

Operations update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Cuba: Hurricane Season 2008

Emergency appeal n° MDRCU0001
GLIDE No. TC-2008-000143
Operations update n° 1
12 September, 2008

Period covered by this Ops Update: 8 September to 11 September, 2008.

Appeal target: 6,417,524 (USD 5,834,112 or EUR 3,973,699).

Appeal coverage: 2%; [<click here to link to contact details >](#)

The Cuban Red Cross encourages donors to support the relief operation directly through the Federation's Appeal.

Appeal history:

- This Emergency Appeal was initially launched on a preliminary basis on 8 September, 2008 for CHF **6,417,524 (USD 5,834,112 or EUR 3,973,699)** for nine months to assist 40,000 beneficiaries.
- Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF): CHF 150,000 was initially allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the National Society in Cuba with starting their early damage and need assessments caused by Hurricane Gustav.



A car destroyed by the passing of hurricane Ike in the province of Camaguey. Source: AP

Summary: Hurricane Gustav hit the island of Cuba on 31 August, 2008 with heavy winds and flooding. Gustav, considered to be the worst storm in 50 years, left thousands of people affected. Just as the Cuban Red Cross (CRC) was responding to this emergency, hurricane Ike ravaged the island as a category three hurricane. Ike came in through Punta Lucrecia on 7 September and crossed the island as a category one hurricane causing additional damage to the island. Implementation of the planned activities to achieve the objectives provided in the preliminary emergency appeal has not yet started since hurricane Ike hit the island before the CRC could start the relief operation. This Operations Update no.1 provides information on damages and impact caused by Ike.

This operation is expected to be implemented over nine months, and will therefore be completed by 1 June 2009; a Final Report will be made available by 1 September 2009 (three months after the end of the operation).

The situation

On 31 August, **Gustav** struck the Isla de Juventud (Isle of Youth) as a category four hurricane. It quickly moved to mainland **Cuba** where it hit the province of Pinar del Río. Gustav reached gusts up to 340 kilometres an hour. After four hours, Gustav left the isle and headed towards the Gulf of Mexico, leaving a path of destruction throughout Cuba.

Gustav caused damage in the housing, education, poultry, fishing, electricity and telecommunication service sectors. The National Electrical Union reports initial damage to infrastructure estimates in the western region of Cuba and the Isla de Juventud to have a value of 15 million Cuban pesos (approximately CHF 12.5 million).

The Civil Defence Command implemented preventive measures before Gustav's strike and no fatalities were reported. Over 61,000 people were housed in shelters; an estimated 77 percent of those evacuated live in the Pinar del Río, Isla de Juventud and in Havana provinces.

In Pinar del Río, 75 to 80 percent of the population was affected, 55 educational centres sustained damage in addition to 19 health centres. Over 25,900 metric tons of agricultural crops were lost, which might affect the food security situation on the longer term.

Just as the government was coordinating relief activities to respond to Gustav, hurricane **Ike** arrived adding additional difficulty to delivering humanitarian aid. Ike came in through Punta Lucrecia on 7 September as a category four hurricane, but as it went across the isle it downgraded to a category one hurricane. Ike produced rain accumulation between 200 – 400 mm.



A destroyed home in one of the affected provinces. Source: United Nations

The most affected provinces are Pinar del Río, Holguin and Las Tunas. Other provinces that sustained damages were Guantanamo, Granma, Camaguey, Ciego de Avila Havana and Cienfuegos.

According to damage reports provided by Cuba's National Television, mainly all the damages are located on the eastern side of the country, especially the coastal area. The communication, housing, electricity and agricultural sectors were deeply affected. There are 2,500 shelters open and 2,915,000 people have been evacuated which equals 20 percent of the population. This means that the people are living in crowded circumstances with inadequate sanitation conditions. 400,000 people are still in state shelters. The government has mobilized 9,000 vehicles to assist in relief activities, of which 1,400 are light and heavy machinery for transportation and recovery. Currently, 160,000 people appointed by the government are assisting in the response phase. There are 63 dams

on the isle, 35 of which are between the provinces of La Tuna and Santiago. Many of these dams reached over 90 percent of their capacity. Transportation is still limited in many areas of the country. In total there are 320,000 affected houses due to the passage of Ike and Gustav and 30,000 houses are destroyed according to the Ministry of Housing. The majority of the provinces have no gas or electricity which may lead to water and sanitation issues.

