

BAHAMAS: HURRICANE FLOYD

*Preliminary appeal no:
23/99
21 September, 1999*

***THIS PRELIMINARY APPEAL SEEKS CHF 435,000
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES
TO ASSIST 3,000 FAMILIES FOR ONE MONTH***

Summary

Hurricane Floyd moved over the Bahamas archipelago on 13 -14 September, causing widespread damage to the country's outer islands, particularly Abaco, Cat Island and Eluthera, whose population all lost water, telephone and electricity supplies and saw their houses totally or partially destroyed.

On receiving the hurricane warning over the weekend, the Bahamas Red Cross Society opened up and managed 41 shelters on New Providence island and Nassau. Immediately after Floyd's passage, the Society carried out a damage and needs assessment on the most affected outer islands on Friday 17 September, with assistance from International Federation and American Red Cross relief and preparedness delegates available in the region. Their observations, that water, temporary shelter and food are very urgent needs for almost half the affected population of around 27,000 persons living on the outer islands, are confirmed by other agencies involved in the emergency response.

In close collaboration with the Federation's Regional Delegation in Santo Domingo and with support from the American Red Cross, the Bahamas Red Cross Society has decided to mount an emergency relief programme for 3,000 of the most vulnerable families on the outer islands, which will provide some 100 metric tons of relief commodities over a one month period.

To support the Bahamas National Society, the Federation is launching this preliminary appeal, which may be revised once detailed assessments have been completed.

The Disaster

Hurricane Floyd, as a category 4 hurricane, was one of the most intense hurricanes ever to affect the Bahamas. It passed over the archipelago with winds of more than 250 kms. per hour, forming a storm surge estimated at around some six metres above normal tide levels, flooding out many coastal communities and causing widespread damage to the outer islands. The combined effects of the extreme wind and huge waves toppled power and telecommunication lines, severely disrupting electricity and

telephone services for several days, and uprooted trees and ripped roofs off homes. Water desalination plants as well as most roads and docks on the islands were damaged.

The island of New Providence with Nassau, the main tourist destination and administrative centre of the 700 island chain, suffered only minor damage and utilities were quickly restored. In the outer islands where the eye of the hurricane made land fall, however, preliminary damage assessments by responding agencies and the Bahamas Red Cross indicate that a significant number of houses were damaged or destroyed. The worst affected islands are Abaco, Eleuthera and Cat Island, but parts of Grand Bahamas have also been identified as in need of support.

According to the Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO), the most severely affected island, Abaco, with a total population of around 10,000 persons, is especially in need because of the significant number of Haitian immigrants on the island. It is estimated that more than 2,000 persons are homeless in the Mud area as a result of the hurricane, which also completely destroyed around 30% of the homes in Dundas town and severely damaged another 10% in Murphytown. In addition the island's inhabitants remain without electricity and drinking water.

While assessment figures of damage to the housing infrastructure are still not available from the far less populated Cat Island, its total population of around 1,700 persons are without water and electricity and have to cope with severely damaged roads and clinics.

In Eleuthera, where the total population is estimated at around 10,500 persons, preliminary assessments indicate that 25% of the houses as well as the whole water system have been damaged, together with four clinics.

In summary, around 10,000 persons or 3,000 families affected by the passage of Hurricane Floyd are in urgent need of external assistance to cover their basic needs.

Response so far

Government Action

With technical assistance from PAHO and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), the Government of the Bahamas has conducted a general damage and needs assessment. Widespread needs for water, food and building supplies have been established, distributions of water and some food items have started, and the Government is restoring utilities on all the islands.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Bahamas Red Cross provided support to the evacuees in the 41 shelters it operated in the capital, Nassau, and the rest of New Providence island. The Society has regularly attended co-ordination meetings with the Government of the Bahamas, and is distributing relief items received from an airlift organised by the American Red Cross. The plastic sheeting included in this cargo has already proved its value as temporary roofing material for several outer island clinics.

Immediately after the passage of Floyd over the Bahamas, the Federation's Regional Delegation in Santo Domingo deployed a technical delegate with HF radio equipment to the National Society to assist in restoring radio communication and in conducting damage and needs assessment surveys on the most severely impacted islands. He was joined by three representatives from the American Red Cross who brought with them four satellite telephones and the airlifted donation of plastic sheeting, hygiene kits, flashlight batteries, bed sheets and tents valued at USD 85,000 as well as a pledge of USD 25,000 to the Bahamas Red Cross' relief activities.

The Federation today released CHF 100,000 for the operation from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF).

Other Agencies' Action w

CDERA prepared several technical emergency response teams before and immediately after the passage of the hurricane, and PAHO is currently assisting the Government in conducting an in-depth public health assessment throughout the country. The agency plans to bring in equipment for vector control and water purification, reestablish the cold chain, establish epidemiological surveillance, and repair eight clinics.

In addition to the American Red Cross pledge mentioned above, the British High Commission has also pledged USD 25,000 to the Bahamas Red Cross, and contacts have been established with the Netherlands Embassy in Kingston, Jamaica.

Co-ordination w

While the Bahamas Red Cross Society is meeting regularly with the Government's National Emergency Committee, the Federation's Regional Delegation in Santo Domingo, in co-ordination with the American Red Cross, has been working closely with the Society's leadership in order to organise and carry out the initial emergency response activities and prepare for a larger relief operation of one month's duration to assist 3,000 of the most vulnerable families with basic relief items.

