

P R E S S E M I T T E I L U N G

Madagascar: Children ‘facing tragedy upon tragedy’ ahead of fourth tropical storm in five weeks

Antananarivo, 21 February 2022 – Children and communities on the South East Coast of Madagascar who have lost their homes and schools from successive major storms are steeling themselves for the country’s fourth tropical storm in five weeks, Save the Children said today.

The news that Intense Tropical Cyclone Emnati, will make landfall tomorrow, 22 February, comes 100 days after the Glasgow Climate Pact at COP26 in November, and illustrates the vulnerability of low-income countries like Madagascar to the impacts of the climate crisis, the child rights organisation said.

In the past five weeks, more than 25,000 people have been displaced by Storms Ana, Batsirai, and Dumako, and 133,627 children have been left without education as 2,562 classrooms have been destroyed.

Many schools that are still standing are now acting as shelters for people who have lost their homes to the storm. Feno*, 13, has been sheltering in a school building with his family after Cyclone Batsirai destroyed their home two weeks ago. He said: *“I am not going to school now because all the classrooms have been destroyed by the cyclone. What I need is for our house to be rebuilt, as well as our school. I’m really afraid that our house will never be rebuilt.”*

Onja*, 13, from Mananjary, had to flee to a temporary shelter in a school before moving to shelter in tents in a camp, where she remains with her mother and two brothers. She said: *“When the cyclone hit Mananjary, on Friday afternoon, the wind was blowing hard. We prepared ourselves to move to the school. I was very afraid because once we were at the classroom, the wind was blowing hard and water was getting inside, so we had to sweep it away. We could not sleep till the morning.*

“We had to be relocated here because the cyclone destroyed our house. Our home and fields where we grew Bambara peas and sweet potato leaves have been completely destroyed. The harvest was supposed to be in April but the cyclones damaged everything. It’s more difficult to find food now, because the cyclone destroyed all the plants which we would have sold.

“For now, schools are being repaired so we don’t have class. I am afraid of the next cyclone because I heard it will be stronger than the last one.”

Tropical Cyclone Emnati is projected to reach Category 4 – the second highest category on the Saffir-Simpson hurricane scale – with strong winds of up to 220 km per hour, before making landfall in areas around the eastern area of Mahanoro and the south of Madagascar, with heavy rainfall, floods and mudslides expected. The country’s central-eastern region already severely hit by Storm Batsirai, another Category 4 storm, just over two weeks ago, is likely to be affected, Save the Children said.

Save the Children's Programme Director for Madagascar, Tatiana Dasy, said: "Over the past few weeks, children across eastern Madagascar have had nearly everything ripped away from them. Tens of thousands have lost their homes, and 133, 627 have been left with no access to education as these cyclones have torn school buildings apart.

"Already, roughly 9 out of 10 people in Madagascar live below the global poverty line, and more than half of children are chronically malnourished. This country is just not prepared for these kinds of successive climate shocks. We are extremely worried about further devastation that Cyclone Emnati will bring. With the drought and hunger crisis in the south of the country, and these successive tropical storms, children in Madagascar are facing tragedy upon tragedy."

Save the Children's Global Director of Child Poverty and Climate, Yolande Wright, said: "What we have seen play out in Madagascar over the past few weeks is a perfect example of the multi-layered, intersecting crises of climate and poverty. Children who have done nothing to contribute to the climate emergency are shouldering the burden of the rise in global emissions that is fuelling more frequent and severe disasters, in countries that are already struggling with high levels of poverty.

"100 days since the Glasgow Climate Pact was made at COP26, the devastating situation in Madagascar – and elsewhere - should stand as an illustration of why the leaders of high-income countries and historical emitters need to urgently step up actions on all fronts – including climate financing for the most vulnerable."

Save the Children has carried out a needs assessment of communities affected by the successive tropical storms and is preparing a response in partnership with the organisation Humanity and Inclusion.

*Names have been changed to protect anonymity.

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Kontakt:

Save the Children Deutschland e.V.

Pressestelle – Marie-Sophie Schwarzer

Tel.: +49 (0)30 – 27 59 59 79 – 226

Mail: marie.schwarzer@savethechildren.de

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Im Nachkriegsjahr 1919 gründete die britische Sozialreformerin und Kinderrechtlerin Eglantyne Jebb Save the Children, um Kinder in Deutschland und Österreich vor dem Hungertod zu retten. Heute ist die inzwischen größte unabhängige Kinderrechtsorganisation der Welt in rund 120 Ländern tätig. Save the Children setzt sich ein für Kinder in Kriegen, Konflikten und Katastrophen. Für eine Welt, die die Rechte der Kinder achtet. Eine Welt, in der alle Kinder gesund und sicher leben und frei und selbstbestimmt aufwachsen und lernen können – seit über 100 Jahren.