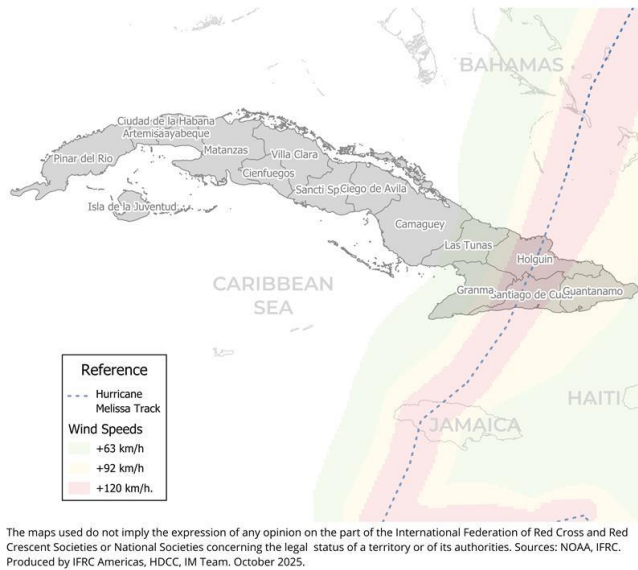




A family salvages belongings from the rubble of their home after it collapsed during Hurricane Melissa's passage through Santiago de Cuba, Cuba, on 29 October 2025. Credit: YAMIL LAGE / AFP.

Appeal No: MDRCU013	IFRC Secretariat Funding requirements: CHF 15 million Federation-wide Funding requirements: TBD	
Glide No: FL-2025-000201-CUB	People [affected/at risk]: 2.7 million potentially affected	People to be assisted: 100,000 people
DREF allocation: CHF 1 million	Appeal launched: 30 October 2025	Appeal ends: 31 October 2027



SITUATION OVERVIEW

On 25 October 2025, the National Hurricane Center ¹ began monitoring a tropical wave moving westward across the Atlantic with conditions conducive for rapid development. Over the following days, the system steadily intensified, reaching Category 5 status on 28 October, with sustained winds near 185 mph (295 km/h) and a central pressure close to 892 mb — one of the most intense hurricanes ever recorded in the Caribbean basin.

In the days preceding Melissa's arrival, the Cuban Civil Defense reported extensive precautionary measures — pre-positioning, mass evacuations and sheltering, school closures, transportation suspensions, and the safeguarding of agricultural assets.

The government assisted over 735,000 people to evacuate from coastal and low-lying zones. Widespread damage to housing, crops, and power networks was expected in provinces

along the path of the storm. UNOSAT estimated 2.7 million people could potentially be affected.

On 27 October, as Melissa was approaching Jamaica, the Cuban Civil Defense declared the provinces of Guantánamo, Santiago de Cuba, Holguín, Granma, Las Tunas, and Camagüey to be in an “alarm phase”, its highest level of alert for storms.

After making landfall in Jamaica as a Category 5 hurricane on the afternoon of 28 October, Melissa weakened briefly before restrengthening to a Category 4 hurricane on its approach towards Cuba. The storm's outer bands began impacting Cuba's eastern provinces with intense rainfall, strong winds, and storm surge flooding by the evening of 28 October.

In the early morning hours of 29 October, Melissa made landfall for the second time as a Category 3 hurricane on the southern coast of eastern Cuba, in the province of Santiago de Cuba, with maximum sustained winds near 125 mph (195 km/h).

Storm total rainfall of 10 to 20 inches was expected throughout the day on 29 October, with local amounts up to 25 inches expected over mountainous terrain. The National Hurricane Center warned this would cause life-threatening and potentially catastrophic flash flooding with numerous landslides. Cuba's National Institute of Hydraulic Resources reported accumulated rainfall of 15 inches (38 centimeters) in Charco Redondo and 14 inches (36 centimeters) in Las Villas Reservoir. As part of its anticipatory actions, Cuban Red Cross supported preventive evacuations. Volunteers also provided psychosocial support and helped families connect with each other. All branches on the island were activated and on alert, in

¹ [National Hurricane Centre Advisories for the Atlantic on Hurricane Melissa](#)

coordination with the National Civil Defense system to ensure preparedness measures before landfall.

