



Enhancing Gender Visibility
in Disaster Risk Management and
Climate Change in the Caribbean

Country Assessment Report
for Jamaica



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List of Acronyms

AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
BWA	The Jamaica Bureau of Women's Affairs
CDM	Comprehensive Disaster Management
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CGDS	Centre for Gender and Development Studies
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ELIAMEP	Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy
ESSJ	Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica
FHH	female-headed household
GDP	gross domestic product
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
JSLC	The Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions
KMA	Kingston Metropolitan Area
MHH	male-headed household
NDC	National Disaster Committee
NEOC	National Emergency Operations Centre
ODPEM	Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management
ODIPERC	Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Relief Coordination (now ODPEM)
PAHO	Pan American Health Organisation
PEOC	Parish Emergency Operations Centre
PIOJ	Planning Institute of Jamaica

SALISES	Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UWI	University of the West Indies
WHO	World Health Organisation
WROC	Women's Resource and Outreach Centre
WTO	World Trade Organisation

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and objectives

This country assessment on Jamaica is done against the background of the Hyogo Framework for Action from the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2005 which commits the Government of Jamaica and other key stakeholders to integrate gender into disaster risk management policies and programmes. The CDERA Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming in Disaster Risk Reduction in the Caribbean also provides a regional framework for gender mainstreaming.

According to the Director General of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), “Jamaica because of its location, geology and geography is prone to several natural hazards. The major threats include landslides, hurricanes, floods, droughts and earthquakes. These hazards when combined with situations of high vulnerability usually result in disasters of varying severity.”¹

These hazards therefore often cause disasters that affect the lives of men and women, and have a profound negative impact on the country and the development of its people, especially the poorest. The island is particularly vulnerable to hurricanes because of its location in the track of Atlantic hurricanes, and within a seismically active plate boundary zone.

The most vulnerable population includes men and women living in rural areas, coastal zones, and low-lying areas. In Jamaica, women comprise just over half the population, but represent 70 percent of persons living below the poverty line. This indicates that gender needs to be taken into account in strategies to deal with poverty. With higher levels of poverty, poor women are more vulnerable to the impact of natural hazards. They are also likely to bear the heaviest burdens when there are disasters from these natural hazards. At the same time, women are more often than not overlooked and are seldom visible in disaster management.

This assessment is based on consultations with three agencies involved in disaster risk management to assess the extent to which they are sensitive to gender as a cross-cutting issue in their work. Specific reference is made to the three most recent devastating disasters to impact on Jamaica within the past 20 years: Hurricane Gilbert (1988), Hurricane Ivan (2004) and Hurricane Dean (2007). Table 1 presents a summary of the institutions consulted.

¹Jackson (2005). Managing Natural Hazards in Jamaica

Table 1: Agencies surveyed by mandate and sex of Head

Name of Agency	Area of Responsibility	Sex of Representative of Agency
The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPEM)	Disaster Management	Male
The Bureau of Women's Affairs (BWA), the national government machinery responsible for women's and gender affairs	Promoting women's rights and gender equality	Female
The UNDP which coordinates UN response in disasters	Human development and disaster coordination	Male

Source: Compiled from interviews for this study.

The Sir Arthur Lewis Institute for Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) of the University of the West Indies (UWI) was also consulted, for although it is not part of the national disaster machinery, it focuses on policy research. SALISES conducts graduate teaching and research in social, economic and public policy development, including governance, with special reference to small developing countries. An interview was conducted with the Director of SALISES. This Institute could be important for policy research and training in gender and disaster risk management.

1.2. Literature review on gender and disaster risk management

A common theme in the review of literature on gender and disaster risk management is that women are often more vulnerable to disasters than men because of their socially constructed roles and responsibilities, and because they are generally poorer (Pan American Health Organisation, 1998; Mitchell et al., 2007). Several studies highlight the linkages between pre-existing gender inequalities and increased vulnerability of women to disasters associated with natural hazards.

Enarson (2000) for example indicates that women's vulnerability in disasters is linked to their having major responsibility for domestic tasks such as the collection and preparation of food, providing energy supply for the household as well as care-giving to children, the sick, the elderly, and caring for the home and assets.

Hannan (2002) also notes that most of the worst effects of disasters associated with natural hazards are directly linked to human behaviours and that disasters tend to reveal inequalities in existing national, regional and global power structures as well as power relations in intimate relationships. How men and women are impacted by, and respond to disasters is shown to be based directly on existing gender roles and relative socio-economic status in pre-disaster situations.

Patt et al. (2007) note that the gender roles and responsibilities of women present challenges as they have to provide water, and manage sanitation and health risks. This increases the burden of work on them as they also have to combine their productive and reproductive work when a disaster occurs, even if they have lost their main source of livelihood. In many societies, sociocultural norms and care-giving responsibilities prevent women from moving to look for shelter when a disaster occurs. Self-sacrifice and caring for their family also hampers women's own rescue efforts.

