

## CRISIS IMPACT OVERVIEW

On 20 October 2024, Hurricane Oscar landed in Cuba as a Category 1 hurricane. For 24 hours, it brought strong winds of 130km/h and heavy rains to eastern Cuba, majorly affecting Guantanamo as well as Holguin province (EFE 23/10/2024; UNCT Cuba 22/10/2024; BBC 22/10/2024). **In Guantanamo province, floods and landslides particularly affected the municipalities of Baracoa, Imías, Maisí, and San Antonio del Sur. By 22 October, the hurricane had affected at least 15,000 people, including seven fatalities.** As these are preliminary assessments, the total numbers are likely higher (SWI 23/10/2024; RTVC 22/10/2024; ECHO 25/10/2024; The Guardian 21/10/2024).

On 29 October, 84% of the pumping stations and water treatment plants in the four most affected municipalities (Baracoa, Imías, Maisí, and San Antonio del Sur) were non-operational, severely limiting access to water and increasing epidemiological and health risks for thousands of residents (UNCT Cuba 28/10/2024).

The country was already experiencing an electricity crisis before the hurricane. The damage from the storm has worsened this situation and hindered efforts to gather information on humanitarian needs and the impact on affected individuals (UNCT Cuba 28/10/2024; Havana Times 23/10/2024).

Between 20–21 October, the affected municipalities received at least 600mm of rain, causing heavy flooding, severe infrastructure damage, and the blocking of roads and highways. This has constrained access for humanitarian and government responders, as well as information-gathering about current needs (Radio HC 28/10/2024; UNCT Cuba 22/10/2024).

## ANTICIPATED SCOPE AND SCALE

On 28 October, the National Hurricane Center issued a warning about another tropical depression potentially forming near Cuba's eastern coast, resulting in above-average rainfall. While the current low-pressure system poses no immediate threat, there are concerns that it may intensify and move towards regions already affected by Hurricane Oscar (CiberCuba 28/10/2024).

There is a high risk of waterborne and vector-borne diseases because of waterlogging from the floods (UNCT Cuba 22/10/2024). Prior to Hurricane Oscar, there were already around 12,000 suspected dengue cases in 106 municipalities across the country (Granma 30/09/2024).

In late May, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration forecasted that 17 to 25 named storms could hit Cuba in 2024, indicating an above-average occurrence. Additional named storms may occur, as Oscar is already the 15th named storm of the year (NYT 19/10/2024).

## HUMANITARIAN CONSTRAINTS

The hurricane caused considerable damage to 56km of roads, eight highways of national interest, and seven bridges in Guantanamo province (UNCT Cuba 28/10/2024; Radio HC 28/10/2024). This is likely to affect the movement of humanitarian teams trying to deliver assistance to the affected people.

By 22 October, electricity was gradually being restored in various towns and communities. By 28 October, San Antonio del Sur had nearly 97% of its electricity service restored, although some remote areas remained inaccessible for land-based recovery efforts. In Imías, approximately 47.5% of the municipality had regained power, with expectations to reach 50% soon. In Baracoa, 98% of the municipality's electricity had been supplied with electricity, while the overall municipality stood at 63%. In Maisí, 72.8% of households had electricity restored. Overall, Guantanamo province had service restored to a little more than 67% of its households (Granma 29/10/2024).

The hurricane destroyed roofs and homes and left streets littered with debris and downed utility poles, which could hamper humanitarian access (RTVC 22/10/2024).

## CRISIS IMPACTS

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### WASH

Until October 29, only 63% of Guantanamo province had access to water, with five pumping systems intermittently functioning and over 20 systems completely offline as a result of a lack of electricity. Consequently, in the affected areas, people have resorted to using bottled water distributed by humanitarian teams (Granma 29/10/2024). 84% of the pumping stations and water treatment plants in Baracoa, Imías, Maisí, and San Antonio del Sur, the most affected municipalities, remain non-operational (UNCT Cuba 28/10/2024).

Flooding may have compromised sanitation infrastructure, such as toilets, leading to the contamination of drinking water sources. This can aggravate the public health crisis, as communities may be forced to rely on unsafe water, increasing the likelihood of gastrointestinal diseases and other health issues (UNCT Cuba 22/10/2024).

