

INFORMATION BULLETIN



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

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This Information Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. It was agreed with the Cuban Red Cross not to launch an appeal for this operation. Activities are expected to conclude by the end of August 2002.

The Situation

Hurricane Michelle, a category 4 storm, hit the southern coast of Cuba on 4 November 2001, with maximum sustained winds of 215 km/h (135 mph), causing extensive damage as it crossed the island from south to northeast. Despite the strength of the hurricane, only five people died and eight were injured. A total of 694,129 people were evacuated to areas of lower risk; among these, 140,405 were placed in emergency shelters.

In response to the hurricane and with funds received from five Red Cross sources, the Cuban Red Cross (CRC) provided emergency supplies and formulated projects directed at repairing roofs on homes and strengthening the capacity of the CRC in disaster response and preparation.

Because of the high state of preparedness of the authorities in Cuba, loss of life was low, and aid could concentrate on relief and rehabilitation. As mentioned in the Federation's *World Disasters Report 2002* (p.41), "The emergency phase of international response to such a disaster, which generally lasts for several weeks, was all but eliminated. The UN mission reported that, less than a week after the disaster, local authorities were already delivering construction materials to families whose houses were damaged."

Now, some nine months after the disaster struck, life in the most affected provinces is, to a large degree, back to normal. The Cuban government has established the goal of completing activities in response to the damage by 30 August 2002.

Jamaica was also affected by hurricane Michelle. Heavy rains caused extensive flooding and mudslide damage in the parishes of Portland, St. Mary, and St. Ann. 1,500 persons were made homeless in twenty villages located in a region of extreme poverty, heavily dependent on subsistence farming and coffee production and of difficult access.

After assessments carried out by the Jamaica Red Cross (JRC) in coordination with other institutions, it was agreed to provide food and non-food relief to 400 persons in the Blue Mountain Valley, Western Portland, and Eastern St. Mary areas, in the south and east of the country, and to assist in shelter management.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Cuba

The government and other organizations working on the response prioritized repair for damaged homes. The CRC decided to participate in this activity given its technical capacity in this area and that the needs for roofing were not covered by other organizations. Three provinces, Cienfuegos, Sancti Spiritus and Villa Clara, were targeted for roof repair activities with Federation funds, since the needs in the fourth selected province, Ciego de Avila, are being met with funds from other donors.

The CRC received donations from five different Red Cross donors: the Federation, the German Red Cross, the Spanish Red Cross, the Swiss Red Cross and the French Red Cross. Taking into account its capacity to manage these five responses, the CRC decided that the various programmes would be implemented consecutively. It was recognized that the whole process would take some 10 months, but that the benefits outweighed the drawbacks of attempting to implement all five projects simultaneously. The CRC's strategy includes ensuring accuracy in targeting beneficiaries, quality in implementation, close monitoring of distribution and use of materials, and assurance that the supplies are used appropriately. The order of implementation is: the German Red Cross, the Spanish Red Cross, the Swiss Red Cross, the Federation, and the French Red Cross. The Federation-supported project implementation is scheduled to conclude by 30 August 2002.

Under the Federation-funded project, zinc sheeting and nails were provided to repair 730 homes in three provinces. 694 houses were originally scheduled for reconstruction, but the efficient distribution of the material provided made it possible to cover 36 additional ones. Nails were provided (without zinc sheeting) to a fourth province, Matanzas. The original plan did not include working in Matanzas, but during implementation it became apparent that the need for nails was less than planned; therefore, the excess nails were distributed to Matanzas. In total, 141 homes are scheduled to be repaired in Sancti Spiritus, 198 in Villa Clara and 391 in Cienfuegos.

Volunteers from local branches of the CRC helped with the needs assessments and subsequent distribution of materials and implementation of the project. All roofing materials were purchased by the Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) in Panama and shipped to Cuba. The number of zinc sheets distributed varies from home to home because of varying house sizes and the extent of the damage. The average number of zinc sheets per house is of 40.4. Branch offices of the CRC in the target areas worked closely with local community representatives to determine the needs per household. These representatives, along with volunteers of the CRC, worked with the beneficiary families to deliver and install the roofing materials. Each beneficiary household provided the labour for its own roof repair and in some cases, also assisted neighbouring households.

A field inspection in June 2002 by the disaster preparedness and response delegate of the Caribbean regional delegation in Santo Domingo, confirmed that all roofing materials had been distributed to the beneficiary communities, implementation systems were in place and are advancing, and that it was realistic to expect completion by the end of August 2002.

Funds are also being used for equipment to improve the CRC radio communication system in the four targeted provinces, to improve response capacity and visibility of the CRC, to supply intervention teams with individual and collective first aid kits, lanterns and rain gear, and to provide three search and rescue teams of four members each with necessary technical equipment to carry out the most common types of rescue operations.

Jamaica

Funded by ECHO, five cycles of family food basket distributions were carried out benefiting some 400 people (87 families) during the hurricane Michelle relief operation. Each 50 kg. basket contained rice, cornmeal, flour, sugar, beans, vegetables, salt, mackerel and codfish. Food packages were provided at two-week intervals. Non-food relief items such as beds, stoves, utensils, clothes, hygiene and kitchen sets, were also distributed to 400 persons. Under this operation, 400 tarpaulins were purchased but, due to problems with customs procedures, only 50 were distributed to affected families.

In addition, five one-day training workshops were carried out to community members and JRC volunteers. The aim of these workshops was to increase disaster awareness and capacity in disaster management.

For a full description of the National Societies profile, see www.ifrc.org

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

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