A very important contribution to the literature on gender and disaster risk reduction in Jamaica is the report entitled *Assessment of the Socioeconomic and Environmental Impact of Hurricane Ivan on Jamaica* (UNECLAC, UNDP and PIOJ, 2004). This comprehensive study by a multidisciplinary team, led by UNECLAC, examined the vulnerability of women and children as well as the impact of Hurricane Ivan on the social and productive sectors, infrastructure and the environment. It also presented a summary of damage and losses, and the macroeconomic effects of the disaster; it concluded with guidelines for reconstruction and rehabilitation.

The section of the 2004 report entitled 'Vulnerability of Women and Children' noted that people who are most vulnerable before a disaster become the most affected in times of crisis such as natural disasters. One of the most vulnerable groups is female-headed households (FHHs), and in 2002 approximately 45.5 percent of households reported females as the heads of households. The rate of FHHs was higher in the Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA) (50.8 percent), with other major towns accounting for 45.6 percent and the lowest in Rural Areas (40.1 percent). FHHs were over-represented in each category of type of damage reported. Among persons who reported that their houses had been completely destroyed, 48 percent were FHH. Among those who reported severe damage and minor damage, 57 percent and 54 percent were FHHs respectively. The report further noted that these findings were consistent with the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (JSLC), which reported that FHHs tend to have more children than male-headed households (MHHs) and have a higher proportion of other adult females, suggesting intergenerational families.

The report further indicated that the higher vulnerability of women and children was also related to women's lower labour force participation rate which in 2003 was 53.2 percent compared to 71.4 percent for males, and a higher unemployment rate for women of 17.6 percent compared to 9.7 percent for men. The JSLC cited the publication *Jamaica Children and Their Families: A Situation Assessment and Analysis 1999-2000*, a report which highlights children's vulnerability, noted that children's vulnerability was linked to living in poor families in remote rural areas, overcrowded inner city slums, or in households dependent on female wage earners whose income is less than men and who are usually paid less than men for the same work (ECLAC, UNDP and PIOJ, 2004, p.10).

1.3. Structure of the report

The first section of this Country Assessment Report provides a socio-economic context for understanding issues of vulnerability related to gender inequality and the environment in Jamaica. The second section presents the findings of consultations with each of the three agencies. The third section reports conclusions and recommendations to address the findings. A list of references is also included.

2. Socio-economic overview of Jamaica²

2.1. The land

Jamaica has an area of 10,991 km² and is located at 18 15 N, 77 30 W. The coastline is 1,022 km in length and the climate is hot and humid. The terrain is mountainous with narrow, discontinuous coastal plains on which significant numbers of the population live. The highest elevation is the Blue Mountain Peak at 2,256 m. The main natural hazards affecting the country are hurricanes, floods, tropical cyclones, fires, landslides and earthquakes. Hurricanes are most common and the official hurricane season is between June 1 and November 30.

2.2. Population profile

The *Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica (ESSJ)* (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2008) notes that in 2007 the population was 2,682,100, of which 49.3 percent were male and 50.7 percent were female. When disaggregated by sex, the numbers were 1,321,600 (49.3 percent) males and 1,360,500 (50.7 percent) females. The result is a sex ratio of 97.1 males to 100 females though there are variations within broad age groups. The main trends noted were: a decline in the age group 0-14 years; an increase in the working age group 15-64 years; and a rapidly growing dependent elderly group of persons aged 65 years and over. Data from the 2001 census show that the majority of the population is black (91 percent) with smaller proportions of East Indians, Chinese, white and mixtures of other racial groups.

Most of the population lives in Kingston and St. Andrew (24.7 percent) and St Catherine (18.5 percent); the smallest proportion lives in Hanover (2.6 percent). Population density is 259 people per sq. km. of land area. Life expectancy at birth is 73.59 years (Males: 71.88 years; Females: 75.38 years (2008 est.)). The Total Fertility Rate was 2.3 children born per woman (2008 est.). The Total Literacy Rate was 87.9 percent (Males: 84.1 percent and Females: 91.6 percent) (2003 est.).

2.3. The economy

Jamaica's economy is heavily dependent on bauxite/alumina exports, remittances from overseas, and services (including tourism), which together account for over 60 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). These sectors are therefore important sources of foreign exchange. Remittances account for nearly 20 percent of GDP and are equivalent to tourism revenues. Jamaica's economy is vulnerable to external shocks in the world economy and is affected by high oil prices, and sluggish economic growth, as well as economic setbacks from the damages suffered during disasters (e.g. Hurricane Dean in August 2007 and Hurricane Gustav in 2008). Economic problems are also related to: increased foreign competition related to globalization and liberalization of the economy; high but declining interest rates; exchange rate instability; a sizable merchandise trade deficit; large-scale unemployment and underemployment; and a debt-to-GDP ratio of 135 percent.

