

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

14 November 2001

Appeal No. 33/01

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

Disaster relief emergency fund (DREF) allocated: None

Beneficiaries: 4,800

Operations Update No. 2 Period covered: 19 - 30 October 2001 (last Ops Update issued: 18 October 2001)

“At a Glance”

Appeal coverage: 95.8%

Related Appeals: 01.32/01 Caribbean regional programmes

Outstanding needs: CHF 27,329

The Disaster/Situation: Distributions of essential non-food items to 800 vulnerable families in the Toledo district have been completed. A team leader/programme coordinator has been identified and deployed to the field to continue supporting the Belize Red Cross Society (BRCS) in the implementation of the operation. A food security assessment carried out by a specialist in nutrition from OXFAM - with the support of the BRCS and the Federation - established that “large families relying on agricultural labour and subsistence farming are at the highest risk of food insecurity over the next six months”. As a result, follow up will be necessary to ensure that these families are provided with adequate support.

Operational Developments:

Hurricane Iris made landfall in southern Belize on 8 October at approximately 20.45 hours local time. In preparations, some 15,000 people had been evacuated from coastal areas. 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 60 km long and 30 km wide. The hurricane damaged numerous buildings in the towns of Placencia, Independence and San Antonio and destroyed large numbers of houses, mostly constructed of local materials, in small villages throughout southwestern Belize.

Statistics provided by the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) damage assessment sub-committee on 17 October indicate that 24 people died, 21,568 people were affected by the hurricane and 3,178 houses were damaged. Furthermore, 19 schools and 12 health posts were destroyed. Eighty-five per cent of banana plantations were damaged, together with shrimp farms accounting for 25 per cent of production. Corn, rice, plantain, mango and cacao crops were also seriously affected, with damage to 5,512 acres of banana plantation and 3,581 acres of rice cultivation.

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

As of 10 October, the Belize Red Cross Society (BRCS) began 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, was set up by the BRCS and the Federation. More than 50 volunteers provided support and a warehouse was rented for three months. Over 300 families benefited from this assistance.

The Federation's regional delegation in Santo Domingo fielded a team three of delegates: the head of the regional delegation (team leader), the information/reporting delegate and the disaster response/preparedness delegate, who reached Belize on 10 and 11 October. Together with the National Society, they carried out needs assessments and coordinated the launch of the emergency appeal. On 24 and 25 October respectively, the disaster response/preparedness delegate who had been working with the National Society branch in Punta Gorda and the field coordinator who had been based in Belize City working with the BRCS headquarters, returned to their posts, to be replaced by an interim team leader. A team leader to be based in Belize City for the operation has now been assigned and, following briefing sessions in Santo Domingo, arrived in Belize during the weekend of 27-28 October.

Relief distributions w

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.

To date, the Belize Red Cross Society has been distributing food provided by local donors to 400 families in the Toledo district. Food distributions, as outlined in the Federation's appeal, will take place as soon as the selection of suppliers has been completed. The anticipated food ration per person per day in accordance with the SPHERE standards, is as follows:

Rice	250g
Flour	150g
Beans	100g
Sugar	30g
Lard	20g
Salt	5g.

It is intended that food packages will be provided at two week intervals.

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

Between 15 and 20 October, non-food distributions took place, with the support of some 40 volunteers, to a total of 800 families in 14 of the 15 targeted villages in the Toledo district. The National Emergency Management Organization agreed to undertake distributions in San Antonio, home to 264 families. Two blankets, two buckets, one sanitary kit and one hygiene kit were distributed per family.

Shelter w

Objective 1: Emergency shelter - To address immediate shelter needs for 800 families, reducing exposure to a harsh environment during the rainy season, increasing resistance to disease and supporting the maintenance of community and family life.

Each beneficiary family received one tarpaulin to assist with short-term emergency shelter needs.

A major concern is related to more permanent shelter since the recent field assessment carried out by OXFAM/BRCS/Federation (see below) identified the fact that disaster victims are concentrating efforts on the rebuilding of their homes and are therefore currently unable to engage in income-generating activities.

The BRCS has received several offers of donations of construction material from local companies which will be accepted in order to carry out construction in those areas where the issue of land title is clear.

The Canadian Red Cross has donated funds to construct between 50 and 60 partial houses consisting of a basic frame and a roof, without walls. This is to be carried out as a separate activity which does not fall under the framework of the present appeal.

Water and Sanitation w

Objective 1: Water purification - To ensure access to safe drinking water and reduce the risk of water-borne diseases.