The agricultural sector was severely hit by Ike; many crops such as tobacco, sugar, yucca, banana and coffee were destroyed. There is a possibility this will lead to food insecurity in the country.

There are still many isolated communities and assessments have not been completed since the country is still experiencing rain. Communication by mobile or radio is down in many provinces and infrastructure such as schools, commercial buildings and highways have received damages throughout the country.

Damage assessments are still ongoing in all the affected provinces. It is expected that the number of affected people will increase. More information will be available shortly.

Coordination and partnerships

The Red Cross Movement has been coordinating efforts both internally and externally from the onset of the emergency. The Federation Secretariat has been in regular contact with the Cuban Red Cross through the Federation's **Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU)**. One shelter coordinator and one Disaster Management delegate remain in Cuba to support the National Society with assessing the initial needs.

The Cuban Red Cross (CRC) coordinated early relief actions with local authorities. International Federation Disaster Management delegates and the CRC participated in an inter-agency meeting led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The OCHA regional advisor and the OCHA national officer from Nicaragua arrived in Cuba to support the UN agencies to prepare a request for the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). Additionally a BCPR (Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery) – UNDP advisor arrived in Cuba to offer support during the recovery phase.

The CRC and the International Federation have been providing Partner National Societies from Italy, Norway, Spain, and the United Kingdom with information on hurricane Ike.

The Cuban Red Cross encourages donors to support the operation directly through the Federation's Appeal.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

In response to hurricane Gustav, the **CRC** activated the National Coordinating Committee for disasters, consisting of 448 operation groups made up of 1,572 volunteers. These volunteers participated in evacuation activities in high risk areas prioritizing families that had been previously affected by floods. Over 1,376 CRC volunteers are providing support in the emergency shelters. Activities include distributing food items, delivering first aid care, providing psychosocial support and activating the family link service.

The International Federation, through PADRU sent a first cargo plane with emergency kits for 3,300 families from Panama.

In preparation for hurricane Ike, the CRC, with support of the Disaster Management delegates in the field, were tracking Ike's path and preparing various scenarios and possible responses. Once Ike passed throughout the island, some 9,500 CRC volunteers were performing search and rescue activities, providing psychosocial support and clearing debris.

Progress towards objectives

Since the launch of this preliminary emergency appeal the planned activities to achieve the objectives have not yet been implemented due to bad weather conditions caused by hurricane Ike.

Relief distributions (basic non-food items)

Objective: 8,000 families (40,000 people) affected by the hurricane will benefit from the distribution of non-food items (7,000 families in Pinar del Rio, 500 families in Cienfuegos and 500 Sancti Espiritus) in order to help them recover from the hurricane.

Expected results	Activities planned
Approximately 40,000 people in the affected countries will receive essential non-food items to help them recover.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct rapid emergency needs and capacity assessments. • Develop beneficiary targeting strategy and registration system to deliver intended assistance. • Distribute relief supplies and control supply movements from point of dispatch to end user. • Monitor and evaluate the relief activities and provide reporting on relief distributions. • Develop an exit strategy.

The following relief items will be distributed to the most affected in Cuba:

- 8,000 kitchen kits (1 per family).

- 8,000 mattresses (1 per family).
- 16,000 Jerry cans (2 per family).
- 16,000 mosquito nets (2 per family).
- 8,000 towels (1 per family).
- 8,000 sheet sets (1 per family).

Progress:

The Regional Logistics Unit sent a first air shipment with the following items:

- 3,330 kitchen kits.
- 6,600 mosquito nets.
- 6,600 jerry cans.

The CRC received the items and placed it in the main warehouse. Currently, CRC is assessing the latest information obtained from the field in order to identify the beneficiaries and the places to distribute. Once finished, distribution activities will commence.

After the passing of hurricane Ike and once all evaluations are completed, there is a possibility the number of beneficiary families will increase.

