

I have just finished speaking on the phone to Simon Chikwana, **zm's** Field Director. Please pray for him as he juggles his many responsibilities and now faces very difficult additional challenges. He visited the Lower Shire area and said that the *"devastation there is horrible"*. Simon has said that *"everyone, every church in Malawi has been affected in one way or another"*. This latest bulletin brings news from his recent visit to the Lower Shire and also an update from Chirombo ZEC.

Bangula is a town in the Lower Shire area. Simon visited the ZEC church there last Friday, and it seems as if the area around nearby Makhanga is one of the worst affected in Malawi. The Ruo and Shire rivers meet just to the south of Makhanga town and the excessive flow in both rivers led to flooding over a 5km radius from the confluence. The floods had devastating consequences, including destroying the railway line and bridge leading to Mozambique. 35 families have been displaced from ZEC's prayer house at Makhanga as a result of the floods. Not only will they have lost their houses and most of their possessions, but also their fields. At a village called Manyowa, near Makhanga, only the village chief survived because he was away on business. The rest of the village was completely swept away with no survivors. Further down the Shire river at Nsanje ZEC, Simon said that *"only four or five have lost their houses"*, but since crops tend to be grown closest to the river, *"all their fields have gone"*. We remarked that Simon's comment was an indication of how bad things are: he talked about only four or five losing their houses as if it was a positive thing. How would we feel if all we possessed was washed away?

The pastor from Chirombo ZEC, Pastor Maluwati, was able to reach Blantyre and bring news from his church, which we had been very concerned about. Chirombo, which is in the south eastern corner of Malawi, beneath Mount Mulanje, was badly affected when the Phalombe river overflowed. The pastor reported that over 2,000 houses have been destroyed, and that 50 families from his church have been displaced. The families concerned are now all living in three different primary schools. The area is still surrounded by water and he had to use a canoe to get out. Tragically, a whole family from his church was swept away, and only the body of one child has so far been found. The pastor is now very concerned about access to safe drinking water, and he says that some people have escaped the floods only to die from water-borne diseases.

We are still waiting to receive an accurate update from Pastor Mvula Mvula of the River of Life Evangelical Church about the situation in his churches, but are thankful that there seem to be no very serious concerns. As soon as we receive news we will give an update via this bulletin. We have been encouraged to hear about the activity of other small Christian charities like Aquaid and ICW/To All Nations in the flood affected areas. It is good to know that we are not working alone.

Prayer points:

- Please pray for Simon – that the Lord would give him and his team strength and wisdom.
- Our thinking is that our approach will be to provide further emergency relief, followed possibly by some support for housing repairs. The next step will involve supporting churches with income-generating schemes to provide support until the next harvest time in spring 2016. Please pray for guidance and wisdom from the Lord as we work with our partners to develop these plans.
- Please give thanks for the partner organisations in Malawi that we work alongside.

Yours in Christ

Michael Beesford