

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 FRANCES

7 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. 05/2004) is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 70,000 has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). Based on further updates, also including information relating to Hurricane Ivan currently in the Caribbean, and details from assessment reports, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation may consider international support through an Emergency Appeal.

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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>

The Situation

In the early morning of Saturday, 4 September, Hurricane Frances, weakened to a category 2 storm, swirled away from New Providence Island in the Bahamas which had been affected by hurricane conditions for some 26 hours. Following the storm's displacement, heavy flooding occurred on Grand Bahamas Island with one death reported.

Shelters in New Providence accommodated a total of 1,281 persons. Throughout the day on Saturday, the majority of the shelters were closed, together with those in the southern Bahamas. However, those in the northern Bahamas remained open as a result of heavy rainfall and flooding. Grand Bahamas Island has suffered serious damage and shelters are still open, housing around 1,208 people, many of whom are from the Haitian community. There is currently no electricity or telephone service and water supplies are cut off. The Bahamas Red Cross Society is working in close coordination with the government in order to identify needs and ensure that assistance is provided.

Hurricane Frances made landfall in the early morning of Sunday, 5 September, on Florida's east coast, some 35 miles north of West Palm Beach. The hurricane knocked out power in at least three million homes, downed trees and was accompanied by torrential rain. Frances was downgraded to a tropical storm during the afternoon of Sunday as it moved towards Tampa on the west coast of Florida. Later, on the afternoon of Monday, 6 September, the storm crossed the state and a corner of the Gulf of Mexico and made a second landfall in Florida, 20 miles south of Tallahassee.

On Monday night, Hurricane Frances finally dissipated over Georgia and Alabama, following driving rains and fierce winds in the Florida panhandle, affecting overall some five million people in Florida alone. Some 4,900 National Guard troops were deployed to provide security and to distribute relief assistance.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

In the Bahamas, on Tuesday, 7 September, damage and needs assessments were conducted in the islands of Grand Bahama and Abaco. The assessment team on Grand Bahama Island included the Director General of the Bahamas Red Cross Society and a Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) disaster management delegate. On Grand Bahama Island, there are many uprooted trees, together with fallen cables and poles and a further problem is stagnant water, although this is receding.

The Red Cross branch is participating in emergency response and shelter management in Freetown. Shelters began to evacuate yesterday afternoon, Monday, 6 September, once roads were opened. However, for those who are remaining in shelters since their homes were destroyed, shelter conditions are deteriorating, particularly as a result of the lack of water supply, affecting sanitation; food is also urgently needed in the shelters. A team from the Pan American Health Organization will be requested by the health authorities to assess the possibility of the outbreak of disease and to conduct vector control. Since there is no electricity, the water distribution system on the Island is not functioning; it is estimated that the daily requirement is for some 60,000 gallons of water daily. A total of approximately 8,000 people are affected on Grand Bahamas Island, particularly those living in the western part of the Island in low-lying areas.

A second disaster management delegate from PADRU formed part of the assessment team in Abaco Island. In the highly affected communities of Coopers Landing and North Abaco, over 50 per cent of homes have incurred structural damage, and roofs were ripped from many of the houses. In Marsh Harbour, where four shelters accommodating 904 people had been managed by the BRCS, around 20 homes are flooded, the road leading to the southern end of the island has been cut off and the town of Sandy Point can be reached only by air. Two of the shelters remain open, housing 67 people, the majority of whom are Haitians. The Bahamas Red Cross Society personnel in Abaco report the need for food, water, clothing and communications.

OFDA/USAID has confirmed that it will donate relief supplies to the Bahamas Red Cross Society including 4,000 hygiene kits and 200 rolls of plastic sheeting. There is also the possibility of sending two water treatment plants to Grand Bahama Island. A plan of action for relief assistance is currently being drawn up by the Bahamas Red Cross Society with the cooperation of the disaster management delegate from PADRU and will focus on Grand Bahamas and Abaco Islands. The operation will target the population remaining in shelters and vulnerable groups including the homeless, the elderly, single mothers and the handicapped. All activities will be coordinated with the Ministry of Social Services which is currently conducting a detailed assessment of damage, together with the vulnerability of those affected.

An allocation from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund of CHF 70,000 has been made. This will ensure that operations in the Bahamas, following Hurricane Frances, and in the Caribbean as a result of Hurricane Ivan, currently threatening Tobago, Grenada, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Jamaica, are undertaken rapidly to assist the most vulnerable.

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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