



Jamaica Red Cross Volunteers in Saint James Branch

Jamaica - Hurricane Melissa Imminent DREF

MDRJM005

DREF Operational Review Report

Prepared by: British Red Cross

April-May 2026

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Address: Chemin des Crêts 17, Petit-Saconnex, 1209 Geneva, Switzerland Postal address: P.O. Box 303, 1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland. **T** +41 (0)22 730 42 22 | **F** +41 (0)22 730 42 00 | **E** secretariat@ifrc.org | **W** [ifrc.org](https://www.ifrc.org)

Executive Summary

This rapid DREF operational review assesses the Jamaica Red Cross (JRC) Imminent DREF operation for Hurricane Melissa, following a CHF 80,000 allocation approved on 23 October 2025 to support anticipatory actions and early response. Hurricane Melissa made landfall on 28 October as a Category 5 event, triggering a rapid scale-up to a CHF 19 million Emergency Appeal. The review used a rapid, mixed-methods approach, combining desk review, surveys, key informant interviews, and field-based discussions, focusing on the first 45 days of implementation (23 October to 07 December 2025) and assessing performance against relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, quality (CEA/PGI), and short-term impact.

The Imminent DREF operation was timely and largely relevant, with early actions informed by forecast risks and focused on shelter, basic needs, and access constraints. Rapid approval and pre-landfall mobilisation, enabled by prior training, pre-positioned stock, and strong logistics systems, allowed JRC to respond quickly, delivering assistance within 48 hours of landfall. However, the severity and shifting trajectory of the hurricane, combined with a short lead time (5 days), exposed limitations in planning. Early actions focused more on readiness rather than anticipatory measures at community level, and key components such as early warning engagement, communication contingency systems, and safeguarding mechanisms were not fully integrated during the critical pre-landfall stage.

Despite these gaps, the operation demonstrated strong performance in logistics, coordination, and rapid scale-up, reaching over 2,300 households with distributions 48 hours after Hurricane Melissa made landfall (as per desk-review findings). The movement of pre-positioned stock to branches and volunteer mobilisation were essential to this success, particularly in hard-to-reach areas. However, effectiveness was constrained by limited volunteer capacity, access challenges, and reliance on paper-based systems, which affected targeting, accountability, and timeline verification. In addition, access to information during the data collection stage was difficult, therefore distinguishing timelines on distributions was not possible, limiting the findings. Coordination with government and partners was a key enabler but took time to fully function, while gaps in CEA and PGI, particularly feedback mechanisms and safeguarding referral pathways, highlighted weaknesses in accountability and quality during the early response post-landfall.

The findings highlight the need to strengthen the anticipatory dimension of Imminent DREF activations, ensuring early actions translate into timely, community-level mitigation. Key recommendations include, establishing scalable feedback and safeguarding systems; strengthening communication infrastructure and coordination between HQ and branches; investing in volunteer capacity and standardised, more accountable distribution systems; enhancing logistics, digital data, and pre-agreements; and expanding JRC's role in shelter and MHPSS preparedness. At IFRC level, improvements are recommended in financial transparency and timeliness, pre-season DREF training and adapting DREF modalities to better support National Society operational capacity. Together, these actions aim to enhance the effectiveness, accountability, and impact of future Imminent DREF operations.

THE AUTHORS

- **Review Team:** British Red Cross

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The review team extends thanks to all those who contributed to this Rapid Operational Review. We are particularly grateful to the Jamaica Red Cross Society for their openness, collaboration, and strong support throughout the process. Staff and volunteers across headquarters and branches, and community members, generously shared their time and insights, showing a commitment to learning and strengthening future responses.

Gratitude is also extended to the IFRC Regional Office (including the CCD) for their time and input, and to the IFRC DREF Team for their support in developing the Terms of Reference, structuring this review and providing feedback.

Final thanks go to colleagues from the Canadian Red Cross, with whom we conducted the in-country visit. This enabled more detailed discussions of findings and recommendations, reducing multiple separate visits to the Jamaica Red Cross.

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Abbreviations / Acronyms

AA – Anticipatory Actions	MHPSS – Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
CEA – Community Engagement and Accountability	HHI – Household Item
DREF – Disaster Response Emergency Fund	NEOC – National Emergency Operations Centre
ERU – Emergency Response Unit	NOAA – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
FGD – Focus Group Discussion	NS – National Society
GBV – Gender-Based Violence	ODPEM – Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management
GDACS – Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System	OU1 – Operations Update 1
HAC – Humanitarian Assistance Committee	PDM – Post-Distribution Monitoring
HQ – Headquarters	PFA – Project Funding Agreement
IFRC – International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	PGI – Protection, Gender and Inclusion
IM – Information Management	PIRAC – French Red Cross Caribbean Regional Response Platform
JHDNA – Jamaica Household Damage and Needs Assessment	SOP – Standard Operating Procedure
JRC – Jamaica Red Cross	ToR – Terms of Reference
KII – Key Informant Interview	

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and Objectives

On 23 October 2025, an [Imminent DREF](#) allocation of CHF 80,000 was approved to support Jamaica Red Cross (JRC) in implementing anticipatory actions (AA) ahead of Tropical Storm Melissa (later Hurricane Melissa), as well as supporting early response activities. Early actions¹ included volunteer mobilization; mobilizing and distribution of household items (HHIs); and support to emergency shelters across eight high-risk parishes. These activities were designed to be complemented by early response actions, including support to the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC), damage and needs assessments and basic needs support for disaster-affected households. See Figure 1 below for the Imminent DREF plan.

Proposed Actions			
	Sector	Activities	Budget (CHF)
 Early Actions	Shelter	• Setting up of emergency shelters • Mobilization and distribution of stock to 250 at-risk households through local branches and designated shelters before the impact of the tropical storm including 250 shelter kits, 250 hygiene kits, 250 cleaning kits, 500 tarps, 750 blankets.	CHF 56,250
	NS Strengthening	• National Society strengthening, internal coordination and early response planning with local branches • Mobilization of staff and volunteers and preparation of support necessities (transportation, communications, visibility items, safety gear, etc.) • Support the operation of the National Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)	
 Early Response	NS Strengthening	• Support the operation of the National Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)	CHF 18,750
	CEA	• Initiate a Damage and Needs Assessment to collect information on existing needs after impact of the storm. • Advance CEA activities by establishing the feedback and complaint mechanism channel for the response.	
	Shelter	• Run emergency shelters • Procurement of supplies for registration and temporary sheltering of disaster-affected households. • Replenishment of items distributed during the early actions. • Distribution of relief items stocked in local branches and shelters to affected communities after impact of the storm. • Replenishment of relief items distributed during the early response.	
Sub-total			CHF 75,000
Indirect Cost			CHF 5,000
Total			CHF 80,000

Figure 1 – Imminent DREF Overview (Imminent DREF Application)

¹ **Early actions** in the context of anticipatory action are predefined, proactive measures implemented **before a forecast hazard occurs**, based on agreed triggers and financing mechanisms, with the aim of reducing the anticipated humanitarian impacts on people, livelihoods, and assets. In this review, **early actions** refer to anticipatory measures undertaken before Hurricane Melissa's landfall under the Imminent DREF operation. These should be distinguished from **early response actions**, which were implemented after landfall to address immediate humanitarian needs arising from the hurricane's impacts.

On 28 October 2025, Hurricane Melissa made landfall as a Category 5 hurricane in Jamaica, affecting up to 1.9 million people across all 14 parishes. This triggered a transition from anticipatory action to full-scale response through a Federation-wide Emergency Appeal ([MDRJM005](#)) launched on 29 October 2025 with a CHF 19 million funding requirement. Additional funding of CHF 920,000 from IFRC-DREF was allocated on 02 November 2025 to support the early scale up of interventions while resources were being mobilised. This allowed the extension of both the geographic scope and timeframe of the DREF component of the Appeal to nine months, as reflected in [Operations Update 1](#) (OU1).

This review serves two purposes, evaluating the Jamaica Imminent DREF operation and is the first review of an Imminent DREF implementation.

