

GREATER CARIBBEAN HURRICANE CRISIS APPEAL

September 2004



Para toda la Infancia
Salud, Educación, Igualdad y Protección
ASI LA HUMANIDAD AVANZA

unicef 

UNICEF Crisis Appeal – Serial Hurricanes in the Caribbean

ISSUE

The 2004 hurricane season is proving to be one of the most damaging in recent memory. Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne have already claimed lives and sown destruction in communities throughout Barbados, St. Vincent, Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Bahamas and Puerto Rico, reaching as far south as coastal Venezuela and even affecting Panama. This rapid succession of dangerous tropical storms and hurricanes blowing through the Caribbean Basin has claimed hundreds of lives in a dozen countries, and shows no sign of diminishing. New tropical storms are headed for the Lesser Antilles as of this writing.

UNICEF has responded with immediate relief actions to each storm in turn, providing supplies and technical resources in line with the humanitarian needs and the organisation's own Core Commitments for Children in emergencies. UNICEF recently issued a flash appeal for the devastated island of Grenada following Hurricane Ivan, and is in the process of finalising another for Haiti. Country Offices on individual island states have initiated contacts with the representatives of donor governments in search of financial support to respond to the various needs that have arisen. Nevertheless, only half-way through this hurricane season of historic proportions, the battered Caribbean appears too vulnerable to withstand the continued onslaught of the elements.

The rapid succession of storms has had varied and specific consequences for each island-state. Whether receiving a direct hit like Grenada, a glancing blow (e.g., Cuba) or bouts of intense rainfall (Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Panama), the concomitant effect of the extreme weather has been particularly harmful to children.

Haiti: Tropical Storm Jeanne swamped northern Haiti on Saturday 18 September 2004, killing at least 691 persons, an undetermined number of whom are children, with another 1050 still missing, and affecting a population of 200,000. The country's third largest city of Gonaïves was hit with a wall of water 3 meters high, totally destroying 4,000 houses, leaving 20,000 homeless and flooding much of the town. Water, electricity and other basic services have been cut off. Between 300 and 500 homeless persons reside in each of 20 shelters in Gonaïves. The two north coast cities of Port-de-Paix and Cap-Haïtien were also flooded, with 56 deaths in the former and 1,600 persons affected in the latter. Transportation to the north has been interrupted; there is an acute problem of unsafe drinking water and sanitation, particularly dangerous to children. Centuries of deforestation and ecological degradation of the highlands intensify the effects of any storm. Even in the best of times, Haiti has minimal disaster management capacity. At present, with an interim government and United Nations forces (MINUSTAH) still battling civil unrest, the country's emergency

response systems are even further weakened. The nation is extremely vulnerable to any storms forthcoming in the remainder of the hurricane season.

Grenada: Hurricane Ivan passed over Grenada on Wednesday 8 September 2004, and in only two hours left the country wrecked beyond recognition. Authorities estimated the economic damage at US\$800 million. UNICEF's Barbados Representative, who visited the site the next day, described the situation as one of "total devastation." Fully 90% of the homes and structures were damaged or destroyed. The storm killed 37 persons and forced some 20,000 persons (one fifth of the population) into shelters, of which 8,000 are children. Many more have been forced to seek refuge with relatives or neighbours. People were left in a state of shock at the level of destruction, with children especially traumatised. The damage to schools, which just started the academic year the day before, means that some 20,000 primary and secondary students risk long-term interruption of their education.

Jamaica: By the time Hurricane Ivan passed over southwest Jamaica on 10 September 2004, it had already reached Category 5 (maximum strength). Six children died. For many more, Ivan is taking a toll on their health, education and psychosocial well-being. An estimated 19,000 persons including many children had to leave their damaged homes to live in 358 shelters across Jamaica. Access to safe water was interrupted over most of the island, increasing children's risk to water-borne diseases, including gastroenteritis. Schools were used as shelters, and are only gradually returning to their intended use after two weeks. In some cases, the re-opening is blocked by a lack of water and electricity and the need to complete repairs. In South Clarendon and other hard-hit communities, children express a high level of psychological distress, as they saw their homes, belongings and environment devastated by the hurricane. As Ivan affected income-sources for farming and fishing communities, this has precipitated more children into poverty, well beyond the 52% of people living under the nationally-defined poverty line before the hurricane.

Dominican Republic: Hurricane Jeanne left a trail of devastation across the north and east of the country, but it was the heavy rains in the days following the passage of the hurricane that caused even more damage. Rain-induced flooding resulted in 20 deaths and incalculable losses in services, infrastructure and agriculture. Eleven out of the 29 provinces were affected, and provisional data indicate that around 500,000 people were affected in one way or another, with around 40,000 classified as severely affected. Several localities were particularly punished, including some where UNICEF has been involved through the Child-Friendly Municipalities Project. At the height of the emergency, there were over 40,000 people in shelters. Over 300 schools have been damaged, interrupting the academic year for all levels of students. Among the key problems has been insufficient food and nutritional items for small children who took refuge from the flood, as well as the problem of unsanitary conditions in shelters.

