

# Hurricane creates new crisis in Haiti, aid begins arriving

October 8 2016, by David Mcfadden

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A view of the damaged city after the passing Hurricane Matthew in Jeremie, Haiti, Friday, Oct. 7, 2016. People across southwest Haiti were digging through the wreckage of their homes Friday, salvaging what they could of their meager possessions after Matthew killed hundreds of people in the impoverished country. (AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)

Jislene Jean-Baptiste and her neighbors had little before Hurricane Matthew and now they have a lot less.

A grandmother who lives with her three daughters and their children in a one-room house in the devastated town of Jeremie, Jean-Baptiste on Friday was surveying what remained of her home after Matthew tore across southwestern Haiti three days earlier.

There wasn't much. Storm surge flowed across the road and drenched everything she owns in waist-deep salt water, washing away the stores of rice and sugar she sells at the market to support her family. Then the wind tore off her roof.

"That storm was the most terrifying thing that ever happened here," she said.

Many of her neighbors are in a similarly dire situation because of a storm that killed hundreds of people in Haiti. Its government has estimated at least 350,000 people need some kind of assistance in what is likely to be the country's worst humanitarian crisis since the devastating earthquake of January 2010.

Katrina Legner, a 23-year-old mother of two, also saw the storm destroy her small, concrete-block home before she fled to the house of a cousin that was then also wrecked. "We have very little food and I'm getting worried," she said.



Saint Anne church lays totally destroyed by Hurricane Matthew in Camp Perrin, a district of Les Cayes, Haiti, Thursday, Oct. 6, 2016. Two days after the storm rampaged across the country's remote southwestern peninsula, authorities and aid workers still lack a clear picture of what they fear is the country's biggest disaster in years. (AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)

Amid the suffering, aid began pouring into the coastal town of Jeremie, where thousands of homes were damaged or destroyed and many people were running low on food and facing an increased risk for cholera. Dozens of young Haitians came to the small airstrip along the coast to watch as a helicopter was unloaded with crates of food and water.

"My home is totally wrecked and I heard they were bringing food," said Richard David, 22, one of those who came to the airport. "I haven't had anything but water today and I'm hungry."

The country's Civil Protection Agency said the death toll was still at

nearly 300, but officials conceded it was likely higher because the central government had not received totals from much of the Grand Anse region because communications were still largely down across the rural and mountainous area.

Saint-Victor Jeune, an official with the Civil Protection agency working in Beaumont, in the mountains on the outskirts of Jeremie, said 82 bodies found by his team had not been recorded by authorities in the capital because of spotty communications. Most appeared to have died from falling debris from the winds that tore through the area at 145 mph (235 kph) on Tuesday.

"We don't have any contact with Port-au-Prince yet and there are places we still haven't reached," Jeune said, as he and a team of Civil Protection agents in orange vests combed the area.



A UN helicopter lands in Jeremie, Haiti, Friday, Oct. 7, 2016, bringing

assistance to victims of Hurricane Matthew. People across southwest Haiti were digging through the wreckage of their homes Friday, salvaging what they could of their meager possessions after Matthew killed hundreds of people in the impoverished country. (AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)

The storm left signs of devastation all around the southwestern peninsula. Outside Jeremie, home after home was in ruins. Drew Garrison, a Haiti-based missionary who flew in Friday, said several fishing villages were submerged and he could see bodies floating in the water.

"Anything that wasn't concrete was flattened," said Garrison, whose organization, Mission of Hope Haiti, based in Austin, Texas, was bringing in a barge loaded with emergency supplies on Saturday. "There were several little fishing villages that just looked desolate, no life."

The Pan American Health Organization and others warned of a surge in cholera cases because of the widespread flooding caused by Matthew. Haiti's cholera outbreak has killed roughly 10,000 people and sickened more than 800,000 since 2010, when it was introduced into the country's biggest river from a U.N. base where Nepalese peacekeepers were deployed.

Sophia Cheresal, deputy medical coordinator of Doctors Without Borders in Haiti, said there were at least 18 cases of cholera at the Jeremie hospital. "It's getting worse and probably some people are going to die."

U.N. emergency relief coordinator Stephen O'Brien called the hurricane's damage a major blow to Haiti's reconstruction effort and the fight against cholera.



