

CARIBBEAN: HURRICANE DEBBY

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The Disaster

Debby, a category one hurricane, has now turned into a tropical depression and continues to weaken along the northern coast of Hispaniola and Cuba. Its winds there are down to 85 km per hour. It is expected the storm will further weaken while moving over Haiti and Cuba. At 17:00 on Wednesday, the Government of Cuba has replaced the hurricane warning with a tropical storm warning for the northern coastal provinces of Guantanamo, Holguin and Las Tunas as well as for Santiago de Cuba and Granma. The centre of Debby will be moving over the high terrain of eastern Cuba tonight.

The Bahamas Government has replaced the hurricane warning with a tropical storm warning for the central and south-east Bahamas and for the Turks and Caicos Islands.

A tropical storm warning remains in effect for northern Haiti and Port au Prince. The hurricane warning has been discontinued for the northern coast of the Dominican Republic and for the north-west of the Bahamas. In Dominican Republic and Haiti, the winds are not strong but it is raining heavily.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

National Societies •

Reports from the American Red Cross International Disaster and Response Unit (IDRU) has given the following information:

Bahamas - The national society is ready to manage 40 shelters in Nassau, the main island and in Grand Bahamas. The Bahamas Social Services Office will be in charge of refugee registration and food, while the coalition of churches will provide water for the people in shelters.

The National Society has radio communication with Cat Island, Eleuthera, Ragged Island and Inagua. Through local radio stations, they broadcast a request for volunteers to come forward. They are also alerting general public to take precaution and consider donations in non-perishable food items.

Haiti - The National Society is on alert and has mobilised volunteers, prepared vehicles and communication equipment. They are in constant contact with the Federation and the IDRU delegate in the Puerto Rico.

Dominican Republic - The National Society has reported that a total of 889 persons, from the northern coastal areas (Puerto Plata, Montecristi, Nagua, La Victoria, Samaná and La Caleta), have been transferred to hurricane shelters opened by Civil Defence. The Red Cross volunteers assist with First Aid. Relief supplies are also available if needed.

Turks and Caicos Islands - The local branch has made necessary preparations and remains in constant contact with IDRU.

International Federation •

The Caribbean Regional Delegation has been in regular contact with the affected National Societies. Early reports from the Cuban Red Cross confirm the possibility of flash flooding in the northern coast of Cuba, the region which has suffered from severe drought for several months. The Federation and IDRU are on stand-by for possible damage assessment if it request by the Cuban Red Cross or by the Haitian National Red Cross Society.

The Government of Haiti and the Haitian National Red Cross Society are both concerned with a similar, long-lasting drought in Haiti. Sudden heavy rains could cause serious damage. Several international NGOs operational in Haiti, co-ordinated by the Government, are ready for action in order to mitigate Debby's possible impact.

American Red Cross - IDRU Response

The IDRU has delegates in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. They are in continuous contact with the National Societies in the region and the Federation. They continues to monitor the hurricane. Their teams are on stand-by if relief assistance if required.

Needs

As Debby is presently weakening, it is estimated that international assistance will not be needed. The Federation Regional Delegation in the Caribbean as well as the Guatemala Regional Delegation will continue to closely monitoring the path of the storm.

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This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>