Situation Update

Two months after Hurricane Matthew struck southwestern Haiti, relief organizations continue to aid the government with meeting humanitarian needs resulting from the storm. International Medical Corps and other relief actors have been working since early October to deliver medical care following widespread damage to health facilities and hospitals; prevent the spread of cholera and other diseases; and assist families that have been displaced from their homes.

November brought new humanitarian challenges in the lead up to Haiti’s rescheduled presidential elections, held on November 20. With some 86 schools in use as shelters, pressure increased significantly to empty the schools to enable their use as polling stations, as well as to facilitate the resumption of classes. Given the scale of damage caused to homes by the hurricane, humanitarian organizations raised concerns that alternative shelter arrangements were needed before families were removed. However, evictions from large school-based shelters moved forward and most were closed, leaving families to return to damaged homes or to relocate to smaller shelters that remained open. Gender-based violence and other protection issues remain a concern in the smaller shelters, as overcrowding and a lack of privacy were already present risks and have been further exacerbated by an influx of...
new people. In Les Cayes and Jérémie, where most remaining shelters are located, Return Task Forces have been established to facilitate peaceful departures and provide assistance, such as relief supplies and food vouchers, for departing families so that they are not left entirely without resources.

As of December 7, the UN World Health Organization/Pan-American Health Organization (WHO/PAHO) had reported approximately 9,600 suspected cholera cases in Haiti since Hurricane Matthew. Weekly case counts nationwide have been decreasing since mid-November, although cases are still far above pre-hurricane levels in Sud and Grand’Anse—two departments that typically had a lower number of cholera cases annually than other parts of the country. From November 8 to 19, International Medical Corps, WHO/PAHO, UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and other response actors supported the Government of Haiti’s Ministry of Public Health and Population (MSPP) in the implementation of an oral cholera vaccine (OCV) campaign in Grand’Anse and Sud, aiming to mitigate the spread of cholera. The campaign covered seven communes in Sud and nine in Grand’Anse. Final figures for the campaign indicate more than 90 percent of targeted people were provided with OCV, with approximately 729,000 people reached. International Medical Corps provided operational support for the campaign, including payment and logistics for vaccinators, monitoring and evaluation capacity, and other activities.

Relief actors have raised concerns about deteriorating food security and malnutrition rates in areas affected by Hurricane Matthew. Malnutrition rates and food insecurity were significant in Haiti prior to the storm, particularly given the impact of the 2010 earthquake. Hurricane Matthew has exacerbated the situation by destroying crops and straining the financial resources of affected families, limiting their ability to purchase food. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), nutrition screenings in Grand’Anse and Sud appear to indicate a rise in acute malnutrition rates in heavily affected communities. International Medical Corps’ mobile medical teams are conducting nutrition screenings as part of their routine care and sharing findings with MSPP.

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CORPS RESPONSE

International Medical Corps’ emergency response team (ERT) is implementing Hurricane Matthew response programs in Grand’Anse and Sud, focused on delivering integrated primary health care and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) assistance to address health needs and mitigate the spread of cholera. Six mobile medical teams—each staffed with two doctors and two nurses—are helping to restore access to health care in Sud and Grand’Anse for populations with limited or decreased access to health facilities as a result of the storm. From the start of operation on October 15 to November 29, mobile teams conducted more than nearly 8,300 medical consultations, serving 15 communes in Sud and one in Grand’Anse. As health
facilities are repaired and resuming services, International Medical
Corps mobile activities will soon begin to transition, with mobile staff
supplementing activities at health centers in need of additional
support, as well as implementing more targeted activities such as
cholera outreach, reproductive health care, and nutrition
interventions.

In Sud’s Les Anglais commune, International Medical Corps continues
to operate a 26-bed cholera treatment center (CTC) at the Les Anglais
Health Center, in cooperation with MSPP. International Medical
Corps has 24 staff working alongside MSPP staff at the facility. From
November 28 to December 4, the CTC received 22 suspected cholera
cases, and has seen 230 cases since opening in mid-October. Most recent cases have come to the CTC from Tiburon
commune. To improve access to treatment for people who live in mountainous or otherwise isolated communities,
International Medical Corps has set up oral rehydration points (ORPs)—sites where community members can receive
oral rehydration salt solution. To date, International medical Corps has established 15 ORPs in Les Anglais and Tiburon
communes. Three of the ORPs are more extensive, staffed by nurses on a 24-hour basis and providing IV rehydration for
more serious cases. In the coming days, International Medical Corps will close four ORPs due to decreased volume of
patients presenting at those locations, taking into consideration the availability of a nearby ORP for support. In
Cavaillon, International Medical Corps is working with MSPP to operationalize a cholera treatment unit (CTU) at the
commune’s local health center. The CTU opened on December 5 with an 11-person capacity. For both cholera
treatment facilities, International Medical Corps is conducting or coordinating with partners for contact tracing, paired
with hygiene promotion, household-level disinfection, and distribution of water treatment supplies.

In November, International Medical Corps WASH teams continued basic repairs, cleaning, and disinfection, as well as
checking water quality to ensure access to safe water, in Les Cayes school-based shelters. WASH teams also distributed
hygiene kits when conditions permitted, including to 54 families staying at Ecole Demian. However, several of the larger
shelters where International Medical Corps operated were emptied due to the election and the desire to restart
schooling, disrupting plans for further kit distribution. Although evacuees have left the shelters, International Medical
Corps’ work—including laying gravel for drainage, installing water tanks, and repairing sanitation facilities—will continue
to benefit the community once classes resume. As additional shelters close, WASH teams will transition to activities that prepare schools to reopen, such as cleaning and disinfection.

In addition to ongoing health and WASH programs, International
Medical Corps is launching prevention of gender-based violence
activities, as well as mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)
interventions. These include trainings for health personnel, include
MSPP staff, on basic concepts of caring for GBV survivors and ensuring
safe referrals. International Medical Corps also plans work with
health facilities on mapping referral pathways to ensure appropriate
linkages between mental health, psychosocial support, and medical
services, and will conduct trainings for health staff on the clinical
management of rape (CMR). International Medical Corps has also deployed a technical advisor to southwestern Haiti to assess MHPSS needs in affected departments.

In addition to the ERT’s Hurricane Matthew activities, International Medical Corps’ Haiti Country Team is implementing ongoing health, nutrition, and WASH programs in Nord, Nord-este, Artibonite, and Ouest departments.

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