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# Annual report

## Cuba

 International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

**MAACU002**

**14 May 2012**

**This report covers the  
period 01 January 2011  
to 31 December 2011**

*Cuban Red Cross Volunteers working in  
community preparedness activities.  
Cuban Red Cross*



### **In brief**

The work of the Cuban Red Cross (CRC) is guided by Strategy 2020 and the Inter-American Plan 2007-2011 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.

During the first half of 2011, most of the work of the Latin Caribbean Regional Representation (LCRR) which covers Cuba was the re-establishment of a continuous dialogue with the Cuban Red Cross and Cuban government authorities. As mentioned in the Latin Caribbean 2010 Annual Report (MAA49002), many of the Federation's programmatic activities in Cuba were temporarily halted after the earthquake in Haiti. Furthermore, given the low coverage of the initial budget for the country support plan, only 50 per cent of total funding required, many sectors of the plan were revised and reallocations of funding made from a balance from the 2008 hurricane season operation.

Part of the first semester was dedicated to securing funding for future activities through a European Commission Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) proposal as part of a regional DIPECHO VIII (Disaster Preparedness) programme which was successfully achieved.

One of the main challenges that the CRC and LCRR confronts during programme implementation relates to the restrictions that are in place in Cuba that can hinder cooperation projects.

### Financial situation

Following revision, the total 2011 budget was 459,678 Swiss francs, of which 457,859 Swiss francs (99.6 per cent) was covered at the end of the reporting period.

The total overall expenditure from the revised budget was 95,483 Swiss francs (21 per cent), which focused on health and care and National Society development, covering essential items, trainings and transportation. This low percentage of implementation is a consequence of the range of difficulties linked with the flow of information and supplies to the island.

**[Click here to go directly to the financial report](#)**

<https://fednet.ifrc.org/docs/Appeals/annual11/MAACU00211arf.pdf>

### No. of people we have reached

The main beneficiary of the secretariat support is the Cuban Red Cross and its volunteers and staff. During the reporting period, the Cuban Red Cross training activities have offered training opportunities to members from the municipalities' operations and relief groups (*Grupos de Operaciones en Socorros Municipales* – GEMOS, in Spanish), members from the water safety brigades, those working in the area of Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (VCA) and regional coordinators. Additionally, some 1,000 families (4,000 persons) have been reached through DIPECHO projects.

### Our partners

In Cuba, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), through its Latin Caribbean Regional Representation, works in close coordination with the Norwegian Red Cross (which has representation in the country), the German Red Cross' Regional Delegation based in the Dominican Republic, and the Regional Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Mexico. Some actions are also coordinated with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and with other humanitarian agencies.

### Context

The work of the Cuban Red Cross has a community focus and deals with diverse socio-cultural contexts, conflicts and emergencies.

The CRC has organized presence supported by infrastructure, equipment and active volunteers in 15 provinces and 85 of the 169 municipalities in the country. The network of 48,000 volunteers covers most of the country and represents the Cuban population, with youth and elderly people actively participating within the National Society. Due to its geographical location, the island of Cuba is particularly vulnerable to severe weather, mainly during the hurricane season. In 2008, the President of Cuba estimated that the hurricane season had a cost of 10,000 million US dollars, around 10 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The national policy on risk reduction, on strengthening local capacity and on the early warning system is based on previous experiences with hurricane related emergency management. Beyond its auxiliary role to the government, the CRC has a key role in the national civil defence system and the goals of the National Society are established by the Civil Defence Executive Committee, in line with the legal framework determined by the highest national authorities.

The economic guidelines set by the government of Cuba had a noticeable influence on the first six months of implementation of the annual plan. All sectors in the country are currently adjusting to the new regulations which are having a direct and immediate impact on the population. After the last congress of the Cuban Communist Party, there is a will to allow for a controlled economic opening of certain sectors, as well as a gradual change of the administrative structure. The government recognizes that Cuba is going through a critical period with some deterioration of living standards. The administrative restructuring and government pay roll cuts had also created some apprehension in the general population.

## Progress towards outcomes

### Disaster Management

#### **Programme Component 1: Community Preparedness/Risk Reduction**

##### **Outcome 1: Through community capacity-building reduce risks and impact related to climate change and disasters**

The first months of 2011 were dedicated to setting the basis for the second stage of the Cuban Red Cross and Norwegian Red Cross risk reduction project. Strong coordination was carried out to complement the existing strategy with an ECHO proposal for 300,000 euro, as part of DIPECHO VIII. In addition, a high level meeting with the commander-in-chief of the Cuban Civil Defence was held to analyze possible ways to move forward after receiving permission to present the DIPECHO VIII proposal. The project is designed to procure storage capacity for prepositioning relief goods for 1,000 families in the eastern part of the country (Province of Holguin), particularly vulnerable to seismic hazards. Purchases of the stock were made at the end of 2011 and will be ready for deployment by spring 2012.

