DREF operation update

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Caribbean: Hurricane Gustav

DREF operation n° MDR49003
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29 August 2008

The International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) is a source of un-earmarked money created by the Federation in 1985 to ensure that immediate financial support is available for Red Cross and Red Crescent response to emergencies. The DREF is a vital part of the International Federation's disaster response system and increases the ability of national societies to respond to disasters.

Period covered by this update: 27 August to 29 August, 2008.

Summary: CHF 25,000 was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 26 August, 2008 to support the National Society in Haiti in jump starting their early damage and need assessments caused by Hurricane Gustav. A second DREF was allocated for CHF 25,000 on 28 August, 2008 to support the National Society of Jamaica to cover early preparation and relief activities costs. This regional DREF operation may increase to include additional support to the National Societies of Dominican Republic, Cuba and Cayman Islands.

A flooded street in Haiti.
Source: Reuters

On 25 August, 2008, Hurricane Gustav started to affect the countries of Haiti and Dominican Republic with heavy rain. It later moved on to Jamaica, heading to Cayman Islands and Cuba. This update reflects the actual situation and actions undertaken to date by the National Societies, the Overseas Branch of the British Red Cross Society (BRCS), Partner National Societies and the International Federation.

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The situation

On 25 August 2008, a tropical depression in the Caribbean strengthened into tropical storm Gustav, the seventh named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season. On 26 August, it rapidly became a category one hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson Scale causing heavy rain in the south-eastern part of **Haiti** and **Dominican Republic.** The same day the eye of hurricane Gustav made landfall on the south-west peninsula of Haiti, approximately 10 miles west of Jacmel. Airports, sea ports and public offices were closed. On the morning of 27 August, as Gustav left Haiti, thousands of people were left affected by the heavy winds and floods. The Haitian Civil Defense has been leading assessments along the affected areas. The government has opened approximately 76 emergency shelters in the southern part of the country housing approximately

5,610 affected people. 51 deaths have been reported in addition to one person missing, 140 damaged houses and 234 destroyed houses. Electricity posts are down and floods are reported in the province of South East. The water system is damaged, electricity posts have fallen and a bridge collapsed due to heavy flooding in Jacmel. Additionally, heavy flooding has been reported in West-Petit Goave and West Metropol blocking roads. Plantain and banana fields as well as livestock have been destroyed in the South East and Nippes due to the floods.

On 26 August, the government of the **Dominican Republic** issued a red alert for the provinces of Barahona, Pedernales, Independecia, Elias Pina, Santo Domingo, among others. According to data provided by the Emergency Operations Center (Centro de Operaciones de Emergencia – COE), 871 houses were damaged and one house was destroyed in the south-east region of the country forcing approximately 4,360 people to evacuate as a preventive measure. Approximately 16 emergency shelters have been opened housing 1,313 people. The provinces of Barahona, Pedernales, Independencia and Azua remain in red alert. The Ozama river water level has increased and provoked a mud slide killing eight people and injuring two in the area of Guadalupe (National District). Several floods have been reported in Barahona forcing many families to evacuate.

Flooded street in Cuba.
Source: Reuters

On 28 August after leaving Haiti, Gustav re-gained strength and closed in on **Jamaica**. The government of Jamaica issued a hurricane warning and shut down the country as Gustav approached the island. On 29 August, the center of Gustav was located 100 miles west north-west of Kingston, Jamaica; in the afternoon of the same day, Gustav left the country. The Office for Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) advised the Jamaican government to close all airports, recall public transportation and to notify the toll authorities to open all roads to facilitate evacuation and emergency response.

Evacuation activities have begun in the most vulnerable areas. Heavy equipment has been pre-positioned to facilitate clearance of blocked roads and a pre-impact list has been developed. According to the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) 26 communities are dealing with floods and landslides. Some 79 shelters have been opened, housing a total of 1,520 people.

The government of **Cayman Islands** issued a hurricane warning and an order to open emergency shelters. Banks have been closed and government offices will be closing early on 29 August. Gustav is anticipated to pass between Grand Cayman and sister islands starting 29 August producing up to 12 inches of rain.

The civil defence in **Cuba** ordered a preventive evacuation of some 22,000 people and livestock that are at most risk, especially in the eastern provinces of Santiago de Cuba. In Granma more than 5,000 people have been evacuated. The government has opened 184 emergency shelters and as of 28 August a tropical storm warning remains in effect for the province of Granma since Gustav is expected to arrive in western Cuba on 30 August.