Cuba: The western area of Cuba comprises Pinar del Río and Havana provinces, Havana City as well as the Isle of Youth, with a total of 3,780,000 people, one third of the country's total population. With a time difference of just one month, the western area was hit by two powerful hurricanes: Charley and Ivan. The first one, was category 2 to 3 in the scale Saffir-Simpson. The second was a Category 5, the most serious one affecting Cuba in the last 50 years and the fifth most powerful in the Atlantic area. On 13th August, Charley crossed over the westernmost portion of Havana Province, affecting the capital of the country and nearby areas, causing several damages. The most serious damages include affectation to 75 000 houses, 837 schools and 127 health facilities. Additionally, there were damages to the industrial and agriculture sectors, which is crucial when considering the difficult situation resulting from the drought in the eastern provinces, mainly affecting agriculture. Even though damages and emergencies are seriously affecting several provinces, the vulnerability accumulated in Pinar del Río concentrates this appeal in this area which, given its geographical position, is at risk of periodically being hit by hurricanes and tropical storms. There were no human losses thanks to effective protection and mitigation measures, which included the evacuation of over 2 million persons, 78% of them to the homes of neighbours and relatives. Some 2,492 shelters were made available. About 22,170 houses were affected, 1,000 of which were totally destroyed. Damages were reported in 299 schools, among them 23 day-care centres, including partial or total loss of roofs, windows, doors, and glass structures, as well as school furniture and materials. Serious damages were reported in 8 maternal and child care centres, 9 hospitals, including the provincial paediatric hospital and 2 hospitals providing maternal and child attention, 9 pharmacies, 4 polyclinics, and 40 family doctor's offices. An even larger number of health services and centres are currently affected as a result of the lack of electric power resulting from serious damages in power facilities. There were also damages to agriculture and social infrastructure, such as roads, the telephone network, etc. Children, adolescents and pregnant women have been confronted, in any event, with a change in their way of living since they have had to abandon their homes to remain in houses of relatives, friends, or in shelters.

Panama: Intense precipitation associated with the tropical convergence zone fell over the eastern part of Panama City on 17 September 2004, overflowing three rivers and severely affecting an area inhabited by 80,000 persons in 51 communities. Within only a few hours, flooding killed 7 persons (five of them children) and disappeared 15 more. The swollen rivers caused one bridge to collapse, damaging two schools, three water plants and 1,435 houses. A preliminary estimate puts the number of affected persons at 20,000. The authorities evacuated 18 communities and designated three shelters in churches and schools. Residents of the area were directly affected by the affluence of trash, mud and sewage water, with concomitant threats to health and hygiene. Additional rains on 22 September 2004 have multiplied the damages.

ACTIONS

During the first two weeks of the spate of disasters, UNICEF has responded through the rapid provision of relief items, including Oral Rehydration Salts, emergency health kits, trauma and first aid kits, water purification tablets, water containers and plastic sheeting. In most of the countries affected, UNICEF was able to provide an initial supply of these items from the stocks maintained in country or at the regional office in Panama City, or to mobilise a rapid shipment from the UNICEF warehouse in Copenhagen and through procurement in nearby Venezuela. In the case of Jamaica, Grenada and Haiti, Country Offices were also able to provide a small quantity of recreation kits, school-in-a-box kits, toy sets and other assorted psychosocial inputs.

As the authorities begin to manage the immediate humanitarian needs effectively, UNICEF has turned its attention to the key sectors where the rights and welfare of children remain under-protected. The role of UNICEF in each country has been coordinated with other UN agencies, government counterparts and collaborating NGOs on the ground, in order to make the most of its comparative advantage and expertise. On a country-by-country basis, UNICEF's plans can be summarized as follows.

Haiti: In health, UNICEF will assess the vaccination status of children, rehabilitate cold chain installations, provide ORS and nutritional supplements to children under five years, and distribute basic health kits and obstetrical kits. In water and sanitation, activities will include provision of water purifier sachets, hygiene education and rehabilitation of sanitary facilities in schools and health centers. To jumpstart educational activities, UNICEF will construct or rehabilitate some 28 schools, equip them with furniture and supplies, and provide school-in-a-box to students. Psychosocial support will be provided through a team of trained educators and school-level counsellors.

