

Overview of the impact of Cyclone Chido on Mayotte

18/12/2024 | Mayotte

Context & Rationale

Tropical cyclone Chido struck Mayotte, an overseas department of France, with full force on 14 December, with wind speeds exceeding 220 km/h, an event that Mayotte hasn't seen in over 90 years. The cyclone with heavy rains caused flooding and according to the latest confirmed information killed 21 people, injured 830, displaced 100,000 people, affected 7,816 buildings and left 15,000 people without access to electricity¹.

It also severely damaged the infrastructure, including the airport and Mayotte Central Hospital, and making most roads inaccessible. Pre-existing vulnerabilities, such as a large number of informal housing, contributed to the level of impact and damage caused by the cyclone.

This report examines the impact of the cyclone in the context of pre-existing vulnerabilities and highlights the resulting humanitarian needs. It should be noted that the availability of information from different independent sources is limited at this moment, therefore most of the information presented here could not be triangulated.

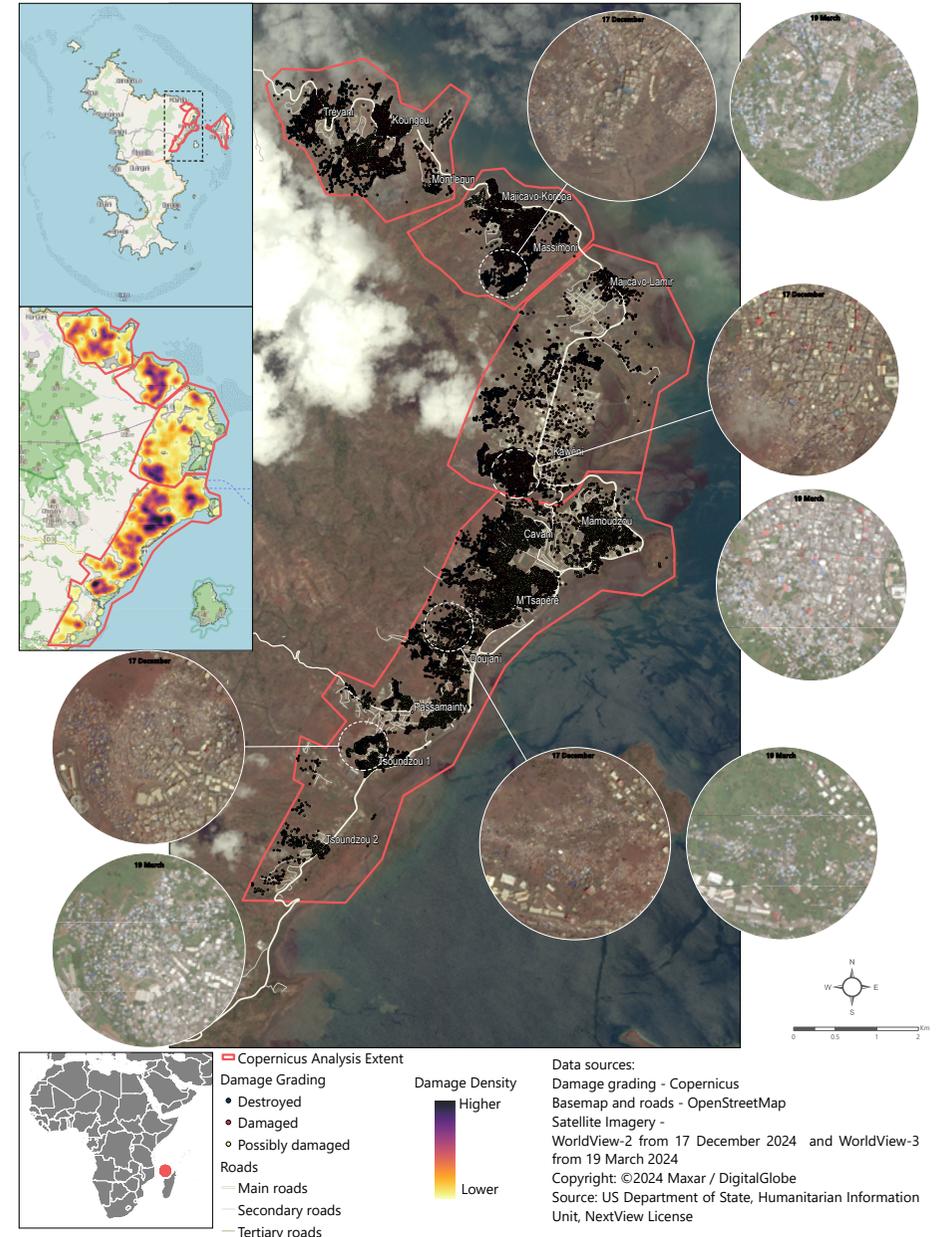
Key Messages

- **Shelter destruction:** One-third of the population living in informal shelters has been displaced, leaving an estimated more than 100,000 people without housing.
- **Damaged infrastructure:** Roads, airports, and ports are inoperable; water, electricity and most telephone networks have been cut, complicating the humanitarian response and limiting search-and-rescue operations.
- **WASH risks:** Contaminated water sources and inadequate sanitation infrastructure significantly increase the **risk of disease outbreaks**.
- **Access to basic needs:** Food, fuel, and market access are severely constrained, with curfews implemented to prevent looting.
- **Healthcare collapse:** Damage to hospitals and healthcare facilities hinders the response to acute and chronic conditions.



