

FLOODS RESPONSE: HEAL OUR LAND - HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT

Impact Report

2 June – 15 September 2022

PROJECT NAME	FUNDING ALLOCATED (EXCL. VAT)	FUNDING SPENT (EXCL. VAT)	AMOUNT RETURNED TO SOLIDARITY FUND
<i>KZN Flood Relief and Trauma Counselling</i>	R4.25m	R2.84m	R1.41m

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SOLIDARITY FUND FLOOD RESPONSE MANDATE

The Solidarity Fund brings together government, business, and civil society to help South Africa respond to the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Following a resolution from its Board of Directors, the Fund expanded its mandate to include disaster relief response for the benefit of all victims of any disaster in South Africa, where such relief may be required. This response includes the provision of humanitarian relief, including food, water and sanitation, emergency health care services, shelter, and other support services

After severe flooding devastated large swathes of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and the Eastern Cape in April 2022, the Fund responded to the government's request to assist with the flood response efforts and set up the Solidarity Fund Flood Response.

The impact of the floods has been profound. Approximately 444 deaths, 40 000 displaced people and 13 790 totally or partially destroyed homes were recorded in KZN. While the crisis in Eastern Cape is on a smaller scale, the impact on these mostly rural, socio-economically deprived communities is no less devastating. Over 3 000 families, 1 943 homes, and countless livestock, crops, and farming equipment and infrastructure were destroyed as a result of the floods. Across both provinces, access to health, education, food, transportation, and water and sanitation services have been interrupted due to the extensive damage to infrastructure and supply chains.

As part of its flood response, the Fund, following a board resolution and support from relevant donors, redirected some of its resources and raised additional funds to fund seven projects. These projects focused on supporting those displaced by the flooding by providing food and essential products, integrated shelter services, and psychosocial support.

PROVIDING SANITATION AND HYGIENE SUPPORT AND TRAUMA COUNSELLING

With so many people displaced by the flooding and forced to live in community centres, there was an urgent need for essential sanitation and hygiene supplies to ensure safe living areas, hygiene safety, and prevention of disease breakouts.

Bulk Drop Hygiene Packs

Since community sharing is high amongst those living in community centres, the Fund supported Heal Our Land to procure and distribute bulk drop hygiene packs to community halls for sharing by all individuals. This ensured equal access to items for everyone in the centre. It also brought cost efficiencies, including better pricing through buying in bulk and cheaper logistics on bulk deliveries.

Individual sanitation and hygiene kits and blankets

As individuals left the community halls and returned home to rebuild their houses or go to transition camps, Heal Our Land also provided individual hampers of sanitation and hygiene kits and blankets.

Psychosocial support

Beyond just meeting their basic needs, many were traumatised by the flooding and the loss they experienced – of their homes, their livelihoods, and sometimes even their family or friends. Heal Our Land also provided trauma counselling and social worker referrals where needed.

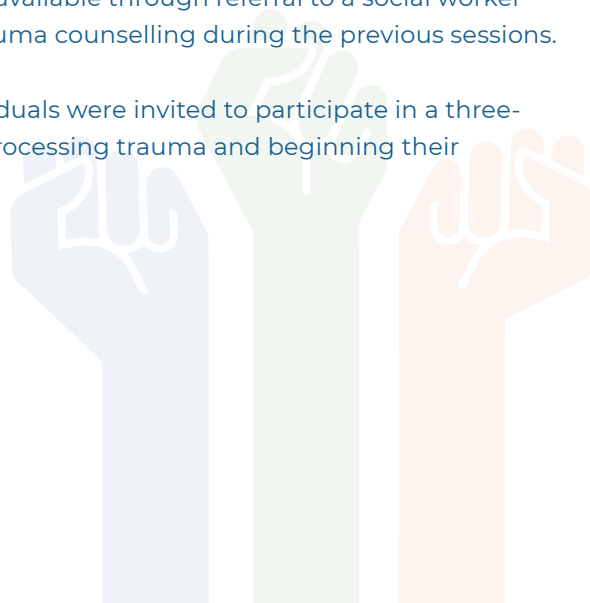
Mass group counselling and therapy sessions assist individuals in processing grief while allowing facilitators to identify individuals who need further referrals and one-on-one counselling. However, displaced people were not only congregated collectively in community halls, but many had also been taken in by neighbours and were living within the broader community. The Fund's approach, therefore, aimed to reach both groups of displaced people through two streams, namely, therapy and training and support.