The review aims to generate actionable learning on the performance of the Imminent DREF activation for Hurricane Melissa, including its contribution to early action activities, National Society readiness, and the transition into early response. To achieve this, the review focused on:

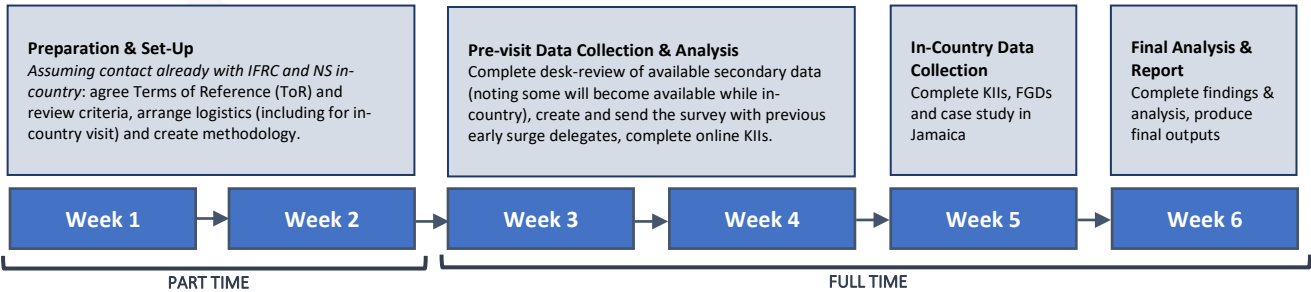
- Assessing the timeliness and appropriateness of the Imminent DREF allocation as an operational tool across both early action and early response.
- Reviewing the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and short-term impact of early action activities implemented prior to landfall.
- Examining operational bottlenecks and enabling factors affecting the quality and timeliness of implementation.
- Analysing how early response activities supported the transition into the immediate response reflected in OU1, including support to affected communities and coordination with internal and external partners.
- Generating practical lessons and recommendations to strengthen future Imminent DREF activations in Jamaica, the Caribbean, and potentially other Small Island Developing States at risk of hurricanes, cyclones, and typhoons.

Through this focus, the review assesses the Jamaica Imminent DREF operation for Hurricane Melissa (MDRJM005) with the aim of reinforcing operational readiness, quality, and learning across the National Society and the IFRC.

1.2. Deliverables

- Rapid Operational Imminent DREF Review Report, including a case study from JRC volunteers on the early response in [Annex 1](#)
- Summary PowerPoint presentation of the Imminent DREF Review findings for internal dissemination.
- JRC quote capturing their experience, to be published under the new Red Cross Red Crescent [Anticipatory Action Practitioners Manual](#), in the new Imminent DREF chapter.

1.3. Methodology



This review adopted a rapid, mixed-methods approach, combining a desk review of secondary data with targeted primary data collection. Data collection focused on a light-touch evidence base, drawing on:

- A **desk review** of key operational documentation sourced by JRC and IFRC, including the Imminent DREF allocation, Operations Update No. 1, situation reports, and relevant guidance. See [Annex 2](#) for list of documents reviewed.

- A **survey and semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) with rapid response surge delegates** deployed during the initial stages of the Hurricane Melissa response.
- **Semi-structured KIIs and focus group discussions with selected JRC and IFRC staff**, with the majority conducted in person during a one-week visit, complemented by online KIIs with colleagues not based in Jamaica. A more simplified set of 3-questions were developed to support these discussions, capturing what happened, when and recommendations for future Imminent DREF operations.
- A **qualitative case study** capturing volunteer perspectives on early response implementation, conducted in person.

Note: Interviews were recorded, where possible, to support accurate transcription and analysis. Verbal consent was collected from all participants before each interview or discussion. All data was managed to ensure responses remained anonymous and confidential, unless otherwise stated (e.g. for the case study or use of direct quotes). To support the online participation (survey and KIIs), contacts were provided by JRC and IFRC.

Analysis was guided by five standard evaluation criteria: **relevance and appropriateness; efficiency; effectiveness; PGI, CEA, and implementation quality; and impact (immediate/short-term)**, with a focus on the transition from AA to early response. An analysis matrix was used to categorise findings according to these criteria, each containing a set of questions defined by the IFRC-DREF Team in the original ToR (refer to key findings and lessons learnt section to see these). A timeline was also developed to complement the analysis. AI (Microsoft Co Pilot) was used to support the compiling of findings and analysis, and the creation of the case study.

Findings are presented in this report to generate practical lessons and actionable recommendations applicable to future Imminent DREF activations. The approach used supported stakeholder engagement and data triangulation, while enabling a rapid yet sufficiently comprehensive operational review.



Review Team visiting JRC warehouse

1.4. Limitations and Challenges

From a methodological perspective, the following limitations and challenges were identified:

- **Timing and scope of the review:** this review was conducted approximately six months after Hurricane Melissa and focused on a defined timeframe covering the first 45 days of AA and early response under the Imminent DREF (23 October 2025 to 7 December 2025). While the operation was originally designed as a 45-day anticipatory action (AA) intervention, Hurricane Melissa made landfall on day 5 of implementation (28 October 2025), triggering an immediate transition from anticipatory action to emergency response. As a result, the review period captures both the brief anticipatory phase and the early response phase, and findings should be interpreted in light of this rapid operational shift. Reflecting retrospectively on this early phase, while the response was still ongoing, created challenges related to recall and distinguishing early actions from response activities. To mitigate this, the review prioritised reflections on decision-making, processes, and comparative timelines (e.g. before and immediately after landfall), rather than detailed chronological recall. Findings were triangulated with available secondary data to support accuracy.
- **Subjectivity and no defined benchmark of a successful Imminent DREF:** there is no established benchmark for what a “successful” Imminent DREF implementation is. As a result, the analysis involved a level of subjectivity and focused on understanding why decisions were taken and how processes functioned in practice. These insights were then analysed against the five evaluation criteria and questions (see findings) to ensure consistency.
- **Review timeframe, workload and complexity of review questions:** while the ToR indicated a duration of 15–20 days, the actual effort required was approximately 25 days. Additional time was needed to design the methodology, including the survey, interview tools and analytical framework given the absence of an established Imminent DREF review process (only template that existed was the Final Report). This is the first Imminent DREF Rapid Review, therefore extended work was needed behind the preparation, and there was no prior experience in applying the review questions set out in the ToR. The twelve questions were highly detailed and, in some cases, overlapping, which was challenging within the intended Imminent DREF Rapid Review timeframe. To manage this, questions were simplified for key informant interviews and focus group discussions, with responses subsequently analysed against the original question set. Sub questions were also created to help guide data collection for the desk-based review.
 - Due to the rapid timeline, the review included a 1-week visit, which did not allow sufficient time to present findings and recommendations directly to JRC at the end of the visit. This was mitigated by aligning with the Canadian Red Cross visit, who had a longer visit and were able to share our combined findings and reflections with JRC, as well as feedback to the Imminent DREF review team.
- **Data collection constraints:** although online KIIs were planned ahead of the in-country visit, limited availability meant some took place afterwards. The review was designed as a rapid, light-touch exercise with a short timeframe (around eight weeks) and a small team and focused only on the Imminent DREF component to avoid overlap with ongoing EA evaluations. These factors limited the depth of data collection; a survey was therefore used to complement a small number of KIIs with surge delegates.

2. KEY FINDINGS & LESSONS LEARNT

A total of 19 documents (see [Annex 2](#)) were reviewed as part of the desk-based analysis. For primary data collection, a survey was distributed to 14 IFRC surge delegates. Five survey responses were received and four KIIs were conducted with surge delegates instead of the survey. One delegate declined to participate due to a lack of involvement in the early stages. In total, 10 responses were received, representing a 67% response rate.

Further data collection included two additional online KIIs with IFRC staff, as well as KIIs and informal discussions with 11 colleagues from both JRC and IFRC. Two FGDs were also conducted with JRC volunteers and community members in Westmoreland and St. James parishes.

Findings, supporting evidence, and lessons learned are presented in the table below, structured around 11 of the 12 questions outlined in the Terms of Reference for this Rapid Imminent DREF Review. Insights relating to Question 12 (*what improvements do NS staff, volunteers and communities recommend for future Imminent DREF activations?*) have been incorporated into the ‘[Recommendations](#)’ section that follows.

2.1. Relevance & Appropriateness

Q1. To what extent did the early action activities meet the priority needs identified through risk analysis and pre-impact forecasting?

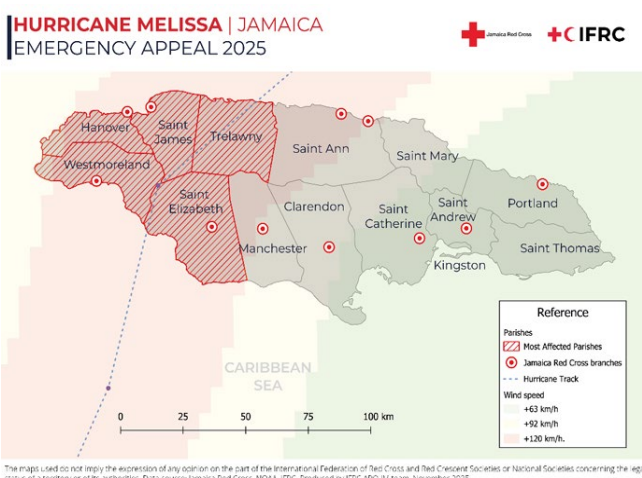
Findings	Lessons
The planned early actions were mostly risk-informed and aligned to forecasted shelter, basic needs and access challenges, but were less adaptive to Hurricane Melissa which was considered a ‘worst-case scenario’ and did not include key components such as early MHPSS and working during prolonged communication outages.	This response highlights the importance of incorporating worst-case scenario planning, reliable communication systems (e.g. SAT phones, satellite/ solar), and early integration of MHPSS, alongside pre-positioning HHIs and preparing emergency shelter support, to strengthen an Imminent DREF hurricane response plan.

