

# 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

9 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. 06/2004) 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). The Federation does not anticipate further needs. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed. This operation will be reported on through the DREF update.**

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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

On 2 September 2004, the Bahamas was struck by Hurricane Frances, then a category 4 hurricane, killing two people. The hurricane brought winds of 140 miles per hour, heavy rain, and a storm surge of up to 20 feet to the islands. The northern islands, including San Salvador, Abaco and Grand Bahama, were the most affected, although there was also significant damage to the central and southern islands. Grand Bahama is the second most populated island in the Bahamas, and the northern islands include the most vulnerable population groups.

Grand Bahama was the most affected island, suffering serious damage, particularly in low-lying areas on the western end of the island following high sea surges. An estimated 8,000 people have been directly or indirectly affected on Grand Bahama. Shelters on the island are still open, housing up to 2,000 people, many of whom are from the Haitian community. The island is currently without electricity, telephone or water services, and there is standing water in some areas. The water distribution system is not functioning at present because it is run by an electric pump.

On the island of Abaco, the most affected communities are Coopers Town and North Abaco, where over 50 percent of the houses have suffered structural damage and have lost large portions of their roofs. Several electric cables are also down in the area. Also affected are Sandy Point and the community of Marsh Harbour, where approximately 20 homes have been flooded. Shelters on this island at one point housed 904 people. Many

residents have now returned home, but two shelters remain open, housing 67 people. As on Grand Bahama, the majority of the people in shelters are members of the Haitian community.

The island of San Salvador has a population of 1,200 people. Here, five homes were destroyed and approximately 80 homes suffered some structural damage to roofs. The hardest hit community was United Estates, where all 50 homes suffered serious structural damage. Power lines are down across the island and are currently being repaired.

After striking the Bahamas, Frances weakened to a category 2 hurricane as it moved towards the state of Florida in the United States. After passing over the state and into the Gulf of Mexico, Frances, which by that time had been downgraded to a tropical storm, turned and made a second landfall in the northern region of Florida. The second hit brought heavy rains and winds of 65 miles per hour to the state, also affecting parts of the states of Georgia and Alabama. Authorities in the United States have blamed 14 deaths on Frances and estimate that damages could range between USD 2 and 10 billion.

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

The Bahamas Red Cross Society (BRCS) is working in close coordination with the National Emergency Management Agency and the Social Development Agency to identify needs and ensure that assistance is provided in a coordinated and efficient manner. The main identified needs are in the areas of relief, housing, and water and sanitation. Conditions in shelters are deteriorating and relief supplies are needed for those people remaining in shelters, including food, bedding, hygiene materials and flashlights. Plastic sheeting is also needed to cover holes in roofs for those residents who are returning to their homes. As regards water and sanitation, water services have been interrupted and water reservoirs have been contaminated by salt water and will need to be cleaned. The government is currently airlifting drinking water to the affected areas, and there is a significant need for water containers to purify and store water.

The National Society has drawn up a plan of action, identifying the needs of the affected population and outlining the Red Cross response. Activities will be funded through the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). Donors are encouraged to provide funds to repay DREF.

The plan of action targets at least 4,000 families on Grand Bahama Island, Abaco Island and San Salvador Island. These families will be selected through personal interviews conducted by Red Cross volunteers and Social Development Agency workers. The BRCS seeks to assist beneficiary families that have been severely affected by Frances, in particular families whose homes have been destroyed or damaged. Beneficiary selection criteria will also focus on vulnerable members of the communities, including senior citizens, female heads of households, low-income residents and people with disabilities.

Relief activities will focus on two areas: providing basic relief to the affected population through the distribution of food and non-food items, and strengthening the capacity of the BRCS to respond to future disasters. Relief activities will include identification of specific intervention zones and beneficiaries, distribution of relief items and monitoring of impact on affected families. This objective will also look at the coordination between the National Society, the Ministry of Social Development and the National Emergency Ministry. Relief activities are scheduled to be completed by the second week in October.

National Society capacity building activities will include review and implementation of shelter management training courses, replenishment and stocking of relief supplies, identification, purchase and installation of HF radio communications equipment on Grand Bahama and Abaco islands, and purchase and distribution of Red Cross identification materials to National Society members, including vests, raingear and t-shirts. Capacity building activities are scheduled to be completed by the second week in December.

These activities will be carried out by the BRCS branches in the affected areas, in coordination with the Social Development Agency and NEMA, and with support from the National Society headquarters. Upon completion of all activities, the BRCS, the Social Development Agency and the National Emergency Management Agency will evaluate the impact of the distributions through beneficiary interviews and inter-agency meetings.

All relief activities are being coordinated with local and national government officials. The National Emergency Management Agency and the Social Development Agency are being informed of all Red Cross activities in order to ensure that there is no duplication of effort, and that all the needs of the affected population are met.

The BRCS is monitoring the implementation of all activities and will submit a detailed report upon completion of these activities. Regular meetings will be held with NEMA and the Social Development Agency to evaluate the response and examine possibilities for further coordination. An internal audit by the BRCS is also scheduled.

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

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