Therapy

The counselling approach in community halls and in the community was undertaken across three levels:

- Firstly, large group therapy sessions were held (called group hearings in community halls and through community dialogues in the community) (Level 1).
- Followed by small group sessions (separated by demographic characteristics (gender, age, trauma, etc.) (Level 2) taking place two days after the group therapy in the halls, and as break out session after community dialogues.
- Finally, one-on-one counselling (Level 3) was available through referral to a social worker for those identified as needing additional trauma counselling during the previous sessions.

Where deep-seated trauma was identified, individuals were invited to participate in a three-day Healing of Memories workshop focused on processing trauma and beginning their journey to restoration.



Training and support

Trauma Awareness and Resilience (TAR) Workshops and facilitator training: As part of the long-term approach, the project capacitated community leaders to develop skills to cope with trauma themselves so they were better able to lead and assist others through trauma. The TAR workshops equipped community leaders with the skills to process trauma from their own experience and then be able to assist others to build resilience.

Support Groups: To provide sustainable long-term level three psychosocial support, the project worked with community members to establish and /or strengthen support groups at community churches through training and support. Individuals that received trauma debriefing and therapy were then connected with community structures that offer weekly support groups for continued assistance.

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PARTNERSHIPS

The Fund partnered with Heal Our Land as the project implementing partner due to their track record in working collaboratively with local KZN partners in disaster relief for almost 20 years. Heal Our Land worked in partnership with local implementation partner The Domino Foundation who they collaborated with to provide disaster relief support after the July 2021 civil unrest. The Domino Foundation team supported the distribution of sanitary and hygiene items and trauma counselling activities, and the required reporting on the activities they supported.

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IMPACT

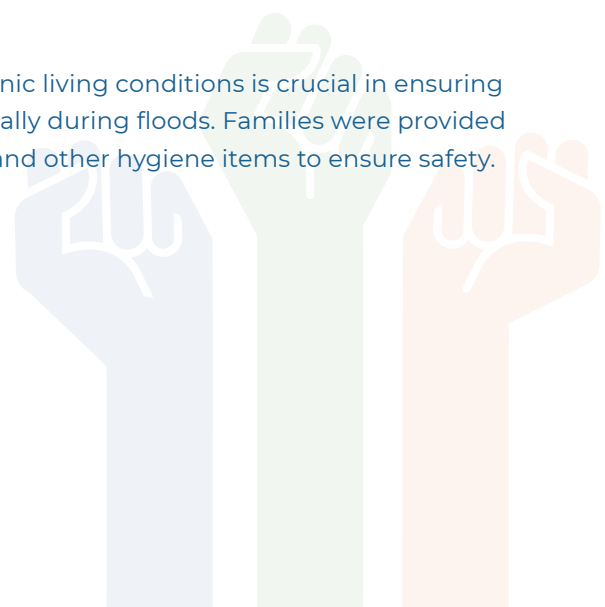
6 147 beneficiaries reached with sanitation and hygiene support

Bulk Drop Hygiene Packs

The first delivery of essential hygiene items was made to sixty community halls between the 29th of June 2022 and the 29th of July 2022, reaching 4 120 beneficiaries. These sixty community halls spanned 39 municipalities and suburbs, mostly in eThekweni District which was hardest hit by the flooding.

These hygiene packs were essential to the displaced people, and we received feedback that they were very grateful and appreciative of the hygiene support. Families were extremely grateful for Hygiene items as these were the 'last' things they worried about when fleeing their homes. Community Hall coordinators appreciated the bulk bleach, dishwashing soap and washing powder.

Ensuring clean environments and safe and hygienic living conditions is crucial in ensuring cholera and other outbreaks do not occur, especially during floods. Families were provided individual toothbrushes, toothpaste, hand soap, and other hygiene items to ensure safety.



The bulk hygiene packs included the following items:

Deodorant (Women)	Deodorant (Men)	Sanitary pads (10s)	Tooth-brush	Tooth-paste	Soap	Washing powder (2kg)	Bleach (2l)	Dishwashing Soap (5l)	Face Cloth
4 712	2 324	4 712	4 153	4 153	8 306	540	240	120	4 153

Individual sanitation / hygiene kits and blankets

2 027 individuals received individual sanitation and hygiene kits and blankets when they moved on from the community halls. This support helped those as they moved forward with rebuilding their lives.

