

MapAction Scrambles Two More Teams to Reinforce Hurricane Irma Response



MapAction, the humanitarian mapping charity, moved fast on Wednesday to send additional support to the Caribbean region, following the devastating initial impacts of Hurricane Irma. MapAction is sending teams to both Jamaica and Haiti, to add to the one that travelled to Barbados on Wednesday morning. Each team consists of two highly skilled disaster mapping experts - specialist technical volunteers - to make the response to this humanitarian emergency as efficient and effective as possible.

The Haiti and Jamaica MapAction teams will each link with UNDAC (UN Disaster Assessment & Coordination) who have requested MapAction's support. The MapAction Teams will arrive very well prepared as the Buckinghamshire-based charity assisted in both Haiti and Jamaica in the response to Hurricane Matthew in 2016, keeping relevant

geographical data updated since then.

Good Maps and Geographical Information Needed

Hurricane Irma has been described by the National Hurricane Centre as the strongest ever recorded in the Atlantic Ocean. The impact of Irma on Barbuda and St Martin has been described as catastrophic, raising fears for countries such as Haiti, where resilience to natural disasters has already been weakened by a succession of recent events such as Hurricane Matthew and the 2010 Haiti Earthquake.

MapAction CEO Liz Hughes said that as soon as the levels of destruction from Hurricane Irma's first landfall became clear it was apparent that this response was likely to be on a different scale to that initially anticipated. Getting the right help to the right people as quickly as possible will be vital in the days, weeks and months to come. Without good maps and geographical information that would be so much harder to do.

It is at times like this that MapAction's model comes into its own. With a large team of volunteers willing to drop everything and travel to wherever their skills are needed to help people in crisis, MapAction can provide the number of Disaster Mappers the situation demands.

The MapAction team heading for Jamaica will include a mix of experience and technical expertise. For Karen Pinkerton from Scotland, this will be her first emergency mission, after more than a year of training on regular weekend courses. MapAction can also call upon a group for Disaster GIS Volunteers who live in the region, and who can be called upon once the local impact and need becomes clearer.