

EASTERN CARIBBEAN: HURRICANE LENNY

**Appeal no: 34/99
9 December, 1999**

***THIS APPEAL SEEKS CHF 802,000
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES
TO ASSIST 4,700 BENEFICIARIES FOR 2 MONTHS***

Summary

Hurricane Lenny struck the small island states of the Eastern Caribbean in mid-November. It moved in an atypical west to east pattern, starting at the northern coast of Venezuela and continuing on a east-northeasterly path through the northern Lesser Antilles.

In three days Hurricane Lenny developed winds of up to 240 kph, almost becoming a category 5 hurricane. On 17 November, the hurricane approached the Leeward islands, destroying houses, flooding hotels and endangering the livelihoods of thousands of residents. Throughout the Eastern Caribbean, islands far from the immediate worst effects of the hurricane, such as Grenada, St. Vincent, and the Grenadines, felt its impact. Along the unprotected western coasts of these islands 15 to 20 foot high waves pounded the shore, accompanied by heavy rainfall, and washed away homes, piers, roads, water mains and other infrastructure.

On 20 November, Hurricane Lenny was downgraded to a tropical depression and moved away from the Eastern Caribbean. In the immediate aftermath, however, it was impossible to gain access by land to the western shores of the most affected islands, which delayed detailed damage and needs assessments.

The Disaster

Hurricane Lenny has caused widespread damage, destruction, and hardship over a large area covering the islands of Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, St. Lucia, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Anguilla, and St. Martin. Those who are particularly badly affected include low-income families living in coastal areas whose homes were damaged or destroyed; farmers and sugar producers whose crops have been washed away or destroyed; and fishermen who lost their boats and all their equipment.

The Response so far

Government Action

Several governments are still working on detailed damage and needs assessments, due to the extensive destruction caused to roads all over the area. The economic sectors are also assessing damage to hotels, agriculture, tourism, fisheries, ports, and other infrastructure.

The national authorities have begun repair work on roads and are cleaning up debris. Water, electricity and phone services have been restored. All shelters have been closed; the homeless are currently housed with families and friends. Some governments are looking at permanently relocating coastline residents away from the affected areas, and have set up committees to review support for rehabilitation housing.

On behalf of the national governments of the most affected countries, CDERA (the inter-governmental Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Response Agency) convened a donors meeting in Barbados on Monday, 29th November, to coordinate response activities. Participants included the Federation, USAID, UNDP, ECHO, CIDA, FAO, PAHO and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). CDERA is now in the process of preparing a regional approach for submission to the participants.

Pledges have been received so far from CIDA (\$50,000) to address environmental health measures; DFID (\$25,000), and OFDA (US\$ 75,000). The CDB has promised loans of US\$ 100,000 to each affected country.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Federation's Regional Delegation in Santo Domingo deployed a disaster preparedness (DP) delegate with a telecom background to St. Kitts & Nevis. He took HF and VHF equipment with him to support the National Society's response efforts on both islands. A base station, mobile and portables have been installed at the Society's headquarters in Basseterre, and repeaters installed both in St. Kitts and Nevis.

In close co-ordination with the Federation Delegation in Santo Domingo, the American Red Cross deployed four DP delegates to support the National Societies of St. Kitts & Nevis, Antigua & Barbuda, and Dominica, plus the British Red Cross local branch in Anguilla, in assessing damage and relief needs. The delegates helped to organise assessment teams and to compile data. These delegates have since returned to their home bases.

The Federation's Regional Relief Co-ordinator for Central America and the Caribbean, who is based in the Regional Delegation in Guatemala City, is now in the Caribbean, providing direct support to the five National Societies covered by this Appeal.

St. Kitts and Nevis Red Cross. •

Red Cross Volunteers and staff immediately provided food rations to approximately 230 residents in primary shelters. On 18 November, 12 shelters were opened in St. Kitts, two of which were supported by the National Society.

The Red Cross also participated in the evacuation of local residents ahead of the arrival of the storm and in transporting injured persons to hospitals. On 21 November, Red Cross volunteers began preliminary damage assessment surveys and distribution of family packages. They distributed full food rations to affected persons as well as family packages consisting of blankets, pillows, kitchen utensils and soap to more than 20 homeless families. The National Society borrowed from its inventory of food items used for its regular (non-disaster) feeding programmes. A total of 36 Red Cross volunteers have been mobilised since the hurricane Lenny, and have been assisted by another 14 volunteers and 1 paid staff member.

