

# Alert

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## Haiti and Cuba

# Response to Hurricane Matthew

Geneva, 5 October 2016

### 1. Brief description of the emergency and impact

Very heavy rains and floods have happened on the arrival of Matthew category 4 Hurricane (in the Saffir-Simpson Scale) currently ravaging Haiti and Cuba. The Hurricane Matthew hit Haiti early on October 4<sup>th</sup> and on the same day in the afternoon in Cuba.

Hurricane Matthew entered Haiti on the south-western coast on department of Grand'Anse, 230km southeast of Port-au-Prince with winds near 220 km/h<sup>1</sup> causing devastating impact, violent winds, flash floods and mud slides primarily in the Southern Coast of the island, Nippes and Grand'Anse departments, although nearly the whole country has been affected. 11 communes of the Great South have already been flooded, a landslide in Anse Milieu has cut off road access, and violent winds in Pointe-à-Raquette, Gonâve Island, are causing great panic. One person has been reported dead in Port-Salut<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile 61,302 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are still living in hosting sites or camps rendering them extremely vulnerable to the violent winds and heavy rainfalls expected<sup>3</sup>. Hurricane Matthew is continuing to the North affecting the Nippes, West, Artibonite and Northwest departments in particular.

Hurricane Mathew arrived in Cuba on Guantanamo, the western province of the island. The Cuban Meteorological Institute register strong winds higher to the 220km/h in both Eastern seaboard, heavy raining, flooding and sea surge including 8-10 meters high waves, over the provinces of Guantanamo, Santiago de Cuba, Granma, Holguin, Las Tunas, and Camaguey. There is a concern to have 40,000 households affected by partial or total loss of houses and important damages in the farming harvests.

### 2. Why is an ACT response needed?

Haiti requires immediate assistance to vulnerable communities in highly affected areas in order to evacuate them, and to households without adequate shelter or having lost goods and belongings in order to prevent further damage, as well as the spread of disease such as cholera, and save lives. The impact is expected to be a large scale emergency which may require additional and specialized support beyond local capacities and preparations in place.

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<sup>1</sup> NHC Track Forecast Alert, 4 October

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.haitilibre.com/en/news-18809-haiti-flash-hurricane-matthew-the-current-situation.html>

<sup>3</sup> IOM DATA Portal, <http://iomhaitidataportal.info/dtm/>

In Cuba, Guantanamo is the poorest province with low emergency preparedness. There are 515,000 inhabitants in that region, 40% were sheltered, especially in Maisí town where 94% are in governmental shelters and family's houses. Most of these people cannot return to their houses for a long time.

### **3. National and international response**

The Haitian national system for disaster risk reduction managed by the direction of civil protection (DPC) is mobilized, having evacuated approximately 6,416 people to date<sup>4</sup>. A needs assessment has been conducted by DPC<sup>5</sup> in the islands off the South shore. The UN Agencies, IOM, ECHO and others have organized their rapid response mechanisms and have established working coordination. ACT Alliance members and their local partners in the South, North and West departments are working in collaboration with the DPC, participating in local coordination meetings and information sharing as well as supporting mitigation actions such as evacuation and awareness.

The Cuban Civil Defence was evacuating people from vulnerable areas. Special protection is provided to sick, disabled, girls, boys, women, and elderly people. There is a stock of food products and assessment of houses and infrastructure is also conducted. The network of the health system has been also activated to assist the affected population.

### **4. ACT Alliance response**

ACT members in Haiti have supported mitigation activities in the past 48 hours including the evacuation of nearly 200 persons in Petit-Goave by Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and local partner AHAAMES. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (DKH) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has a stock of hygiene kits (1,500) and shelter kits (500) available for distribution in Jacmel. Christian Aid (CA) partners in collaboration with the DPC in Ganthier have already distributed food kits of 50kg of rice, 20kg of beans and 18 kg of corn per person to vulnerable individuals in Ganthier.

The emergency committee of the Cuban Council of Churches (CIC) was activated on Friday 30 September. The Community Based Psychosocial Support team is ready to go to the field, to conduct an assessment and to support actions for response. CIC has established communication with other ACT members in the Caribbean and with the governmental Office for the Attention of Religious Affairs in the affected provinces in order to provide a coordinated response.

### **5. Planned activities**

ACT Haiti forum members are planning a coordinated response to the predicted devastation of the hurricane under the leadership of a committee led by CA which includes DKH, LWF, NCA and Finn Church Aid (FCA). A rapid need assessment is conducted for the next 48 hrs and an eventual Rapid Response Fund or an Appeal will be prepared depending on the needs and magnitude of the damages. As livelihoods have been lost, funding will also be needed for rebuilding these in the short-medium term.

The ACT Cuba forum with CIC emergency committee is preparing a proposal to provide humanitarian assistance according their own assessment and the information provided by the Civil Defence, foreseen some support on food, water, water containers, roofs, mattresses, bed clothing, hygiene kits and

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.haitilibre.com/en/news-18809-haiti-flash-hurricane-matthew-the-current-situation.html>

<sup>5</sup> OCHA, Haiti Relief Web News

psychosocial support. The response is to be implemented in the province of Guantanamo. The locations include Maisí, Baracoa and Imías. The target population is estimated at 14,000 households.

## 6. Constraints

In Haiti, resource constraints to facilitate logistics (transport), supplies and technical support needed are the primary challenges to delivering an effective response.

In Cuba there are limitation in communication with the affected region, including limited internet access, and lack of coverage of land and mobile telephones as well as lack of transportation means due to the long period of economic embargo.

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