

OPERATIONS UPDATE



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

BELIZE: HURRICANE IRIS

19 October 2001

Appeal No. 33/01

Launched on 12 October 2001 for CHF 655,000 for 3 months

DREF Allocated: None

Beneficiaries: 4,800

Operations Update No. 1 Period covered: 12 - 18 October 2001

“At a Glance”

Appeal coverage: 94.2%

Related Appeals: 01.32/01 Caribbean regional programmes; 01.26/01 Central America regional programmes.

Outstanding needs: CHF37,983

The Disaster/Situation: Hurricane Iris caused extensive damage and left up to 15,000 people homeless when it hit Belize on 8 October. The Federation’s emergency appeal has received a good early response and relief activities which were initiated immediately by the Belize Red Cross Society (BRCS) target thousands of vulnerable people.

Operational Developments:

Hurricane Iris made landfall in southern Belize on 8 October at approximately 20.45 hours local time. The eye of the category 4 hurricane passed over Independence and Placencia, small towns 130 km south of coastal Belize City, with wind speeds of up to 225 kph (140 mph). As a result of the compact nature of the hurricane, two districts, Toledo and Stann Creek, bore the brunt of its force as it swept away buildings, ripped up trees and electricity lines and flattened standing crops across an arc of coastal plain some sixty kilometres long and thirty kilometres wide. The hurricane damaged numerous buildings in the towns of Placencia, Independence and San Antonio and destroyed countless houses, mostly constructed of local materials, in small villages throughout southwestern Belize. Initial reports indicate that in a total of 35 villages and settlements, over 95 per cent of houses and other buildings were destroyed. First assessment reports from the Belize government National Emergency Management

Organisation (NEMO) and the Belize Red Cross Society (BRCS) indicate that more than 20 people were killed and up to 15,000 inhabitants of the coastal areas were made homeless.

Public water supplies failed since the national electricity grid was disrupted, forcing inhabitants to resort to wells served by hand pumps which in many cases had fallen into disrepair. All crops in the affected area - rice, cacao, coffee, banana, corn and papaya - have been destroyed, and most food stocks, both government and personal, have been lost.

Many of the inhabitants of the affected area live in the isolated mountainous region and are subsistence farmers of predominantly Mayan origin. Deprived of their houses and food stocks, this vulnerable population faces increasing threats of sickness and disease as the rainy season continues and their food security is threatened.

Red Cross Red Crescent action w

Civil defence authorities in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras activated states of alert in anticipation of heavy rains from Iris and thousands of people left low-lying areas for higher ground. In Guatemala, on the night of 8 October, torrential rains due to the passage of hurricane Iris affected the northern departments of Petén and Izabal. On 9 October, the Guatemalan Red Cross (GRC) undertook a damage and needs assessment to identify those most in need of assistance. The most affected communities were San Luis, on the border with Belize, and Sayaxché in Petén, where some 450 families' homes were either totally or partially destroyed. Since only minor damage was incurred in Izabal, those evacuated to shelters from low-lying land close to river beds in Puerto Barrios were able to return to their homes. Three trucks, each accompanied by volunteers, left the GRC headquarters on Thursday, 11 October with relief goods provided by the American Red Cross and 700 blankets from the GRC stock for 450 families as follows: San Luis - 370 families and Sayaxché - 80 families. Distributions were carried out on 12 October with the support of GRC volunteers; each family received 20 metres of plastic sheeting, 6 blankets, 3 plastic buckets and one hygiene kit containing tooth brushes, tooth paste and soap. The GRC coordinated preparedness activities with the national disaster coordination organisation (CONRED) and worked in close collaboration with the American Red Cross, the Netherlands Red Cross and the Federation.

The Belize Red Cross Society, having alerted all branches and mobilised volunteers, has been responding to the emergency since first light on 9 October. Two Federation delegates specialised in disaster response/preparedness and water and sanitation arrived in Belize City on the morning of 9 October to provide support to the BRCS and to help coordinate the damage and needs assessment. Federation drivers left Guatemala for Belize with two landcruisers to support the assessment team and the relief operation. The head of the regional delegation for the Caribbean, the regional information delegate and the regional disaster response/preparedness delegate reached Belize on 10 and 11 October.

On 9 October, the Belmopan branch of the BRCS mobilised an assessment team to travel south to the affected area and launched a national appeal for cash, clothing and food. Two trucks left the BRCS headquarters, heading for Stann Creek, with supplies of food, blankets and plastic raincoats. A truck provided by the Salvadorean Red Cross Society/Federation delegation in El Salvador left San Salvador on 10 October for Belize with supplies of 1,000 units of plastic sheeting, 400 household hygiene kits and two generators which are on loan from the Netherlands Red Cross. A total of 504 jerry cans purchased through the regional delegation were added to the load as the truck passed through Guatemala. The Honduran Red Cross also dispatched a truck on 9 October with 2,000 blankets and 18,000 bags of drinking water. A telecommunications team accompanied the truck with a view to setting up a communications system for the emergency operation.