While the full extent of damage is not yet known, preliminary reports indicate significant impacts, including collapsed houses, buildings without roofs, and roads blocked, with the eastern part of the country being the most affected. Around 992,000 houses suffered light damage in Guantánamo, Holguín and Santiago de Cuba. In the latter province, about 200,000 houses were affected either partially or totally. Flooding in Holguín province has isolated communities and impeded rescue efforts. Teams are working to clear routes and evacuate those affected. Hurricane Melissa has impacted the same part of the country severely affected by Hurricane Oscar in October 2024. In Guantánamo, Santiago, and other eastern communities, homes were damaged, essential services were disrupted, and nearly 450,000 people temporarily lost access to safe water. The provinces of Santiago de Cuba, Granma and Holguín have no electricity. To date, damage has been detected in 44 health and education institutions. Classes remain

suspended in the eastern provinces. Several community food distribution centers were lost, and many people lost their fishing boats, livestock, and other means of subsistence. Recovery has progressed, but shortages and fragile infrastructure persist, worsening the impacts of Hurricane Melissa in these areas.

Compounding these hurricane impacts, Cuba is simultaneously contending with a complex arboviral outbreak reported by the Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP) in October 2025, involving Dengue, Oropouche, and Chikungunya viruses. Flooding and infrastructure damage heighten vector-borne transmission risks. As a result, this operation constitutes a multi-crisis response that aims to deliver life-saving assistance while restoring safe water and sanitation, reinforcing vector-control and risk communication, and safeguarding the continuity of essential health services.

TARGETING

This Emergency Appeal will target 100,000 people from vulnerable communities affected by Hurricane Melissa and the current Arbovirus Outbreak². The Cuban Red Cross received the report from the Cuban Civil Defense indicating that the most affected provinces were Guantánamo, Santiago de Cuba, Granma, Holguín, Las Tunas, Camagüey, Sancti Spíritus and Ciego de Ávila.

Ranked among the three most intense hurricanes in Cuban meteorological history, Melissa's strong impacts affected southeastern Cuba, entering through Granma, Santiago de Cuba; and leaving through Banes, Holguín province.³

The Cuban Red Cross (CRC) proposes to assist **30,000 households, approximately 100,000 people**, whose homes sustained significant damage from Hurricane Melissa. Although detailed disaggregated figures are not yet available at this early stage, the CRC will collect and report sex-, age-, and disability-

² [IFRC DREF Operation MDRCU012: Cuba: Arboviral outbreak](#)

³ [UNCT Cuba: Flash update 01, Hurricane Melissa](#)

disaggregated data (SADD) as assessments advance, and will include these data in the operation's updates.

Priority will be given to households whose homes are damaged or destroyed—including partial or total roof loss—along with single-parent families, households caring for dependent older adults, families with children under five and/or pregnant women, and households that include persons with disabilities. These criteria focus assistance on those facing the greatest shelter, health, and protection risks, ensuring that support is equitable and firmly needs-based.

The selection process will be coordinated by CRC municipal and provincial branches in close collaboration with government counterparts, Civil Defense Councils, and civil-society organizations. Community engagement and accountability mechanisms—clear eligibility information, accessible feedback and complaints channels, and transparent communication of decisions—will guide implementation so that assistance reaches those most in need and is continually refined based on verified assessments and community input.

In this response, the Cuban Red Cross aims to reach families across multiple sectors, prioritizing lifesaving needs and supporting early recovery. The table below consolidates the planned targets per sector.