3 633 beneficiaries reached with trauma counselling and psychosocial support

1. Community Hall services:

- Delivered 20 x group hearings for 1 202 beneficiaries.
- Delivered 69 x small groups for 1 116 beneficiaries.
- Delivered 433 x one-on-one sessions.

2. Broader Community:

- Delivered 20 x trauma awareness dialogue sessions at a community level.

3. TAR Workshops/Training:

- Delivered ten x TAR workshops.

4. Support Groups:

- Established two local community church support groups, for long-term community support, with three more planned to open in October.

Comprehensive trauma counselling was a genuinely essential service for displaced people. We know that food, hygiene, and housing are necessary for survival, but often, people's internal trauma is never dealt with during a crisis like this. We are proud of the various levels of support that we were able to offer and the short-term impact and long-term difference it has made in many people's lives. Beneficiaries told us they appreciated being listened to and were happy to know they were not alone; we believe we are creating new and stronger communities through this support.

- **Community halls:** These halls provide a unique and particularly challenging environment for the displaced people who endured living in confined spaces with many other families without privacy. This caused many levels of frustration and tension, on top of the issues they were facing with finding alternative housing, grief, loss and trying to maintain a sense of normalcy with work or school. The counseling support helped people to cope with living under these circumstances as well as addressing their other concerns.
- **Focus groups:** These allowed for reconciliation within and between people in the halls, understanding each other's pain, and, as a result forgiving others. One of our biggest impacts was the trust we built with the communities. Survivors in the community halls were becoming disillusioned with being promised support by other entities and this support not materialising. They were very appreciative of the fact that the project team honoured their commitment to return for additional counseling sessions and to continue to provide support. People opened up more due to this trust that was built up, helping the

team to have a greater impact on the beneficiaries. Our teams were flexible and able to discern, observe and adapt, as each hall had unique issues and challenges.

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BENEFICIARY STORIES AND INSIGHTS

Sanitation and Hygiene Support



Three bulk hygiene drops were planned, one delivery per month, anticipating products to be used within the month. Although bleach, washing powder and dishwashing liquid were still needed, most individuals made toiletries extend across months. We also learnt that each hall was unique and had a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to hygiene items. Some halls worked well with sharing items amongst displaced people, while some halls had separate groups and individualistic approaches to items and would have preferred individual packs per person.

Trauma Counselling

The community was very receptive to the counselling approach in general, with individuals expressing gratitude from hearings, small groups, one-on-one sessions and workshops.

"Thank you for listening to me. No one ever has."

"This is the first time I felt people cared enough to accompany me through pain. People have come, done interviews, and after that, we have never seen them again, but you came back. I feel hopeful, but I am still a long way to being totally healed."

"I almost left the session because I thought all these people were the same. I am so grateful that they convinced me to continue with the sessions. I am feeling hopeful and feel like the weight I have been carrying all these months has been offloaded."

"Yesterday was the first night I really slept, and I feel my son felt safe."



Community hall trauma counseling session

This approach was one of a kind, and was created for the floods response. We learned that mental health services were not readily available to many individuals and families before the floods. This meant, at first, individuals were sceptical and did not participate in the hearings. What worked in our favour was having the services provided in a tiered approach, requiring our teams to return every few days. This allowed for trust to be built (most were surprised when our teams returned and stuck to their 'promises'), which contributed to higher than expected requests for one-on-one sessions.

Another learning was that although we primarily assisted flood-related trauma, most individuals had never had the opportunity to process or think about their thoughts and have time to reflect. This meant that past trauma was brought to the surface during one-on-one sessions with social workers. here is a need to provide further support for long-term sessions. Heal Our Land is looking for funding from other sources to hold follow-up sessions, allowing their team to follow up with individuals and cases as one, one-on-one session is not always enough.

Counselling and trauma support is solely client-centric and depends on the individual. Although one group hearing, focus groups, and one-on-one sessions were planned, we could not apply a standardised approach. Social workers found it difficult not to spend more time and conduct follow-up visits after sessions while trying to meet the number of sessions within a tight timeframe. We hosted a debrief workshop with all role players and have begun to try to unpack and generate future ideas for continued success.