On the morning of 10 October, the BRCS and the Federation undertook an initial aerial and ground survey of Toledo and Stann Creek districts. This assessment confirmed government figures relating to property and crop damage.

Relief Distributions

The Belize Red Cross Society is distributing used clothing, food, water and other goods in Toledo and Stann Creek districts from its in-country stocks. A distribution centre in Punta Gorda, the Toledo district headquarters, has been set up by the BRCS and the Federation. More than 50 volunteers are providing support and a warehouse has been rented for three months. In Toledo district, the worst affected by hurricane Iris, surveys for selection of beneficiaries in approximately fifteen communities have been completed. Remote communities in Toledo district have been chosen, with the percentage of material damage, accessibility and local Red Cross capacity being taken into account in the selection process.

Objective 1: Food Relief - To ensure adequate food supplies for 800 families for a period of three months, reducing the risk of malnutrition or reliance on survival strategies with long-term negative consequences.

Procurement of food items - rice, flour, sugar, beans, salt and lard - for 800 families has been initiated in Belize City.

Objective 2: Non-Food Relief - To ensure access to essential household supplies and implements, allowing scarce resources to be directed towards rebuilding of homes and recovery of agricultural activity.

Two rounds of distributions of kitchen sets, hygiene kits, blankets and jerry cans have taken place to a total of 500 beneficiary families.

The consignments of relief items provided through the El Salvador and Honduras national societies/delegations have been transported to Punta Gorda and distributed. In addition, 1,000 kitchen sets funded by the German Red Cross are on their way from Panama to Belize City, consigned to the BRCS. The American Red Cross has transported by truck 3,000 units of soap, 10,000 sachets of shampoo, 8,000 sanitary towels, 1,000 razors, 2,400 nappies, 2,000 blankets, 2,000 buckets, 2,000 sets of adult tooth brushes and paste and 3,000 children's dental kits.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Society w

The Belize Red Cross Society strengthened its disaster response capacity considerably through implementation of the hurricane Keith operation in 2000. As a result of the threat of hurricane Iris, the BRCS immediately undertook preparedness measures; representatives of the BRCS attended a meeting of the national disaster response coordinating body, NEMO, and volunteers assisted in evacuation procedures and prepared to help manage shelters for the displaced.

National Society Capacity Building w

The appeal includes training components in order to strengthen response and preparedness capacities within the National Society. It is anticipated that the current operation will reinforce the Punta Gorda branch of the BRCS which is closest to the Toledo district. Local personnel in Punta Gorda working directly with the Federation disaster response delegate are receiving training in warehouse management, beneficiary survey techniques and distribution procedures.

Federation Delegation w

A coordinator has been posted in Belize City to work with the BRCS at the level of headquarters and, as of 12 October, a Federation delegate has been temporarily posted in Punta Gorda at the BRCS branch in Toledo district.

Coordination

Liaison is being maintained with the government coordinating body, NEMO, as well as its district-level equivalent, DEMO, in Toledo. In addition, cooperation is ensured with international organisations such as OXFAM, MSF, WFP and OFDA.

In addition to donations received in accordance with the attached list of contributions, the BRCS has also received a cash donation of USD 25,000 from the US Embassy in Belize City.

Outstanding needs

The Federation is urgently seeking a team leader/project coordinator for four months, to be based in Belize City. The team leader will be supported by local staff and will replace the two Federation delegates currently posted in Belize.

For further details please contact:

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- w** *John Humphreys, Head of Regional Delegation, Santo Domingo, Phone 1 809 567 33 44; Fax 1 809 567 33 44; mobile phone 1 809 696 8820; email ifrcdr08@ifrc.org*

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.

This operation seeks to administer to the immediate requirements of the victims of this disaster. Subsequent operations to promote sustainable development or longer-term capacity building will require additional support, and these programmes are outlined on the Federation's website.

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

Peter Rees-Gildea
Head a.i.
Relationship Management Department

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Head
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Belize - Hurricane Iris						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 33/2001		PLEDGES RECEIVED				19.10.2001
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				655'000		TOTAL COVERAGE 94.2%
CASH CARRIED FORWARD						
BRITISH - GOVT/DFID		68'000	GBP	160'480	18.10.2001	
CANADIAN - GOVT		100'000	CAD	102'400	16.10.2001	
ECHO (01002)		200'000	EUR	295'700	27.09.2001	
ICELANDIC - RC		200'000	ISK	3'310	12.10.2001	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				561'890	CHF	85.8%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
GERMAN GOVT	Kitchen sets	1'000		43'560	18.10.2001	Direct to Belize RC
GERMAN GOVT	Water containers	1'300		11'567	18.10.2001	Direct to Belize RC
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				55'127	CHF	8.4%