

BAHAMAS: HURRICANE FLOYD

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Relief operations are underway in the worst effected islands from the Bahamas archipelago: Abaco, Cat Island, Eleuthera, Grand Bahama, San Salvador and Nassau, after the onslaught by the Hurricane Floyd which left 3000 families in need. Delegates from 4 National Societies and 2 Delegates from the Caribbean Regional Delegation are being supported in relief operation by the International Federation, which launched an Appeal on September 21 for CHF 435,000 .

The context

Floyd, a category 4 hurricane, was one of the most intense hurricanes to affect the Bahamas archipelago. It passed over the islands with winds of more than 250 KM, forming a storm surge 6 meters above normal tides levels. Many coastal communities suffered severe flooding and widespread damage. The combined effects of the extreme winds and huge waves toppled power and telephone lines, severely disrupting electricity and communication services for several days uprooted trees and ripped roofs of homes.

After the storm official figures estimated that around 27,000 persons living in the outer islands were affected and urgently needed water, temporary shelter and food. The worst affected islands were Abaco, Eleuthera, Grand Bahamas, Cat Island, San Salvador and Nassau. Delegates from Caribbean National Societies of Antigua and Barbuda, Cayman Islands, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Vincent and the Grenadines have augmented the Federation's presence in the islands which consisted of three representatives from the American Red Cross and a technical delegate from the Caribbean Regional Delegation.

Latest events

The plan of action have been finalised for all 6 islands in The Bahamas archipelago where the International Federation is supporting relief operations in response to Hurricane Floyd: Abaco, Cat Island, Eleuthera, Grand Bahama, San Salvador and Nassau. In order to provide support to the affected islands, The

International Federation launched an Appeal on September 21 for CHF 435,000 to assist 3,000 families for one month in the 6 most affected islands, with relief supplies such as: baby package, hygienic kits, food parcels, bedding articles and tools kits.

To date, American Red Cross, the British High Commissioner, Norway Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross have responded to this Emergency Appeal. In addition, National Society has received local donations from the Bahamas Coast Guard, local supermarkets and companies as well as private Bahamian donors.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Bahamas Red Cross •

The Bahamas Red Cross has provided support to the evacuees in 41 shelters that operated in New Providence Island, where the capital, Nassau, is located. Volunteers operated in teams providing food and water supplies for displaced, elderly and injured persons living in shelters as well as distributed plastic sheeting for several outer island clinics.

Red Cross workers supported the damage and needs assessment surveys on most of the severely impacted islands as well as helped to distribute relief items received from an airlift organised by the American Red Cross which included plastic sheeting, hygiene kits, flashlight batteries, bed sheets and tents valued at US\$85,000.

With the support and assistance of a team of relief and disaster preparedness delegates from the International Federation's Regional Delegation and the American Red Cross the needs assessment took place in all affected island and together, in close co-ordination with the Society's leadership, they organised the initial emergency response and prepared the emergency appeal. The Caribbean Delegates are helping to co-ordinate the distributions in Eleuthera, Cat Island and Abaco.

While the emergency assistance was taking place in the different shelters, the technical delegate from the Regional Delegation was assisting in restoring National Society's radio communications. A H.F. network (radio IcomIC707) has been installed in all 4 affected islands: Nassau, Eleuthera, Abaco and Grand Bahama.; all radios are operating during this relief assistance and will be a permanent communication support between National Society HQ and local branches. The control station is located in Bahamas Red Cross HQ, in Nassau. In addition, 4 new HF radio stations were aquired to be installed in: Deadman's Cay, Duncan Town, Mansons Bay and Matthew Town. A future radio communication project will necessary to implement a network system across the archipelago.

All the relief supplies were purchashed locally, benefiting the local economy and were delivered to the beneficiaries as follows:

Community	Distribution Schedule		Families	Persons
	Start	Finish		
Abaco	27.09.99	07.10.99	20	80
Eleuthera	29.09.99	07.10.99	589	2,400
Cat Island	30.09.99	07.10.99	400	1,600
Grand Bahama	30.09.99	04.10.99	200	800
San Salvador	02.10.99	04.10.99	200	800
Neighbouring Islands: Acklins and long Island	03.10.99	05.10.99	49	200

Community	Items						
	Food Parcel	Baby Kit	Hygienic Kits	Water Gallons	Plastic Sheeting	Tents	Other Supplies
Cat Island	400	400	800	1,000	15	1	1
Eleuthera	589	380	200	3,900	20		122
San Salvador	200		300	600	12		
Long Island	10						
Gran Bahama	200		300				
Harbour			75	145			
Abaco	20				30	1	3
Acklins	39						
Total	1,458	780	1,175	5,645	77	2	126

Outstanding needs

Training is necessary to ensure continued distribution of the emergency supplies across the affected islands as well as to ensure that radio communication can be done by the local personnel and volunteers

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

With technical assistance from PAHO, OFDA, CDERA and the Government of Bahamas, the Red Cross relief worker developed the general damage and needs assessment. Widespread need for water, food and building supplies have been established, water and some food rations have been provided and delivered by the government to the homeless. To date, the National Government is restoring utilities on all affected islands.

A significant relationship has been developed with local media in order to inform Bahamian community of the Red Cross relief operations as well as to increase the image of the National Society in the country.

Contributions

Local donations have been received from different organisations. The Bahamas Guard Coast facilitated transport to carry out food distribution to neighbouring islands. Both American Red Cross and the Norwegian Red Cross and The British Government donated US \$25,000 (each one) in cash and emergency supplies only hours after Floyd passed the archipelago. The Canadian Red Cross will purchase some relief items as well as radio equipment to be sent in a few days to Bahamas.

A local theatre was temporarily donated to the National society to facilitate the storing of relief supplies. Volunteers are packing and storing around 5,000 boxes which includes food parcels, hygienic kits, water and baby kits. Around 20 MT. of relief assistance still in this warehouse and will be distributed as outlined in the Bahamas Red Cross plan of action. It is expected that this relief operation will continue until December.

Conclusion

Continued financial support is needed in order to address the relief operation and the future radio communication training for Red Cross volunteers and personnel. The International Federation has been active in the region throughout the crisis, and has been working closely with the Bahamas Red Cross Society to assist the most vulnerable victims of this natural disaster. The great support given by the Caribbean National Societies has increased the regional network during this operation and provided the opportunity to improve the Red Cross emergency response skill during a natural catastrophe.

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