Evidence

- Risk analysis from NOAA/ GDACS informed planning anticipating flooding, landslides and storm surge. However, forecasts underestimated intensity and pathway of Hurricane Melissa (Category 1–2 vs actual Category 5, further West than predicted). The location focus of the Imminent DREF was therefore kept flexible to support additional parishes in the West e.g. Westmoreland, Saint James and Saint Marys.



Source: National Hurricane Centre, Warnings and Forecast Cone (22 October 2025).



Source: IFRC Operations Update #1, Hurricane Melissa pathway through Jamaica

Figure 2 - Comparison of predicted versus actual pathway Hurricane Melissa (using sources from IFRC documents)

- Communities reported unprecedented impacts with flooding up to waist levels, prolonged isolation (up to 3 weeks), and mixed opinions on evacuation decisions with some reporting that the forecasts were so early they did not immediately evacuate, and in some cases, this meant they did not evacuate at all. People stated they had “never seen an event of this scale before in Jamaica”.
- Early actions were mostly aligned with identified risks, primarily weak infrastructure vulnerable to damage and access challenges due to prolonged road blockages. These actions included relocating pre-positioned HHIs from HQ to branches, mobilising volunteers ahead of landfall, preparing to support emergency shelters, and supporting the National EOC (informed by past experiences, such as Hurricane Beryl). However, planning did not sufficiently account for potential disruptions to communication systems (e.g. lack of contingency for satellite phones, solar panels, or Starlink), despite this being a known risk, nor did it integrate early MHPSS despite strong internal capacity.
- Other gaps were noted but considered justified due to contextual reasons rather than them being shortcomings, including the absence of explicit early warning activities (government-led in Jamaica with JRC supporting, *see Q9*), which limited health coverage in early actions (consistent with JRC mandate who support only in first aid and MHPSS activities, later expanded through a Health ERU on government request), and not completing stock replenishment within the Imminent DREF window due to the scale of the response shifting this activity into the recovery phase.

Q2. To what extent did early actions activities contribute to immediate life-saving actions and reduce hurricane impacts after landfall?

Findings	Lessons
Readiness and early actions contributed to rapid delivery of basic needs and life-saving support, although direct links to reduced mortality or losses are not fully measurable, only assumptions can be made.	Prioritisation of shelter and essential HHI support effectively contributed to immediate life-saving outcomes but could be strengthened by integrating early MHPSS to better support resilience in large-scale, high-impact events.
Evidence	
- Pre-landfall mobilization of JRC staff and volunteers in branches, the prioritizing of support to emergency shelters (for example in schools and churches) and movement of pre-positioned stock to branches enabled immediate support post-impact. <i>This is complemented by findings in additional questions (not repeated here to avoid duplication: Q3 on targeting, Q7 on early action effectiveness and Q10 on impact).</i> - However, limited early integration of MHPSS could have reduced early coping support in a highly traumatic and unprecedented event, communities referenced this as a preferred coping mechanism before future hurricanes.	

Q3. How appropriate and inclusive were targeting and prioritisation processes (gender, age, disability, livelihood, geographic exposure)?

Findings	Lessons
Early targeting remained flexible due to the changing hurricane path and the need to move pre-positioned stock from headquarters to seven branches. It was informed by government data, first through ODPEM and later through the National EOC. JRC prioritized heavily affected, hard-to-reach areas and vulnerable groups. Some respondents described targeting as initially ad hoc and reactive, while others stressed that it was consistently informed by government and branch	Targeting in rapid-onset emergencies requires systems that are both flexible and structured to adapt to changing risks. Investment in digital data collection and disaggregation and rapid IM support are critical for accuracy and inclusiveness when such systems are not always in place. Systematically integrating MHPSS into targeting could improve identification of vulnerable groups, and pre-established distribution and targeting

information. Effectiveness was constrained by reported access challenges (with some areas taking up to 18 hours to reach), limited communication of targeting criteria to communities, and weak early data systems, including paper-based assessments and reported weak disaggregation. Targeting improved with the deployment of an IM delegate, which strengthened data collection and evidence-based decision-making, and the process was standardised through the introduction of Relief SOPs.	SOPs would ensure a standardised approach that can be clearly communicated to communities.
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Evidence

Early action targeting:

- *As evidenced in Q7*, seven branches were prioritised to receive pre-positioned stock transported from Kingston HQ ahead of Hurricane Melissa's landfall. These branches were selected based on the forecast hurricane track and community vulnerability data maintained by ODPEM. However, *as noted in Q1 and Q7*, the projected hurricane path changed during the early action window, resulting in adjustments to the targeted locations. Overall, there was limited evidence that distributions took place during the early action period, *as discussed in Q7*.

Early response targeting:

- JRC utilised government systems and data for targeting, in the early response phase this came from the National EOC which was complimented by information by branches to make decisions on which communities to support. This was later complimented by the Jamaica Household Damage and Needs Assessment (JHDNA) which JRC were obliged to use for the initial assessments.
- Two primary targeting criteria were used:
 - Heavily impacted and hard-to-reach areas (some highly visible and supported areas e.g., Black River, were deprioritised in the early stages in favour of under supported ones),
 - Vulnerable groups (elderly, children, disabilities).
- Several factors limited inclusiveness and targeting accuracy during the early response phase. Early distributions were based on pre-identified needs before full assessments (*refer to Q10 for further findings on distribution targeting*). Access constraints led to uneven coverage in remote areas (some areas took 18 hours to reach), compounded by:
 - Limited communication of targeting criteria to communities.
 - Weak early data disaggregation (some branches were using pen and paper for early assessments due to there being no prior digital systems in place before Hurricane Melissa e.g. use of Kobo, some branches did have tablets but it was clear that not all branches had access to these in the early response) – *see Q9 evidence for actions taken since Hurricane Melissa to support data disaggregation improvements for future operations*. It was reported however, that the paper-based assessments did include data disaggregation.
 - One colleague identified a missed opportunity to better utilise MHPSS capacity to identify and reach vulnerable groups. They noted that MHPSS activities provide access to particularly at-risk community members, and that insights from these interactions could be more systematically shared to strengthen targeting and ensure support reaches those most in need.
- In the initial phase (first ~2-3 weeks), targeting was reported by some to be more ad hoc and reactive (e.g. distributing items to those in shelters). Despite this, JRC reported that government and branch data was consistently used to inform targeting throughout the response. Some referenced the introduction of the Relief SOPs from mid-November onwards as setting a more standardised and systematic approach – including the use of government and branch data to inform targeting.
- These challenges were partially mitigated when JRC identified the need for an IM delegate, who supported the introduction of digital systems improving systematic data collection, disaggregation, and evidence-based targeting.

- Preliminary HHI PDM data from the wider response shows disaggregation from respondents (40% households with children under five, 69% with older adults, 19% with persons with disabilities), though this does not only reflect the early response phase but also the wider response phase too.

2.2. Efficiency

Q4+5. To what extent were available resources (human resources, stocks, transport, etc.) mobilised to enable timely early action implementation? How did logistics, procurement and financial processes facilitate or hinder early action delivery? *These two questions were combined for the analysis due to overlapping information.*

