

# OPERATIONS UPDATE



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## **BAHAMAS, CUBA AND MEXICO: HURRICANE WILMA**

27 January 2006

*The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.*

### **In Brief**

**Appeal No. 05EA024; Operations Update no. 01; Period covered: 27 October, 2005 to 27 January, 2006; Appeal coverage: 67.1%;** ([click here to go directly to the attached Contributions List, also available on the website](#)).

#### **Appeal history:**

- Launched on 26 October, 2005 for CHF 1,918,000 (USD 1,498,000 or EUR 1,237,000) in cash, kind or services to assist 14,000 families (70,000 beneficiaries) for 6 months.
- Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated: CHF 220,000.

**Outstanding needs: CHF 630,112 (USD 489,711 or EUR 405,201)**

**Related Emergency or Annual Appeals: El Salvador: Floods and Volcanic Activity (Appeal 05EA020); Central America, Mexico and Haiti: Floods from Hurricane Stan (Appeal 05EA021)**

#### **Operational Summary:**

Immediately following the emergency and in view of the devastation caused by Hurricane Wilma, the Bahaman, Cuban and Mexican Red Cross Societies worked arduously to respond to the needs of the most affected families. Damage and needs assessments are complete, with on-going distributions of food and non food items. In the Bahamas, relief supplies have been provided for the most affected districts of Grand Bahamas Island that were the hardest hit by storms and sea-surges, causing destruction to thousands of homes. In Cuba, the most affected municipalities were Campechuela, Media Luna, Niquero and Pilon (Province of Granma) and Guama and San Luis (Province of Santiago de Cuba), where the Cuban Red Cross and its volunteers, the Government and Civil Defence, through their plan of action, are providing assistance to the most affected families who are recovering from the effects from the storm. In Mexico, damage and needs assessments for the hardest hit municipalities in the State of Yucatan and Quintana Roo are complete, and on-going distributions of food and non food items will be completed by the end of January in the city of Tizmin, State of Yucatan, which experienced extensive flooding. To date, a total of 11,563 individuals in Mexico benefited from relief operations. In addition, psychosocial support has been provided for the most affected families by Red Cross volunteers in the three countries.

The Appeal period will to be extended by 3 months, until 26 July 2006, for the Cuban Red Cross in order to complete the implementation of relief assistance. The Appeal coverage now stands at 67.1% - additional funding is required to implement the Appeal objectives in their entirety.

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*All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>*

## Background

Hurricane Wilma, the 12th hurricane and 21st named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season, battered Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, Cuba, the state of Florida in the United States, and the Bahamas between 20 and 24 October 2005 causing widespread destruction. Wilma first formed as a tropical depression on 15 October in the southeast of Jamaica. The storm brought heavy rains and flooding to the Cayman Islands, Haiti, Honduras and Jamaica as it moved towards Mexico. The category four storm first came ashore on the Yucatan Peninsula on Friday, 21 October, bringing winds of up to 225 km/h (140 mph). The slow moving storm remained over the area for two days, killing at least six people. The somewhat weakened storm then moved back out into the Gulf of Mexico, heading towards Florida. The storm regained strength over the warm waters of the Caribbean, lashing Cuba with its outer rain bands, before slamming into Florida as a category three storm. By Monday afternoon, the hurricane had moved out into the Atlantic Ocean, causing heavy rains and flooding in the Bahamas. The hurricane then headed north through the Atlantic Ocean.

In total, at least 25 people were killed during Wilma's march across the Caribbean: 11 in Haiti, 1 in Jamaica, 6 in Mexico, 6 in Florida and 1 in the Bahamas. Hurricane Wilma virtually decimated the Mexican resort town of Cancun and the island of Cozumel, destroying hotels and homes and littering the streets with debris. It is estimated that approximately 60 percent of the 80,000 residents of Cozumel were affected. Cancun's airport was shut down on 21 October and tens of thousands of tourists who were not able to leave were evacuated from hotels along the coast to shelters.