Grenada: As part of the coordinated response of all actors, UNICEF has taken the lead in education and child protection, to ensure that children are not denied their right to education, and that they are better equipped to overcome the tremendous emotional and psychological stress of natural disasters of this magnitude. Activities will target 20,000 affected children with non-formal education (school-in-a-box), psychosocial workshops, cultural and recreational activities, as well as small, community-based rehabilitation projects. Adolescents and youths will be trained as peer counsellors and brigade leaders, empowering them, helping the children to cope, and providing a sense of normality in highly abnormal conditions, which tends to "heal" society as a whole, freeing parents and communities to rebuild the damaged structures.

Jamaica: Health interventions include the provision of hygiene kits, ORS, water purification tablets and health emergency kits. For schools, UNICEF will provide educational kits, organize teacher sessions to facilitate the back-to-school effort

and distribute school materials. Psychosocial and recreational activities will be implemented in children's homes, shelters and communities most affected. Rehabilitation activities led by adolescents will be supported with cash and material assistance, and UNICEF will work with the Child Development Agency to lead a public education campaign on risks to child health and safety.

Cuba: Cuba is historically among the best-prepared societies in the region in terms of natural disaster, and tends to rebound rapidly following hurricanes. Even though the government is undertaking the usual recovery actions and there is a gradual return to regular activities, UNICEF cooperation is required to complement these efforts at local and national levels. UNICEF will support the existing structures with supplies and equipment in order to restore basic social services, rehabilitate damaged infrastructure and guarantee the protection of 165,000 children, representing 22% of the total number of 740,242 inhabitants in the province, 363,000 of whom are women. Chief interventions will be in health and nutrition (medicines, surgical material kits, electrogen group generators, refrigerating equipment and air conditioning, cookers, furniture, hydro sanitary installations, mattresses, blankets, sheets and cleaning products for hospitals and maternal and child centers); water and sanitation (chlorine tablets, water containers, water tanks, electric pumps, pipes and accessories), and education (school furniture, refrigerators, cookers, electric appliances, toy kits, didactic and teaching materials, networks y hydro sanitary installations, water dispensers, mattresses, towels, sheets and mosquito nets, helping to preserve the high social indicators in the territory. UNICEF will also work with local structures to implement psychosocial recovery actions, based on previous collaboration between UNICEF and the government.

Dominican Republic: Following the initial response, providing supplementary feeding items and sanitary/hygiene kits, UNICEF's response will concentrate on two areas: a) nutrition, health and hygiene; and b) education and community support. Interventions will include the provision of supplies and logistical support to Ministry of Health provincial authorities and support for families and children who have lost homes, belongings and livelihoods. In terms of education, UNICEF will support small rehabilitation of damaged schools and provide school related supplies to students. All interventions will be coordinated through UNICEF's existing "child-friendly municipalities" initiative.

Panama: Interventions in water and sanitation (provision of chlorine, buckets, ORS) is the top priority to prevent deaths from dehydration due to diarrhoea. The rapid re-initiation of schooling is key to restore normality and uphold the children's right to education notwithstanding the disaster. UNICEF has initiated the "Return to Happiness" psychosocial support programme with adolescent volunteers, and will train staff of NGOs, teachers and community members to continue this. UNICEF will monitor conditions in shelters to ensure that children's rights are respected.

From the regional level, UNICEF/TACRO has provided support directly to the Country Offices in terms of supplies, logistics and human resources, while at the same time coordinating with the other UN agencies through the mechanisms of the Emergency Support Group and the inter-agency Regional Risk and Disaster Management Group, based in Panama.

BUDGET

At this point in time, UNICEF recognises the need to treat the series of storms as a sub-regional emergency. Accordingly, UNICEF launches the present document as a consolidated flash appeal of humanitarian needs throughout the greater Caribbean Basin. This appeal does not substitute for any consolidated inter-agency effort which may be launched subsequently. The programme lines and budget reflect actual actions and costs to be carried out at the country level, whether by UNICEF on its own, or (preferred) as part of an inter-agency appeal.

COUNTRY \ SECTOR	Grenada	Jamaica	Cuba	Dominican Republic	Panama
Health and nutrition	15,800	100,000	240,000	215,000	--
Protection and psycho-social	246,000	100,000	40,000	50,000	25,000
Water and sanitation	--	--	200,000	40,000	50,000
Education	350,000	100,000	280,000	90,000	25,000
Logistics and communication	161,350	100,000	40,000	10,000	--
Cross-sectoral	--	--	-	50,000	--
Sub-Total	773,150	400,000	800,000	455,000	100,000
Indirect programme support cost 12%*	92,778	48,000	96,000	54,600	12,000
TOTAL	865,928	448,000	896,000	509,600	112,000

* The actual recovery rate on individual contributions will be calculated in accordance with the Executive Board Decision 2003/9 of 5 June 2003.

Note: The appeal requirements for Haiti will be available in the upcoming UN Inter-Agency Appeal for the country.

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