Coordination and partnerships

The Red Cross Movement has been coordinating efforts both internally and externally from the onset of the emergency. The **Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU)** has been in close contact with the National Societies from the Cayman Island, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, and the overseas branch of the BRCS. PADRU's high frequency radio is operative and is being used to monitor the emergency among the affected islands. One PADRU disaster management delegate has been deployed to

Haiti and another has arrived to **Cayman Islands**. Three disaster management delegates are on stand-by for deployment to **Cuba** and **Jamaica** respectively**.**

The Deputy Head of Zone for the Americas and the Regional Representative for Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti were initially in **Haiti** supporting early damage and need assessments undertaken by the Haitian National Red Cross Society (HNRCS). The International Federation has participated in an inter-agency meeting hosted by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to share information. The Partner National Societies (PNS) from France, Spanish, Canada, United States of America and Germany are also present providing relief items, vehicles and overall support. The Norwegian Red Cross has contacted the International Federation to offer their support based on the evolution of the emergency. Additionally, a PIRAC delegate will arrive on 29 August. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has also been participating in coordination meetings and will be supplying a vehicle for assessment activities as well as relief items including jerry cans, kitchen kits, water tanks and sleeping mats. Local authorities (local civil defence) are coordinating activities with the HNRCS local branches and have activated coordinating tables. Clusters have not yet been activated.

A United Nations Emergency Team (UNETE) is in the **Dominican Republic** and will visit some shelters in Santo Domingo.

In **Jamaica** the Office for Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) has fast tracked its emergency activities, including advising all non-essential employees to stay home until weather conditions improve, the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) has been activated, shelter managers have been alerted and a list of priority shelters has been published. The public has been advised to monitor radios and televisions for further advisories. Regionally, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) Coordinating Unit has also placed emergency support personnel on standby for support to Jamaica should this become necessary. NEOC meetings have been held with ODPEM in order to coordinate relief actions and to continue monitoring the situation. The International Charter for Space and Major Disasters has been activated as well.

The Emergency Operation Centre was activated and the Overseas Branch of the British Red Cross in the **Cayman Islands** is present preparing the volunteers for Gustav's arrival with the support of PADRU's disaster management delegate that was deployed previously. The Red Cross volunteers have been assigned shelters that are ready and equipped. The Hazard Management Council has held meetings in order to coordinate early warning activities.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The **Haitian National Red Cross Society (HNRCS)** has held meetings with the local branches and other actors present in the field, and has mobilized 250 available NIT members. Early warning actions by Haitian Red Cross volunteers saved lives since volunteers were sensitising communities on the need to move to safer grounds. Currently, the HNRCS is in the assessment phase and will be able to provide more detailed information once evaluations are completed. Volunteers have been working since the past 48 hours assisting shelters and providing first aid care.

The **Dominican Red Cross (DRC)** has activated all the coordinating operative centres and is closely monitoring the situation. All local branches issued a red alert and approximately 200 volunteers are currently preparing to provide relief activities. Their national radio system is functioning well with over 50 stations. The DRC relief director has mobilized equipment and volunteers and is assisting the emergency shelters.

The **Jamaica Red Cross (JRC)** has been meeting with their Office for Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management's Shelter and Care Committee, is active in the Jamaica Emergency Operations Centre and has its branches ready to respond. Stocks were moved to where stocks were low in order to be prepared and priority shelters were opened.

The Overseas Branch of the British Red Cross in the **Cayman Islands** has been involved in two emergency council meetings and is in contact with the Overseas Branch Director in London to discuss preparation for Gustav. A PADRU Disaster Management delegate is in Cayman Islands assisting the Overseas Branch in early preparation activities.

The National Intervention Team (NIT) members from the **Cuban Red Cross (CRC)** have been mobilized. There are five specialized NIT teams with a total of 107 volunteers, and 3,600 CRC volunteers are

performing evacuation activities with support from the Civil Defence. The CRC is supporting the government in managing the emergency shelters.

Needs

Following the Information Bulletin published on 26 August and the DREF bulletin published on 27 August, this DREF Operation Update no.1 includes an additional DREF allocation to support initial costs for the National Society of Jamaica. Once all evaluations are completed and immediate needs are identified by each country, a DREF update with detailed objectives will be published. Additional DREF funds can be requested to meet further needs and operational costs for these countries or for Cuba and Cayman Islands.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the ***Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief*** and is committed to the ***Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*** (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

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