

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 & CENTRAL AMERICA: 9 October 2001 **HURRICANE IRIS & TROPICAL STORM JERRY**

Information Bulletin N° 2/01

DREF Allocated: None

This Information Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, the Federation will consider international support through a Preliminary Appeal.

The Situation

Hurricane Iris

On Saturday, 6 October, Hurricane Iris swept across the Dominican Republic, causing downpours of 8cm of rain and tidal surges of more than 1.2 metres. Fortunately, little damage occurred and loss of life was limited to a family of three whose house collapsed. On Sunday, 7 October, the hurricane passed south of Jamaica and winds of up to 150 kph blew metal roofs from several houses in the south west of the country. However, early Monday, 8 October, Hurricane Iris strengthened into a small, but deadly category 4 hurricane with wind speeds of up to 220 kph.

Belize: At 17.00 hours EDT, the hurricane was 105 miles (168 km) east of Belize City, moving west at 21 mph (33 kph). Iris made landfall in Belize at 20:45 local time, the eye of the storm passing over Independence/Placencia. The hurricane seems to be narrow and localised, a maximum 30 km wide. There were early reports of a 15 ft (five metre) surge over Placencia, with 145mph (225 kph) winds, 6ft (two metres) of water over peninsula. There was also 15 ft of water in Big Creek with lots of roof damage and poles down. Many houses were reported lost in Placencia, which is reporting people being trapped in a collapsed hurricane shelter. A tourist boat was reported overturned at BGC port while trying to dock but there are no reports yet on casualties. Another boat was trying to assist. Storm surges are expected near the point at which the eye crossed the coast and torrential rains are anticipated which could cause both flash flooding and mud slides inland. Belize City is not affected and the airport is expected to remain open.

Tropical storm Jerry, located over the east Caribbean sea, which caused heavy downpours and high winds, lost intensity during the day, becoming a tropical depression.

Guatemala: No major reports on damage. Red Cross supported CONRED (the national coordinating body in times of disaster) in evacuations in Puerto Barrios and Rio Dulce areas. Two temporary shelters have been opened for 1,200 people. The Guatemalan Red Cross has 183 volunteers active/on standby in branches that may be affected, as well as 24 vehicles and 3 trucks, including a water tanker.

Honduras: No reports on damage.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Hurricane Iris as expected has affect the southern coast of *Belize*; all Belize Red Cross Society (BRCS) branches were on full alert and volunteers were mobilised to work in management of shelters. Evacuations started from the offshore reefs and islands and the threatened coastal areas. Coordination of the operation is taking place from Belmopan branch. The National Emergency Organisation (NEMO), of which the Belize Red Cross Society is a member, held a coordination meeting today, attended by the BRCS President. BRCS will start to immediately evaluate their stock position and likely requirements. A flight is planned as soon as conditions permit on Tuesday to allow an initial aerial survey to be followed up with ground assessment.

In *Guatemala*, CONRED, of which the Guatemalan Red Cross (GRC) is a member, issued a red alert and early warning systems have been activated. As of 16.00 hours on Monday, 8 October, 1,200 people were evacuated from coastal villages including Punta de Palma and Punta de Manabique in the Puerto Barrios district. Two shelters are being set up with the capacity to accommodate 1,750 people and CONRED is supplying blankets and mattresses. The Red Cross branch will provide a water purifying plant and a water tanker will be released from the GRC headquarters, if required. An updated inventory of supplies available has taken place in coordination with the American Red Cross and the Spanish Red Cross Societies and quantities of blankets, jerry cans and plastic sheeting are in stock.

The Guatemalan Red Cross has also issued a red alert for the northern regions of the country. The departmental branches of Puerto Barrios, Santo Tomás de Castilla, Chinook, El Estor, El Quiché, Sacapulas, San Juan Cotzal and Cobán have been issued with instructions to ensure all trained volunteers are on standby for emergency action. In addition, the search and rescue team was put on alert and is ready to mobilise, together with all relief volunteers trained to form part of national intervention teams (NITs) whose expertise may be required to carry out needs assessments. Departmental branches of the GRC which are to be found in the high-risk area, are being issued with a CD containing radio announcements with key messages in the event of hurricane disasters. Support is being sought from local and community radios so that these messages can be broadcast effectively.

In *Honduras*, the Bay Islands are currently experiencing heavy rain as a result of hurricane Iris. The national emergency response body, COPECO, has activated emergency operations centres in La Ceiba and San Pedro Sula.

Honduran Red Cross (HRC) branches in the Bay Islands and on the Atlantic coast are on red alert. They are monitoring the situation and liaising constantly with the HRC office responsible for disaster response, OPADE. Eight trained national intervention team members have been put on standby in the northern coastal areas and contingency plans activated in the branches on the northern coast and in the Bay Islands.

Federation Support: The Regional Delegations in Santo Domingo has the responsibility for support to the Belize RC but following the response methodology successful applied during Hurricane Keith have coordinated support with the Regional Delegation in Guatemala City.

Disaster response Teams: A field assessment and coordination team (FACT) call up has not been necessary at this stage, Regional Intervention Team resources are available. Guatemala has been reinforced with three technical delegates from the El Salvador earthquake operation to support any

response that may be required in Guatemala or Honduras. Two Federation delegates will arrive in Belize by first flight to Belize City by plane, (ETA 09:20 on Tuesday 9 October) to assist with preliminary damage assessment. Delegates from Santo Domingo are prepared to travel to reinforce this team which has sufficient funds to commence assessment activities. The Regional Delegation in Guatemala City (RDGC) and Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) landcruisers, prepositioned in Guatemala, will move to Belize Tuesday to support damage assessment team. Three additional vehicles are on standby if needed. Personnel from PADRU in Panama are on standby.

Relief materials:

Belize RC indicates priority needs may be plastic sheeting. Additional details will be supplied on Tuesday.

Federation stocks of plastic sheeting and water tanks and other essential supplies are positioned in El Salvador and Panama are available as needed.

American RC have stocks of plastic sheeting and blankets in Guatemala.

Participating National Society support:

- Spanish RC are supporting branches in northern Honduras and Izabal (Guatemala Atlantic coast).
- American RC international disaster response unit (IDRU) team on standby - and could move to Belize on Tuesday.
- Netherlands RC supporting Flores and Sayaxché branches in Guatemala.
- German RC has been approached to determine availability of their relief stock held in the PADRU warehouse in Panama.

Tropical Storm Jerry

Jerry has been downgraded to a tropical depression - not expected to do major harm for the time being.

Needs:

It is likely that additional relief supplies will need to be procured or transported from stock as soon as a more detailed assessment of damage can be completed on Tuesday. No DREF funds have been requested at this stage. Regional funds will allow assessment to start. A preliminary appeal may be issued as soon as the extent of damage can be confirmed. Offers of early support have been made for human resources and stock from a number of Participating National Societies and any such support is welcomed.

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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.

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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