Sector	People Targeted
Shelter & Household Items	100,000
Health (incl. MHPSS & Community Health)	96,000
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH)	100,000
Protection, CEA & Inclusion	15,000
Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)	15,000

PLANNED OPERATIONS

Through this Emergency Appeal the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) aims to support the Cuban Red Cross in the response to a multi-crisis after the effects of Hurricane Melissa which aggravated the arbovirus (Dengue, Oropouche and Chikungunya viruses) epidemiological outbreak⁴ and will focus on the following areas:

Integrated assistance

(Shelter, Livelihoods)



Under this sector, the operation will ensure safe shelter, restore essential household items, and support climate-resilient reconstruction. In the first phase of the response, priority will be given to urgent needs by distributing emergency shelter toolkits, and key non-food items such as mattresses, blankets, kitchen sets, and solar lamps, enabling affected families to stabilize living conditions and protect their homes while immediate hazards are addressed. A recovery assessment will start alongside relief work to inform medium to long term needs, including reconstruction and climate resilient practices. As conditions allow and reconstruction progresses, the operation will shift toward Build Back Better approaches, providing roofing kits to families, as well as tool kits and technical

⁴ [PAHO/WHO | Pan American Health Organization - Crisis situation in Cuba](#)

guidance to communities to strengthen the safety and resilience of repaired homes. Local builders and volunteers will be trained in safe and climate-resilient construction practices, and community awareness sessions will be delivered in coordination with local authorities to promote durable, risk-informed shelter solutions.

Shelter interventions will incorporate Green Response principles, emphasizing the use of local, sustainable materials and solar-powered lighting solutions. The operation will also promote environmentally responsible waste management and debris recycling.



Health and WASH efforts will prioritize preventing and reducing morbidity and mortality linked to hurricane impacts and concurrent public-health risks, including the arboviral outbreak reported by the Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP) in October 2025 involving Dengue, Oropouche, and Chikungunya viruses, by reinforcing community-based surveillance, health promotion, and close coordination with health authorities. Interventions will ensure the continuity of essential public-health functions through mobile or auxiliary service delivery and by safeguarding access to safe water, basic sanitation, and hygiene in line with national guidance. Environmental health measures, such as waste removal, cleaning of water systems, and preventive campaigns against arboviruses, will be coordinated with local institutions and communities to reduce secondary impacts.

Health actions will focus on strengthening the capacity of volunteers and communities to provide lifesaving and psychosocial support while ensuring access to essential medical supplies. Volunteers will receive first aid and psychosocial support training, while community-level first aid sessions will help expand knowledge and preparedness in the most affected areas. Local Red Cross branches will be equipped with first aid and bleeding-control kits to enable a timely response, and health-promotion campaigns will be conducted with printed materials to raise awareness on disease prevention and wellbeing. The planned recovery assessment will also inform medium to long term support to public health institutions, medical modules including the procurement of consumable supplies requested by the Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP) will be delivered, along with the installation of alternative energy sources, such as solar panels and generators—to ensure the continuity of services at health posts.



Regarding WASH, interventions will safeguard safe water, sanitation, and hygiene through household-level water treatment and hygiene promotion; distribution of household water-treatment kits and storage containers; and rehabilitation and cleaning of community water systems, tanks, and wells in coordination with local water authorities. They will also include distribution of hygiene kits (soap, detergent, sanitary materials); vector-control efforts, community clean-ups, waste collection, and targeted spraying in high-risk areas, alongside preventive communication on dengue and other arboviruses; and the installation of solar-powered or gravity-fed water pumps to guarantee continuous water supply during power outages.

Protection and Prevention

(Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI), Community Engagement and Accountability, Environmental Sustainability, Risk Reduction, Climate adaptation and recovery,)

The response will integrate cross-cutting approaches to ensure assistance is impartial, accessible, and informed by community feedback. Two-way information, communication, and feedback channels will enable timely adjustments to activities in line with community priorities. Special attention will be given to the safety and inclusion of women, children, older people, and persons with disabilities, with a focus on preventing secondary harm, reinforcing trust and accountability, and upholding dignity, participation, and equitable access—particularly in collective settings.

The Cuban Red Cross (CRC) will base the response on strong community engagement, using meetings, focus groups, and key-informant consultations to ensure meaningful participation and real-time understanding of community needs. Trained volunteers will collect and document questions, suggestions, and complaints, systematically analyzing and using this feedback to adjust activities. Clear information and feedback channels—such as radio messaging, notice boards, hotlines, and community assemblies—will be implemented and promoted, supported by culturally adapted and accessible communication materials. The CRC will ensure accountability by informing communities how their feedback shapes decisions and by closing the loop through transparent follow-up and communication.



Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI), standards will be applied across sectors by promoting gender balance within volunteer teams and prioritizing at-risk groups, including persons with disabilities, older people, and women-headed households. The response will ensure safe, dignified conditions in collective centres and organize services and referral pathways where relevant to safeguard protection and facilitate access to assistance. These measures will mitigate protection risks while promoting equitable participation and outcomes for all.

Regarding environmental sustainability, risk reduction, and climate adaptation and recovery, the operation will promote practices that minimize environmental impact and build resilience to future shocks. This includes integrating risk-sensitive planning, strengthening early-warning and preparedness capacities, and supporting climate-smart measures that protect critical services and livelihoods. Recovery efforts will prioritize locally appropriate solutions that restore essential services, reduce exposure to hazards, and enhance communities' ability to anticipate, absorb, and adapt to climate-related risks over time.

Enabling approaches

The sectors outlined above will be supported and enhanced by the following enabling approaches:

Coordination and partnerships



The operation will be implemented in close coordination with national and local authorities, inter-agency mechanisms and Movement partners, ensuring alignment with national response plans and complementarity of efforts. Continuous liaison with municipal platforms, sectoral ministries and humanitarian coordination bodies will support information-sharing, avoid duplication and enable evidence-based prioritisation. Engagement with United Nations and regional mechanisms will ensure

coherence with wider response architecture and allow technical harmonisation, so that the operation contributes to a coordinated and efficient humanitarian approach that maximises collective impact.

Shelter Cluster coordination



Shelter Cluster coordination is part of the broader humanitarian coordination system managed by the Global Shelter Cluster and activated for emergencies through the United Nations and active participation of IFRC. The Ministry of Construction (MICONS) in Cuba leads the development and regulation of construction services, including the production of construction materials and the construction of housing and urbanization projects. The Ministry also oversees the application of the General Law of Housing and the Housing Fund, dictating necessary regulations and implementing measures to control the application of these laws.

IFRC Secretariat services

The IFRC Secretariat will accompany the National Society throughout the operation to ensure principled, accountable, and efficient assistance. It will provide technical guidance, operational oversight, surge support, and compliance services to uphold EA procedures, fiduciary standards, and safeguarding requirements.



The IFRC will manage supply-chain operations, from procurement to arrival in country. Given Cuba's operational constraints, where imports and transport limitations increase logistics costs, the Secretariat will apply cost-control measures and transparent reporting to maintain efficiency and predictability.

Global and regional teams will support planning and implementation across PMER, Information Management, CEA, PGI, and logistics, and will facilitate engagement with interested Participating National Societies. These services will ensure the response remains accountable and procedurally sound, with timely technical inputs applied throughout the operation cycle.

National Society Strengthening

To facilitate the effective implementation of the emergency response operation—ensuring timely, safe, and accountable delivery—the Cuban Red Cross will put in place a set of operational enablers across staffing, systems, logistics, and volunteer support.



The operation will strengthen the Cuban Red Cross by training volunteers in National Intervention Team competencies and conducting a lessons-learned workshop during the response. Institutional visibility and communication capacity will be enhanced through upgraded communications equipment and improved internet connectivity. Branch digitalization will be supported by providing computer equipment and peripherals, enabling more efficient information management, reporting, and operational follow-up.

To ensure operational continuity, backup energy systems will be installed at branch offices, and fleet capacity will be reinforced through the acquisition, maintenance, and repair of vehicles and necessary spare parts. Volunteer safety and readiness will be ensured with comprehensive personal protective and rescue equipment—including helmets, coveralls, headlamps, rechargeable batteries and chargers, rubber boots,

life jackets, rain gear, cold-weather gear, water shoes, spinal boards, scoop stretchers, hemorrhage-control kits, and whistles—together with insurance and support for volunteer deployment. The operation will also procure essential office supplies and materials for effective reporting and administration, and conduct monitoring and follow-up visits to ensure quality implementation, transparency, and continuous learning.