In accordance with local customs within the communities, chlorine is to be distributed to beneficiary families to avoid the risk of disease through contaminated water.

Agriculture w

Objective 1: Agricultural support - To assess the need for and feasibility of support in agricultural reactivation and food security for subsistence farmers who have lost crops through hurricane damage.

A workshop on food security, facilitated by a nutritionist from OXFAM and supported by the Federation and the BRCS, was held on 19 October in Punta Gorda. Participants from organizations working with the District Emergency Management Organization (DEMO) attended the training sessions, including members of the Belize Red Cross Society. Six people were trained in assessment techniques, and took part in the assessment of food security which took place between 20 and 22 October within six villages assisted by the Red Cross programme. The full report of the assessment is available on request. The findings revealed that the affected population may be divided into four categories based on the source of livelihood:

- Small scale subsistence farmers (with some three acres of land), representing 60 percent of the population;
- Cash crop and animal farmers (rice, cocoa, cattle rearing), representing 25 percent of the population;
- Waged labourers in shrimp farms, banana plantations - representing 10 percent of the population;
- Fishermen and lobster catchers - representing 5 percent of the population.

The most food insecure sectors of the population are subsistence farmers and waged labourers who have lost their crops and source of income respectively. Waged labourers work in the banana plantations and on the shrimp farms, which were severely damaged by the hurricane and will need considerable time to recover. Subsistence farmers usually work some three acres of land, which they do not own, and produce mostly corn and beans. In general, harvests are barely sufficient to meet family food needs. Farmers are now having difficulty accessing their land which, in many cases, is blocked by fallen trees since cultivation often takes place on steep slopes.

The assessment will result in a plan of action to determine how best the Belize Red Cross Society can continue to assist vulnerable families in the transition from relief to self sufficiency.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Society w

The BRCS provided volunteers to ensure distribution of relief items in the affected communities and to run the distribution centre in Punta Gorda. Furthermore, a group of BRCS volunteers was trained during the workshop on assessment techniques relating to food insecurity; these volunteers subsequently assisted in the implementation of the evaluation. Given the experience gained by the National Society during the hurricane Keith operation in 2000, the new team leader will work exclusively with local staff and volunteers of the BRCS to ensure completion of the operation.

National Society Capacity Building w

Training of six volunteers took place in OXFAM's livelihood food security approach. Furthermore, the Federation response/preparedness delegate based at the BRCS branch in Punta Gorda carried out training in warehousing, needs assessments, emergency response and beneficiary selection.

Federation Delegation w

Given that the operation is now running smoothly and that the Belize Red Cross Society has solid experience in disaster response, the delegates based in Belize City and Punta Gorda have been replaced in the last few days by a team leader. The team leader will work from Belize City with the National Society staff and volunteers to ensure completion of the operation.

Coordination

Coordination has been ensured with participating National Societies (PNS) - the American Red Cross, the German Red Cross and the Netherlands Red Cross - which supplied emergency relief goods. The regional delegations for Central America and the Caribbean were also involved in supporting the National Society during the early stages of the needs assessments and emergency response. Coordination with National Societies in the region resulted in the provision of relief goods from the Honduran Red Cross and the National Society and delegation in El Salvador.

Coordination with NEMO, UN agencies including UNDP, WHO/PAHO, WFP and UNICEF as well as NGOs is on-going particularly with a view to avoiding duplication of assistance. The Ministry of Human Development is implementing an assistance programme for 4,000 families with a basic food ration provided by the WFP for three months, due to start in mid November. The villages targeted are not receiving assistance from NEMO or the Red Cross. The Ministry of Agriculture has launched an appeal for a rehabilitation programme.

A major recommendation of the food security assessment, and one of the main purposes of its implementation, is to ensure that focused, coordinated initiatives are carried out to assist those affected by the hurricane. This will maximise resources and help to ensure coverage of basic needs. The survey also stresses the need for follow-up and continuous assessment to identify vulnerable families who may require support beyond the programme period.

Outstanding needs

A team leader/programme coordinator for the operation has now been assigned and deployed in Belize. There is a funding shortfall in order to achieve the appeal target of CHF 655,000.

For further details please contact:

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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.

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>.

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Belize - Hurricane Iris						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 33/2001		PLEDGES RECEIVED				09.11.2001
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				655'000		TOTAL COVERAGE 95.8%
CASH CARRIED FORWARD						
BRITISH - GOVT/DFID		68'627	GBP	161'960	23.10.2001	
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	
NORWEGIAN - RC		50'000	NOK	9'274	24.10.2001	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				572'644	CHF	87.4%
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%