Shelter

Objective: To provide adequate shelter for 8,000 families; 7,000 families with the reconstruction damaged roof tops and 1,000 families with temporary reparation of damaged roof tops using shelter kits.

Expected results	Activities planned
8,000 families will have adequate shelter assisting them to return to their daily lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of communities and specific beneficiaries coordinating with local government authorities. • Procurement of materials (zinc sheeting, nails and wood) for the reconstruction of damaged roofs. • Supervision in the repairing of the damaged houses by CRC staff and volunteers.

7,000 families will receive zinc sheeting, nails (each family receives 30 zinc sheets and one of nails) and materials in order to repair their homes.

1,000 families will receive shelter kits and additional material for setting up the roof (timber or other available material). The shelter kits contain the following items:

Specifications	Quantity per kit	Units
Tarpaulins	2	Pc
Rope	1	Roll
Hand saw	1	Pc
Roofing nails	0.5	Kg
Shovel	1	Pc
Hoe	1	Pc
Machete	1	Pc
Tin Snips	1	Pc
Nails	0.5	Kg
Tie wire	1	Roll
Claw hammer	1	Pc
Woven sack	1	Pc

Water and Sanitation

Objective: 1,000 families in the affected communities receive a specialized water filter.

Expected Results	Activities planned
Specialized water filter is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of communities and specific beneficiaries

provided to the most affected communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordinating with local government authorities. • Procurement of materials (Brazil) • Distribution of water filter and supervision of their installation • Instruction for the population
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National Society Capacity Building

Objective 1: The capacity of the Cuban Red Cross (CRC) in disaster response and preparedness will have been strengthened.	
Expected Results	Activities planned
The Cuban Red Cross local branches volunteers will be adequately identified and prepared for this and future emergencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement of visibility materials (T-shirts, caps), computers, office equipment • Disaster preparedness workshop for volunteers • Procurement of 20 tents, 100 stretchers, 200 radios for volunteers • Procurement of a laptop • Procurement of two Toyota land cruisers and three motorcycles

The two land cruisers will be used to perform evacuation, search and rescue activities among other relevant operations. The three motorcycles are to be used for volunteers to perform follow up activities on the distributions in the affected areas.

Early Recovery

Objective: Early recovery activities are assessed, planned and implemented together with the affected communities and key local, national and international stakeholders.

Relief assessments will determine early recovery needs. According to the initial assessments carried out by the Cuban Red Cross together with the Federation delegates and according to UNDP and OCHA situation reports the majority of affected families suffered damaging impacts on their livelihoods. These include damage to home gardens, family livestock and small-scale family business. This leads to increased needs especially on the short and medium term. A detailed joint assessment between the Zone/Regional Representation Office and PADRU will be carried out in the coming weeks.

Communications – Advocacy and Public Information

Maintaining a steady flow of timely and accurate information between the field and other major stakeholders is vital for fundraising, advocacy and maintaining the profile of emergency operations. During an operation, communications between affected populations and the Red Cross and Red Crescent, as well as with the media and donors, is an essential mechanism for effective disaster response and the cornerstone to promote greater quality, accountability, and transparency.

The communications activities outlined in this appeal are aimed at supporting the National Society to improve their communications capacities and develop appropriate communications tools and products to support effective operations. These activities are closely coordinated between the Cuban Red Cross and the Federation communications team in the Americas and Geneva. Support will be provided to the Cuban Red Cross to increase the visibility of their humanitarian actions for this operation.

At the onset of the operation, the PADRU Information Officer was deployed to Cuba to assist, to set up media interviews and to increase visibility of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in the field. A detailed communications plan of action is forthcoming.

Information on the emergency has been published on the following web sites: www.cruzroja.org, and www.ifrc.org. This will include press releases, articles and photographs from the field. 30 interviews were given, and two press releases and two humanitarian stories were published on the web.

The International Federation is supporting the Cuban Red Cross to assist the most vulnerable people affected by the hurricane. Activities carried out in this operation are based upon the principle of humanity. Beneficiary

selection is based on the level of vulnerability of those affected, respecting culture diversity and ensuring gender sensitivity.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and is committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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