

Eastern Cape floods cause R4.5bn infrastructure damage

It will cost the Eastern Cape provincial government an estimated R4.5bn to fix and replace road and bridge infrastructure damaged by the floods that recently battered the province.



Source: www.pixabay.com

This was confirmed on Monday, 20 February, by Eastern Cape cooperative governance and traditional affairs (CoGTA) MEC Zolile Williams during a media briefing.

“This doesn’t include all other infrastructure, especially water and sanitation infrastructure that was also damaged. The estimated cost for human settlements stands at R420m, for all the recoveries,” he said.

While search and rescue operations are underway for four missing people, 10 people have died in the floods.

Since 8 February, the province has been experiencing higher-than-normal rainfall, resulting in flash floods which have displaced families and destroyed economic infrastructure in six districts.

Torrential rains caused by El Nina effect

“The report of the [South African Weather Service] SAWS to the last Cabinet meeting indicated that the cause of these torrential rains was the El Nina effect which was responsible for above-normal rainfall and this was to remain with us until the end of the first quarter of 2023,” he said.

Williams said the current disaster took place against the backdrop of similar destructive weather in 2021 and 2022. The impact of the disasters, he said, “remains an albatross” on the Eastern Cape government.

While the floods of 2021 and 2022 had been declared a disaster, causing R1.9bn in destruction, no funds had been availed to the province, said the MEC.

“This background must inform us that the situation we are facing is unprecedented and we are in a worse situation, both in terms of our financial situation and the state of economic infrastructure,” he said.

The 2023 disaster, he said, was more devastating, saying it had destroyed both proclaimed and access roads, bridges and homes in most rural districts.



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14 Feb 2023



Communities displaced

“The Chris Hani District Municipality was the worst hit due to the displacement of communities. Those communities were placed in community centres. Most communities in Dr AB Xuma and Emalahleni municipalities were cut off of services such as schools, healthcare facilities and businesses to sustain their livelihoods.”

In the Joe Gqabi District, landslides were experienced, particularly in Elundini Local Municipality. Here, several schools were heavily affected by the roads being cut off.

“Water and sanitation infrastructure was damaged in most districts, resulting in water challenges to the communities and consequences to the local tourism industry,” he said.

Williams said tourist towns like Coffee Bay had been completely cut off by the floods, saying this was “detrimental”.

“The magnitude of the disaster is such that our efforts to return the situation to normality is undermined completely due to the continued inclement weather and momentum it takes for infrastructure to be rebuilt.

“ *The Eastern Cape is one of the worst affected provinces by the floods in the country. This is as rain continues to fall in different areas across the country.* pic.twitter.com/sJHiOpdo2q — SABC News (@SABCNews) [February 18, 2023](#) ”

Request to involve Sandf

“We have submitted to the inter-ministerial committee on disaster a request to involve the Sandf [South African National Defence Force] for them to provide temporary bridges in all the affected areas so that communities can be connected to services,” he said.

Various government departments and NGOs and some political parties had been on the ground to assist communities in distress.

Construction of temporary shelters and temporary roads has begun. Despite this, he said the province was “overwhelmed due to limited resources”.

On education, he said the provincial department would arrange “catch-up plans” to accommodate lost time caused by the floods.

“Our assessment teams are still struggling to extract all the information on infrastructure damages due to the bad state of roads. This delays our submission to the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC),” he said.

However, he said the province was engaging state agencies to assist in this regard.

Rain in the province remains persistent, said the MEC.

“It is already predicted that we may face a tropical cyclone called ‘Freddy’ through the Madagascar island, and this may result in more flash floods that may affect this province. Our disaster teams must remain on alert until the situation subsides,” he said.

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