Findings	Lessons
Prior preparedness actions enhanced the efficiency of the early actions, namely the pre-positioned stock, strong regional logistics capacity, and prior logistics and DREF training. The 2025 DREF training in particular allowed rapid adaptation of the pre-written application to the context of Hurricane Melissa. However, efficiency was constrained by limited human resources and challenges to logistics capacity beyond the early actions and during scale-up, highlighting a gap between JRC's capacity and the scale of Hurricane Melissa. Challenges included low volunteer numbers due to personal impacts from the hurricane, lack of visibility materials, reliance on volunteer-led branches, compounded by logistics challenges such as a reliance on paper-based systems. Temporary measures, including additional warehousing, IM delegate deployment and use of VHS and Starlink systems, helped mitigate some impacts as activities transitioned to response.	Effective early action through Imminent DREF is enhanced when scenario-based preparedness trainings are completed prior, enabling rapid drafting of the Imminent DREF application. In addition, pre-positioned resourced that can be quickly mobilized, a strong sustained volunteer base and good visibility increase effectiveness of early actions and the transition/ scale-up into a response. Investment in scalable logistics systems, digital tracking, and robust pre-agreements is critical to support this, alongside reliable communication infrastructure. Such emergencies should also be leveraged to expand and retain volunteer capacity for future responses.
Evidence	
• Timely early action was enabled by key resources, including pre-positioned stock at JRC HQ for 500 households, strong regional logistics capacity in Panama (pre-agreements with suppliers, early supply chain coordinator was deployed and sent with early HHI shipments), and prior logistics and DREF trainings that were completed in 2024 and 2025. • IFRC-DREF training prior to Hurricane Melissa in 2025 used real templates/ scenarios allowing for a draft Imminent DREF to be developed which was rapidly adapted for Hurricane Melissa. This training was widely identified by JRC and IFRC as a critical factor in accelerating the early actions and response. <i>See Q8 for evidence suggesting JRC could have applied for the Imminent DREF earlier, enabling more resources to be mobilised within their early action lead time (5-days), and Q7 for evidence on activities that were realistic within the short lead time.</i> • Despite this, capacity constraints did reduce overall efficiency: ○ Limited volunteer numbers and availability was a frequently cited challenge. Secondary data indicates approximately 250 active volunteers, but many of these are based in Kingston, limiting their ability to support early actions and response in affected areas to the West due to access constraints. This was further compounded by volunteers themselves being impacted on a personal level by Hurricane Melissa, in some cases losing everything, as illustrated in the early response case study (see Annex 1).	

- A lack of visibility materials (despite being included in the Imminent DREF plan), was also mentioned. For example, some delegates reported visiting emergency shelters where JRC volunteers were present but not identifiable due to the absence of JRC branding.
 - With only 25 core staff, Hurricane Melissa far exceeded JRC's capacity, requiring a 500% surge increase (113 personnel over six months). While surge is not directly part of the Imminent DREF findings, it was frequently cited to illustrate the mismatch between JRC's size and the scale of the response, and how human resource limitations constrained early action and response.
 - Additionally, all JRC branches are volunteer-led without paid staff.
- JRC volunteers noted that Hurricane Melissa creates an opportunity for volunteer mobilisation, with new volunteers joining due to increased JRC visibility. An opportunity for increased capacity in future Imminent DREF operations.
 - Logistics constraints reduced efficiency, including insufficient HQ warehouse capacity, which required rapid expansion under difficult conditions, as pre-existing agreements were hard to activate due to high demand. Predominantly paper-based systems further limited tracking and risked overlooking hard-to-reach communities not captured in government datasets. An additional warehouse was temporarily established in Montego Bay by the end of week two, later consolidating into expanded capacity in Kingston. These challenges reflect the scale of Hurricane Melissa as a worst-case scenario (see Q1), which stretched available logistics resources.
 - Q1 noted the lack of sustainable communication; early into the response, Starlinks were sourced (approximately 40, more than enough for 1 per branch), this was free for the first 3-months. The desk-review highlighted that emergency communications were re-established in 2 Western parishes using VHF radios and Starlink units provided by IFRC.

Q6. How efficient was the Imminent DREF process, from development and review to approval and fund transfer?

Findings	Lessons
The Imminent DREF was processed and approved rapidly to support early actions, with the CHF 40,000 transfer released pre-landfall, demonstrating strong efficiency supported by prior experience and training. However, there were a mixture of accounts on the transfer balance, with the outcome being that it was used by IFRC for replenishments overall raising concerns regarding financial transparency from IFRC to JRC, particularly given the integration of the Project Funding Agreement (PFA) containing the full allocation into the Imminent DREF application.	While initial disbursement was effective to support early actions, the funding transfers highlight gaps in timing, transparency, and adherence to process. The PFA is embedded into the Imminent DREF application, therefore any funding allocation decisions should have clear justification where transparency is prioritised to ensure accountability.
Evidence	
● The Imminent DREF application containing an embedded PFA was completed on 22 October 2025, demonstrating swift internal processing. ● Imminent DREF was approved on 23 October 2025 (under 24 hours), with the first transfer of CHF 40,000 made the same day, ensuring funds were available pre-landfall. This makes the lead-time for this Imminent DREF implementation 5-days (Hurricane Melissa made landfall on 28 October 2025). ● Efficiency was supported by prior experience, including use of the previous PFA and banking details from Hurricane Beryl as guidance, along with the 2025 DREF in-person training, enabling JRC to take an active role in the Imminent DREF process (see Q4-Q5).	

- The key issue identified is the transparency behind the remaining Imminent DREF funding, with different accounts between IFRC CCD, Regional Office and JRC:
 - JRC reported during data collection that further DREF funding was not received until 13 January 2026.
 - The DREF PFA outlines two transfers scheduled for 2025 and two further transfers for 2026. For the Imminent DREF, the first transfer (CHF 40,000) is evidenced above and was received by JRC prior to landfall.
 - Another account confirmed that only one transfer of CHF 40K was planned as part of the Imminent DREF, because the remaining funds had to remain with IFRC to support replenishment of stocks which were going to be used. The remaining transfers in the DREF operation PFA were for the response phase.
- This shows a mixture of accounts on the remaining Imminent DREF transfer, with the outcome being that it was used for replenishments. This raises concerns regarding financial transparency and adherence to established processes, particularly given the integration of the PFA into the Imminent DREF application and given JRC were not aware of this.

5. SCHEDULE OF TRANSFERS and FINANCIAL REPORTING

	Transfer	Amount in CHF	Reporting Period	Report due
1 st Transfer	Oct 24, 2025	40,000	Oct 22, 2025 – Nov 30, 2025	Dec 10, 2025
2 nd Transfer	Dec 20, 2025	60,000	Oct 22, 2025 - Feb 28, 2026	Mar 10, 2026
3 rd Transfer	Mar 20, 2026	60,000	Oct 22, 2025 - May 31, 2026	Jun 10, 2026
4 th Transfer	Jun 20, 2026	48,700	Oct 22, 2025 - Jul 31, 2026	Aug 15, 2026
TOTAL		208,700		

Figure 2 – DREF PFA Transfer Schedule

2.3. Effectiveness

Q7. To what extent were early action activities implemented within anticipated lead times, and did they mitigate or reduce impacts on at-risk communities?

Findings	Lessons
JRC mobilised branches early, with 390 volunteers on standby pre-landfall and essential relief items pre-positioned across nine branches between 23-27 October 2025. However, there is limited evidence that items were distributed to communities before landfall, indicating actions were primarily focused on readiness rather than community-level early actions. Despite limited stock (covering 500 households), pre-positioning proved critical and achievable within the 5-day lead time and early post-impact distributions would not have been possible otherwise. Clarity on JRC's role in early action within the national system (NEOC and emergency shelters) was also limited.	While early mobilisation of branch volunteers and the movement of pre-positioned stock enabled a rapid response, there is a need to strengthen the delivery of community-level early actions within the Imminent DREF window. This requires clearer positioning of JRC's role within national coordination mechanisms and a stronger focus on actions that reach communities before impact. Increasing lead time, <i>as highlighted in Q8</i> , alongside sustained preparedness and capacity, would further support the effective implementation of AAs.
Evidence	
• Evidence from waybills confirms that 18 types of HHIs (e.g., tarpaulins, hygiene kits, and shelter kits) were distributed from the Kingston HQ warehouse to nine branches (Clarendon, Kingston, Manchester, St Andrew, St Catherine, St Elizabeth, St Mary, St Thomas, and Westmoreland) and partners such as the Girls to Women Foundation between 23-27 October 2025, ahead of Hurricane Melissa's landfall on 28 October 2025. <i>As highlighted in Q1</i>, following a shift in the projected hurricane path, the St Mary and Westmoreland branches were also supported prior to landfall. ○ The National Society reported that some distributions happened before the hurricane's landfall from branches such as Clarendon, Portland, and Westmoreland, based on pre-identified vulnerable households. However, no additional evidence via distribution records were seen or available for confirmation by the Review Team.	

- The pre-positioning activities would be classified as NS branch readiness actions rather than community-level early actions. *Refer to the evidence presented in Q10 for the first verified distributions.* Survey responses reinforced this finding, with respondents reporting that “the first distributions started very early after the hurricane’s impact.”
- Pre-positioned stock was limited (covering a reported 500 households) but proved critical, as early post-landfall distributions would not have been possible without it due to access and transport constraints, particularly in western parishes. *As found in Q6*, the lead time for this Imminent DREF was 5-days (23-28 October 2025), therefore although not classed as community-level early actions, mobilization of this stock was realistic to achieve within such a short timeframe and essential to enabling a timely response (*see Q8 for findings on suggested longer lead times and Q10 for further evidence on impact*).
- JRC began mobilising branches from 21 October 2025, with the NEOC fully operational 24/7 by 26 October 2025, and despite volunteer capacity challenges, around 390 volunteers were mobilised and placed on standby pre-landfall (*as discussed in Q4+5 around 250 were active post-landfall according to secondary data*).
- Despite this, there was limited clarity on JRC’s early action role in the National EOC and emergency shelters from interviews and in-person data collection for these findings, beyond deploying trained shelter managers on request, within a system led by the Government through Parish Disaster Committees, highlighting an area for potential strengthening by JRC to ensure early actions are completed within the Imminent DREF window, that go beyond readiness. *See Q10 for more information on early response shelter activities and MHPSS supporting this finding.*

Q8. How did coordination with authorities, NEOC, forecasting actors and Movement partners support or delay effective implementation?

