

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 MICHELLE

7 November 2001

Information Bulletin N° 3/01

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, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation will consider international support through a Preliminary Appeal.

The Situation

At 7 PM EST on Monday 5 November Hurricane Michelle was located at latitude 26.6 north and longitude 74.5 west, exiting the Bahamas and heading east-northeast at a speed of 33 km/h. The sustained winds of Hurricane Michelle have now slowed down to 120 km/h, and is expected to continue losing force over the next 24 hours as it continues further north.

When the hurricane crossed over Cuba winds of over 216 km/h left a trail of destruction and damage. The Cuban Government evacuated 700,000 people from the high-risk areas hours before the hurricane hit, and 100,000 people now remain in shelters. Five deaths have been reported, with one person drowning and four dying when buildings collapsed.

The Government of Cuba was expected to publish the first report on the estimated damage on Tuesday, 3 PM local time. The most affected provinces are Cienfuegos, Matanzas, Villa Clara, Santi Espiritu and the Island of Youth, with lesser but still substantial impact in the provinces of Ciego de Avila, Havana, and the City of Havana. The agricultural sector has suffered major damage, and winds have knocked down power lines. Efforts are underway to restore electricity and communications as soon as possible, but Havana is still currently without electricity, water and gas services.

In the Ciego de Avila Province the sugar cane, citrus fruit, and banana crops have been lost, and in the Santi Espiritu Province the citrus fruit and rice plantations have suffered extensive damage due to the strong winds and heavy rains. While the extent of the damage to houses is still being assessed, it is clear that in the Ciego de Avila Province a number of health and maternity/infant-care centres and housing facilities for the elderly have been damaged.

The Cuban Red Cross's (CRC's) Cienfuegos and Ciego de Avila branches have also been damaged, and the situation with the CRC's Matanzas branch remains unknown since the communications antenna tower collapsed.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The CRC has been closely coordinating evacuation and rescue activities with Cuban authorities since the start of the operation, and continues to work in close collaboration with the Civil Defense Force by providing relief and psychological support assistance in shelters.

CRC branches continue to collect data and evaluate the damage, and this information is immediately shared with the Civil Defense Force and the Cuban Government.

Needs

Cuba has not issued a formal appeal to the international community, but President Castro indicated on Monday that all external assistance would be welcome. The Vice Minister of Public Health informed the Federation's delegation in Havana that 2-3 million chlorine tablets will be needed, as well as oral antibiotics and blankets. On Tuesday (6 November) the CRC and the Federation's information delegate were invited by Cuban authorities to participate in a damage assessment mission to the Matanzas Province.

The Federation is considering launching a Preliminary Appeal, pending further data collection and assessment efforts. Two Federation disaster response delegates remain on standby, backed up by the Federation's Field Assessment and Coordination teams (FACT).

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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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