless act. Thus, there is an asymmetrical relationship between providers

and recipients, in which the former can persuade a recipient state to adopt certain policies and conditions (BRETT, 2016).

This asymmetry allows the imposition of certain values or perspectives regarding human rights, including particular humanitarian aid approaches, creating difficulties for effective problem resolution (DONNELLY, 1982). If it is to receive the resources it requires to face its fundamental problems, the recipient country more often than not will have to adopt a passive and compliant stance in regards to the stipulated terms of this transaction (ZORMELO, 1996; MANNING; MALBROUCH, 2010).

One of the recurring challenges in the execution of humanitarian actions is task coordination. Since the country has a history of cyclonic occurrences, several strategies had already been tested in Mozambique. During the intense tropical cyclone Favio, in 2007, the Cluster Approach was adopted, showing the potential of a nucleic organizational structure for meeting the demands and problems of disaster relief. However, the communication between the clusters was not satisfactory, due to the low number of employees and technicians tasked with participating in meetings and the duplication of clusters. This led to problems of coordination and inefficient use of resources (FOLEY, 2007).

One of the main conclusions of the aforementioned report – which interviewed humanitarian actors – ascertained the importance of humanitarian assistance in Mozambique. However, questions were raised regarding the assistance model's effectiveness, considering the magnitude of the emergency and the frailties underlying Mozambique's national response abilities. According to Conor Foley, the important question is whether the Cluster Approach was chosen because it was the most effective model for providing support to Mozambique's government and population, or because it was intended as a test for the international community's capabilities in the management of complex emergencies. In case of the latter, "then it could be legitimately asked whether the government and people of Mozambique should have been given any say in whether they wished to be used in this experimental manner" (FOLEY, 2007, p. 20).

The humanitarian aid system has improved coordination between actors and incorporated new aid modalities, especially social protection in humanitarian programs, including the provision of cash, vouchers and cash-for-work. These modalities have significant benefits, since they stimulate local markets and enable beneficiary countries to choose their priorities (GHA, 2012).

In the context of Idai, one of the challenges was to coordinate air transport to the affected regions. This mode of transportation also became an option for bringing workers, food and medicine to difficult-to-access places. During emergency operations, the aid offered by some countries consisted of aerial and aquatic transports, used for rescuing victims. In the case of aerial means (helicopters and airplanes), there was no guarantee that they would limit their flight paths to places affected by the catastrophe. Mozambique did not have the technological means (such as radar equipment) required for fine-grained control of the helicopters and planes used in humanitarian operations. Thus, it was unable to verify that they were effectively engaged in humanitarian assistance missions instead of pursuits that were alien to the country's interests.

In other words, Mozambique did not have the technical capacity to lead the coordination of air and water operations, since it lacked the technologies taken for granted by regional and world powers.

The registration of affected populations is also a challenge in humanitarian emergencies, given the difficulty in recognizing and identifying those who have actually been affected. In the case of Cyclone Idai, there was an “avalanche” of volunteers – whether affiliated with NGOs or individually – headed for the affected regions and willing to take part in humanitarian assistance operations. However, the migration and customs authorities faced immense difficulties in controlling their internal movement, since they were unable to certify that these volunteers were still practicing the activities they declared they intended to practice when entering the country.

In the 2007 mission report on Cyclone Favio, Conor Foley pointed out that the lack of financial resources for NGOs to lead operations and effectively distribute donations was an important issue. Another issue refers to the distribution of food. When collectively sourced, this process may entail political manipulation, failing to benefit genuinely vulnerable groups such as women and children.

Food aid is considerably expensive, since it includes production, transportation and management costs that vary according to the severity and location of the event. In Cyclone Idai, humanitarian access to various areas remained limited due to safety constraints, road damages and transportation challenges in the affected islands.

According to a statement by Human Rights Watch, when access by road is compromised, food becomes the responsibility of local leaders, who must take care of its storage and distribution. However, as explained

by a community leader, “food is not enough for everyone: some local leaders have exploited the situation by extorting people in exchange for including their names in the distribution lists” (MOZAMBIQUE: VÍTIMAS..., 2019, our translation). Some women complained about the food distribution lists due to their families simply being excluded: “in some villages, there are women and children who have not seen any food in weeks” (MOÇAMBIQUE: VÍTIMAS..., 2019, our translation).