Findings	Lessons
Strong coordination between JRC, government authorities, and Movement partners was a key enabler of the early response, supported by JRC’s integration in national structures (e.g. NEOC, HAC) and effective collaboration with logistics and customs, which enabled rapid clearance of goods. However, early coordination took time to fully establish post-landfall, and there was little evidence of this pre-landfall, with initial gaps in NEOC functionality and broader agency coordination, alongside internal challenges such as strained capacity from surge personnel, gaps in information sharing and unclear reporting and decision-making structures between country, cluster, and regional levels of IFRC, and communication gaps between JRC HQ and branches.	While established partnerships supported an effective response, improvements are needed in early-phase coordination, including clearer roles, faster activation of national systems, and stronger internal communication channels. Strengthened information sharing, clearer reporting lines across IFRC levels, and better management of surge capacity would enhance coordination efficiency during the early action phase in future Imminent DREF applications, supporting the transition into early response.
Evidence	
● Coordination between JRC and government authorities was a key enabler of effective early response. JRC is well embedded within national coordination structures, including the NEOC and the Humanitarian Assistance Committee (HAC), which is co-chaired by JRC and led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS). Coordination with the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) and Parish Disaster Committees further supported implementation. ● However, when Hurricane Melissa made landfall, early coordination was reported to take time to fully establish. There were indications of limited ODPEM presence in the first week to month, and the NEOC was not fully operational in the initial week (showing limitations in the early action window ahead of landfall). The Office of the	

Prime Minister reportedly assumed a stronger coordination role around Day 6 due to challenges around broader agency coordination. Throughout, the MLSS led on distributions and shelter activities.

- A key example of good collaboration was with logistics and customs authorities. E.g. fast-tracked approvals (15 Nov-15 Jan) were communicated by the port officials to JRC/ IFRC via WhatsApp and via email, enabling goods clearance within hours.
- Survey and KII data consistently highlight strong coordination and communication with Government and Movement partners as a key factor accelerating the early response.
- It was also noted that because of the Imminent DREF operation, the IFRC CCD were able to mobilise much quicker e.g. IM delegate was already there when HEOPs arrived – despite this speed, feedback suggested that the Imminent DREF could have been applied for by JRC even earlier to ensure a longer window before hurricane landfall to complete early actions within.
- JRC colleagues noted that the Hurricane Melissa response highlights JRC's role as a government auxiliary and part of a global Movement able to scale support during major emergencies.
- Coordination challenges included the strain placed on JRC by a large influx of surge personnel at the early response stage (*refer to Q4-Q5*), which stretched capacity and made coordination difficult, as well as financial coordination issues, particularly limited transparency and communication from IFRC CCD, contributed to delays in supplier payments.
- Survey responses support this, e.g. observed "limits to information sharing between country and regional office", with one highlighting a need for "clearer establishing of reporting and decision making between country surge, IFRC country and cluster office and regional office".
- Internal communication within JRC was referenced as a challenge, with branches cut off due to access and communication outages (*see Q1*). There were also no observed channels linking branches together with HQ; just individual branch reporting into JRC HQ.

2.4. PGI, CEA & Implementation Quality

Q9. How effectively were community feedback, early warning (EW) messaging, PGI and safeguarding integrated into early action design and implementation, and did they influence decisions?

Findings	Lessons
The Imminent DREF operation showed significant gaps in CEA and PGI integration. There were no structured early warning activities or feedback mechanisms, and uneven PGI implementation due to low capacity and prioritisation. Safeguarding risks in shelters were mitigated with MHPSS activities to an extent, but no structured approach or internal referral pathway for sensitive cases create significant gaps in accountability, while key PGI and MHPSS actions were introduced late and not during the early action window.	Stronger early integration of CEA and PGI is needed, including structured early warning, accessible feedback mechanisms, and clear safeguarding systems from the outset. Dedicated focal points and timely surge support are critical to ensure consistent implementation, though this must be balanced against surge capacity constraints. The later development of PGI tools and plans provides a useful foundation to strengthen these areas in future Imminent DREF operations in the JRC context.
Evidence	
• As noted in Q1, the Imminent DREF operation did not include explicit early warning (EW) activities, reflecting a context where this is primarily a government function. While JRC supported some ad hoc dissemination (e.g. word-	

of-mouth and social media), there was no structured or well-monitored approach to targeted EW engagement. This represents a gap where JRC could take a stronger role in supporting early actions in future Imminent DREF operations, linking to its potential opportunity to expand its role in emergency shelter management (see Q7 and Q10).

- Feedback mechanisms were not visible or accessible during the Imminent DREF timeframe (early actions or early response); preliminary HHI PDM findings show only 6% of respondents knew how to provide feedback or make a complaint, highlighting a significant accountability gap consistently reflected across data sources, including community FGDs. While later improvements (e.g., a cash helpline) indicate CEA strengthened over the response phase, it was not effectively integrated from the outset.
- PGI was reflected in targeting and volunteer roles, but implementation was uneven due to limited dedicated capacity, high operational pressure, and low prioritisation, with feedback indicating weak operational integration. Identified shelter protection/ safeguarding risks (e.g. lighting, separate facilities) were only partially addressed due to resource constraints, with the MHPSS sessions starting mid-November providing some limited mitigation reducing emotional stress but were not a full solution and did not happen in the pre-landfall early action window or early response.
- In addition, no internal referral mechanism exists within JRC, despite sexual violence being a significant concern in Jamaica and there being some observations and reports of this in emergency shelters, leaving no safe and confidential pathway to escalate safeguarding concerns.
- While some early deployed delegates such as MHPSS did support minimum PGI standards, the lack of dedicated PGI and CEA surge capacity was an early gap; however, there were mixed views on deploying additional specialists in the early response given the strain of already high surge demands on JRC.
- In response to identified gaps, the IFRC PGI and CEA regional team highlighted the need for dedicated JRC focal points and surge capacity, ensuring PGI and CEA were integrated into the Emergency Appeal. After five months, a PGI surge delegate was deployed for six weeks, during which key outputs were delivered, including SOPs for SGBV referral mechanisms, PGI and MHPSS integration in CVA, PSEA training and guidance, a Child Risk Assessment Action Plan, supported a guide for using SADDD (sex, age and disability disaggregated data) in PMER and capacity-building for volunteers. The delegate also, through handover and ongoing regional support, contributed to a PGI Action Plan for JRC, providing a foundation for future Imminent DREF operations.
- *For analysis on quality outside of the CEA and PGI scope, see Q10.*

2.5. Impact (Immediate / Short-term)

Q10. What immediate benefits or challenges resulted from early action activities for NS branches and at-risk communities?

Findings	Lessons
For findings and evidence on the early actions, see Q7 which found that JRC focused more on readiness to respond before landfall with limited evidence of community focused actions before landfall.	Strengthening data systems and real-time tracking is critical to improve accountability and verify timelines. Distribution approaches should be more structured and targeted from the outset, with clearer communication, better crowd management, and more equitable coverage.
Post-landfall distributions were rapid, scaled up quickly, and highly valued by communities, with desk review evidence indicating assistance began within 48 hours and	Expanding pre-positioned stock, addressing immediate cross-sector needs, and integrating environmental messaging could enhance impact, if feasible (noting the

reached over 2,300 families. Pre-positioning and early volunteer mobilisation enabled this speed despite access constraints. However, timelines were difficult to verify due to paper-based systems and accountability gaps. Distribution quality issues were also reported, including long waits, uneven coverage, and inconsistent communication. Additional constraints reported by communities included limited stock, infrastructure disruption, and unmet immediate needs (e.g. water, waste, transport), while JRC's early role in shelters was less visible to communities this became more visible later through valued MHPSS activities.	previous findings that Hurricane Melissa was considered the “worst-case scenario” in Jamaica). Earlier prioritisation of shelter-related activities and MHPSS readiness, alongside clearer visibility of JRC involvement in shelters, would further strengthen the early response.
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Evidence

