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ChildFund International Begins Clean-up in Tropical Storm Erika's Aftermath

RICHMOND, Va. (Sept. 4, 2015) — ChildFund International, a child-focused international development organization working in 30 countries, has begun providing families in Dominica with food, shelter and other necessary supplies after Tropical Storm Erika struck the Caribbean island Aug. 27, leaving it deluged in 12 inches of rain.

Access across storm-ravaged Dominica remains challenging. Most of the affected communities are near rivers, on undulating, precipitous terrain or on the shores of the Atlantic. One community is landlocked and, for now, is accessible only by air or on foot. Nine communities across the island have been declared “special disaster areas.” Six shelters house 369 people, including 95 children.

ChildFund operates throughout the island. For now, our usual programs are on hold while our staff focuses on immediate relief and ensuring that child protection needs are addressed. We are providing food and non-food items, with a particular focus on hygiene and sanitation in the nine special disaster areas, and collaborating with other organizations and authorities on the ground to reach those in need.

Meanwhile, community members themselves are banding together to tackle the daunting work of clean-up and restoration, and supporting each other with their limited means. Local fishermen are helping distribute supplies. Health care and mental health providers are offering their services as they can.

ChildFund, with its emphasis on child protection in emergencies, has produced a public service announcement calling upon parents, caregivers and communities overall to pay special attention to children, mindful of the added hazards and trauma they are experiencing. Three radio stations are broadcasting this message throughout the island.

We are also gearing up to open Child-Centered Spaces at shelters in the nine special disaster communities, gathering materials and preparing to orient volunteers. These centers provide safety and care for children while their parents search for food and shelter. They also provide a path to addressing child protection needs, a central focus of ChildFund’s work in emergencies. To stay updated about ChildFund’s response in Dominica, visit www.ChildFund.org/Emergency.

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ChildFund International is a global child development and protection agency serving more than 18.2 million children and family members in 30 countries. For more than 76 years, we have helped the world's deprived, excluded and vulnerable children survive and thrive to reach their full potential and become leaders of enduring change. As a member of ChildFund Alliance, we create supportive environments in which children can flourish. For more information about ChildFund, visit www.ChildFund.org.