Electronic devices covered in mud stand outside an office destroyed by Hurricane Matthew in Les Cayes, Haiti, Thursday, Oct. 6, 2016. Two days after the storm rampaged across the country's remote southwestern peninsula, authorities and aid workers still lack a clear picture of what they fear is the country's biggest disaster in years. (AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)

"We expect that homes, schools and cholera treatment facilities have been destroyed and that water systems, roads and bridges have been severely damaged," he said in a statement that also announced that the U.N.'s Central Emergency Response Fund was releasing \$5 million to help Haiti. Earlier this week, the fund released a loan of \$8 million to UNICEF to scale up response to Haiti's cholera epidemic.

Solette Phelicin, a mother of five who lost her home and her small fruit and vegetable plot, watched from her yard as U.N. peacekeepers patrolled the airstrip. She said they were hungry and desperately in need

of food.

"Jeremie might get rebuilt after I'm dead, maybe, but I doubt it," she said.

As Haitians mourned their losses, they tried to recover what they could of their belongings. Homes throughout the area were piles of rubble, the roofs mangled or stripped away.

Officials were especially concerned about the department of Grand-Anse on the northern tip of the peninsula, where they believe the [death toll](#) and damage is highest.



A car stands after it was smashed by a tree felled by Hurricane Matthew in Camp Perrin, a district of Les Cayes, Haiti, Thursday, Oct. 6, 2016. Two days after the storm rampaged across the country's remote southwestern peninsula, authorities and aid workers still lack a clear picture of what they fear is the country's biggest disaster in years. (AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)

Emmanuel Pierre, an Interior Ministry coordinator in Les Cayes, told The Associated Press late Thursday that authorities had counted 283 people dead in one part of Haiti's hard-hit southwest, but that did not include Grand-Anse or its surrounding areas.

Death tolls are frequently difficult to tabulate in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster in any country, though it is particularly difficult in remote and mountainous southwest Haiti.

When Category 4 Hurricane Flora hit Haiti in 1963, it killed as many as 8,000 people.

Those killed in Haiti by Matthew included a woman and her 6-year-old daughter who frantically abandoned their flimsy home and headed to a nearby church to seek shelter as Matthew surged in early Tuesday, said Ernst Ais, mayor of the town of Cavaillon.

"On the way to the church, the wind took them," Ais said.



A man dries his toys after he recovered them from the debris left by Hurricane Matthew in Les Cayes, Haiti, Thursday, Oct. 6, 2016. Two days after the storm rampaged across the country's remote southwestern peninsula, authorities and aid workers still lack a clear picture of what they fear is the country's biggest disaster in years. (AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)



Jislene Jean Baptiste stand in her roofless home, damaged by Hurricane Matthew in Jeremie, Haiti, Friday, Oct. 7, 2016. People across southwest Haiti were digging through the wreckage of their homes Friday, salvaging what they could of their meager possessions after Matthew killed hundreds of people in the impoverished country. (AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)



Documents and bags of black beans air-dry in the sun near a home destroyed by Hurricane Matthew in Jeremie, Haiti, Friday, Oct. 7, 2016. People across southwest Haiti were digging through the wreckage of their homes Friday, salvaging what they could of their meager possessions after Matthew killed hundreds of people in the impoverished country. (AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)



Residents carry a coffin containing the remains of a pregnant woman, a victim of Hurricane Matthew, in Jeremie, Haiti. Friday, Oct. 7, 2016. People across southwest Haiti were digging through the wreckage of their homes Friday, salvaging what they could of their meager possessions after Matthew killed hundreds of people in the impoverished country. (AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)



Residents try to put the body of victim of Hurricane Matthew in a coffin in Cavaillon, a district of Les Cayes, Haiti. Thursday Oct. 6, 2016. The coordinator for Haiti's Interior Ministry in the area hit hardest by Hurricane Matthew said the confirmed death toll in that southwestern zone has risen to almost 300. Emmanuel Pierre told The Associated Press that he expects the toll to rise as authorities reach remote places that were left isolated by the storm. ( AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)



A girl helps her mother to remove mud from her house after Hurricane Matthew flooded their home in Les Cayes, Haiti, Thursday, Oct. 6, 2016. Two days after the storm rampaged across the country's remote southwestern peninsula, authorities and aid workers still lack a clear picture of what they fear is the country's biggest disaster in years. (AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)



A girl washes mud from her feet after Hurricane Matthew passed in Les Cayes, Haiti, Thursday, Oct. 6, 2016. Two days after the storm rampaged across the country's remote southwestern peninsula, authorities and aid workers still lack a clear picture of what they fear is the country's biggest disaster in years. (AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)

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