The Intended Operation

Assessment of Needs •

The preliminary damage and needs assessment carried out by the Bahamas Red Cross Society and the Federation confirms the main trends in reports from other agencies -- that food supplies, building material, plastic sheeting and bedding are urgently needed. Since a detailed needs assessment has not been carried out as yet by the government or any of the local or external agencies involved in the disaster, due to the particular geography of the worst affected islands, the actual needs may be greater than foreseen in the initial surveys.

Abaco and Eleuthera, which are the primary agricultural areas, also appear to have a high concentration of Haitian immigrants. Anticipated needs therefore are likely to be in the area of agricultural support and rehabilitation to the damaged housing stock.

Red Cross Objectives

- | to provide immediately 100 metric tonnes of emergency relief supplies to 3,000 of the most vulnerable families affected by Hurricane Floyd in Abaco, Eleuthera, Cat Island, Grand Bahamas, San Salvador and Nassau;
- | to respond to tracing requests;
- | to act as auxiliaries to the national government in the distribution of relief supplies.

National Society/Federation Plan of Action

September - October 1999 •

The International Federation and its member National Societies will continue to support the Bahamas Red Cross response to the disaster. The National Society has established an Emergency Operations Centre at its headquarters in Nassau and will implement relief distributions from this location. Distribution of food packages, hygiene kits, baby parcels, tool kits and bedding supplies will be carried out in Nassau, Abaco, Eleuthera, Cat Island, Grand Bahama and San Salvador.

Three skilled volunteers from sister National Societies in the Caribbean with recent experience and training in disaster management and relief will be assigned to the affected islands where they will work with local volunteers to carry out the relief operation. These relief administrators will also conduct local relief management training for Bahamas Red Cross volunteers on the affected islands. The Red Cross Societies of Antigua & Barbuda, St. Kitts & Nevis and the Cayman Islands have all agreed to provide the personnel requested, and it is expected that three short term Federation relief administrators will arrive in Nassau on Wednesday, 22 September, to assist with the operation.

The significant geographical distances between the operational areas, combined with the damage to telephone lines all over the Bahamas, make telecommunications an even more critical issue than usual. HF radio equipment will therefore be installed and a limited number of mobile phones or VHF handsets will be acquired to facilitate operational co-ordination.

The Regional Delegation in Santo Domingo will offer support to the operation in monitoring and reporting.

Capacity of the National Society •

The planned emergency relief operation will be the biggest ever carried out by the Bahamas Red Cross Society. It is expected to place considerable strain on both its human and material resources.

Present Capacity of the Federation in the Caribbean region •

The Federation, through its Regional Delegation in Santo Domingo, is capable of providing long term support to the National Society in the form of temporary delegates from both the region and the Regional Delegation. Volunteers and staff trained under the regional disaster preparedness programme are able to provide support in emergency operations management, damage and needs assessment, logistics, relief distribution and other associated areas. Over twenty persons from twelve National Societies in the region have recently been trained in these areas, and many have offered their services for this operation.

Evaluation •

Monitoring visits will be conducted by the Regional Delegation at specific periods to ensure that programmed activities are proceeding according to plan. The final evaluation of the operation will eventually be conducted in co-ordination with the Government.

Budget summary

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

Hurricane Floyd has been the most destructive hurricane to affect the Bahamas in the past decade. It has left an estimated 3,000 vulnerable families in urgent need of emergency assistance, particularly for water, food and shelter. Donors are urged to respond rapidly with cash donations to enable the Bahamas Red Cross Society to continue to respond to the needs of those left homeless after the passage of the hurricane. The urgency of the situation is highlighted by reports of continuing poor weather in the region. Tropical Storm Harvey has caused heavy rains in southern Florida and this led the Government of the Bahamas to issue yesterday a tropical storm watch for Grand Bahama and the Abaco.

For further information please contact Americas Department Director Santiago Gil at phone (41 22) 730 4391 (email: gil@ifrc.org) or Desk Officer Luis Luna at phone (41 22) 730 42 7428 (email: luna@ifrc.org)

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Hurricane Floyd - Bahamas**IN CHF****RELIEF NEEDS****Food items**

Food parcels (3,000 parcels X 50CHF) 150,000.00

Non food items

Hygiene kits (3,000 kits x 20CHF) 60,000.00

Baby parcels (1,000 kits x 30CHF) 30,000.00

Tool kits (1,000 kits x 60CHF) 60,000.00

Bedding kits (1,000 kits x 25CHF) 25,000.00

TOTAL RELIEF NEEDS**325,000.00**

Capital expenditures

Telecom - 4 HF radio sets 10,000.00

Transport, storage & vehicles costs

Sea transport: 5 containers x 2,700CHF 13,500.00

Land transport: 4 islands x 1,650CHF 7,000.00

Packing, labelling & handling 7,500.00

Personnel

Expat staff 24,500.00

National staff 13,500.00

Training

Administrative, office & general expenses

General administration costs 5,000.00

Travel and related expenses 5,000.00

Secretariat operational support 24,000.00**TOTAL OPERATIONAL NEEDS****110,000.00**

TOTAL APPEAL CASH & KIND**435,000.00**

LESS PLEDGES ANNOUNCED

0.00**NET REQUEST CASH & KIND****435,000.00**

All items are to be purchased locally

This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>