The planned response reflects the current situation and is based on the information available at the time of this Emergency Appeal launch. Details of the operation will be updated through the Operational Strategy to be released in the upcoming days. The Operational Strategy will also provide further details on the Federation-wide approach which includes response activities of all contributing Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, and the Federation-wide funding requirements.

RED CROSS RED CRESCENT FOOTPRINT IN COUNTRY

Cuban Red Cross



Core areas of operation	
Number of staff:	393
Number of volunteers:	39,648
Number of branches:	183

The Cuban Red Cross is a humanitarian organization and auxiliary to the public authorities, officially recognized in 1919 and a member of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Operating under its legal mandate as part of the national civil defense system, the organization works closely with the Ministry of Public Health to support preparedness and response to emergencies across the country.

The Cuban Red Cross’s response to Hurricane Melissa will focus on traditional humanitarian relief as well as their mandate in health-related interventions. The National Society provides rescue services, restores contact between family members, and offers first aid and

psychosocial support immediately after disasters.

The National Society has a strong presence with volunteers and branches capable of providing immediate assistance to affected communities. Its services include search and rescue, first aid, psychosocial support, and the restoration of family links. Over the past decade, the Cuban Red Cross has responded to several major hurricanes, including support for 7,000 families after Hurricane Sandy (2012), 22,191 people after Hurricane Ian (2022), and thousands more during Hurricanes Oscar and Rafael in 2024. These responses have been coordinated with local authorities and supported by the IFRC’s Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF).

In addition to disaster response, the Cuban Red Cross promotes community preparedness and safety, carrying out water safety campaigns and preventive inspections in public pools, rivers, and beaches.

The IFRC continues to support the Cuban Red Cross through National Society Development initiatives, including the Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) and the Branch Organizational Capacity Assessment (BOCAC). Plans for 2026 include a review of the volunteer policy and continued

logistical support to ensure access to essential goods and materials — from vehicles and spare

parts to hygiene kits and communication supplies — amid national shortages.

IFRC Membership coordination

The IFRC provides ongoing support and collaboration through global, regional, and delegation teams. There are no Partner National Societies with presence in Cuba and the IFRC continues to strengthen the unified planning processes and motivate the membership's Way of Working. IFRC motivates dialogue to ensure a collaborative process focused on National Society strategic priorities and international cooperation shared management.

Technical focal points from the Regional Office for the Americas and the Country Cluster Delegation for Cuba, Haiti and Dominican Republic engage in dialogue and peer-to-peer exchange to ensure active planning and implementation of strategic priorities and enablers.

Red Cross Red Crescent Movement coordination

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) works with the Cuban Red Cross on initiatives to advance work in international humanitarian law and restoring family links. The ICRC and the IFRC maintain close collaboration through their respective regional offices.

External coordination

The IFRC provides technical supports to the Cuban Red Cross for its engagement and leadership within the national response coordination. The Cuban Red Cross is in close collaboration with the United Nations System⁵, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator and the UNETE technical emergency group, with the support of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and in conjunction with national authorities, has activated its Anticipatory Action mechanism in order to proactively mobilize assistance to those affected in the areas most impacted by the hurricane.

The Cuban Red Cross also coordinates closely with authorities at both national and local levels through Cuba's Civil Defense structure and works in tandem with the Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP) and its health services to support surveillance and referrals, continuity of primary care and MHPSS, and the distribution of health supplies to priority facilities. This coordination extends to life-saving evacuation actions, where CRC volunteers helped evacuate 2,361 people from high-risk areas in response to hurricane Melissa. In parallel, the CRC collaborates with international actors in-country, including distribution support for pre-positioned food rations from the World Food Programme, joint work to restore water supply in community aqueducts, and support to UNDP for hygiene-kit distributions—ensuring coherent, needs-based assistance at the local level.

Contact information

For further information, specifically related to this operation please contact:

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⁵ [UNCT Cuba: UN anticipatory action for the imminent impact of Hurricane Melissa](#)

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