Immediately following the hurricane, shelter conditions were difficult as there was no electricity and little food and water. Prior to the hurricane, Mexican officials had declared a state of emergency in 18 municipalities in the state of Yucatan and 5 municipalities in the state of Quintana Roo. With this measure, the Revolving Natural Disasters Fund (FONDEN) was activated for the immediate relief of the affected population in both states. Emergency teams were able to reach the affected areas a few days after the hurricane, but access was difficult due to flooding and debris in the roads. The security situation in the area was also unstable as there were reports of looting and rioting. Mexican security forces in the area restored order.

Although Cuba was spared a direct hit as the storm stayed north of the country on its way towards Florida, Wilma lashed the capital city of Havana on 23 October with 138 km/h (86 mph) winds, bringing heavy rains and flooding. Flood waters of up to six feet were reported in some parts of the city. Authorities had previously cut off electricity in the city to prevent electrical accidents, leaving the city's 2 million residents without power. Storm surges forced the evacuation of the town of Santa Fe, south of Havana. Almost 800,000 people were evacuated from high risk areas and the provinces of Pinar del Rio, Habana, Guantanamo, Santiago, Granma and Holguin, as well as the city of Havana, were put on alert. Although most of the people evacuated stayed with family members, 71,000 people were housed in 1,325 emergency shelters that were opened in the country. According to the preliminary damage reports, approximately 5,000 homes were damaged, primarily as a result of sea surges and flooding. The

government also opened 755 food distribution centres to serve the affected population. The most affected provinces were Granma, Santiago, Guantanamo, Camaguey, Cienfuegos, Pinar del Rio and Sancti Spiritus, primarily in coastal communities. No deaths were reported as a result of Hurricane Wilma in Cuba.

Wilma battered Florida for about six hours on 24 October, causing at least six deaths and widespread flooding and damage. The storm made landfall in the early morning as a powerful category 3 hurricane. As Wilma moved across Florida, it was downgraded to a category 2 storm. By just after noon, the storm's centre was back over the Atlantic, where it regained strength to category 3 status. Although there were fears that many people had ignored the evacuation orders issued for much of southern Florida, more than 33,000 people were reportedly staying in shelters. At least 3.2 million people were left without electricity. Some 3,000 National Guardsmen were mobilized to respond to the hurricane, and another 3,000 were placed on alert.

The storm was a category 3 hurricane when it struck the islands of the Bahamas on 24 October, with maximum sustained winds of 120 miles per hour, moderate rains but with a surge of about 10-15 feet. At least one person, a child, died in the floods. Although it was forecasted that the Central and Northern islands would be affected, namely North Andros, Bimini, Berry Islands, Abaco, New Providence and Grand Bahama, it was Grand Bahama and Bimini which received the brunt of the hurricane, with Abaco, New Providence and Berry Islands receiving minor damages mostly to trees and utility poles. There was large scale flooding as a result of sea surges, which washed away a number of homes, and it is estimated that some 800 people stayed in shelters following the flooding.

The island of Grand Bahama suffered the most serious damages; the population of Grand Bahama is 47,000 and more than 7,000 persons were affected. Furthermore, Grand Bahama had the largest number of vulnerable people, who had still not fully recovered from hurricanes Frances and Jeanne that hit in September of 2004. The communities of Eight Mile Rock, Hepburn Town, Hunters, Martin Town and Pinder's Point suffered major destruction to homes and utilities due to a sea surge of approximately 15 to 20 ft. More than 1,000 persons were evacuated to shelters in Freeport. Electricity and telephone services were disrupted in most of Grand Bahama. The island of Bimini, which has a population of 1,717, suffered significant damages to homes, trees and utility poles due to heavy rains and sea surge. Most of the residents who had moved to shelters after the hurricane have now returned to their homes.

Prior to hitting Mexico, rains associated with Wilma caused flooding in Belize, the Cayman Islands, Haiti, Honduras and Jamaica. The situation in these countries is now largely under control.

## Operational developments

### *Bahamas*

Immediately after the hurricane hit, the President and Director General of the Bahamas Red Cross (BRC), together with a number of volunteers travelled immediately to Grand Bahama and Bimini and conducted damage and needs assessments. Following the initial assessments, a 40 foot container of hygiene items, buckets, plastic sheeting and food items, was delivered to Grand Bahama Island from the Bahamas Red Cross headquarters, making emergency distributions possible during the first week of November 2005. Additional items such as water, used clothing and ice were provided by private donors.

