



The Caribbean

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

European Commission humanitarian aid to the Caribbean 2010-2015:

€17.4 million

Humanitarian assistance since 1994:

- **€156.3 million for the Caribbean region.**
- **An additional €332 million for Haiti.**

Disaster preparedness since 1994: **€38.3 million for the Caribbean**, and **€32.5 million for Haiti.**

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 the Dominican Republic. PHOTO: UNICEF-DR/ R.Piantini

Key messages

- The Caribbean is **prone to disasters caused by extreme natural hazards**, such as earthquakes, floods, droughts and volcanic eruptions. The hurricane season (June to November) affects thousands of people every year.
- The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) assists affected populations in the aftermath of a disaster, but also by strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities to future disasters.
- Since 1994, the European Commission has granted **€488.3 million in humanitarian aid to the Caribbean** (of which €118 million was allocated to emergency response, €38.3 million to help communities prepare and strengthen their resilience as well as a total of €332 million to vulnerable populations in Haiti).
- ECHO has provided humanitarian assistance for all major disasters impacting the region in the past years: hurricanes *Georges* in 1998, *Lili* in 2001, *Ivan* in 2004, *Noel*, *Olga* and *Dean* in 2007, *Ike* and *Gustav* in 2008, *Thomas* in 2010, *Irene* in 2011, and *Ernesto*, *Isaac* and *Sandy* in 2012, as well as Haiti's devastating 2010 earthquake and cholera outbreak.

Humanitarian situation and needs

Background

Located in the "hurricane belt" and surrounded by several tectonic plates, the Caribbean often experiences extreme natural phenomena. The yearly hurricane season occurs from June to November, with severe storms affecting thousands of people. The Caribbean is also prone to volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, flash floods, landslides, mudslides and earthquakes like the one which devastated Haiti in 2010. Socioeconomic challenges such as high population density, fast demographic growth, isolation, high inequality, poverty rates and a general lack of resources exacerbate the Caribbean's vulnerability and test coping capacities in the event of a disaster.

Major needs and related problems

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

Enhancing local capacities to respond to natural hazards is essential. ECHO provides this support in several ways, such as **integrating disaster risk reduction in all projects** to the extent possible, or through specific actions. ECHO's Disaster Preparedness programme DIPECHO supports local disaster response capacity, assisting with the preparation of emergency plans, early warning systems, protection of livelihoods, information and education campaigns, and reinforcing vital infrastructure such as shelters, schools or hospitals, as well as promoting institutional coordination to anticipate or react to extreme hazards. Simple and cost-effective pre-emptive measures are implemented by the communities themselves, enabling them to protect their lives and livelihoods when a disaster strikes.

The European Union's Humanitarian Response

Funding

Since 1994, the European Commission's **total financial aid to the Caribbean amounts to €488.3 million. Of this, €332 million has been dedicated to Haiti**, notably to support the response to the devastating earthquake of 12 January 2010, the cholera epidemic and food insecurity, providing shelter, safe drinking water, healthcare, food assistance, protection, livelihood activities, access to water and sanitation. The remaining **€156 million was allocated in humanitarian aid to the Caribbean**, supporting response to emergencies and disaster preparedness activities. ECHO strategy aims at properly linking emergency relief and longer term development interventions, helping to build the resilience of the most vulnerable.

For **2015-2016**, the ECHO's Disaster Preparedness programme (**DIPECHO**) granted **€9.33 million for disaster preparedness in the Caribbean region**. Projects funded include promoting early warning systems, strengthening health infrastructure, retro-fitting shelters and school facilities to withstand disasters and improving awareness of the risks linked to earthquakes, tsunamis and hurricanes. 400 000 people are now more resilient to natural hazards in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Jamaica, Dominica, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, Guyana, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago.

In **2014**, in response to serious damage caused by a storm in **Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**, ECHO released more than **€300 000** to help bring relief to the victims through Red Cross and Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO) interventions. Assistance included distribution of food and relief items, access to water and sanitation, hygiene promotion to minimize the risk of diseases and rebuilding health services.

In response to the massive damage caused by **hurricane Sandy in October 2012**, the European Commission allocated **€11.7 million to provide humanitarian aid** in Haiti (€6 million), Cuba (€4 million), Dominican Republic (€1.2 million), and Jamaica (€0.5 million). These funds helped provide shelter and access to safe water, supported activities to reduce water-related diseases (dengue fever, cholera and leptospirosis) and helped the most vulnerable recover their livelihoods.

Disaster preparedness projects proved successful in helping communities and authorities react faster to this hurricane. In Cuba, for instance, the Red Cross National Society was immediately able to distribute emergency items (bedding sets, water cans, thermos, portable beds) previously stocked with support from a previous DIPECHO project. Preparedness drastically enhances the effectiveness of response, especially in the first crucial hours and days after disasters strike.

After **Tropical Storm Isaac in August 2012**, the Commission supported affected populations with more than **€820 000 to reduce health risks**. ECHO supported the Ministry of Health with early screening of sanitary risks, better access to water and sanitation, and monitoring water quality. In addition, ECHO contributed to restoring livelihoods, supporting the production capacity of small farmers and the distribution of safe water and essential non-food items.

Since 2010, the Commission has been assisting with the **Dominican Republic's cholera outbreak** which has claimed to date 487 lives (with 32 286 suspected cases as of May 2015). The **€1.25 million** funding helped control the disease, with implementing partners the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), the Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO) and UNICEF supporting 215 420 people in local communities.