- Distribution timelines were difficult to verify due to reliance on paper-based systems and early accountability gaps (*see findings from Q3, Q4+5 and Q7*). The desk review suggests distributions began within 48 hours of impact, reaching over 2,300 families in St Elizabeth, Clarendon, and Manchester, while communities in Westmoreland and St James reported receiving support within the first week's post-landfall. However, a precise timeline could not be established due to limited available data beyond the desk review (despite multiple data collection avenues explored to get this information).
 - JRC acknowledged that for the first distributions post-landfall, a no regrets approach was used. Hence the findings of this review were primarily supported by waybill evidence – *as found in Q7*.
- Despite this, there is no doubt from the data collection that distributions post-landfall were rapid, scaled up quickly and very valued by communities (of which were enhanced by the evidenced readiness activities pre-landfall):
 - *As discussed in Q7*, movement of pre-positioned stock to branches and early mobilisation of branch volunteer's pre-landfall enabled rapid distribution of essential HHIs, which were critical for initiating the response despite severe post-landfall access constraints. This allowed even remote areas to receive assistance earlier than would otherwise have been possible. Distributions were carried out alongside rapid needs assessments across 10 parishes, informing response adjustments during the first month.
 - As one IFRC delegate said, “JRC has done an immense job in the cargo sent out from the warehouse...one of the most impressive I have seen in quantity from my experience”
 - From a community perspective, items, especially tarpaulins, were highly valued and perceived as high quality, compared to limited ones that were available locally but of poor quality, limited local availability, the preliminary PDM findings show that 93% of respondents were satisfied overall.
- Early response impact was constrained by several factors, including limited pre-positioned stock volumes that did not meet all needs, access and infrastructure challenges (e.g. flooding, damaged roads, communication outages), and weak, paper-based data systems reduced distribution visibility (*linking to findings from Q3, Q4 and Q7*).
- Acknowledging the clear evidence of spend, there were challenges with distribution quality (commonly cited, including by JRC):
 - Distributions were often conducted alongside registration, sometimes a first-come/ first-served approach was reported, leading to long waits (e.g. reports of 300 people ahead), occasional disorder (sometimes requiring police presence), and uneven allocation, with items running out before all households were reached. While most from the preliminary HHI PDM findings reported no safety issues (94%), risks were still present.
 - Communities reported inconsistent communication, largely reliant on word-of-mouth compared to more structured approaches such as via social media (shown in the preliminary HHI PDM findings with the former at 58% vs less than 15% for the latter), limiting awareness; one community member reported discovering a distribution only by passing the site. However, JRC emphasised that communication was not possible via social media due to the widespread communication infrastructure outage.

- Uneven coverage, with some areas supported later when stocks were reduced (community members reported items running out or no longer available to them when they received HHI's).
- Improved coordination and data systems were introduced post-landfall as the response developed (*see findings from across Q3, Q4+5, Q7 and Q8*), mitigation measures in the early response included changing distributions to a door-to-door approach, in some cases, to reduce security challenges and increase targeted coordination. Later into the response by mid-November, further measures started including an increase in surge deployments (including ERUs, *see analysis in Q4+5*) and the development of relief SOPs.
- Communities identified unmet immediate needs beyond HHI support that were not met in the early actions or early response, including water quality, waste management, transport, and communication disruptions. Environmental concerns were noted, with 11% of respondents burning HHI packaging (preliminary HHI PDM findings), highlighting the need to link communities to waste management systems and include environmental messaging in distributions.
- Among communities, *as noted in Q7*, emergency shelters in Jamaica are government-led. Although JRC manages some shelters and maintains a cohort of trained shelter managers who are deployed during emergencies to support shelter operations, community perceptions linked JRC more visibly to HHI distributions.
 - The desk review found that JRC supported 31 active shelters hosting approximately 7,000 people during the early response phase.
 - JRC branches and volunteers highlighted their shelter-related contributions to later in the response, particularly shelter-based MHPSS activities introduced from mid-November, including colouring activities, sports, and group discussions. These activities targeted vulnerable groups identified by shelter managers and teachers and were widely regarded as effective and valuable. Respondents noted that this approach would have benefited from earlier prioritisation. Throughout the longer-term response, training built on existing volunteer MHPSS capacity, with both JRC and IFRC highlighting the value of this investment in enabling a more impactful response.
- *See the [Annex 1](#) case study for a detailed example of JRC volunteer support during the early Hurricane Melissa response, illustrating the rapid mobilisation widely cited as a key success.*

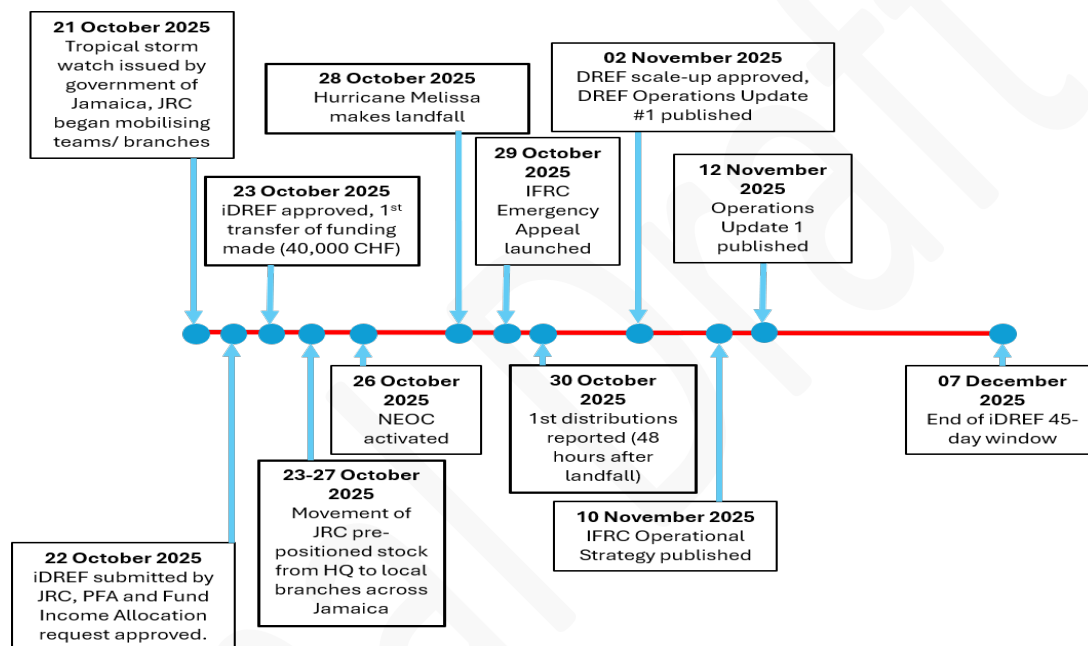
Q11. Did early action and early response meaningfully support transition into the response phase?

Findings	Lessons
Rapid scale-up from Imminent DREF to response through an Emergency Appeal enabled a timely transition to a wider response, building on strong early foundations, particularly in the logistics space with active HHI pipelines, further supported by Movement partners and surge capacity. However, the transition was challenged by ongoing JRC capacity limitations, and early gaps in key sectors (e.g. PGI, health and CEA) that were new additions in the emergency appeal and scale-up.	Rapid scale-up was most effective when built on strong foundations established during the Imminent DREF phase, but challenges related to surge volumes, National Society capacity (staffing, fleet, coordination), sustained in-country appeal ownership, and the integration of new sectors such as health during the scale-up.
Evidence	
• Following the initial Imminent DREF allocation of CHF 80,000 (approved 23 October 2025), a CHF 19 million Emergency Appeal was launched on 29 October to scale up response post landfall, targeting 180,000 people over 24 months. A further DREF allocation of CHF 920,000 was approved on 2 November 2025, bringing the total DREF funding to CHF 1 million. This was allocated as a grant contribution to the Emergency Appeal, expanding the timeframe and reach of the specific DREF component within the Appeal. • Early actions established a strong operational foundation for scale-up, with active HHI pipelines, functioning logistics systems, and parallel processes (assessments, mobilisation, logistics) enabling rapid expansion. This was further	

strengthened by early Movement partner support (e.g. French RC/ PIRAC, Canadian RC were mentioned) and surge deployments, particularly in logistics, which accelerated the transition to a larger-scale response.

- Limitations included initial misalignment with evolving needs, JRC capacity constraints *as analysed in Q4-Q5* (staffing, logistics, fleet, and surge volume), and gaps in sectors such as health, CEA and PGI that required later adding to the Emergency Appeal.
- JRC colleagues also highlighted the need for Imminent DREF and DREF funding to support the branches themselves e.g. buildings, generators; scaling-up the response was challenging when branches had partially or fully damaged offices.