CHALLENGES AND MITIGATING ACTIONS

Sanitation and Hygiene Support

REGISTERS:

- **Challenge:** As with any project of this scale, and the nuances of living in community halls - people going to work and trying to carry on with life, ensuring our reporting and registers were fully complete was a challenge. During our first few hall drops, we faced these issues - not having the correct number of items for the number of people etc., we quickly realised we needed a more efficient system. Some of the signatures at the beginning were missed.
- **Mitigating Action:** Our team decided to arrive at a hall one day, collect the exact number of residents, and leave a register to sign. The next day they would collect the registers and arrange the correct number of items. Then the delivery would take place, and the collection of signed registers. We have signed affidavits from the community coordinators for the missing signatures.

PEOPLE LEAVING HALLS:

- **Challenge:** Delays in the start of the project, people leaving halls after counts were done, and people making hygiene and sanitation items last longer than expected, meant there were less items than originally anticipated, leading to a unspent project funds.
- **Mitigating Action:** The Solidarity Fund was approached to re-allocate the surplus funds to support food relief. However, due to the need to meet tight project close-out requirements, the funds were returned to the Solidarity Fund.

Trauma Counselling

TIME REQUIRED:

- **Challenge:** One of the challenges the project team faced was the added time required for community sensitisation and awareness raising prior to carrying out project-related activities. Some community leaders were overwhelmed and suspicious of new (additional) interventions. Time is required to work with the leaders to inform them of the project and added benefits for their communities.
- **Mitigating Action:** The project team mitigated this by starting with the TAR workshops with the leaders and service providers. This helped open doors for further work in these communities.

LEVEL OF TRAUMA:

- **Challenge:** Some community members and leaders have experienced deep levels of trauma, both primary (direct) trauma and secondary (in-direct) trauma, and ongoing trauma work is required at a broad community level.
- **Mitigating Action:** Where there are severe individual cases, these were referred for one-one counselling and Healing of Memories healing weekend courses.

SUPPORT GROUPS:

- **Challenge:** Getting all five support groups started and running by the programme end date was a challenge.
- **Mitigating Action:** Two support groups were completed within the implementation timeframe. The remaining three are currently taking place. The registers and a report on these will be sent to the Fund on their completion.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Collaboration is key:** Having trusted and reliable partners are key. This allows people and organisations to 'run in their lanes', where they are the 'experienced professionals'. The project's partnerships allowed for streamlined support. Psychosocial response, although impactful, highlighted the enormity of the problem and the need for this intervention as an ongoing intervention within communities.
2. **Capacity Building of Hall Co-ordinators:** This is critical. We came across halls that were well organised and others that were not. This meant that paperwork, numbers and relevant information would need to be fact-checked constantly as this is forever changing. Going forward, we will be adding a capacity-building module to our disaster work to ensure community mobilisers are equipped and ready to bring order from chaos during a disaster.
3. **Digitise project and capacitate staff:** A rapid response was required due to the scale of the disaster that these floods inflicted. This meant systems were being built while implementation was underway, but most were paper-based and admin-heavy. Streamlining paperwork and distribution registers and digitising the entire system would provide more frequent live data to make decisions and adapt where necessary. This should save time, money, food and other costs. Several partners supported by the Fund for the floods response are collaborating on a digital app they can use to help streamline their work on this and future disasters.
4. **Stakeholder engagement:** Although we engaged with community halls weekly to understand needs and support areas, people moved in and out of halls so frequently, and other organisations also provided support. We placed a permanent team member at each displacement camp to ensure no duplication or 'old' data and numbers, to prevent mismatched deliveries.
5. **Social Cohesion:** Trust, at all levels is critical for teams and partners to function. Based on KwaZulu Natal's history over the past two years, trust was lacking between corporate, the government, civil society, and communities. It created enormous challenges on the ground, especially with data gathering and registers' follow-up. It was also evident that between communities and ethnicities, distrust remains high (evident in halls where segregation occurred). The Domino team are putting together a project plan for a social cohesion intervention to help measure, improve and foster more significant levels of community trust and cohesion.

CONCLUSION

In partnership with Heal Our Land the Solidarity Fund has been able to make a real impact on the lives of many displaced by the Floods. This has brought comfort and renewed hope to beneficiaries while their communities rebuild.