The Norwegian Preparing Communities (PRECO) project is targeting the central and western part of the country. The implementation of both projects will therefore ensure coverage of the entire territory.

#### **Programme Component 2: Organizational Preparedness**

##### **Outcome 1: The groups specialized in operations and relief are prepared and strengthened to maintain effective work at three different levels (provincial, municipal and community) levels.**

Operational equipment for the GEMOS has been procured, including search and rescue / first aid materials and individual equipment for members of the water rescue teams. The procured materials will reach 27 cities in different provinces that are prone to seismic hazards.

The goods were received at the end of the year 2011. Although there is a recorded loss of three plasma screens, an investigation is currently under way to tackle it.

##### **Outcome 2: Improved capacity of the National Society to be better integrated in the regional and global Disaster Management system**

During the reporting period two regional coordination meetings were organized together with local authorities, in order to support the CRC internal capacity to connect with the global management system.

A climate change-focused Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment workshop took place in July 2011 in Havana, with the participation of 28 people. This workshop was supported through three instructors from the Centre of Reference for Community Based Education in Disaster Preparedness (CREEC) and implemented in coordination with the Ministry of the Environment.

The International cooperation activities in Cuba are supervised by the Ministry of Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration (*Ministerio de Comercio Exterior y de Inversión Extranjera* – MINCEX, in Spanish). All projects with the CRC are also coordinated with MINCEX. The Ministry's representatives have expressed their satisfaction with the work carried out by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and their desire to increase the three-way cooperation.

In October 2011, a meeting was hosted by the UN resident coordinator and the Cuban Civil Defence system (and the Cuban Red Cross, as part of this). The meeting also included participation from OCHA-Panama and Geneva, by teleconference. The IFRC Latin Caribbean Regional Representative has been asked to support the CRC Executive President in this respect as the civil defence has made been very clear that the IFRC and the National Society will continue working as key partners, but that cooperation with UN in Cuba is through the State.

## Health and Care

### **Programme Component 1: HIV and AIDS**

**Outcome 1: Contribute to the National HIV and AIDS response through behaviour change campaigns promoting HIV prevention and reduction of HIV related stigma and discrimination.**

Unfortunately this component did not receive funding during the reporting period.

### **Programme Component 2: Community-based Health and First Aid**

**Outcome 1: Contribute to preventing and reducing the impact of road and aquatic accidents and to 100 per cent voluntary blood donations through community health prevention and promotion campaigns.**

In late 2010 the CRC participated in the first Trainer of Trainers' course in the IFRC's revitalized community health methodology, Community Based Health and First Aid in Action, which was held in Lima, Peru. The secretariat can also provide peer facilitator support as needed for national volunteer training.

**Outcome 2: To achieve a better social integration of special disabled persons.**

Unfortunately this component did not receive funding during the reporting period.

### **Programme Component 3: Public Health in Emergencies**

**Outcome 1: Contribute to the health in emergencies and pandemic influenza preparedness and response with community health promotion campaigns and institutional preparedness.**

The secretariat has promoted the Epidemic Control for Volunteers Manual and Toolkit in Spanish in an effort to increase the capacity of volunteers in case of emergencies and epidemics. These tools underwent a country validation and were distributed for the use of all 14 Cuban Red Cross branches.

## Organisational Development /Capacity Building

### **Programme Component 1: Volunteer Management**

#### **Outcome 1: The volunteer management cycle is improved with the use of an informational database**

Since May 2011 the Latin Caribbean Regional Representation has a delegate supporting the development of the volunteer network in the region. Plans to replicate the volunteering database software of the Bolivian Red Cross have been discarded and a local solution will be used instead. The computers and equipment needed have been delayed; however they finally reached Cuba by the end of the year. Given the Bolivian Red Cross' experience in setting up volunteer management systems, the National Society is providing peer to peer support to assist the Cuban Red Cross in moving ahead in this process.

In August the Cuban Red Cross, through the regional representation, received an invitation for taking part in a Global Conference on Volunteering in Budapest, Hungary, in September. Financial support was given and arrangements were made for one Cuban to take part. After the Conference the participant did several presentations of the experience. Due to the conference, the Cuban Red Cross also carried out some specific activities around the International Day of Volunteering on 5 December. Radio stations transmitted messages and talked about the day.

During the month of October/November a Cuban Red Cross volunteer developed a basic database for the registration of volunteers. The database was presented in an Annual Volunteer workshop that the IFRC financially and technically supported in December 2011. 12 provincial branches participated in this workshop, all of which received an electronic template prepared to capture information relating to the volunteers.