Women and girls were regarded as comprising the most vulnerable group by the various organizations active in the Cyclone Idai relief operation, since they remained largely devoid of protective measures and actions. At the Beira Conference, held between May and June 2019, the Humanitarian Consortium composed by Save the Children, CARE and Oxfam (COSACA) pointed out the exposure of women and girls to Gender Based Violence (GBV) in the post-Idai context. This type of violence was linked to this group’s societal circumstances, such as having to walk long distances to collect water and having to use shared bathrooms at night in badly illuminated places.

Exposure to violence is also present in the family nucleus, as a result of growing tensions and the pressure caused by basic subsistence needs. This type of violence puts fundamental rights (access to school) at risk and compromises girls’ individual empowerment, since outside the school space they may be exposed to precocious marriage and sexual violence.

On the occasion of the International Donor Conference in Beira City, a transformative change was proposed to assist women and girls in rebuilding their lives. The following measures were suggested to donors: a commitment to invest in opportunity networks, leveraging the skills of local partners and women’s rights organizations; assurance of basic women needs, particularly in rural settlements and communities, in addition to prioritization of women-led income-generating activities alongside food security and reduction of gender inequality (COSACA, 2019).

The regional context – in which 37% of households are headed by women – makes this measures worthy of consideration. They would ensure targeted care as an effective strategy for limiting the impacts of natural disasters on the deepening of poverty and violence at the regional and national level.

For the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, the United Nations provided a hotline to follow up on cases involving these and other forms of abuse, corruption and fraud. One of the advantages is the fact that

its operators speak the main local languages. This facilitates the provision of information and assistance (USAID, 2020).

Six months after Cyclone Idai, UNICEF estimated that nearly one million people, including 160,000 children, were still experiencing food shortages and worsened nutritional status, meaning that they were at a serious risk of losing their lives. This points to the gravity of the impact of cyclones Idai and Kenneth in regions that were already facing nutritional problems, fundamentally justifying the continuation of preventive actions. For this reason, certain measures were reinforced: acute-malnutrition screening of more than 735 thousand children under the age of five, with more than 400 thousand expected to be screened by February 2020; treating of almost 10,000 malnourished children using therapeutic food supplements; support for the innovative mobile brigades created by Mozambique's Ministry of Health, which reach remote communities to provide unified health and nutrition services (UNICEF, 2020).

More than a million people still live in homes destroyed or damaged by cyclones Idai and Kenneth. Almost 92,500 remain displaced throughout 71 resettlement areas in the country's central and northern regions. They need food, education and health services. More humanitarian resources are required if affected people are to preserve their lives and continue supporting their families (OCHA, 2019).

## **FINAL REMARKS**

International humanitarian law comprises more than a hundred international conventions. These are complex norms aimed mainly at armed interstate conflicts. In this sense, there are few conventions towards the governance of humanitarian assistance programs in the eventuality of natural disasters. Their enactment would allow for the creation of international legal protection devices aimed at economically disadvantaged states. This protection would be provided by more economically robust countries, in deference to the principles of international law, such as respect for the national sovereignty of states and non-interference in their internal affairs, besides good-faith cooperation and solidarity.

The occurrence of Cyclone Idai brought to the fore several problems related to the humanitarian aid process in economically disadvantaged countries. Although the volume of donated resources is an important matter, it is also crucial to help the affected country create the necessary

conditions for fulfilling its capacity to meet the affected populations' basic needs. In this way, when humanitarian aid ceases and calamity partnerships decrease, the government should be able to autonomously manage its own problems, ensuring basic services and products, especially the safeguarding of fundamental rights.

Mozambique is still trying to solve the problems caused by Cyclone Idai, and requires further humanitarian aid. The city of Beira is slowly recovering. Private initiatives by individuals and private companies are doing their best to rehabilitate homes and factories. However, the public sector remains dependent on the beginning of the execution phase of the institutional programs that have already been planned. The pledges of financial aid made at the 2019 International Donor Conference in Beira are yet to be fulfilled. This severely limits the execution of post-Cyclone Idai reconstruction efforts.

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