Hurricane Ian barreled through Cuba’s western tip on Tuesday, September 27, as a Category 3 storm, leaving millions of Cubans without power. The storm strengthened into a Category 4 hurricane while moving over the Gulf of Mexico toward Florida, with sustained winds of 155 mph, making landfall in the state on Wednesday afternoon. Ian is expected to bring life-threatening storm surges between 12 to 18 feet along the coastal Fort Myers area, from Englewood to Bonita Beach; catastrophic winds from 150 to 190 mph in southwest Florida; and widespread, flooding rain of 12 to 14 inches in central and northeastern Florida.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis had issued evacuation orders for an estimated 2.5 million people, which presents challenges given the significant amount of the population in the affected area above the age of 65, many of whom reside in long-term care centers. It is estimated that 17% of the total exposed population of 11.1 million is elderly. As of 9 a.m. September 28, more than 142,000 Florida utility customers were without power, while 58 school districts had closed and airports had suspended operations.

On Saturday, September 24, the Biden Administration approved an Emergency Declaration for the State of Florida and directed the heads of Federal agencies to provide additional resources to the region. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) also is coordinating across the government to support recovery and response efforts by positioning generators, millions of meals and millions of liters of water. Florida’s National Guard has pre-positioned soldiers, airmen and equipment at bases throughout the state.

International Medical Corps’ Response

International Medical Corps’ Emergency Response Team is on the ground monitoring the storm’s path and unfolding situation, and coordinating closely with the Florida Department of Health to support the state’s response efforts. We also are working closely with our federally qualified health center partners PanCare and the Florida Association of Community Health. Our teams stand ready to assist with response and recovery efforts, and have prepositioned a mobile medical unit (MMU), a mobile command center and critical relief supplies, including tarps, generators, solar lamps, hygiene kits and

5 https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3172236/dod-readies-in-florida-for-hurricane-ian/
drinking water. As part of our long-standing relationship with the Florida Department of Health, we have activated our Emergency Response Roster, and stand ready to deploy as needed nurse strike teams, medical task force teams, and medical field units with or without clinical teams to support the state’s response, if requested.

Upcoming anticipated needs include emergency healthcare; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services, including psychological first aid (PFA).

**International Medical Corps in Florida**

International Medical Corps has provided emergency health services in Florida since 2017, after Hurricane Irma struck the southern portion of the state. After Hurricane Michael made landfall in Florida as a Category 5 hurricane in 2018, International Medical Corps collaborated with the Florida Department of Health to deploy multiple teams of doctors and nurses to medical facilities and special-needs shelters to provide primary healthcare to people affected by the storm. We also deployed a health facility in the Panhandle, helping to keep healthcare services operational while existing facilities were rebuilt.

In responding to Hurricane Ian, we are leveraging decades of experience responding to natural disasters around the world. For example, in the US and Caribbean, International Medical Corps has experience providing hurricane response in the Carolinas after Hurricane Florence; in Puerto Rico following Hurricanes Irma, Maria and Fiona; in Louisiana after Hurricane Ida; in Haiti after Hurricane Matthew; in the Bahamas following Hurricane Dorian; and in Dominica following Hurricane Maria.