Regular contacts have been maintained with NEMA (National Emergency Management Agency), and continue with the newly-formed Relief Co-ordination Committee comprised of public agencies.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines Red Cross •

On 18 November, Red Cross volunteers distributed food and clothing supplies. The following day the National Society started needs and damage assessments in communities affected by the high seas: Buccament, Layou, Chateaubelair and Bequia. The same day, staff and volunteers took clothing and hot meals to the victims. The National Society met with the National Disaster Co-ordinator to identify and re-assess needs, and distributions of food items and clothing started the following day.

The Society estimates that the emergency food needs of the 20 most affected families will last for around two months. It has started distributing hygiene kits, household items and bedding packages to them, and plans to contribute to the emergency repairs of their damaged houses.

Grenada Red Cross •

The National Society's staff and volunteers conducted a damage and needs assessment in co-ordination with the National Emergency Relief Organisation. Several houses, restaurants, fisheries and other business premises in St. George's, St. John's, St. Mark's and west of Carriacou and Petit Martinique have been destroyed. The government has asked the Grenada Red Cross to help in emergency repairs and rehabilitation of 22 houses in these communities as well as to supply replacement fish traps to some 100 fishermen who lost their boats and fishing equipment.

Dominica •

After a damage and needs assessment which the National Society carried out in close collaboration with the national authorities, it was asked to provide household items and carry out a supplementary feeding programme for more than one hundred of the most affected families over the next two months. In addition, it has been asked to take on the administration of the rehabilitation plan for the homes of the 100 families covered by the feeding programme (40 houses damaged, 60 destroyed).

In order to be able to monitor the planned activities, the Dominica Red Cross needs to renew parts of its radio and telecommunications equipment.

Antigua and Barbuda Red Cross •

After taking part in relief efforts following Hurricane José less than 30 days earlier, the National Red Cross Society promptly responded to the new disaster by providing plastic sheets, food, blankets sleeping cots and lanterns to victims of Lenny. On 19 November, Red Cross volunteers visited shelters where they distributed food, powdered milk, canned juices, sleeping cots and blankets. The American Red Cross delegates arrived in Antigua the next day to help the National Society with a needs and damage assessment, and to link up with the OFDA team for the damage assessment. National Society volunteers and staff continue to distribute dry foods, powdered milk and other relief supplies to persons in shelters.

The National Society finalised the needs and damage assessment on 24 November. Three teams of three volunteers each went from door to door in the affected areas to gather more details after the previous assessment.

The Intended Operation

Assessment of Needs •

Needs assessment have been carried out by the five affected National Societies. The Red Cross has also had access to a wide variety of information from other sources, including governmental agencies in the region such as CDERA, PAHO and Civil Defence.

Immediate Needs •

- **St. Kitts & Nevis (230 families):** Food packages for 1 month; Hygiene Kits; Bedding packages.
- **Antigua & Barbuda (500 families):** Food packages for 1 month; 1.200 tarpaulins; 50 mattresses. The worst affected are undoubtedly the 855 people left homeless by Hurricane José, which struck Antigua & Barbuda one month before Hurricane Lenny.
- **Dominica (100 families):** Supplementary feeding of affected population for two months.
- **St. Vincent and the Grenadines (20 families):** Food packages; Hygiene kits; Bedding packages and household items.
- **Grenada (22 families):** Household items.

Anticipated Later Needs •

- **Antigua and Barbuda:** 62 mattresses for 62 households (which were more than 60% flooded); roofing material (10 zinc sheets) for 50 low-income houses; one roll of fish trap wire each for 100 fishermen.
- **Dominica:** Building materials for 40 families for repairs to homes.
- **Grenada:** Emergency repairs to 12 damaged houses. Replacement fishing traps for some 100 fishermen.

In addition to distributions of food and essential household items, there is a clear need for emergency repairs and rehabilitation of housing stock, especially for families who were previously living in low-lying coastline areas vulnerable to flooding and storm surges.