Mayotte - Tropical Cyclone Chido
Storm Affected Areas - As of 17 December 2024

For Humanitarian Purposes Only
Production date : 17 December 2024

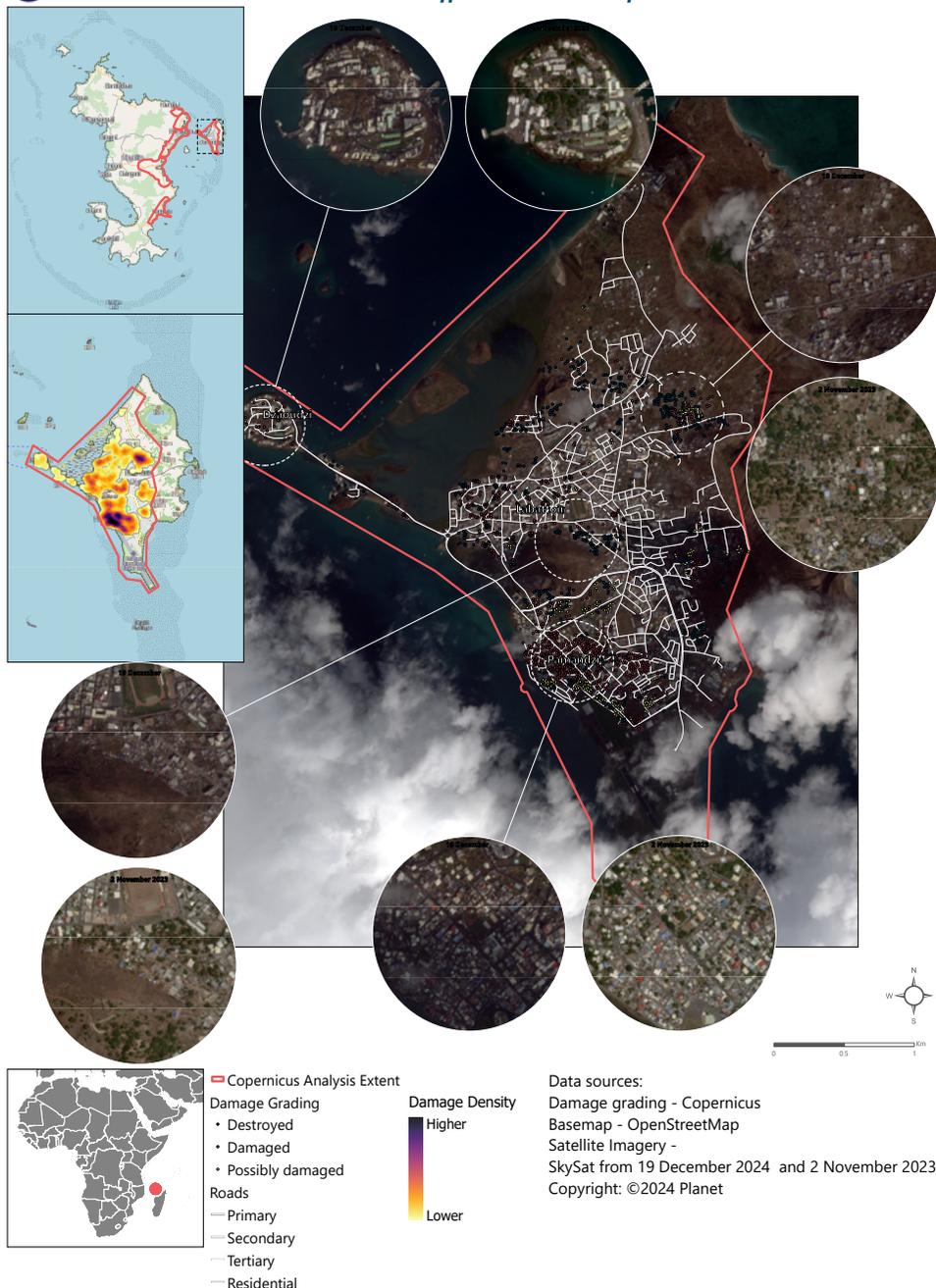




Mayotte - Tropical Cyclone Chido

Pamandzi Island Storm Affected Areas - As of 19 December 2024

For Humanitarian Purposes Only
Production date : 19 December 2024



Pre-existing vulnerabilities exacerbated the impact of the event

Informal housing

In Mayotte, the department with the highest rate of poverty in France, 77 percent of the people live below the national poverty line, and at least one third of the population lives in makeshift informal housing, made of sheet metal and other lightweight materials². **These shelters have been completely destroyed by the cyclone, leaving more than a 100 thousand people without a shelter** (see estimations of shelter damage in certain areas in the map on page 1). Reports mention that some have already started to reconstruct makeshift shelters², while others are accommodated in 70 emergency centres¹.

The damage might have been amplified also by the fact that Mayotte is usually not affected by large cyclones - the last one with comparable force struck the islands more than 90 years ago -, as Madagascar acts as a natural shield and usually weakens cyclones before they reach Mayotte, making the population less aware of the potential risks, and contributing to the lack of adequate preparedness to such an event.

Social barriers

Sources estimate that besides Mayotte's official population of 320,000 there could be as many as 200,000 undocumented residents due to illegal immigration^{2, 4} that were likely harder to reach with alerts and preparedness measures. Emergency alerts were reported to be sent out only in French, even though a large part of the population does not speak the language².

Inadequate water and sanitation infrastructure

With makeshift shelters having limited access to proper sanitation², water-borne diseases were already a significant risk before the cyclone. Insufficient access to clean drinking water was also a pressing issue, and the cyclone's destruction of infrastructure has further exacerbated these challenges, making sanitation and water access one of the most urgent priority needs.

Damaged infrastructure prevents adequate response