### Health

Hurricane Oscar has severely affected Cuba's healthcare infrastructure, particularly in the eastern provinces. On 22 October, 43 public health institutions and the University of Medical Sciences of Guantanamo were reported to be affected, mainly their roofs. That said, damage assessments of the municipal hospital, polyclinics, clinics, and pharmacies do not yet include all the damage to medical equipment, furniture, medicine, and medical and non-medical supplies. In Baracoa municipality, damage was reported to the roofs of the administrative area (laundry, medical supply, and construction material warehouses) of the Octavio de la Concepción y la Pedraja hospital and three pharmacies. At the same time, two family doctor's offices were cut off in the communities of Jamal and Turey. In Imías municipality, water contamination was reported in Ciro Frías polyclinic. In Maisí, there was partial damage to the roofs of two-family doctor's offices in Sabana and La Punta. In Guantanamo municipality, two pharmacies completely lost their roofs (UNCT Cuba 28/10/2024).

### Food security and livelihoods

The hurricane and subsequent extreme weather events damaged more than 4,000 hectares of vegetables, 750 hectares of bananas, 1,100 tonnes of beans, 4,600 hectares of coffee, 3,000 hectares of cocoa, and 200 hectares of coconut. Overall, coffee has been the most significantly affected crop. The hurricane also damaged 50% of the banana plantations in Guantanamo, reaching 70–80% in Baracoa and Maisí. In San Antonio del Sur, preliminary

assessments released on 22 October show that the hurricane destroyed half of the municipality's salt production (UNCT Cuba 28/10/2024; Periodico26 22/10/2024).

Cuba is highly dependent on agriculture because of international sanctions preventing the country from importing from many countries. The extensive loss of crops from the hurricane threatens the food security and livelihoods of the people who directly or indirectly depend on the affected industries.

### Shelter

Until 22 October, more than 15,000 people (9,000 people in Imías and 6,000 in San Antonio del Sur) had been relocated to evacuation centres or moved in with relatives, friends, or neighbours. By 21 October, the storm had affected over 1,800 homes in Maisí and Baracoa municipalities (ECHO 25/10/2024; Radio Rebelde 23/10/2024; PAHO 23/10/2024).

### Education

By 29 October, a total of 150 educational centres (accounting for 43% of the total in the country) had sustained damage. This disruption would affect over 23,500 children. The municipal education department in Baracoa has officially announced the suspension of classes until 4 November, and other municipalities have implemented similar measures (Granma 29/10/2024; UNCT Cuba 28/10/2024).

The prolonged school closures caused by Hurricane Oscar have far-reaching consequences for children's education and overall wellbeing. Disruptions to learning can result in academic setbacks, higher dropout rates, and reduced prospects. School closures also limit access to essential support services, such as nutritional programmes and mental health counselling, which are vital during recovery periods.

## DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS

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### Hurricane season and climate-related hazards

Hurricane Oscar struck southeastern Cuba on 20 October and subsequently dissipated over the northwestern Atlantic Ocean on 22 October (ECHO 25/10/2024). Hurricane Oscar is the 15th named storm to develop in the Atlantic in 2024 (NYT 19/10/2024).

The Atlantic hurricane season typically runs from the beginning of June to the end of November (FOX Weather 25/08/2021). Hurricanes in the Atlantic occur with high frequency

because of significantly high sea temperatures that create favourable conditions for their formation (BBC 11/10/2024). From 1991–2020, the average hurricane season comprised 14 named storms, including seven hurricanes, three of which were classified as major hurricanes (CDP 11/10/2024). Although climate change is not the only reason behind the increase in the number of hurricanes, it is amplifying the probability of the most intense hurricanes occurring and leading to more substantial precipitation. As global temperatures increase, sea surface temperatures also rise, providing the vital energy required for hurricane formation and intensification. Hurricanes require a calm environment for formation, and in the Atlantic, a robust El Niño amplifies wind shear (variations in wind speed and direction with altitude), which hinders a storm's capacity to consolidate. In the absence of El Niño this year, clouds are more prone to ascend to the requisite altitudes necessary for the formation of a strong cyclone (BBC 23/05/2024; NYT 19/10/2024; E+LEader 11/10/2024).

