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Hurricane Matthew Makes Landfall in Haiti

NEW YORK, NY (October 5th 2016)—During the night of October 4th, Category 4 Hurricane Matthew made landfall on the island of Haiti, a country still struggling to recover after a devastating earthquake in 2010. The hurricane is the most powerful storm the Caribbean region has seen in nearly a decade.

In the early hours of Wednesday, October 5th the south and west of Haiti, including areas such as Grande-Anse, Les Cayes and Jeremie, were severely affected by Hurricane Matthew. Doctors of the World/Médecins du Monde has had a presence in these areas since 1989, and currently has 47 staff members on the ground focused on cholera prevention and sexual and reproductive health.

According to the first official reports, there have been 6 deaths in Haiti. This death toll is expected to rise. There has also been extensive damage to Haiti's infrastructure, including houses and schools – many of which have been destroyed by severe flooding and landslides. The Petit-Goave bridge, the only route to Les Cayes, has collapsed and has effectively isolated the southern areas of Haiti.

Our teams on the ground are particularly concerned about the effect of the storm on health centers; Haiti's health system was severely compromised by the 2010 earthquake and it is still very fragile. For the vast majority of Haitians access to healthcare is limited – approximately 60% of the rural population receives no care at all. Although our initial assessments of the region are still underway, it is clear that many centers have been significantly damaged.

In this post-hurricane context, the reemergence of a cholera epidemic in southern Haiti is a major concern for our teams. Our teams have been engaged in the treatment and prevention of cholera since the 2010 earthquake. This year, cholera cases have been on the rise, with 50,000 cases already confirmed in 2016 compared to 38,000 reported in 2015. We are currently working to increase and strengthen our cholera emergency response.

Doctors of the World/Médecins du Monde is deploying an emergency response in coordination with other health authorities on the island and will provide medical equipment and supplies to areas most affected by the hurricane. According to the UN, there were 10,000 pregnant women present in these at-risk areas, so we will also focus specifically on maternal and child health.

For more information visit doctorsoftheworld.org.

Doctors of the World

Doctors of the World USA is a US non-profit that is part of the global Médecins du Monde network. It provides emergency and long-term medical care to vulnerable people, while fighting for equal access to healthcare worldwide. Founded in France in 1980, the network cares for the most vulnerable through 350 programs in 80 countries.

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