The workshop was the first one for the Cuban Red Cross focusing on volunteering. Several continental materials about volunteer development were distributed as well as material about climate change and its consequences. The workshop gathered volunteer coordinators from all 15 provinces in the country as well as some branch presidents. Other actors were invited, such as the UNHCR and UNICEF to talk about the current situation in Cuba concerning work related to the Cuban Red Cross and the need for volunteers. One of the conclusions of the workshop was to have a follow up in 2012, as some issues were left pending and more dissemination is needed around the new database. In the beginning of 2012 the new computers should arrive in Cuba and therefore make it possible to implement the database. At the end of 2011, the Cuban Red Cross was resolving the customs requirements to receive the seven computers in order to follow up with the process of installing the database.

### **Programme Component 2: Branch Development**

#### **Outcome 1: Empowered branches implement their branch development plan**

It was not possible to complete the planned training workshops with CRC branches or print the materials due to a lack of funds in 2011.

## Principles and Values

### **Programme Component 1: Promote humanitarian principles and values**

**Outcome 1: Influence the behaviour and attitude to reduce discrimination and promote respect for diversity**

**Outcome 2: The principles and values are internally and externally promoted by the Cuban Red Cross**

In March 2011, the LCRR supported the CRC's "National School for CRC management" project. As part of the project, 18 secretaries general from 18 branches participated in a basic course about the Red Cross Movement that included both international and regional perspectives.

The LCRR is considering the possibility of replicating this strategy in Cuba, ensuring that the activity forms part of any capacity building project proposal. If successful, the National Society would be in a position to fund the travel expenses of the provincial management staff.

### **General programme challenges**

- Delays in the arrival of some resources have set back programme implementation. However, these were received on 30 December, after completing customs formalities in Cuba.
- Lack of funding for HIV/AIDS related activities has made it difficult to achieve related outcomes detailed in the plan.

### **Working in partnership**

International cooperation activities in Cuba are supervised by the Ministry of Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration (Ministerio para la Inversión Extranjera y Colaboración Económica, MINCEX), which follows up the implementation of some 1,300 projects representing the sum of 480 million US dollars per year. Cuba has on-going cooperation projects with 55 countries, although MINCEX clarifies that there are additional cooperation agreements with 130 countries. All projects with the CRC are also coordinated with MINCEX. During previous discussions, the Ministry's representatives have expressed their satisfaction with the work carried out by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and their desire to increase the three-way cooperation.

Some development goals are being complemented by other Movement actors. The Spanish Red Cross, for example, follows a decentralized model, working directly with provincial branches to carry out projects such as the rehabilitation of water systems or health centres. The German Red Cross also follows a similar method.

In the case of Norwegian Red Cross, this is the only National society that has a delegate present in the country and has a bilateral cooperation agreement with the CRC. The main focus of their working agreement is in the areas of risk reduction and disaster preparedness. The "Preparing Communities" (Preparando Comunidades – PRECO, in Spanish) project has three main goals: risk reduction at the community level, support to the groups specialized in operations and relief (Grupos de Operación y Socorro – GOS in Spanish), and institutional strengthening. As the first stage of the project was deemed successful by both the Cuban Red Cross and the Norwegian Red Cross, it was decided to continue with the same approach but with the addition of some pilot micro projects in water and sanitation, early warning and maintenance of a school in rural areas. These micro projects were identified by the communities after completing the VCA. Also, during the second stage of the project in 2010-2011, the Norwegian Red Cross increased its coordination with the Centres of Reference in El Salvador and Costa Rica to make better use of the Federation's adapted tools.

Finally, the CRC also works alongside with the Regional Delegation of the ICRC in Mexico. They have a project focused on reinforcing the capacities of the CRC to disseminate international humanitarian law (IHL) with government offices and educational institutions.

## Contributing to longer-term impact

Considering MINCEX's level of satisfaction with the work carried out by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and their desire to increase the three-way cooperation, it may be possible to reach better cooperation agreements that could possibly ease the delivery of key items and resources, aiding the CRC in fulfilling this and future plans, improving cooperation with PNSs working in the country and contributing to the Millennium Development Goals.

## Looking ahead

The current decisions and economic guidelines of the Cuban Government will have a strong impact on the implementation of the CRC plan for the period 2012–2013. It is difficult to anticipate how adjusting to these new rules and regulations in all sectors will affect the population and the cooperation in Cuba. A new representative of the Norwegian Red Cross is due to arrive in Havana. Continued coordination and work in partnership will be a priority.

## How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations](#) (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

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Find out more on [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

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