

# *Cuba*

## *Hurricane Irene*

**Appeal no: 27/99**  
2 November 1999

***THIS APPEAL SEEKS CHF 1,160,000  
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES  
TO ASSIST 3,000 FAMILIES FOR 3 MONTHS***

***This appeal replaces the Preliminary Appeal which was launched  
on 20 October, 1999***

### ***Summary***

Hurricane *Irene*, classified as a category 1 hurricane, crossed Cuba on 14 October beginning at 15:00 hrs local time with winds up to 120 kilometres an hour. The first town to be affected was Batabo, to the south of Havana province. Later *Irene* struck the capital, Havana, and Santiago de las Vegas and at about 17:00 hrs left the coast in the province of Baracoa on its way to Florida in the United States.

In its wake the hurricane produced intense rain and caused flooding along the coastal areas in western Cuba, especially the province of Havana from Villa Clara and then passing to Cienfuegos and Camagüey. The most affected were the capital city and the provinces of Cien Fuegos, Island of Youth, Pinar del Rio, Sancti Spiritus, Villa Clara and Matanzas.

Over 160,000 people had to be evacuated and four deaths have been reported. The hurricane destroyed homes, blew off many roofs and caused considerable damage to electrical generators, industrial centres and agricultural areas.

### ***The Disaster***

At 11:00 hrs on 11 October heavy rains began to fall on the Island of Youth (Isla de la Juventud) and along the western coast of Cuba. In 24 hours, 49 of 79 water reservoirs in the provinces of Matanzas, Ciego de Avila, Havana and Sancti Spiritus overflowed and 162,664 persons had to be evacuated from

the danger zones, of which 21,602 were housed in temporary shelters and the remainder with family or friends. Over 3,000 homes were affected of which 224 were destroyed and 2,870 sustained damages to their roofs and walls. 144 factories and 26 agricultural installations suffered partial damage. Electricity was cut off and communications were interrupted. Three hospitals and one health clinic were damaged. 20 schools were damaged of which six were totally destroyed. Damage to agricultural areas is still being evaluated.

## ***The Response so far***

### **Government Action w**

The government and Civil Defence authorities have been providing assistance to those evacuated to the temporary shelters and have carried out damage assessments in the affected areas.

### **Red Cross/Red Crescent Action w**

The Cuban Red Cross (CRC) mustered 4,162 trained volunteers to assist with rescue efforts and evacuation of the population in the worst affected areas. The Red Cross also informed the population on preventative actions to be taken in case of a hurricane and how to cope in the aftermath. First aid has been provided where needed and volunteers continue to bring assistance to people in areas difficult to access.

### **Co-ordination w**

The Cuban Red Cross has been co-ordinating with Civil Defence authorities in evaluating the damage in the affected provinces, removing fallen trees from roads, and assisting with blood collection activities. Tracing activities are underway in addition to the clearing of debris.

The Federation's Regional Delegation in Santo Domingo has been in contact with the Cuban Red Cross via HF-radio, telephone and e-mail. The Regional Delegation sent a Disaster Preparedness Delegate to carry out with the National Society the damage assessment. The results showed a smaller scale of disaster needs: from the initial 8 affected provinces, only 5 were considered to be still in need of assistance. While the government is involved in emergency feeding needs in shelters, the Red Cross activities will be focus in the support of vector control, distribution of safe drinking water in shelters and rehabilitation efforts. The Federation has released CHF 200,000 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to help the Cuban Red Cross provide immediate assistance to the hurricane victims.

## ***The Intended Operation***

### **Assessment of Needs w**

The Cuban Red Cross has prioritised the provision of emergency assistance to victims evacuated to shelters, namely providing first aid, distributing drinking water to evacuees and providing sanitation support in shelters.

A Disaster Preparedness Delegate from the Regional Delegation supported the Cuban Red Cross (CRC) needs assessment as well as helped the CRC develop this emergency appeal. After the assessment, the results showed that there is no need for food assistance for the evacuees living in shelters. However, it is clear that this relief operation is going to be in the area of rehabilitation of the housing stock, especially for those families who were previously living in areas that are vulnerable to flooding and storm surges. Many of these families lost everything. In some communities of the 5 most affected provinces almost all zinc roofing sheets were lost in the storm and many partially damaged homes are in need of repair. These

affected families also are require drinking water, bedding supplies, kitchen sets and hygienic kits, as well as zinc roofs and construction material to repair their houses. Also, the National Society does not have sufficient relief and office equipment to ensure proper support for this operation.

#### **Immediate Needs w**

The most urgent needs are to provide emergency relief assistance and rehabilitation support to 3,000 families (12.000 persons) currently accommodated in shelters in the 5 most affected provinces. Personal hygiene articles, clothing, medical assistance, water containers and general sanitation are also pressing needs for the next two months. Ponchos and boots are needed for the Red Cross volunteers.

#### **Red Cross Objectives w**

- { to assist with providing medical and first aid assistance to the sick and injured who are in the shelters;
- { to assist people in shelters by providing safe drinking water, hygiene articles and bedding;
- { to provide basic equipment to the volunteers from those branches supporting the operation;
- { To support repairs and rehabilitation of low-income housing stock for 2,000 families in the 5 most affected provinces by providing building material: zinc roofing sheets, nails, and wood.

## ***National Society/Federation Plan of Action***

The Federation/CRC will provide basic relief items to 3,000 homeless families for a period of three months, distributed as follows: 325 families in Matanzas, 600 families in Villa Clara, 1,175 families in Ciudad Habana, 400 families in Sancti Spiritus, and 500 families in La Habana

#### **Capacity of the National Society •**

The present operation is significantly less that past relief operation carried out by the National Society; these include Hurricane Lili in 1996 and Hurricane Georges in 1998. The Cuba Red Cross therefore has both manpower and expertise to conduct this operation. It is not expected that this operation will place excessive strain on National Society.

#### **Present Capacity of the Federation in the Caribbean Region •**

The Federation through the Regional Delegation in Santo Domingo is capable of providing long term support to the National Society in the form of temporary delegates from the region and the Regional Delegation. Volunteers and staff trained under the regional disaster preparedness programme are able to provide support in emergency operations management, damage and needs assessment, logistic, relief distribution and other associated areas. Regionally over twenty persons from twelve National Societies have been trained in these areas, and many have called in offering their service

#### **Evaluation •**

Monitoring visits will be conducted by the Regional Delegation at specific periods to ensure that programmed activities are proceeding according to plan.

## ***Budget summary***

See Annex 1 for details

## ***Conclusion***

Hurricane *Irene* has left thousands homeless, as well as causing severe damage to the infrastructure, industrial, and agricultural sectors of Cuba. This Appeal has been developed on the basis of evaluations carried out by the Cuban Red Cross in the affected provinces together with the Regional Delegation to provide immediate assistance to over 12,000 people accommodated in shelters.

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