

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

HAITI: UNREST

27 February 2004

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Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Allocated: CHF 60,000

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 180 countries.

For more information: www.ifrc.org

In Brief

This document is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. As information from further updates and details from assessment reports become available, the Federation will consider international support through an Appeal. A DREF allocation of CHF 60,000 has been released, proving vital for initial needs assessment and planning for response. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed. Information will be provided in the event of further funding needs or requirements for other assistance.

The Situation

The situation in Haïti is more and more precarious as rebel groups control most of the northern and central regions including the town of Cap Haïtien; as a result, these regions are inaccessible given that roads are barricaded. The south of the country remains volatile as opposing factions vie for control. The situation is difficult to assess with little precise data available; however, as the crisis and levels of violence escalate so do fears of food shortages, electricity outages, lack of clean water and failing public services, particularly health care. Humanitarian agencies refer to a potential exodus of people fleeing the disturbances to neighbouring countries. The UNHCR states that some 400 Haïtians have fled to the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Cuba since unrest began in early February. In addition, today, 27 February, there are press reports of 500 Haïtian migrants intercepted by US coastguards. Although there are reports of internal displacement in Haïti particularly towards rural areas from towns seized by rebel groups, it seems that at present this is not significant. However, as the situation deteriorates and law and order disintegrates, a major humanitarian crisis in Haïti looms large. Rebel groups threaten that they will seize Port-au-Prince in the coming days and pro government activists in the capital are bracing for the clash, rousing support and setting up blockades.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Federation's organizational development delegate, the telecommunications delegate deployed to Haïti from the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) together with the French Red Cross and Netherlands Red Cross delegates were relocated to Santo Domingo on 26 February in view of the growing insecurity in Haïti. The possibility of their returning to Haïti will be continually assessed. The Federation's water and sanitation/relief delegate also deployed by PADRU, forms part of an ICRC team undertaking a ICRC mission in Gonaïves where reports indicate that access to potable water is becoming a major problem, as stocks of fuel run short.

The Federation is focusing efforts on contingency planning with National Societies in the region where population influxes can be anticipated. The Dominican Red Cross has made a commitment to provide direct support to the Haïtian National Red Cross Society (HNRCs) in the area of provision of medicines, ambulances and food. The

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border branches of Jimani, Dajabon, Pedernales and Elias Piñas have 50 volunteers per branch available, together with an ambulance. Work has begun in the Dominican Red Cross on the installation of radio networks in branches along the border to facilitate communication. The Federation has received information from the Jamaican Red Cross that 105 Haitians have reached Jamaica and are accommodated in a shelter in Portland. The National Society has provided food, thanks to donations from the private sector, and hygiene kits. It is planned to move the migrants to shelters in Saint James and the Jamaican Red Cross has been requested to ensure shelter management. Coordination between the Jamaican Red Cross and the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) has been reinforced.

The Cuban Red Cross is assisting displaced Haitians in camps run by the Cuban government in Punta de Maisi (Guantánamo) with UNHCR support.

The Federation is stepping up coordination efforts with international organizations based in Port-au-Prince, Santo Domingo and Geneva in order to maximize assistance in the event of large population movements flowing from Haiti.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

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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