



Solidarity after the cyclones in Mozambique

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When I traveled to Mozambique for my fieldwork this year, I knew a couple of days before I arrived that the country was threatened by Cyclone Idai, growing into a huge tropical storm. Landfall was in Sofala province in the center of the country, one day before my arrival. I, myself was based in Maputo, the capital in the far South for the first couple of weeks of my fieldwork stay, where I conducted interviews with experts on large-scale land investments and mobilization of civil society. After a week of uncertainty, when electricity and phone networks were down in the Sofala province, the extent of the destruction slowly became clear. The United Nations labelled Idai later as 'one of the worst weather-related disasters (...) in the Southern hemisphere', because of the large number of fatalities and destruction (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/03/1034951>). I met people who told me firsthand that everything in their apartments was destroyed. They came to Maputo, to get cash, as ATMs were not working in Beira due to a lack of electricity.

My whole stay was accompanied by Idai, and later the cyclone Kenneth, which made landfall one month later in the North of Mozambique. Not only were tropical storms often mentioned in everyday life, when people talked about own experiences they made with storms

and floods, but also in my interviews as examples for the importance to preserve the ecological equilibrium, or when interviewees talked about adaptation strategies. This helped me to get a better understanding of the ecological, social and economic interrelations in the context of my research.

Under these circumstances, what impressed me most was the large extent of solidarity among the people in Mozambique. Donation boxes for victims of the cyclone were everywhere: In supermarkets, where lists stated what was most needed and how these items could be bought as donations, in ministries, local NGOs and international organizations. Clothes and food donations were always welcomed. Also, several charity events and concerts took place in Maputo which, instead of an entrance fee, collected donations to support the people in these areas. Especially in the immediate crisis response to Idai, support and solidarity was overwhelming. As roads were still destroyed in the center of the country, donations were gathered at the port of Maputo. To prepare the containers for shipping, volunteers were urgently needed. So many people were around that they formed human chains to pack the containers. The number of volunteers increased daily and, after three days, some of them had to be sent away, because the area of the port was too crowded. All the support and solidarity accompanied me during my stay and highly impressed me. It showed that global cooperation starts on the local level.

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