A timeline has also been developed to visualise the timeliness actions, (where relevant data was available – see above findings and evidence for further detail):



The Imminent DREF operation was largely relevant and timely, with early actions informed by forecast risks and focused on shelter, basic needs, and access constraints. Rapid approval and pre-landfall mobilisation, enabled by prior training, pre-positioned stock, and strong logistics capacity, allowed JRC to respond quickly once Hurricane Melissa made landfall. However, the extreme scale, changing trajectory, and short lead time exposed gaps in planning, including limited integration of worst-case scenarios, structured early warning messaging, and contingency for communication disruptions did provide constraints relating to the full relevance of the Imminent DREF application.

In practice, early actions were primarily focused on readiness rather than direct AA at the community level. Pre-positioning of HHIs and volunteer mobilisation were critical in enabling rapid post-landfall distributions, reaching households within 48 hours, and were highly valued by communities. However, effectiveness was constrained by limited volunteer capacity, access challenges, and reliance on paper-based systems, affecting targeting, accountability, and timeline verification. While coordination with government and partners was a strong enabler, it took time to fully function in the immediate aftermath, with additional challenges in internal communication, surge management, and short implementation timelines limiting the scope of pre-impact activities.

Across the response, gaps were also evident in CEA and PGI integration. Early warning, feedback mechanisms, and safeguarding systems were not systematically embedded during the early action or immediate post-landfall phase, and referral pathways were absent. Although these areas improved later through surge support and new systems, they were not in place during the critical early phase.

Overall, the operation demonstrated strong foundations in logistics, coordination, and rapid mobilisation, while highlighting the need to strengthen the anticipatory dimension of Imminent DREF activations, ensuring early actions go beyond readiness to deliver community-facing mitigation measures, supported by stronger data systems, communication, and integrated quality standards from the outset.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the findings and lessons outlined above, the following recommendations aim to address key gaps identified in the design and implementation of early action within the Imminent DREF component of Hurricane Melissa operation. In particular, they focus on strengthening the anticipatory component of Imminent DREF activations, ensuring that early action more effectively translates risk analysis into timely, community-level mitigation measures implemented ahead of impact.

The recommendations prioritise improvements in systems, coordination, and capacity at both National Society and IFRC levels, with a view to enhancing operational quality, consistency, and accountability alongside speed. They place particular emphasis on strengthening communication and feedback mechanisms, data and logistics systems, volunteer and branch capacity, and the early integration of cross-cutting areas such as CEA, PGI, and MHPSS.



Review Team with Jamaica Red Cross Volunteers in Westmoreland Branch

3.1. For Jamaica Red Cross

Recommendations for JRC, supported by technical guidance, training, and SOP development from IFRC CCD, IFRC Regional Office and Partner National Societies (with broader applicability as good practice for strengthening National Society capacity in similar Imminent DREF contexts).

Recommendation 1: Pre-establish a scalable feedback mechanism and an internal referral mechanism for escalating safeguarding concerns. (<i>linking to findings from Q3, Q9, Q10</i>)	
Rationale	Activities for operationalization
JRC should establish a pre-agreed, scalable feedback and safeguarding system that can be activated immediately during Imminent DREF operations.	Suggested approach based on conversations and findings include: • Setting up of a feedback mechanism with multiple channels (examples; toll-free hotline, WhatsApp, in-person volunteer focal points, suggestion boxes), with clear instructions/ SOPs for collection, analysis, referral and response. Define focal points to support this process, and when/ how to scale-up during large-scale emergencies. • This should include clear communication guidelines on how community members can provide feedback, and how it will be actioned. • The setup of a feedback mechanism should be accompanied by a confidential and functional referral pathway for PGI and GBV concerns. • The feedback mechanism could include lessons from the cash helpline model, that was setup in the latter stages of the Hurricane Melissa response.
Recommendation 2: Strengthen internal communication systems for improved emergency coordination (<i>linking to findings from Q1, Q4-5, Q8</i>)	
Rationale	Activities for operationalization
Findings showed that communication structures between HQ and branches could be strengthened to improve reliability, decentralise communication flows and reduce reliance on a single focal point	• This could include the use of WhatsApp groups for real-time coordination and information sharing, such as distribution schedules, selection criteria, and operational best practices. • Invest in backup communication systems (e.g. satellite phones, Starlink, solar-powered solutions) to ensure continuity during outages. During Hurricane Melissa, JRC acquired approximately 40 Starlink units, which were widely cited by community members, staff, volunteers, and IFRC as essential for maintaining communication in the early response phase. While initial access was free for three months, the long-term sustainability of these systems remains a key consideration.

Recommendation 3: Prioritise national branch development, with a focus on distribution quality and volunteer sustainability (*linking to findings from Q3, Q4-5, Q7, Q10*)

Rationale	Activities for operationalization
Prioritising national-level branch development is important to ensure consistent response capacity across all branches (noting that outside the Imminent DREF, branches to the West of Jamaica have received trainings e.g. in logistics, and PGI during the Hurricane Melissa response), with a particular focus on strengthening distribution quality and volunteer sustainability.	This should include: • Standardizing distribution practices across all branches (building on Relief SOPs introduced during the wider response), including: ○ Improving targeting transparency by clearly communicating selection criteria prior to registration and strengthening advance communication (e.g. standardised messaging templates). Opportunity here to utilise data on vulnerable households collected through AccessRC pre-registration for cash assistance to improve targeting in future operations. ○ Moving away from first-come/ first-served approaches towards more structured and accountable distribution methods. ○ Strengthening data collection, tracking and validation, including the use of digital tools (e.g. Kobo) where feasible. ○ Incorporating community verification mechanisms (e.g. local leaders) to reduce duplication and improve targeting accuracy. ○ Contents of the NFIs should be listed and displayed at distribution points to ensure that the relevance of the items to the local population are clear. • Supporting this through targeted training and capacity building, including adapting Relief ERU distribution training and tools for National Society use to promote more systematic and organised approaches. • Strengthening volunteer recruitment, training, and retention, including providing incentives, visibility, and preparedness training prior to emergencies. Hurricane Melissa presents an opportunity to build on newly engaged volunteers and sustain this momentum. • Exploring branch-level fundraising initiatives to improve sustainability, enabling branches to access and manage small budgets to support locally identified priorities, including volunteer support and operational readiness.

Recommendation 4: Strengthen logistics capacity, systems, and preparedness agreements (*linking to findings from Q4-5, Q7, Q10, Q11*)

Rationale	Activities for operationalization
Acknowledging the success, speed and scale-up of logistics aspects to the	• Strengthening of warehouse management systems to improve stock visibility and tracking, transitioning from paper-based to digital and system-based logistics processes. • Establishment of pre-agreements with suppliers (transport, warehousing, equipment e.g. forklift).

Hurricane Melissa response, JRC could further strengthen logistics capacity.	• Expansion of branch-level storage and pre-positioning capacity (supplies for 500 households needed scaling-up for a hurricane of this strength) – <i>something that has already started with the additional Kingston warehouse.</i> • Continued trainings following the logistics training in 2024, including branch directors from across Jamaica. Included here is familiarity with IFRC logistics systems that are used during large-scale emergencies such as Hurricane Melissa.
Recommendation 5: Strengthen JRC's role in emergency shelter support and MHPSS preparedness (if prioritised) (linking to findings from Q1, Q2, Q7, Q9, Q10)	
Rationale	Activities for operationalization
If JRC continues to prioritise shelter support (in line with the planned Imminent DREF activities), it's role would need to be strengthened.	• Pre-positioning items for safe and inclusive shelters (e.g. lighting), MHPSS items and volunteer visibility materials to support early response. • Clearly defining JRC's role in the government shelters, strengthening partnerships with the government and supporting pre-season shelter assessments. • Scaling up shelter management and MHPSS training for branch staff, this should include referral pathways and distributions as per previous recommendations. • Linking to the previous communication recommendation, a need to strengthen coordination between shelter managers, branches, and HQ which could be achieved through WhatsApp groups and/ or joint trainings.

3.2. For IFRC Country Cluster Delegation and Regional Office

Recommendation 6: Strengthen financial decentralisation and transparency for Imminent DREF operations (linking to findings from Q6, Q8)	
Rationale	Activities for operationalization
IFRC should review and strengthen financial management modalities for Imminent DREF operations to improve timeliness, clarity, and country-level autonomy.	This should include: • Ensuring timely access to funds at country level, enabling National Societies to prepare for and initiate operations ahead of an Emergency Appeal, and strengthening communication and transparency between IFRC regional, cluster, and National Society levels. • Clarifying and standardising procedures for fund allocation and disbursement, including the use of separate Project Funding Agreement (PFAs) for DREF contributions, to ensure predictable and timely funding flows. • Improving financial transparency and accountability, by providing clear guidance on funding timelines and processes to support compliance and reduce delays.

