



Hurricane Sandy: Catholic Church response in the Caribbean and the U.S.

November 2, 2012

Greetings of peace to you.

Thank you for your concern for the people affected by Hurricane Sandy. Catholic Relief Services has been working closely with our local partners to respond in the Caribbean as we pray for those affected in the Northeastern United States. Here is the latest information as of Nov. 2, 2012.

HAITI

Hurricane Sandy caused severe damage to households and infrastructure throughout Haiti, particularly in the southern peninsula. A result of major flooding, initial assessments estimate crop losses of up to 70 percent throughout the southern peninsula, leaving the area at high risk for food shortages. Government officials estimate more than 7,000 hectares of cropland were destroyed and some 15,000 animals killed along the south coast.

After working through the weekend to deliver three-day emergency food rations to people in emergency shelters along the southern coast of Haiti, CRS staff began distributing a 15-day supply of food and hygiene kits to 1,850 households in the southern departments of South and Grande Anse. CRS is also seeking funding for a comprehensive disaster response that will provide food assistance, infrastructure repair and temporary employment for up to 29,000 people in the southern peninsula.

The government has reported a rise in the number of cholera cases since the storm made its exit. CRS and partner hospitals and clinics have already identified nine new cases of cholera, which can spread quickly in contaminated water. We continue to monitor the situation closely and will begin providing soap and aqua tabs, for purifying drinking water, in affected areas of Port-au-Prince in the coming days.

CUBA

Cuba, the last Caribbean country to be hit by Sandy before it made its way to the United States, is still reeling from the effects of the storm. In Santiago de Cuba, the eastern province that suffered the most damage, phone lines are still down, electricity is out, and many residents are without running water. Meanwhile, many residents report having a difficult time finding food, and soldiers have been mobilized to remove rubble and fallen trees.

CRS has committed an initial \$20,000 to help our partner, Cáritas Cuba, buy food, water purifiers and candles and matches to help the people most affected make it through these difficult days. - over -

Cáritas Cuba has identified zinc roofing sheets and other construction materials as a priority intermediate-term need of many families.

Sandy struck Eastern Cuba on Thursday after passing through Jamaica and Haiti. Flooding and landslides, downed trees and power lines, destroyed homes, and washed out crops occurred throughout the eastern provinces of Santiago de Cuba, Guantánamo and Holguín, where a major river overflowed. The hardest hit was the city of Santiago de Cuba, where 9 people were killed and tens of thousands of people were forced to find shelter with families and friends. According to official government reports, there wasn't a single block in Santiago de Cuba, the second most populous city in the country, which did not have some damage.

All told, an estimated 100,000 homes were damaged – 15,000 of them destroyed – as roadways were blocked, telephone services disrupted and important crops lost. Meanwhile, estimates are that 90 percent of churches and chapels were damaged, including the National Shrine Basilica of Our Lady of Charity, the basilica near Santiago de Cuba named for the patroness of Cuba.

JAMAICA

In Jamaica, CRS is actively coordinating with the Archdiocese of Kingston, the Saint Patrick's Foundation, Mustard Seed, the Red Cross, government authorities and other local church partners. The St. Patrick's Rangers, an inner-city Kingston youth club of about 150 volunteers supported by the Saint Patrick's Foundation and CRS, put their disaster response training into action during and after the passage of Sandy. They checked in on vulnerable community members, helped other neighbors reattach zinc roofing sheets that had blown off in the storm and worked to clear fallen trees. In addition, the Archdiocese of Kingston has distributed tarpaulins it received from CRS to affected families in the eastern provinces.

UNITED STATES

While Catholic Relief Services is carrying out its international mission by working with the local Church to respond to Hurricane Sandy in the Caribbean, Catholic Charities is responding to those affected by the hurricane in the United States. We encourage you to contact them if you wish to support relief efforts in the United States. Since Hurricane Katrina, Catholic Charities USA and its network of agencies across the country has helped thousands of families recover from disasters, first as an early responder to the immediate needs and later helping people rebuild their lives.

Relief and recovery services are provided at the local level by Catholic Charities agencies that provide critical services including emergency food, shelter, direct financial assistance, counseling, and support. These services are provided regardless of religion, race, creed, or socio-economic status.

To support Catholic Charities USA efforts and help restore desperately needed hope, please call 1-800-919-9338 or visit www.catholiccharitiesusa.org to see how you can help.

To support the work of Catholic Relief Services, including our response to Hurricane Sandy in the Caribbean, please visit www.crs.org and the CRS Blog at <http://crs-blog.org>. **Prayers and intercessions** can be found at www.crs.org.

Thank you for your prayers and all that you do for those less fortunate here in the U.S. and around the world.

[This Nov. 2 update from CRS adapted by and provided for parishes and groups in the Seattle Archdiocese by Missions Office, Archdiocese of Seattle, 710 9th Ave, Seattle, WA 98104; missionsoffice@seattlearch.org; (206)382-4580; (800)869-7028.]