



The Caribbean

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

Total European Commission's humanitarian aid to the Caribbean 2011-2014:

€18.6 million

€147 million for humanitarian assistance since 1994

€29 million for disaster preparedness since 1994

ECHO is the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department.

Through ECHO funding, nearly 150 million people are helped each year in more than 80 countries outside the EU through approximately 200 partners (International non-governmental organisations, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement, and UN agencies).

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Beneficiaries of humanitarian aid in Dominican Republic. PHOTO: UNICEF-DR/ R.Piantini

Key messages

- The Caribbean is prone to extreme natural phenomena. The hurricane season (June to November) affects thousands of people every year.
- The European Union assists the affected populations both in the aftermath of a disaster and with measures that increase the resilience of vulnerable communities to natural hazards.
- Since 1994, the European Commission has granted €147 million in humanitarian aid to the Caribbean (excluding Haiti). €118 million has been allocated for emergency response and €29 million for activities to help communities better prepare for and respond to natural disasters.
- The European Commission provided humanitarian assistance in all major disasters that have impacted the region in the past years: Hurricane *Georges* in 1998, *Lili* in 2001, *Ivan* in 2004, *Noel* in 2007, *Olga* in 2007, *Dean* in 2007, *Ike* in 2008, *Gustav* in 2008, *Thomas* in 2010, *Irene* in 2011, and *Ernesto*, *Isaac* and *Sandy* in 2012, as well as the devastating earthquake in Haiti in 2010 and the cholera outbreak.

Humanitarian situation and needs

Background

Due to its geographical location –in the hurricane belt and surrounded by several tectonic plates – the Caribbean often experiences extreme natural phenomena. The hurricane season occurs from June to November when severe storms affect thousands of people every year. The Caribbean is also prone to flash floods, landslides and mudslides, and the majority of the islands face the risk of earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions. This exposure to natural hazards combined with socioeconomic factors such as high population density, fast demographic growth, isolation, lack of resources, high inequality and poverty rates make the Caribbean extremely vulnerable with little coping capacity in the event of a disaster.

Major needs and related problems

Humanitarian assistance in the Caribbean usually includes access to safe water, medical assistance, sanitation and hygiene promotion, shelter, distribution of food and relief items such as jerry cans, mattresses, cooking utensils, hygiene products. In some cases, protection of internally displaced populations is also necessary.

Activities to enhance local capacities to face and respond to natural hazards are essential. This is done through the European Commission's Disaster Preparedness programme DIPECHO which includes support to local disaster response committees, helping with the preparation of emergency plans, installation of early warning systems, information and education campaigns, reinforcing vital infrastructure such as shelters, schools or hospitals, as well as promoting coordination among the entities responsible for anticipating or reacting to extreme hazards. These simple and inexpensive preparatory measures are implemented by the communities themselves and enable them to protect their lives and livelihoods when a disaster strikes.

The European Union's Humanitarian Response

Funding

Since 1994, the European Commission has allocated **more than €147 million in humanitarian aid** to the Caribbean (excluding Haiti which has received over €322 million). These funds have been used to respond to emergencies and to fund disaster preparedness activities. The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department ECHO strategy aims to ensure that emergency relief and longer term development interventions are properly connected.

In **2014**, in response to serious damages caused by a Low Level Trough System in **Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**, ECHO released more than **€300 000** to help bring relief to the victims, with actions implemented by Red Cross and the Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO). Assistance included distribution of food, relief items, access to water and sanitation, hygiene promotion to minimize the risk of diseases, and restoring health services.

In response to the massive damage caused by **Hurricane Sandy** in October **2012**, the Commission allocated **€11.7 million** to provide humanitarian aid in Haiti Cuba (€4 million), Dominican Republic (€1.2 million), and Jamaica (€0.5 million). These funds helped to provide shelter, facilitated access to safe water, supported activities to reduce water-related diseases (dengue fever, cholera and leptospirosis) and helped the most affected people to regain their livelihoods.

After the passage of **Tropical Storm Isaac** in August 2012, the Commission supported the affected population with more than **€820 000** aimed at reducing health risks through support to the Ministry of Health for early screening of sanitary risks, water and sanitation activities, including monitoring water quality. In addition, ECHO contributed to restoring livelihoods and the production capacity of affected small farmers, as well as supporting distribution of safe water and essential non-food items, and hygiene promotion.

Since 2010, the Commission has also helped people affected by the cholera outbreak in the Dominican Republic that caused more than 471 deaths out of 31 646 suspected cases (as of July 2014). The funding has contributed to the control of the disease, supporting actions in communities with a total contribution of €1 250 140 which helped more than 215 420 people. The operations were carried out by the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), the Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO) and UNICEF.

For **2013-2014**, the **DIPECHO** programme granted **€8.5 million** for disaster preparedness activities in the region. Funded projects promote early warning systems, strengthen health, shelters and school facilities to withstand disasters, improve knowledge about telluric risks, and better prepare communities to face tsunamis and hurricanes. As a result, more than 654 000 people are better prepared to face natural hazards in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Jamaica, Dominica, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, Guyana, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago.

Disaster preparedness activities are put to test constantly, when extreme natural phenomena take place. During the emergency caused by **hurricane Sandy** in 2012, these operations proved successful in helping communities and authorities react better. In Cuba, the Red Cross National Society was able to immediately distribute stocks of emergency items (bedding sets, jerry cans, thermos, portable beds) pre-positioned under the DIPECHO project. Prepositioning stocks of relief items is a key component of DIPECHO programmes, enhancing the effectiveness of the response to disasters, especially in the first hours or days before more aid arrives.