The BRC staff and volunteers of the Grand Bahama Red Cross conducted additional assessments, identifying 3,000 individuals (460 elderly people, 472 children under 5 years of age and 2,068 adults) who had been affected by Hurricane Wilma and were staying with friends or relatives. As a result of these thorough assessments and beneficiary lists, the BRC targeted Lewis Yard and Pinder's Point under the plan of action for assistance.

For this relief operation, a delegate from the Federation provided support to the BRC and coordinated the delivery of relief items, including two additional containers containing blankets, hygiene kits and plastic sheeting which were sent by the International Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) in Panama, arriving in Grand Bahama Island during the first week of December. In addition, the American Red Cross sent a consignment of hygiene kits from its stocks. From October to date, there has been a constant pipeline of relief items and on-

going distributions to the most affected communities with some assistance planned for the Islands of Abaco and Bimini.

### ***Mexico***

On Friday, 21 October, two PADRU disaster management delegates travelled to Mexico City and provided support to the Mexican Red Cross (MRC) and then worked together with the MRC and took part in damage and needs assessments in Cozumel. The Mexican Red Cross carried out distributions of food and non food items in addition to contributions received nationally of food and water, having negotiated for 10 Aero Mexico flights to ship food and bottled water from the capital.

After the hurricane hit, distributions took place on a large scale to several of the hardest hit areas, including Cancún, Puerto Maderos, Isla de Mujeres, Playa del Carmen and Cozumel. The National Society used seven trailers with a 40 tonne capacity and sufficient relief goods for some 2,400 families. Branch teams delivered basic first aid and basic health care services, conducting rescue activities and the evacuation of people to shelters. The Red Cross branch in Cancun benefited from 55 volunteers, Playa del Carmen 20 volunteers and Cozumel 5 volunteers. Additional volunteers were called upon from the states of Hidalgo, Jalisco, Nuevo Leon and Tabasco. In addition, psychosocial support teams were mobilized to the field from the capital.

Run-off waters caused by Hurricane Wilma also resulted in widespread flooding in the communities of Cancunikin, Tizimin, San Roman, Naranjales Esperanza and Nuevo Valladolid, in the State of Yucatan. To date, the Mexican Red Cross has provided 240 tonnes of relief food and non food items through a distribution centre in Tizimin, benefiting 15,000 families in the most affected areas.

### ***Cuba***

The Cuban Red Cross (CRC) mobilized 5,381 volunteers in the affected regions in order to participate in the evacuation of those in high-risk areas, to work in temporary shelters, to provide psychosocial support and to assist with family linking and tracing. In addition, specialized search and rescue teams worked together with affected communities and assisted with evacuations. The original plan of action was revised in December 2005 with the support of a disaster management delegate from PADRU.



La Havana is battered  
by Hurricane Wilma

*Photo courtesy of the Cuban Permanent Mission in Geneva*

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action - objectives, progress, impact

### Emergency relief (food and basic non-food items)

**Objective:** 14,000 families (70,000 people) affected by the floods will have benefited from the distribution of food and non-food relief items (1,000 families in the Bahamas with food and non-food items, and 3,000 families in Cuba and 10,000 families in Mexico with non-food items) in order to help them to recover from the effects of the floods.

### Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)

#### *Bahamas*

The following items were sent from the International Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit in Panama on 10 November 2005: 5,000 blankets, 1,000 hygiene kits, 1,000 pieces of plastic sheeting, and 1,000 mosquito nets.

The following distributions have been carried out to date by the BRC for the most affected families in communities in Grand Bahamas with support from the Federation, the American Red Cross and private donors. Distributions are continuing.

Communities	Beneficiary Families	Food Kits	Hygiene kits	Baby kits	Plastic sheeting	Mattresses	Blankets	Mosquito nets	Jerry cans
Grand Bahamas (Lewis Yard, Pinder's Point)									
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>746</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>		<b>400</b>

### Impact

The most affected families were helped to recover from the effects of the Hurricane through the provision of relief assistance.

### Constraints

The limited resources in response to the Federation's Appeal affected the timeliness and amount of distributions that were made by the BRC.

