

## Alert note

Cuba, Hurricane Rafael, 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2024

**Completed by:** Jesús Manuel Iglesias Gómez, CCRD

**Date completed:** 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2024

**Forum:** Forum ACT Cuba

**Type of emergency:** Hurricane

**Date of emergency (if rapid onset):** 6<sup>th</sup> of November 2024

### 1. The nature of the emergency

On the evening of Wednesday, November 6, 2024, Hurricane Rafael (Category III on the Saffir-Simpson scale) struck the western part of Cuba, passing through the provinces of Mayabeque and Artemisa and causing significant damage to urban infrastructure and agriculture. The hurricane also caused collateral damage in Havana Province. Sustained winds exceeding 185 km/h and torrential rain battered these areas, including the cities of Artemisa and Bauta<sup>1</sup>. This disaster occurred amid an unprecedented national energy crisis, characterized by repeated disconnections of the national electrical system, which left the entire country without power for several days<sup>2</sup>. As of November 8, 2024, the situation is still not fully resolved, and parts of the country, especially in the western provinces, remain partially or entirely without electricity.

### 2. The impact and scale of the emergency *(please include your source of information with links if possible)*

The hurricane's impact came at a time when Cuba was already facing an unprecedented economic and humanitarian crisis, marked by food and resource shortages, continuous daily blackouts, and limited access to medical supplies. Since December 2022, reports indicate an exacerbation of staple food shortages. Approximately 80% of the basic food basket for the Cuban population relies on imports, costing over \$2 billion USD. The main imports—wheat, rice, beans, corn, soybeans, chicken, and oil—could potentially be produced domestically if sufficient funding and a coherent production strategy were available at the local and territorial levels.

As of Sunday afternoon, approximately 200,000 people in Artemisa and Bauta remain without power and water as emergency crews continue repairs. Electricity and phone services were also destroyed. There are no fatalities reported. Hurricane Rafael is the strongest storm to strike this part of Cuba in nearly 80 years.

Hurricane Rafael's slow movement for 12 hours brought heavy rainfall and strong winds that caused flooding, severe infrastructure damage, and road blockages affected 11 municipalities in Artemisa. The preliminary data records damages, including total or partial collapses, in more than 5,500 homes, including 4,933 in Artemisa and 660 in Mayabeque. In Havana, 461 collapses are reported, both total and partial, of which 99 were in the housing sector. As of November 8, an estimated 83% of Havana's residents remain without power. In the city of over two million people, only about 100,000 have access to water by gravity, while the rest rely on pumping stations that require electricity. Severe impacts on the agricultural sector of Artemisa and Mayabeque, the main food producers in Havana. Preliminary reports suggest significant damage to banana, cassava, rice, bean, vegetable, corn, and soybean crops, as well as to poultry and pig farms<sup>3</sup>.

The lack of power has hampered local information dissemination and preparedness efforts, further complicating response activities.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8jy1xxv7rzo>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/11/6/hurricane-rafael-becomes-a-category-2-storm-as-it-nears-cuba>

<sup>3</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/cuba/respuesta-huracanes-rafael-oscar-reporte-de-situacion-no-05-de-la-oficina-del-coordinador-residente-08-de-noviembre-de-2024>

The short-term consequences of this disaster include immediate displacement, urgent shelter needs, and emergency efforts to restore power and water. While the government and local organizations are providing basic support, including food rations and temporary shelters, the scale of the need is daunting.

Long-term consequences are expected to be equally severe. The damage to agriculture and infrastructure threatens the livelihoods of those dependent on farming, and the destruction of health facilities raises concerns about health and sanitation, particularly given the lack of clean water. Prolonged displacement and limited access to healthcare could further deteriorate health conditions and increase vulnerability to infectious diseases.

**3. Local and national capacity**

Before Hurricane Rafael’s landfall, the Cuban government issued an alert for the incoming storm while crews in Havana worked to fortify buildings and clear scraps from seaside areas in anticipation of flooding<sup>4</sup>. The government, faith-based organizations, and the general population are actively engaged in the recovery process, working to restore basic services such as electricity, water, and sanitation. The government is also providing food rations to the affected population and shelter for those who have lost their homes. The UN team in Cuba is collaborating with the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment to expand the Action Plan<sup>5</sup>, consolidating efforts to respond and recover from the impacts of Hurricanes Oscar and Rafael. The Cuban Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment has reported that donations for hurricane victims from outside the island can be made by national or regional governments, companies, NGOs, or individuals through the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment. This ensures that relevant tax and tariff exemptions are applied and that donations are distributed to those in need. The Russian government has sent 80,000 tons of fuel oil to supply thermoelectric stations, and many countries and humanitarian organizations have pledged to send aid, including building materials and equipment.

**4. Key needs and gaps**

Government data indicates that the hurricane has caused extensive damage to housing and infrastructure, with affected households losing essential items, including water containers and roofing. Water distribution systems are also compromised, and the deterioration of wastewater and sanitation systems has put the population at heightened risk for waterborne and vector-borne diseases. The most vulnerable groups, including the elderly, children, and women, are exhibiting signs of post-disaster distress.

**Food and WASH:** There is a critical shortage of basic food items and limited access to safe drinking water. The market was already undersupplied due to the country’s ongoing socioeconomic crisis, and the hurricane has exacerbated this, as many people have lost what little food reserves they had at home. Basic items are now either unavailable or inaccessible due to high prices.