## COMPOUNDING/AGGRAVATING FACTORS

### Socioeconomic issues

In 2024, Cuba has been experiencing its worst economic crisis in 30 years (The Conversation 23/10/2024). Over a million people, approximately 10% of the population, did not have access to clean water until 30 September. The scarcity of food, fuel, and medicine has also become a widespread issue across the country (RTVC 22/10/2024; Reuters 01/10/2024). Cuba's ageing power plants, primarily reliant on oil, are struggling to meet the country's energy demands. The reduced fuel supply from Venezuela, coupled with the need to purchase more expensive fuel in the global market, has further strained the nation's energy sector. This has led to frequent power outages and a decline in living standards for many Cubans, most of whom experience daily power outages lasting several hours (The Conversation 23/10/2024; AP 23/03/2024).

The lack of both water and energy has aggravated existing challenges and hindered development across Cuba. Power and water outages disrupt essential services, hamper economic activity, and affect public health. Without reliable access to electricity, industries cannot operate efficiently, limiting job opportunities and hindering economic growth. Similarly, the lack of clean water restricts sanitation, agriculture, and household activities, affecting public health and productivity (BTI accessed 01/11/2024; The Conversation 23/10/2024).

The extensive damage caused by Hurricane Oscar could have long-lasting consequences for Guantanamo's economy and social stability. Many households may struggle to recover financially, affecting their ability to return to their previous living standards. This could hinder the overall economic recovery of the region and potentially lead to social instability.

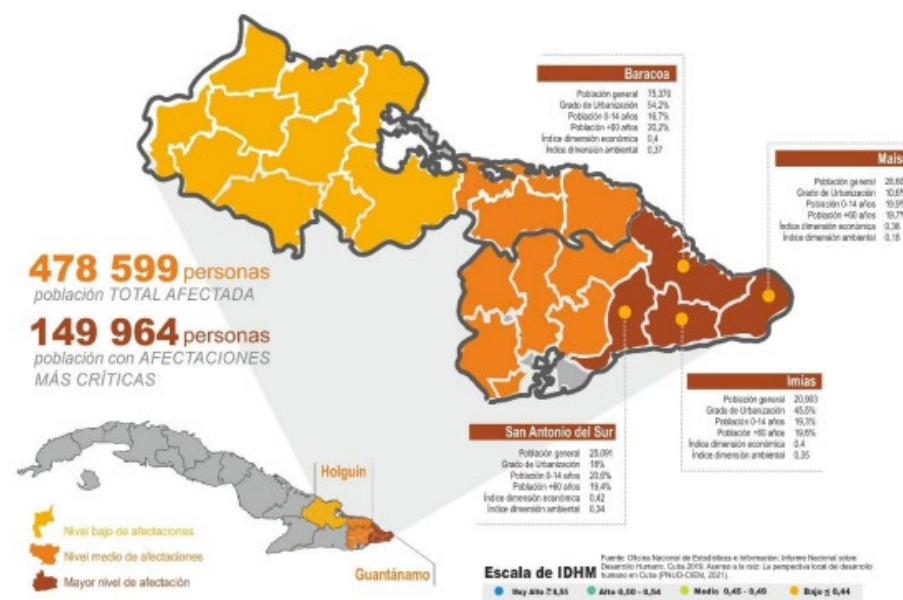
## FUNDING AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

On 25 October, UNICEF donated nearly 1,500kg of medical supplies for hurricane-affected people in Cuba, with the aim of providing healthcare services for about 140,000 people (CiberCuba 27/10/2024).

By 22 October, the municipal defence councils had activated rescue brigades in the affected municipalities (UNCT Cuba 22/10/2024).

By 22 October, WFP had prepositioned food in the country to immediately assist 275,000 people for 60 days. Luminaires, mobile warehouses, pallets, kitchen sets, and tents were also available to support food storage and conservation needs (UNCT Cuba 22/10/2024 and 28/10/2024).

### MAP 1. Impact of hurricane oscar in cuba BY 22 October



Source: UNCT Cuba (22/10/2024)