#### *Cuba*

Immediately after the hurricane, the Cuban government and the Civil Defence Department, with the help of CRC branches and volunteers coordinated relief operations with a focus on the Municipalities of Campechuela, Media Luna, Niquero and Pilon (Province of Granma) and the departments of Guama and San Luis (Province of Santiago de Cuba).

To date, 408 mattresses and 207 sets of bed sheets have been distributed and the remainder of non food items, which include sanitation items, kitchen kits, towels, jerry cans and zinc sheets, are to be distributed in accordance with the CRC plan of action. The CRC will also be provided with relief items and equipment for two National Intervention Teams (NITs), which includes boots, clothing, raincoats, helmets, first aid kits, tents, stretchers, and vertical rescue equipment. In addition, VHF and HF equipment will be provided for Red Cross branches in the provinces of Granma and Santiago de Cuba. The zinc sheets will be distributed to rehabilitate roofs and benefit 560 households. These items will be distributed by the CRC branch volunteers.

In late December, the operational budget and plan of action for the relief operation in Cuba was reviewed by the Cuban Red Cross and the Federation. In view of the limited funding received, it is necessary to scale down the original plan of action. The Appeal period will to be extended by 3 months, until 26 July 2006, in order for the Cuban Red Cross to complete the implementation of the relief assistance.

**Impact**

The most affected families were helped to recover from the effects of the Hurricane through the provision of relief assistance.

**Constraints**

The flow of information from the Cuban Red Cross has been slow and the response to the Federation's Appeal has been limited.

**Mexico**

On Tuesday, 25 October, relief assistance shipped by air from the Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit reached Merida airport; these relief goods included 1,000 hygiene kits, 2,000 plastic sheets and 1,000 kitchen kits and were sent by road from the Merida airport and distributed over a two day period. A further flight was scheduled for Thursday, 27 October, carrying 5,000 hygiene kits donated by American Red Cross, 1,000 additional hygiene kits, 397 kitchen sets, 1,500 mosquito nets and 2 gas generators for use in the response operation. Distributions of food and non food items were carried out by the MRC from 5 distribution centres located in Cancun, Cozumel, Isla Mujeres, Playa del Carmen and Puerto Morelos up until 8 November; disaster operations are now closed and there are no shelters in operation. The relief operation involved a total of 1,500 tonnes of humanitarian items provided by the MRC, together with non food items provided with support from the Federation and an additional 790 kitchen kits which were contributed by USAID/OFDA. These goods benefited 17,000 families (68,000 individuals) in total.

The following distributions were carried out with support from the Federation, the American Red Cross and USAID/OFDA for a total of 11,563 beneficiary families in cities and communities located in Cancun, Cozumel, Isla Mujeres, Playa del Carmen and Puerto Morelos.

State	Community	Beneficiary Families	Hygiene Kits	Kitchen Kits	Mosquito nets	Plastic sheeting	Electric generator
Quintana Roo	Cancun		1,000				
	Cozumel	5,600	2,100	500	1,500	1,000	1
	Isla Mujeres	2,463	400				
	Playa del Carmen		1000	500		350	
	Puerto Morelos	3,500	1,500	500			1
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>11,563</b>	<b>6,000</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,350</b>	<b>2</b>

**Impact**

The distribution of non food items provided much needed relief to the affected families.

**Constraints**

There were some coordination and distribution challenges between the state and local MRC branches.



Distribution of hygiene kits and plastic sheeting by the Mexican Red Cross to beneficiaries in Puerto Morelos, Quintana Roo

**Psychosocial support**

**Objective 1: Vulnerable families in the Bahamas, Cuba and Mexico who have been adversely affected by the hurricane will have benefited from the provision of psychosocial support in order to help them return to their normal patterns of life.**

***Bahamas***

Psychological support has been provided for the affected families by the Bahaman Red Cross and its volunteers involved in disaster relief operations.

**Impact**

The most affected families have been able to cope better with the displacement from their own homes.

**Constraints**

No constraints to report.



Destruction wreaked in the Bahamas by Hurricane Wilma

***Cuba***

Psychological support has been provided for the affected families by the Cuban Red Cross to the most affected families by volunteers involved in the relief operations.

**Impact**

This support has had a positive effect on the most affected families.