**Non-Food Items (NFI):** The partial or total destruction of homes has left families without essential items needed for daily life and hygiene. There is a shortage of basic necessities for food preparation, adequate rest, and household hygiene, which increases the risk of disease outbreaks. Prior to the hurricane, Cuba already faced high rates of arboviral infections, such as dengue and oropouche; these risks may now intensify along with other acute diarrheal diseases.

**Shelter:** Many families have lost their roofs and parts of their home walls, leaving them exposed to the elements and with inadequate shelter.

**Psychosocial Support and Protection:** There is an urgent need for psychosocial support to address severe stress, including mental and nutritional impacts, among the affected population. Additionally, instances of gender-based violence may rise during emergencies, necessitating the establishment of protective groups and structures to mitigate these risks in affected areas.

Please indicate whether you are considering:

	Indicate your intention with an <b>X</b> below
--	--

<sup>4</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/rafael-tropical-storm-hurricane-cuba-f96033ae40b18d745f95d9dd17868457>

<sup>5</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/cuba/plan-action-united-nations-system-cuba-hurricane-oscar-response-october-2024#:~:text=In%20response%20to%20Hurricane%20Oscar's,in%20their%20most%20urgent%20needs.&text=Amid%20a%20complex%20national%20energy,as%20a%20Category%201%20hurricane.>

Rapid Response Fund ( <i>intended for small and medium scale emergencies</i> )	<b>X</b>
Appeal ( <i>intended for large scale emergencies</i> )	

*If you indicate an intention to launch an appeal, the secretariat will activate an Emergency Steering Committee meeting within two working days on receipt of this alert.*

#### **5. Forum Capacity and members intention to respond**

<b>ACT Member</b>	<b>Geographical focus</b>	<b>Sectors of expertise and experience</b>
Cristian Centre of Reflection and Dialogue-Cuba (CCRD-Cuba)	Artemisa and Bauta	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Psychosocial Support (PSS) Food/Nutrition Shelter

Given Cuba's high exposure to hydrometeorological events, the ACT Cuba Forum has developed an Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP) to provide practical guidance for this emergency. Strong coordination exists between the CCRD and the Cuban Civil Protection System, and project implementation will be closely coordinated with the Cuban local government and partners, including the Cuban Council of Churches, the Red Cross at provincial and municipal levels, and ecclesial leadership.

The Cristian Centre of Reflection and Dialogue-Cuba (CCRD-Cuba) have participated on the implementation of several Appeals and one RRF since 2001 and has relevant experience in capacity building to local leadership in community-based psychosocial support, WASH, climate change adaptation and disaster risk management.

CCRD-Cuba will be responsible for the project implementation. Volunteers and local leaders from the communities and churches of the Cuban Council of Churches (CIC) will be involved to organize the implementation in the communities, facilitating a participatory approach in the implementation. A team of facilitators will be created to ensure the proper implementation of the humanitarian response, establishing operational committees for an adequate management of the aid.

CCRD-Cuba, as a member of the ACT Alliance, regularly implements its humanitarian actions in conjunction with local partners in Cuba and the CIC, with whom it has prior work and training to deal with this type of disaster and is guided by the principles of the Core Humanitarian Standard, which will continue to be the case for this response. Due to the remoteness of the affected area and the current mobility difficulties due to lack of access to fuel, limited electricity and lack of available resources in Cuba, work will be done through those partner organizations in the province of Artemisa, which are already active with their emergency committees present in the region. Following the agreements defined since the formulation phase, CCRD-Cuba will be responsible for the response approach, the direct execution of all activities while the selection of beneficiaries will take place in concordance with the experiences of the local churches belonged to CIC. Volunteers and local leaders from the communities and from the churches of the Cuban Council of Churches (CIC) will be involved, together with the CCRD-Cuba team, to organize the implementation of the project in the communities, facilitating a participatory approach in the implementation.

#### **6. Potential responses**

The CCRD-Cuba, in coordination with implementing partners will be providing emergency response in WASH, PSS, NFI, Food/Nutrition and Shelter to more than 1,500 people: 300 households for WASH and psychosocial support (150 from Artemisa and 150 from Bauta); 200 HHs for NFI (100 in each municipality), 200 HHs for food security (100 in each municipality), 66 households for shelter (33 from Artemisa and 33 from Bauta) —representing a population of more than 1,500 individuals. It has been foreseen that this response would last 6 months.

An assessment carried out by community leaders and local churches, with an analysis of the families affected by the hurricane, detailing the type of damage that it presents, which allows us to know the priority sectors. Once the project begins to be implemented, the final assessment will be carried out and the participants selection will be determined. The main needs resulting from the target population are related to access to drinking water, basic food shortages and the total or partial loss of housing roofs. The aim is to purchase and distribute cooking modules, housing roof modules, basic food kits (rice, canned meats, oil, salt, others) and water purification systems, for the benefit of 40 families in the territories of the city of Artemisa and Bauta, for a total of 1,500 people. In addition, support groups will be created, trained in the management and referral of GBV episodes in the territory, as well as psychosocial support, to accompany these families, as a tool to cope with the stress resulting from situations of this nature, prioritizing women and girls who are the most vulnerable sector in the face of such events, as well as people who require special care, the elderly and people with disabilities. A confidential line will be created where people can go to report any type of abuse or present their complaints about the work team or the inappropriateness of the actions, based on the principles defined by the Core Humanitarian Standard.