In order to effectively implement both the relief and the rehabilitation programmes, radio communication equipment, especially handheld equipment, is needed for the Dominica Red Cross to ensure regular feedback from volunteers in the field.

Red Cross Objectives •

The overall goal of this operation is to provide well-targeted emergency relief and shelter to the people affected by Hurricane Lenny in the five affected countries of St. Kitts & Nevis, Antigua & Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada and St. Vincent & the Grenadines, as follows:

- Food distributions for the homeless.
- Emergency repairs of housing.
- Replacement of fish traps.
- To reinforce Dominica Red Cross operational capacity, through the provision of radio and telecommunications equipment and the training of staff and volunteers in its use, maintenance and procedures.

National Society/Federation Plan of Action

Emergency Phase: Late November 1999 - End January 2000 •

The regional Hurricane Lenny relief operation will assist approximately 900 families (4,500 persons) who are living in shelters and/or whose houses were partially or totally destroyed, located as follows:

- **St. Kitts & Nevis (920 Beneficiaries):** Prioritised areas are Old Road, Verchiels, Sandy Point and Charlestown.
- **Antigua & Barbuda (3115 beneficiaries):** Prioritised areas are Crab's Hill, Five Islands and Cobb's Cross.
- **Dominica (more than 400 beneficiaries):** Prioritised areas are several villages on the western coast.
- **Grenada:** more than 100 beneficiaries.
- **St. Vincent & the Grenadines:** more than 100 beneficiaries.

Ongoing and Planned Activities •

Distributions of food and non-food emergency relief items have already started in St.Kitts and Nevis, in Antigua and Barbuda, and in St.Vincent and the Grenadines, and procurement, packing and storage continue. Local companies (e.g. supermarkets) have been contacted to provide credit for supplies, and for packing assistance. The National Societies plan to complete the distributions of emergency supplies by mid-January 2000. The remaining two weeks of January will be used for preparing reports on the operation.

The Federation's Regional Relief Co-ordinator is assisting the five National Societies in drawing up detailed plans of action and operational budgets and co-ordinating efforts with regional agencies and NGOs.

In addition the Regional Delegation in Santo Domingo will maintain regular contacts with regional media, and co-ordinate regional fund-raising efforts, including through the regional Red Cross co-operation and networking mechanism, the Caribbean Co-operation of Red Cross (CCORC).

Based on the recommendation of ECHO, to CDERA and national governments that the Red Cross be used as an implementing agency, at least two governments (Dominica and Grenada) may call on their National Societies, along with the Regional Delegation in Santo Domingo, to provide technical or management supervision during the reconstruction of new housing units.

Capacity of the National Societies •

All five National Societies have previous experience in relief operations. The largest emergency relief effort ever undertaken by Societies in the Caribbean assisted 275,500 beneficiaries for 6 months in 1998 after Hurricane Georges.

The Caribbean Red Cross Societies have a good, nation-wide presence in their respective territories. In general the response capacity of the region has improved in recent years with the exposure of many Red Cross staff and volunteers to disaster preparedness techniques during recent operations. In addition, volunteers and staff trained under the regional disaster preparedness programme are able to undertake emergency operations management, damage and needs assessment, logistics, relief distributions and other associated tasks.

Present Capacity of the Federation in the Caribbean Region •

The International Federation, through its Regional Delegation in Santo Domingo, is capable of providing sustainable support to the National Societies in planning and budgeting, monitoring and surveillance of operations, and in narrative and financial reporting.

The Regional Delegation in Santo Domingo is also providing technical assistance to the Societies in telecommunications, procurement and pre-positioning of non-perishable relief supplies, and general disaster management training for Red Cross volunteers and staff.

Evaluation •

Monitoring visits will be conducted by the Regional Delegation to ensure that programmed activities are proceeding according to plan. A final evaluation of the operation will be undertaken.

Budget summary

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

Although the hurricane's damage was less than feared when it eventually made landfall, it nevertheless severely affected over 4,000 persons across the Windward and Leeward Islands of the Caribbean. Most of the damage was to infrastructure and housing; repairs and replacement are likely to put a significant strain on the population. In addition, many people who sought refuge with families and friends are now being forced to leave, aggravating an already serious situation. Donors are therefore urged to respond rapidly with cash donations to enable the National Societies to continue to respond to those in need.

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