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To whom it may concern

Cyclone and the affected areas in Malawi

Intense Tropical Cyclone Idai was one of the worst tropical cyclones on record to affect Africa and the Southern Hemisphere. The long-lived storm caused catastrophic damage in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi, leaving more than 1,200 people dead, thousands more missing and thousands of animals have tragically died as a result of the disaster. Idai is the deadliest tropical cyclone recorded in the South-West Indian Ocean basin. In the Southern Hemisphere, Idai currently ranks as the second-deadliest tropical cyclone on record, behind the 1973 Flores cyclone.

Following its first landfall, Idai brought torrential rains to south-eastern Malawi as a tropical depression. These areas saw above-average rainfall in January, enhancing the risk for floods. Widespread flooding began on 9 March, washing out bridges, roads, and destroying numerous homes. Fourteen districts experienced direct effects from the storm, with Nsanje and Phalombe being hardest-hit. Rising waters overwhelmed flood mitigating infrastructure, causing dams to collapse. Approximately 1,400 homes were destroyed in Blantyre. After Idai made its second landfall in Mozambique on 15 March, the storm caused even more damage in the region. Two hydroelectric power plants along the Shire River suffered damage and were taken off-line, rendering a loss of 270 MW of Malawi's 320 MW hydroelectric power capacity.

The disaster directly affected 922,900 people nationwide - an estimated 460,000 being children - 125,382 of whom were displaced or rendered homeless. A total of 60 people were killed and 577 others were reported injured as a result of flooding. A further three people are reported missing.

Houses, farmland and roads - as well as the animals in these areas - have been swept away by severe floods. Huge areas of land were underwater.

Surviving animals are sick, injured and starving. Many animal owners have had no choice but to flee, so animals were left to fend for themselves.

There was desperate need of our help, and we assisted as many animals as possible.

Stranded animals were at risk of developing deadly diseases from parasites.

Animals trapped in dirty water for prolonged periods are also in danger of developing other painful ailments such as foot rot and lung infections. Dr. Edwin Nkhulungo, a government veterinary officer responsible for southern Malawi, said: "The floods in these areas may have longer lasting effects on animals, especially with regard to disease incidences and khola destructions."

The organisation and implementation of the project

We are happy as All Creatures to have been given this, once in a lifetime opportunity, to lead in the implementation of such a huge project, which had a direct and positive impact on the farmers and their animals.

Nearly 71.4% of the planned areas were covered during the implementation, most of the animals received treatments, from lumpy skin vaccines, oxytetracycline, ivermectin, new castle vaccine, alamyacin sprays, rabies vaccinations and albendazole medicines.

We tried to distribute the medicine so that each animal will receive one or more on those according to the necessities of the animal. All the farmers were happy and the general response, of such initiatives and intervention was positive.

We managed to do in the following areas, starting with total number of animals done per centre

1. Mphoka...590
2. Chikaonga ..1013
3. Mumbo...1040
4. Saidi Dip Tank ...636
5. Nyazelera...904
6. Sombani dip ...1837
7. Ngolozu.....571
8. Manase971
9. Mpasu225
10. Waluma EPA...503
11. Chilayeni sch. ...165
12. Nachipo village and Minga'mbo school ...629
13. Chinani dip ...1698
14. Chilinga dip1033
15. Mwalala GVH ...532

Now data per species as follows

1. Cattle.... 5 620
2. Goats4 906
3. Sheep162
4. Pigs53
5. Dogs674
6. Cats78
7. Ducks ...4

8. Chickens ...850

Total number of animals = 3D 12 347

These are the animals that received treatment one way or another

Areas or centres which were left uncovered due to the deficiency of medicines are as follows

1. Chigumukile
2. Khoncha
3. Ntambula
4. Namphepo
5. Magololo

Challenges registered while undertaking this exercise

With all the thankful remarks articulated, I would like to go a little bit deeper and express my concerns and recommendations, for future easy implementation of interventions like these ones:

1. All people, government or those in private sector, were supposed to have gone to an orientation program or workshop that could have helped in the briefing of the plan, helped with dose calculations basing on weight estimations, a further orientation about the drugs that were not supposed to be administered to pregnant animals and lactating animals), vaccination preparations and applications, restraint of animals, all the pharmacological advises specific to the drugs to be administered were supposed to be on the fingertips of each and every person who was implementing the project.
2. Most of the proposed drugs especially Albendazole, is very difficult to administer orally to cattle, with 2000 nervous cattle, its impractical to even think one will open the mouth of the animals and dose them.

Drugs which are always easy to administer, to large animals, are ivermectin or dips (cypermethrin or Amitraz dips), the whole of Phalombe has dip tanks, which, if we could have looked for ectoparasiticides and activate all the 11 dip tanks; this was going to reduce stress on the animals and will have simplified part of the work. Lots of animals with ticks were noted.

Most animals in Phalombe were limping, some with visible hernias and lots of wounds that for sure needed surgical interference. Painkillers were a must have type of drugs in such interventions.

Feeds and supplements were supposed to be part of the intervention, most animals were weak especially cows, body condition score of around 2 and 3 in 40% of the animals. We had cases of animals that were anorexic and lethargic, medicines like drips with 50% glucose, borogluconate of calcium etc, were supposed to be part of the list of drugs. Moreover, dogs were having lots of TVT, ticks and mange. It is really important to consider things like this in any intervention.

The response of the general population on chicken vaccines wasn't so good, farmers in Phalombe are more into cattle, goats, sheep, and dogs, so the budget next time should focus more on those animals and limit resources on other animals. Focus on cats pigs, hare, and chickens won't have a positive response no matter the sensitization program one tried to implement basing on our experience.

Safety clothing was a must, to prevent minor accidents that we experienced with nervous animals in the field as well.

What I think was needed in the cyclone intervention is as follows:

1. Ivermectin pour on/ not injectable, CYPERMETRINE/amitraz, activating 11 dip tanks
2. Lumpy skin vaccines enough to cover at least 80% of the animals
3. Alamycin sprays
4. Xylazine, ketamine, diazepam
5. Calcium borogluconate, 50% dextrose, 5% dextrose, RL and duphalyte
6. Carprophen, meloxicam, flunixin meglumine
7. Bandages, and all wound dressing materials
8. Rabies vaccines, new castle vaccines
9. Vincristine, fenbendazole/pyrantel/Pet D
10. SURGICAL KITS, large animal and small animal,
11. Small animal syringes, 1ml, 2ml, 3ml, 5ml, 10 ml, 20ml, needles, 20G, 21G,22G
12. Syringe cattle injection guns, 20ml, 10ml, then needles 16G, 17G, 18G
13. Gloves, gumboots, scrubs, masks and t-shirts for participants
14. Hay, straw, dog food, cat food, multivitamins, mineral supplementary feeds.
15. Antibiotics like oxytetracycline for cowdriosis
16. Imidocarb, Atovaquone and azythromycin,

Conclusion.

In conclusion I would like to say, the implementation of the cyclone response plan was done well and in the future for projects like this some of the recommendations outlined above should be taken into consideration so that the whole activity provides a better impact on the affected animal population.

Yours faithfully

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