Most roads of the country were damaged by the cyclone and by mudslides, and remain inaccessible as of 17 December. Boats at the port have been destroyed, and the airport of Mayotte has also been damaged, with only military flights are operative expectedly until 19 December, making the timely delivery of adequate aid extremely difficult.

Water, electricity and most telephone networks have been cut, hindering the ability to comprehensively assess the severity of damage and needs due to lack of information coming from the field. A warehouse for humanitarian supplies on the Petite-Terre island was partially destroyed and the Red Cross building on Mamoudzou was damaged, impacting the capacity to respond by actors on the ground¹.

Healthcare facilities, including the Mayotte Central Hospital have also sustained damage, limiting the possibilities to provide adequate healthcare and response to the needs of those affected.

Key needs and risks

Key needs are related to shelter, access to food, water and to basic services, including healthcare services. Search and rescue operations are also still ongoing, according to the French Red Cross, on 16 December there were still many missing persons³.

Access to markets is limited, with shops only partially open to avoid crowds, ATMs out of order and gas stations reserving fuel for emergency services and law enforcement. Authorities ordered a night-time curfew starting on 17 December, citing fears of looting⁴.

Key risks include potential disease outbreaks due to contaminated water sources and damages to WASH infrastructure. Overcrowding in emergency shelters further elevates the risk of outbreaks, while damage to healthcare infrastructure poses additional challenges for individuals with chronic conditions.

ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).

Endnotes

¹ [OCHA, "Southern Africa: Tropical Cyclone Chido - Flash Update No. 5, as of 17 December 2024", Reliefweb, 17 December 2024](#)

² [Amanda Morrow/RFI, "Mayotte cyclone lays bare the fragility of France's 'forgotten' territory", RFI, 18 December 2024](#)

³ [Croix-Rouge Française, "À Mayotte, le chaos et l'effroi après le passage du cyclone Chido", Croix-Rouge Française, 16 December 2024](#)

⁴ [Rachel Savage/The Guardian, "Cyclone Chido: many missing in Mayotte as death toll rises in south-east Africa", The Guardian, 17 December 2024](#)