

## Relief Fund Update January-March 2008

The Mothers' Union Relief Fund offers emergency support to families all over the world who have been affected by natural or man-made disaster. The Mothers' Union is well placed within local communities to be able to offer assistance quickly to families whose lives have met with adversity. Emergency supplies of food, medicine, blankets and other essential items can be purchased locally and distributed swiftly to those most in need.

### Cyclone in Vanuatu

In January 2008 a powerful cyclone struck the northern islands of Vanuatu, causing devastation to local villages. Homes on the Banks Islands were particularly badly damaged, with many collapsing completely. Crops were destroyed and some water sources were contaminated. Main roads were blocked with fallen trees and there was also some local flooding. Mothers' Union in Banks & Torres diocese feared that there would be food shortages in the weeks immediately after the cyclone and predicted an increase in illnesses such as diarrhoea.

*"It has been described as the second to worst after Cyclone Wendy in 1972. This is due to the fact that it has caused a lot of damage".*

Mrs Shirley Smith, Mothers' Union Worker, diocese of Banks & Torres.



*The devastation was similar to that in the Solomon Islands in April 2007 (shown above).*

Mothers' Union in Banks & Torres diocese wished to help the families that had been affected by Cyclone Funa by distributing emergency supplies of food, clothes and other essential items. A Relief Fund grant was immediately sent to the diocese to enable them to purchase these supplies.

#### Damage caused by Cyclone Funa:

- **Homes:** severe damage to traditional homes in the Banks Islands, with many collapsing completely.
- **Food crops:** The main foods such as banana, breadfruit, manioc, water taro, yams and other fruit trees have been badly damaged.
- **Cash crops:** Coconut trees have fallen down. It is expected that crop production as a main source of income will decline. Kava has also been destroyed which many people usually make money from. Vanilla and pepper will take time to recover.
- **Water:** Sources of water have become contaminated and are not fit to drink.
- **Community assets:** Halls, church buildings, and other buildings have been damaged.
- **Infrastructure:** Roads were blocked with fallen trees. Flooding also occurred due to a rise in the sea level.
- **Telecommunications:** Telephone lines were affected in places including Merelava, Torres and Ureparapara.

## Earthquake hits Democratic Republic of Congo

On 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2008 an earthquake hit the city of Bukavu in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the surrounding area. According to local reports, more than 10 people were killed and over 234 people were injured. Schools, churches, hospitals and other community centres were destroyed or damaged with 33 aftershocks causing further damage.

Many homes were destroyed and a large number of people were left homeless and in need of food and medicine. Mothers' Union in Bukavu wished to help these families with gifts of blankets, mosquito nets, clothing, medicine and soap. A Relief Fund grant was immediately sent to enable Mothers' Union to purchase and distribute these supplies.

## Severe flooding in Mozambique & Malawi



Families affected by flooding in Niassa, Mozambique

*"During the last quarter of 2007 we were praying for rain because the drought was so severe in some parts of the country. Now there is too much water in some parts of the country and we are praying that rains stop here and in the neighbouring countries".*

Mrs Leonor Zacarias, Mothers' Union Diocesan President of Lebombo.

In January 2008 heavy rainfall resulted in severe floods affecting a large portion of Mozambique. Relief Fund grants were immediately sent to the dioceses of Niassa and Lebombo to help purchase emergency supplies.

In February 2008 Mothers' Union in Malawi reported that the heavy rains and flooding had also affected many parts of Malawi, which neighbours Mozambique.

*"It has been raining almost everyday and some maize/rice gardens have been swept away. This year there is going to be hunger in many areas of our diocese."* Mrs Agnes Mkoko, Mothers' Union Worker, Upper Shire.

According to Mrs Yasinta Matambo, Mothers' Union Worker for the diocese of Southern Malawi, the floods particularly affected the lower shire valley with a total of 10 villages in the diocese seriously affected. Approximately 1,565 households in these 10 villages had been displaced and crops, livestock and possessions damaged or destroyed. Many displaced people were now living in churches or school premises.

The Mothers' Union in Upper Shire and Southern Malawi dioceses have made both immediate and long-term plans for the communities affected. In the short-term the dioceses wished to provide emergency items such as food, bedding and clothes and Relief Fund grants have been made towards purchasing these items for the affected families.



Extract from one of the main newspapers in Malawi.

## Further assistance sent to Iraq

In 2007 a number of Relief Fund grants were sent to the Mothers' Union in Iraq, to help in the ongoing relief effort there. With these funds Mothers' Union in Iraq was able to purchase essential and desperately needed items including food, blankets and medicine but these items were soon gone.

In February 2008 updates were received from the Mothers' Union leader, Nawal George, and Canon Andrew White highlighting the continuing great need and immense challenges faced by families in this troubled area on a daily basis.



*Mothers' Union members in Iraq celebrating Lady Day*



*Mothers' Union members gather together at St George's Church, Baghdad.*

*"Despite all the difficulties here, which continue to be immense the Mothers' Union is doing wonderfully. The church has seriously grown in size with over 1500 members. Mothers' Union is continuing to run all the relief work and continues to provide a lot of support. I had to make some of the Mothers' Union members go home the other day. They have been working in 15hr shifts every day. They take their work so seriously. The MU is not just providing for the Church but the whole community. The Governor of Baghdad recently called for them because he wanted to know who the Mothers' Union were and how they did so much". Canon Andrew White, Vicar of Baghdad.*

A further Relief Fund grant was sent in March 2008 to enable the Mothers' Union to continue their relief effort on the ground.

## How you can help...

### Through prayer

Please pray for all the families that have been affected by these disasters, especially for families who are grieving for lost friends and relatives. Please pray also for all those who are working tirelessly to bring aid and relief to these families.

### By giving

The Relief Fund supports vital Mothers' Union work where it is most needed. This relief work is only possible through the continued enthusiasm, financial and prayer support of our members and friends around the world. By making a donation to Mothers' Union Relief Fund you can make a real difference to vulnerable communities across the world by enabling us to send help immediately as an emergency arises.

Call 020 7222 5533 now to make a donation over the telephone using a credit or debit card, or send a cheque made payable to *"The Mothers' Union Relief Fund"* to: Mothers' Union, 24 Tufon Street, London, SW1P 3RB.

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For more information about the Mothers' Union Relief Fund, please visit the Mothers' Union website [www.themothersunion.org](http://www.themothersunion.org) or e-mail [worldwide@themothersunion.org](mailto:worldwide@themothersunion.org)