The Dominican Republic has many communities exposed to risks such as the flooding of rivers, streams or other sources of water. This reality is particularly tangible in many neighborhoods of San Cristóbal which are located on the banks of the Nigua River. In times of heavy rains or hurricanes, many of these families have to leave their homes and seek shelter. Given the need to have adequate and updated information on the location, capacity and situation of each shelter, the Be Alert Caribbean project has supported the adaptation of the Dismountable Shelter of San Cristóbal, which was built on the premises of the Civil Defense in 2016, as part of the Be Alert San Cristóbal project.

The meeting was also a moment to highlight the importance of including local communities and groups in a situation of greater vulnerability, such as women, children, teenagers or people with disabilities, in risk assessment and pre- and post-disaster plans. This was pointed out by José Isaguirre, Head of Cooperation of the European Delegation in the Dominican Republic, who recognized that only by putting people at the center of risk management could we guarantee to respond to their specific needs and reduce their vulnerabilities.

Although it was demonstrated that we still have a long way to go to face the challenge of climate variability in the region, the event reinforced the commitment of the countries to seek innovative and coordinated solutions to be more and better prepared in the future in order to face a climate of uncertainty and increases in phenomena such as hurricanes, drought and earthquakes.
SOUTH SOUTH COOPERATION
EXCHANGE OF KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AMONG CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES

South-South cooperation and partnerships are the spinal column of the project “Strengthening integrated early warning systems (EWS) in the Caribbean through knowledge and transfer of tools” implemented by UNDP, the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent (IFRC) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) with funding from the General Directorate of Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations of the European Union (ECHO). This project, which takes place in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Cuba, seeks to improve prevention, mitigation and response capacities to protect the lives and economic well-being of the population. In this way, the project helps individuals, communities and key sectors to take appropriate and viable measures when facing an imminent threat. Taking advantage of Cuba’s strengths (tools and models of EWS), Red Cross (community work) and CDEMA (key actor for sustainability), the project connects solutions and support through the most appropriate actors. This approach allows UNDP to integrate and facilitate solutions based on similar practices, countries and contexts, to respond directly to identify challenges in each country.

ACTIVITIES OF THE SOUTH SOUTH COOPERATION PROJECT IN 2018:
TRANSFER OF EWS KNOWLEDGE BETWEEN CUBA AND SAINT LUCIA

Experts from the national disaster management systems of Santa Lucia and Cuba exchange the different working mechanisms for meteorological events and identify a Cuban tool to strengthen the knowledge and identification of disaster risk in Santa Lucia as a possible contribution to the strengthening of the EWS. Soon guided by a package of solutions, it is expected that Cuba will provide technical assistance to Saint Lucia through the adaptation and joint implementation of the tool.

TRANSFER OF EWS KNOWLEDGE BETWEEN CUBA AND DOMINICAN

On April 4th, two Cuban technicians held a day’s work in the Dominican Republic where they met with members of the institutions of the Emergency Operations Center in the country to learn more in depth EWS areas that require further strengthening and in which Cuba could provide technical assistance. Both technical teams held interesting discussions on the most successful practices in both countries, as well as possible solutions for the existing gaps and short-term lines of work were defined.

METHODOLOGICAL WORKSHOP ON CSS SOLUTION PACKAGES

The multidisciplinary team of EWS experts in Cuba, established within the framework of the DIPECHO project, is in charge of leading knowledge exchanges from Cuba to other countries in the Caribbean region. This team was trained on the 21st and 22nd of March in the methodology of creation of solutions packages, the basic tool that the project applies for technical assistance in South-South Cooperation processes.

CUBAN EWS TOOLBOX

Thanks to the experiences in strengthening EWS in Cuba, the country has a vast collection of tools that systematize the Cuban model, including methodologies, instructions, procedures and case studies. These experiences are compiled in a EWS Toolbox and last March, the Cuban committee of experts in EWS officially validated it. In this regional project, Cuba, through these official tools, shares its expertise with the entire Caribbean and offers technical support with specific solutions that will cover the SAT gaps in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica, Saint Lucia and the Dominican Republic.

ARTICLE 2
REVISED MULTI-HAZARD EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS CHECKLIST (MHEWS) ENDORSED BY CDEMA’S TAC

During the 9th Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), members endorsed the Revised MHEWS.

Following the TAC’s endorsement, the Checklist will be presented to the Management Committee of Council, for onward recommendation to the CDEMA Council for endorsement as an important tool to be pursued by CDEMA Participating States. The MHEWS Checklist is a practical tool to identify components and actions that national governments, community organizations and partners within and across all sectors can refer when developing or evaluating early warning systems. Early warning is a major element of disaster risk reduction. It can prevent loss of life and reduces the economic and material impacts of hazardous events including disasters.

During her presentation, Alexcia Cooke, Regional Technical Coordinator, CDEMA, highlighted the development and adaptation process of the Checklist along with the benefits to be derived from its application. She indicated that the Checklist will be applied in 5 countries – Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines under the project “Strengthening integrated early warning systems (EWS) in the Caribbean”. All Participating States were encouraged to pursue its application in close collaboration with relevant public and private sector actions at the national and regional level.

The objective of people-centred multi-hazard early warning systems is to empower individuals and communities threatened by hazards to act in sufficient time and in an appropriate manner to reduce the possibility of personal injury and illness, loss of life and damage to property and the environment.

“During my tenure with CDEMA and even reflecting on previous interventions, we have not seen a tool that has been geared towards benchmarking or providing standards for Early Warning Systems (EWS) and observing the tool applied in such a way as to determine the progress made by countries against those standards”, said Ronald Jackson, Executive Director, CDEMA. “Throughout the Caribbean, there have been initiatives that have sought to develop EWS at all levels. Previous interventions are therefore useful building blocks towards effective EWS in the countries”, he added.

This current version of the checklist was adapted for use in the Caribbean in 2018. Key revisions to the Checklist include: 1) the integration of gender considerations across the four elements of the Checklist, 2) addition of major social groups and other stakeholders among the key actors; 3) general information on the population to be served by the MHEWS 4) levels against which to objectively identify attainment/progress for each action, and 5) minimal revisions to the language of the Checklist for improved clarity.