

# 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

## CARIBBEAN: HURRICANE JEANNE

16 September 2004

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

**This Information Bulletin (no. 01/2004) is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.**

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### The Situation

Tropical Storm Jeanne strengthened into a category one hurricane on Thursday after striking Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands on Wednesday. Hurricane Jeanne is the sixth hurricane of what has been a busy Atlantic hurricane season. Several countries in the Caribbean, as well as the southern United States, are still recovering from the destruction caused by three other hurricanes that have passed through the region in just over a month.

Jeanne, at that time still a tropical storm, brought heavy rains and winds of 130 kilometres per hour to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. On St. Croix, about 50,000 people lost power, but most had it back by later that day. Airports in both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands were closed and businesses were boarded up.

The storm killed two people in Puerto Rico as it dumped more than 40 centimetres of rain on the island and sent many rivers to flood levels. The heavy winds also knocked out power in many parts of the island, and flooding and debris blocked 38 roads in the country. More than 3,500 people were evacuated from low-lying areas and moved to shelters on Wednesday as the heavy rains blocked roads, downed power lines and flooded homes. Some 600,000 people were also without running water. Agriculture officials said that crops of plantain, banana and coffee were likely seriously damaged. The heavy rains in Puerto Rico were expected to continue through Friday.

Officials in Puerto Rico announced that government offices would remain closed on Friday and people were urged to stay home from work to participate in the cleanup effort.

After hitting Puerto Rico, Hurricane Jeanne moved northwest towards the eastern tip of the Dominican Republic. The storm weakened to a tropical storm after making landfall in the Dominican Republic, and a tropical storm warning was put into effect for the island of Hispaniola from St. Nicolas, Haiti to the Dominican Republic capital of Santo Domingo. Forecasters said that the Dominican Republic could receive up to 30 centimetres of rain and warned of flooding as the river levels began to rise.

The Dominican government's Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) declared the red alert in the north of the country and requested that the government suspend school activities in ten provinces due the danger posed by Jeanne. The EOC is permanently monitoring activities jointly with the members of the Civil Defense agencies, which includes the Red Cross. The following provinces were placed on alert: María Trinidad Sánchez, La Altagracia, San Pedro de Macorís, Monte Cristi, El Seibo, Hato Mayor, Samaná, Puerto Plata, Monte Plata, Salcedo, La Vega, Monseñor Nohuel and Sánchez Ramírez. Electricity was cut off in Monte Plata, Salcedo, Sánchez Ramírez and La Vega. Access to the province of Samaná was cut off due to fallen utility poles and trees. There was also no telephone access to this province.

Approximately 2,300 people were forced to evacuate in the provinces of Samaná, San Pedro de Macoris, La Romana and La Altagracia. Numerous emergency shelters were officially opened in the north and central regions of the country, and the latest reports indicate that more than 1,000 people are in shelters. Reports also state that six people have been wounded thus far.

Although the storm is not expected to hit Haiti directly, the impoverished country has a high level of deforestation which makes it extremely vulnerable to flash floods and mudslides. Floods that occurred on Hispaniola in May killed more than 3,000 people in the two countries.

Forecasters are expecting that Jeanne will strengthen again into a hurricane after it has cleared Hispaniola. Jeanne is then expected to pass the 700-island Bahamas chain, which was recently battered by Hurricane Frances. A hurricane warning has been declared for the southeastern Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos. A hurricane watch has been declared for the central Bahamas.

### **Red Cross and Red Crescent action**

In the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Red Cross is currently setting up an operations centre from where the relief effort will be coordinated. Red Cross shelters on the island were opened to house residents whose homes were flooded or damaged. Red Cross volunteers were travelling throughout communities to meet with affected persons and assess their needs. The Red Cross in Puerto Rico is also setting up an operations centre, and Red Cross volunteers are working with communities to determine their needs.

In the Dominican Republic, the Dominican Red Cross (DRC) is meeting with the National Emergency Operations Centre to analyze the country's response capacities. During this meeting, the DRC offered 2,000 ovens to be used to support the affected population staying in shelters. The Red Cross is also working with the EOC at the provincial level to coordinate activities and gather information.

The DRC is liaising with the American, German, Netherlands and Spanish Red Cross Societies that are working in the country to examine the resources available. The Federation has made available cellular phones to facilitate communication between personnel working in the field and personnel working in the National Society's headquarters in Santo Domingo.

The DRC is currently maintaining contact with the Red Cross branches in the affected zones. The Red Cross branches of the northern, central and southern provinces of the Dominican Republic have been activated and are working based on the National Society's contingency plan. The DRC has activated damage and needs assessment teams to be deployed to the affected areas in the north of the country once the storm has passed. In the central and southern provinces, a team has already started assessing the damages in the provinces of Duarte, La Romana, Samana, and Hato Mayor. Red Cross National Intervention Teams (NIT) have also been activated and are ready to

be mobilized as soon as conditions permit. In addition, Red Cross psychosocial support teams made up of 25 volunteers have already been deployed to shelters.

The Spanish Red Cross working in the Dominican Republic deployed two water and sanitation units from Elias Piña, where they are working on the response to the floods that occurred in May 2004, to the National Society's headquarters, in order to ensure that they are available, should the need arise. The Spanish Red Cross has also donated USD 5,000 to support the DRC's initial relief activities.

In Haiti, representatives of the International Federation met with members of the Haitian National Red Cross Society to address the potential needs that may arise.

*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.*

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