**Constraints**

It has been difficult to access information on the relief efforts carried out by the CRC.

***Mexico***

During the relief operation, volunteers from various MRC branches provided psychosocial support to 780 individuals in a temporary shelter in Cozumel Island over a 17 day period, meeting and talking with those who in some cases had lost all of their personal belongings.

**Impact**

These actions had a positive impact on the most affected families allowing them to talk and express their feelings about the recent devastation. The MRC relief operations team recommended for the most affected families to seek additional counseling.

**Constraints**

There were no constraints to report during this relief operation.

**Federation Coordination**

The Pan American Disaster Response Unit and the Panama Regional Delegation maintained contact with the National Societies affected by Hurricane Wilma. PADRU had several disaster management delegates already working in the field as part of the response to Hurricane Stan. PADRU was in contact with the delegates of several Partner National Societies, including the French Red Cross Regional Response Platform for the Caribbean (PIRAC) to coordinate response initiatives. PADRU also maintained contact with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the region. The Mexican Red Cross worked and collaborated with the governmental authorities including the civil protection with regard to the relief efforts. The Cuban Red Cross liaised with governmental authorities in the evacuation of those at risk and in the undertaking of assessments. The Bahamas Red Cross worked closely with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the Ministry of Social Development and identified needs to ensure that assistance was provided in a coordinated and efficient manner.

**Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement – Principles and priorities**

- Relief activities being carried out are based on the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
- Beneficiary selection criteria focus on the vulnerability of those affected.
- Relief operations are conducted with respect for the culture of the beneficiaries, ensuring gender sensitivity and prioritizing assistance to children and the elderly.
- Activities are based on the SPHERE Project humanitarian charter and the code of conduct for emergency response.
- Transparency is ensured through the production of regular reports and news bulletins.
- All objectives put forward in the Appeal are in line with Strategy 2010, as well as the Strategy for the Movement and the Principles and Rules of the Movement.
- Lessons learned during the hurricane operations carried out in 2004 are being taken into account in the implementation of the response to Hurricane Wilma.

**National Society Capacity Building**

The Cuban, Bahaman and Mexican Red Cross Societies and their volunteers' capacities have been strengthened through their participation in providing humanitarian assistance during these relief operations. This experience has had a positive impact on the participating branches in all three countries and their volunteers.

**Communications – Advocacy and Public Information**

Through continued public and media relations it is hoped that the public will develop a better understanding of the mission of the National Societies in the affected countries and the activities the Red Cross undertakes in serving humanity. As members of the International Federation, the Bahamas, Cuban and Mexican Red Cross Societies seek to promote the Fundamental Principles in all activities and subsequently facilitate additional visibility of the Movement as a whole.

In Cuba, the “Friends of the Red Cross” network of journalists that works with the Cuban Red Cross, as well as all Red Cross volunteers who were trained through the long distance learning course in communications, are assisting with visibility. The National Societies and the Federation are ensuring coverage of the emergency operations and a number of articles have appeared on the Federation’s web page [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org) regarding the relief efforts.

*[Contributions list below; click here to return to the title page.](#)*

# Bahamas, Cuba, Mexico - Hurricane Wilma

ANNEX 1

APPEAL No. 05EA024

## PLEDGES RECEIVED

01/30/2006

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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### CASH

					<b>TOTAL COVERAGE</b>	
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				<b>1,918,000</b>		<b>67.1%</b>
AMERICAN - GOVT		300,000	USD	393,600	27.10.05	
CZECH - GOVT		5,000,000	CZK	219,000	09.12.05	MEXICO
JAPANESE - RC		49,400	USD	63,257	14.11.05	
MONACO - RC		10,000	EUR	15,565	30.12.05	
NETHERLANDS - GOVT		320,856	EUR	496,525	02.12.05	BASIC RELIEF ITEMS
SWEDISH - RC		500,000	SEK	81,250	06.12.05	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				1,269,197	CHF	66.2%

### KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
AMERICAN - RC		14,597	USD	18,691	10.11.05	BAHAMAS RC DIRECT ASSISTANCE: 2372 COMFORT KITS
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				18,691	CHF	1.0%

### ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	

**THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:**