3.3. For IFRC DREF Team

Recommendation 7: Scale up pre-emptive DREF training to strengthen Imminent DREF readiness (<i>linking to findings from Q4+5, Q6, Q11</i>)	
Rationale	Activities for operationalization
IFRC should systematically provide pre-season DREF training to National Societies, focusing on practical application of Imminent DREF and DREF processes, as was done in Jamaica ahead of Hurricane Melissa.	This should include: • Scenario-based training using real templates and draft applications, including emphasis on the difference between AA and readiness activities, and injects that transition from the Imminent DREF to response DREF. • Familiarisation with Imminent DREF purpose, timelines, and requirements. • Opportunities to pre-develop draft Imminent DREF plans for likely hazards.
Recommendation 8: Expand Imminent DREF modalities to support National Society structural capacity (<i>linking to findings from Q4, Q11</i>)	
Rationale	Activities for operationalization
Imminent DREF modalities should be adapted to better support National Society operational and institutional readiness, particularly to enable effective scale-up during emergencies.	The National Society highlighted that early response efforts were constrained by damage to critical infrastructure and the lack of funding for immediate repairs. While outside the current scope of the Imminent DREF, future adaptations could consider: • Allowing funding for critical infrastructure and operational continuity needs (e.g. facility repairs, generators, and communications systems) to enable National Societies to maintain and scale up response operations. • Strengthening institutional and operational capacity support alongside community assistance, recognising that smaller National Societies often face core operational costs during large-scale emergencies that exceed their existing capacity.

4. CONCLUSION

Hurricane Melissa was an unprecedented event in the Jamaican context. Despite preparedness for hurricanes and experience (e.g. recent Hurricane Beryl), the scale and intensity of a Category 5 hurricane exceeded prior experience, with both communities and Jamaica Red Cross describing it as unlike anything seen before. This context is critical in understanding both the achievements and challenges of the Imminent DREF activation.

In Jamaica, the Imminent DREF clearly demonstrated its value as an operational tool. It enabled the rapid mobilisation of staff and volunteers, pre-positioning of HHIs at branch level ahead of landfall, and early support to government-led emergency shelters. These actions directly contributed to a swift early response, including the timely delivery of essential assistance to affected communities. For a small National Society such as JRC, operating with approximately 21 core staff at the onset of the response, this early access to funding was critical in accelerating action and expanding operational reach.

This rapid mobilisation was further strengthened by prior preparedness investments, particularly the DREF training delivered months before the hurricane. The opportunity to develop a draft Imminent DREF scenario in advance enabled JRC to quickly adapt and submit a high-quality application, supporting rapid approval and early action. This highlights the importance of preparedness not only in physical resources, but also in institutional knowledge and familiarity with DREF processes.

However, while the Imminent DREF enabled speed, this review finds that the quality and consistency of implementation did not always keep with the pace of response. Limitations in systems, training and volunteer capacity meant that early actions often prioritised scale and speed over standardisation and accountability. Challenges relating to distribution practices, data management, communication, and feedback mechanisms demonstrate that accelerated response without sufficient underpinning systems can reduce overall effectiveness and inclusiveness.

Despite these challenges, the Imminent DREF presents a significant opportunity for small National Societies. The Hurricane Melissa response illustrates that; with timely financial support smaller National Societies can mobilise rapidly and scale-up to deliver large-scale assistance. The findings reinforce that strengthening National Society systems, particularly at branch level, is essential to fully utilise the potential of Imminent DREF in future activations.

The recommendations presented in this report reflect priorities identified by JRC staff, volunteers, and communities, focusing on strengthening operational quality, consistency, and preparedness. These are complemented by recommendations for IFRC CCD and the Regional Office to address structural and coordination challenges, as well as a set of recommendations to improve the Imminent DREF rapid review process itself. As the first Imminent DREF rapid operational review, this report contributes to learning on how such reviews can be streamlined, standardised, and made more practical for future use.

Finally, while this review highlights areas for improvement, it also underscores a strong consensus on the value of the Imminent DREF mechanism. As one respondent reflected:

“The Imminent DREF was amazing, and the National Society has not stopped talking about it. This is lesson to tell other National Societies, that it works.”



Overall, the Hurricane Melissa response demonstrates that the Imminent DREF is a powerful tool for enabling early action and rapid response, particularly for small and resource-constrained National Societies. However, the findings also highlight that achieving the full potential of early action requires a stronger focus on its anticipatory dimension. This includes more explicit integration of worst-case scenario planning, scalable systems, and cross-cutting areas such as CEA, PGI, and MHPSS from the outset. Ensuring that communities are informed, engaged, and better prepared prior to impact will be critical to enhancing the effectiveness of Imminent DREF operations and achieving their intended objective: reducing risks and mitigating impact before disasters occur, rather than primarily responding after the disaster. In this context, the key challenge, and opportunity, is to ensure that this speed enabled by the Imminent DREF is matched by strengthened systems, coordination, and capacity, enabling responses that are not only timely, but also consistent, accountable, and of high quality.



ANNEX 1 – EARLY RESPONSE CASE STUDY

Jamaica Red Cross Volunteers’ dedication in Westmoreland during Hurricane Melissa

Hurricane Melissa caused widespread damage across Westmoreland, Jamaica, leaving communities affected by flooding, roof losses, road closures, and displacement, with many lacking access to basic necessities.

Volunteers were not immune. Many, including Shelete Kelly and Denique Rhoden, suffered significant personal losses and damage within their own communities.

“Within the first 15 minutes of Hurricane Melissa, my roof was totally gone. I had to stay under my closet until the wind and rain stopped. Flooding in my community was so high, it was above waist level”, says Shelete.

Despite these challenges, Shelete joined the response effort, explaining that *“because of my humanitarian side, I could not stay home. I had to get up and go out and do what I love best, to give back to my people”.*

Denique, who used an emergency shelter herself, described that being part of the Jamaica Red Cross means that *“you put yourself aside and do what the Jamaica Red Cross does best, helping people in need.”*

Humanitarian needs were urgent and overwhelming.

Volunteers from the Jamaica Red Cross Society Westmoreland branch carried out door-to-door distributions to reach the most vulnerable, alongside mental health and psychosocial support sessions in shelters during the early stages of the response.

Denique recalled the difficulty of reaching some communities due to blocked roads, sharing that *“one experience that stayed with me was in Belmont. We visited a woman in her home. The lady sat in her chair, and when I explained that the Red Cross were here to distribute essential items, she started crying which also made me cry”.* The Jamaica Red Cross was often the first to reach these hard-to-access areas, demonstrating the impact of timely support.

Emotional responses of gratitude, relief, and hope, highlighted the value of direct engagement. Supporting mental health was as critical as distributing relief items. Shelete described how games and activities in shelters and schools helped people, especially children, feel safe and supported. As Denique noted, *“It was an amazing experience, building relationships with people in the shelters. This was an important part of our work, addressing mental health needs alongside physical relief”.*

Despite long days, appreciation for the volunteers remained strong. *“People were extremely grateful. Many said it was the first time aid had come directly to their doors”* Shelete shared.

Throughout the early stages of the Hurricane Melissa response, Jamaica Red Cross volunteers demonstrated exceptional commitment, resilience, and compassion. Even while facing personal loss, they upheld humanitarian principles and supported their communities when they were needed most.

Note: IFRC consent forms for both volunteers were completed and signed (available on request).



Left - Denique Rhoden (Fundraising Lead, Jamaica Red Cross, Westmoreland Branch). Right - Shelete Kelly (Youth Lead, Jamaica Red Cross, Westmoreland Branch) in Petersfield Primary School, one of the emergency shelters JRCs supported in the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa

ANNEX 2 - DESK-REVIEW DOCUMENT LIST

A total of 19 documents were reviewed as part of the desk-based analysis, the full list of documents is as follows:

Imminent DREF Documents (provided by IFRC-DREF Team and IFRC Americas)

1. Imminent DREF Application
2. Imminent DREF Approval Email
3. Imminent DREF Income Allocation Request
4. DREF Review Checklist - Approval Justification
5. Imminent DREF Operation
6. IFRC Americas PPT Presentation - Imminent DREF Timeline
7. Transfer of Imminent DREF funds

DREF Documents (provided by IFRC-DREF Team)

8. DREF Application
9. DREF Approval Email
10. DREF Income Allocation Request
11. DREF Budget
12. DREF Review Checklist - Approval Justification
13. DREF Appeal Manager Approval
14. DREF Operation
15. Risk Analysis 1-pager
16. DREF Project Funding Agreement

Other (sourced from IFRC GO or provided by Jamaica Red Cross)

17. IFRC Situation Report #1
18. Post Distribution Monitoring NFI initial findings (*full findings were not available until after the review was completed*)
19. Jamaica Red Cross Waybills October-November 2025 (*total waybills reviewed was 73, 37 of which were signed ahead of Hurricane Melissa making landfall*).