

***Dominican Republic: Hurricane Hortense  
Information Bulletin No.01  
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***The Disaster***

After causing destruction in Puerto Rico, category 1 Hurricane Hortense, packing winds as strong as 130 km/h, and accompanied by high swells and heavy rain, hit the Dominican Republic's eastern and north-eastern coast on 10 September, causing severe floods and extensive damage to vulnerable communities. The hurricane's eye came as close as latitude 18.4 N and longitude 68.2 W, or 20 km off the north-eastern coast, at Cabo Engaño.

Although the public had been informed by the media about the hurricane's path throughout the watch, alert and warning phases, many vulnerable families in these areas were taken by surprise. Housing, infrastructure and crops were damaged, with the north-eastern coconut belt of the country the worst affected area. Because of poor quality building and exposed locations along the coast-line and river beds 2,480 houses, belonging mainly to low-income families, suffered severe damage.

In all, 5,000 families were affected in the eastern provinces of La Altagracia and El Seibo and in the north-eastern provinces of Samaná and María Trinidad Sánchez. A total of 3 people died and 20 are reported missing.

***The intended Red Cross operation***

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The Dominican Republic Red Cross is planning to give two weeks' relief supplies to 288 families in four temporary shelters in the province of La Altagracia. The local Red Cross branch will take over the administration of two of the shelters until the end of September.

Following a positive experience during the Tropical Storm Gordon operation in 1994, the National Society intends to implement a rehabilitation project for 210 vulnerable families in rural and low-income areas in the provinces of Samaná, María Trinidad Sánchez and El Seibo. After a detailed survey of needs and a thorough census of the beneficiaries, it will provide corrugated iron sheeting, nails and tools for the repair of damaged roofing. In addition, trained Red Cross volunteers will offer community based disaster preparedness courses in the affected communities along the eastern and north-eastern coast until the end of the hurricane season.

The training will be backed up by a separately operated branch development programme, to be introduced shortly by the National Society, assisted by the Caribbean Regional Delegation.

## ***Response to date***

### **Government Action ●**

Provincial governments together with the Civil Defence evacuated people in flooded areas and opened temporary shelters. The Ministry of Health is providing food, water, mattresses and hygiene articles to the evacuees. Vaccination campaigns are being carried out in the affected areas and primary health care services are being offered to those living in temporary shelters.

### **Other Agencies Action ●**

Shelters are being provided or run by the Catholic Church and the Rotary Club in some of the affected areas. Caritas and Care have been providing emergency supplies for families living in temporary shelters.

### **Red Cross/Red Crescent Action ●**

The Dominican Red Cross kept in close contact with the Caribbean Regional Delegation during the official hurricane warning phase. Volunteers were put on alert in all of the eastern and north-eastern branches of the National Society and carried out rescue activities during and immediately after the hurricane.

The National Headquarters' Relief Department conducted several damage assessments in the affected areas last week and last week-end (14 -15 September). The Caribbean Regional Delegation has been supporting the National Society in assessing the emergency situation and in preparing the relief and rehabilitation operation.

The International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) has allocated CHF 50,000, which it is expected will be reimbursed by contributions from donors. DREF could not cover the entire amount required for the operation because its resources are currently running low.

### **Co-ordination ●**

All Red Cross activities are closely co-ordinated with the national emergency committee.

## ***Red Cross objectives***

The intended Red Cross operation

- \* will provide 288 families living in four temporary shelters in the city of Higüey (province El Seibo) with bed linen, towels, kitchen sets and hygiene articles.
- \* will assist 210 families in rural and low-income areas in the provinces of Samaná, María Trinidad Sánchez and El Seibo to re-establish themselves by providing construction materials;
- \* aims to work with affected communities in order to make them less vulnerable to natural hazards.

The National Society will depend on cash donations to carry out the intended community based disaster preparedness training courses in the affected areas. The National Society has already successfully conducted many training courses, including training curricula that were carried out in other areas of the country as part of a Federation project last year.

In the long term, the government will have to implement physical mitigation and resettlement programmes in many communities located in disaster prone zones. Meanwhile, the skills provided through the Red Cross training activities could enable many of these communities to become less vulnerable to frequent natural hazards such as strong winds and floods.

## ***National Society plan of action***

### **Phase One: September 1996**

Red Cross Volunteers of Higüey will take over the administration of two temporary shelters. Procurement will begin for the relief supplies for 288 families living in all four temporary shelters in Higüey. All shelters will be closed by October 1996.

At the end of September the situation in Samaná, María Trinidad Sánchez and El Seibo will be re-evaluated in order to ensure the project meets the real needs of the affected families. Following the analysis of quotations and depending on donor response, orders will be placed for construction materials.

### **Phase Two: October 1996-December 1996 \***

Based on the needs assessment and the revised list of beneficiaries, Red Cross Volunteers will start with the distribution of the construction materials as soon as possible. Guidelines for hurricane proof home improvements will be handed out and technical assistance will be made available as required

### **National Society capacity**

Although the National Society's branches in the affected areas require organisational and administrative adjustments as well as adequate equipment in order to improve their services, the existing structure is strong enough to implement the intended operation. Assistance will be provided through the Federation's Caribbean Regional Delegation in Kingston, Jamaica.

### **Evaluation**

It is intended to hold an evaluation workshop in early January 1997 with the participation of all branches involved. It will look at the impact of the operation in the affected communities but also draw conclusions of use for the intended branch development project of the National Society.

## ***Budget summary***

	<b>CHF</b>
<i>Food</i>	15,000
<i>Hygiene articles</i>	3,000
<i>Bed clothing</i>	11,500
<i>Construction materials</i>	22,000
<i>Construction tools</i>	2,500
<i>Packing</i>	2,000
<i>Transport</i>	4,000
<i>Local personnel</i>	7,000
<i>Delegate (one month)</i>	4,000
<i>Community disaster-preparedness training</i>	18,000
<i>Telecommunications and other logistical costs</i>	3,000
<i>Secretariat support (Geneva and Regional Delegation)</i>	15,000
<i>Contingency</i>	7,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>114,000</b>

## ***Conclusion***

The supply of relief articles to people in shelters and the implementation of the rehabilitation and training phases of this operation will depend entirely on external support. If realised, the relief operation and the envisaged branch development programmes could form the starting point for the National Society's institutional development.

Donors are invited to make contributions to replenish the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (CHF 50,000) and to meet those expenses not covered by the DREF allocation (CHF 64,000).

Donations in cash should be sent to the International Federation Secretariat in Geneva.

**Donations in kind should be sent directly to the Dominican Republic Red Cross:**

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