

COMPREHENSIVE DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN:
"TOWARDS CONSENSUS AND COOPERATION TO MAINSTREAM DISASTER REDUCTION INTO DEVELOPMENT"

UNDP has supported the development of disaster reduction strategies and capacity building programmes for Regional Organizations with a disaster reduction mandate. In the **English speaking Caribbean**, UNDP supported a highly successful cost sharing initiative with the USAID: Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA), the UNDP Office for the Eastern Caribbean located in Barbados and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), to develop a **Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy (CDM)** for the Caribbean region and to strengthen CDERA to spearhead its implementation and the promotion at the national level.

This strategy which has as its **Goal: "Sustainable Development in the Caribbean"** realized through the strategic objective **"Integration of CDM into the Development Process of CDERA member States"** was developed through interactive and iterative dialogue among key stakeholders in the public and private sectors, donor and multilateral organizations, civil society and multi-level financial institutions operating. It provides an important benchmark for stakeholder cooperation and a useful platform for pro-actively addressing disaster reduction issues within the context of development planning. The CDM strategy development process in itself represented a significant development in the way critical agendas are developed in disaster management in the region. .

Since the adoption of the CDM Strategy at a regional conference in June 2001, it has been presented to at least seven (7) national consultations for consideration for adoption at the national level. These consultations have been characterized by high-level participation of the political leaders, including Heads of Government in some cases with participation of senior decision makers from the public and the private sectors. Already in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) the government has begun to integrate the CDM process into its integrated development strategy. National legislation has been enhanced to support the intersectoral dialogue and cooperation essential to CDM.

The donor community working in the Caribbean has been very supportive of the Strategy and has undertaken to inform their bilateral and multi-lateral programmes for disaster management by the priorities indicated in the Results Framework. Already the governments of Japan and Canada have provided more than US\$5 million to finance CDM related programmes. The European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) Disaster Preparedness Programme, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and the USAID/OFDA are also providing resources to support the advancement of the CDM agenda.

Under this activity an institutional review was conducted of CDERA to determine its capacity to spearhead the implementation of CDM at the regional level and to provide support to its member states for national level implementation. Since the completion of this Institutional Review USAID/OFDA has provided additional funds to support the strengthening of CDERA to take on this role. UNDP will also provide additional resources to complement this and support institutional strengthening for national level implementation.

The CDM Strategy has provided an avenue for bringing important critical actors in disaster loss reduction into a mechanism in which their participation has at best been marginal. CDERA, as the CDM broker, has engaged the utility sector in dialogue in raising the profile and agenda for loss reduction in the regional utility sector. It will be signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Caribbean Electric Utilities Services Corporation (CARILEC) shortly. The CDM Strategy has provided a mechanism for dialogue between climate change actors and disaster reduction professionals. The collaboration between CDERA, UNDP and ACCC (Adapting to Climate Change in the Caribbean project) on a programme for mainstreaming of climate change in disaster management in the region is testimony to the benefits of shared strategic objectives.

CDM stakeholders and partners are enthusiastic about having additional benefits for disaster reduction in the Caribbean. The importance of regular information sharing and programme cooperation has been reinforced. The outcome of this has been the providing of information for the maintenance of a CDM matrix that will inventory ongoing programmes and projects under the result areas. Additionally the support for the convening of a regular CDM forum has been snowballing. Partners are already examining how the existing programmes can support this through cooperative financing.

The CDM has made a great difference to the disaster reduction agenda in the Caribbean. It has energized stakeholders, inspired political leaders and revived marginalized emergency managers.

UNDP/BCPR Disaster Reduction unit in Geneva thank the UNDP Country Office in Barbados and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) for their significant input in the preparation of this piece.