²Some of the statistical data reported in this section was obtained from the website: exxun.com retrieved on 05 July 2008. Data from the Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica 2007 (2008) are also included.

2.4. Gender and economic vulnerability

Poverty in Jamaica is increasingly feminized. This means that among persons who are poor, there is a higher percentage of females. Poverty levels in 2006 were estimated at 14.3 percent (ESSJ 2007, 2008, p. 25.15) and most of the beneficiaries under the public assistance programme were women. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2007) in its *Situation Analysis on Gender Disparities in Jamaica 2007*, quoted from the *Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2005* and noted that almost half of Jamaican households are headed by women (46.3 percent) and are in the poorest quintile of the population. The proportion of female-headed households (FHHs) increases to 54 percent among persons in the poorest quintile, while in the richest quintile only 37 percent of households are headed by women. Characteristics of FHHs as noted in the report are: they are larger in size than male-headed households (MHHs), with a greater number and proportion of children than in MHHs (37 percent and 28 percent respectively). The report further notes that in more than 78 percent of cases, women in FHHs are single (and therefore poorer).

Poverty is therefore a factor that increases the vulnerability of women when there is a disaster. Women's higher levels of poverty and increased vulnerability to disasters is related to their unequal participation in the labour force, lower rates of employment, and higher rates of unemployment. The ESSJ (2008) notes that in 2007 the working age population (15-65 years) was 64.4 percent of the total population. The labour force was 1,261,300 persons; males accounted for 55.4 percent and females accounted for 44.6 percent. However, those employed numbered 1,136,900: males accounted for 57.7 percent while females accounted for 42.3 percent. Table 2 from the ESSJ (2008) shows women's unequal position in the labour force.

Table 2: Main labour force indicators by gender, 2007

Main indicators	2007p Annual Average ('000)		
	Male	Female	Both sexes
Labour Force	699.1	562.2	1,261.30
Employed Labour Force	656.1	480.8	1,136.90
Unemployed Labour Force	43.1	81.4	124.5
Unemployment Rate (%)	6.2	14.5	9.9
Job-Seeking Rate (%)	4.1	8.3	5.9
Labour Force Participation Rate (%)	73.6	56.5	64.8
<i>p – preliminary</i> <i>Note: Discrepancies due to rounding.</i>		<i>Source: Statistical Institute of Jamaica in Economic and Social Survey Jamaica (2008)</i>	

Table 3: Employed labour force by occupational group, 2007

Occupational group	2007p Annual Average ('000)		
	Male	Female	Both sexes
Professionals, Senior Officials & Technicians	88.9	128	216.9
Clerks	24.2	76.2	100.4
Service Workers, Shop & Market Sales Workers	78.1	129.2	207.3
Skilled Agricultural & Fishery Workers	161.8	35.4	197.2
Craft & Related Trades Workers	156.8	18.5	175.3
Plant & Machine Operators & Assemblers	63.9	4.9	68.7
Elementary Occupations	81.7	88.4	170.1
Occupation not specified	0.8	0.4	1.1
Total	656.1	216.9	1,136.90
<p><i>p – preliminary</i> <i>Note: Discrepancies due to rounding.</i> </p>			
<p><i>Source: Statistical Institute of Jamaica in Economic and Social Survey Jamaica (2008)</i></p>			

Table 3 from the ESSJ (2008) shows that in 2007, 19 percent of the employed labour force was classified as Professionals, Senior Official and Technicians. Females were the majority (26.7 percent). Women were also highly represented in the category of Service Workers, Shop & Market Sales Workers (26.8 percent). However, there were more males in the category of Skilled Agricultural & Fishery Workers (25 percent), Craft & Related Trades Workers (24 percent) and Plant and Machinery Operators and Assemblers. Wages in most of the occupational groups dominated by women are low-paid (clerks, service workers in elementary occupations).

Table 4 from the ESSJ (2008) shows that the majority of paid government employees and unpaid workers were female; while the majority of employers, paid non-government employees, and own account workers were male.

Table 4: Employed labour force by employment status, 2007

Occupational group	2007p Annual Average ('000)		
	Male	Female	Both sexes
Paid Government Employee	56.4	82.7	139.2
Paid Non-Government Employee	329.5	244.6	574
Unpaid Worker	3.7	10.6	14.3
Employer	21.8	9.2	31
Own Account Worker	243.5	132.4	375.8
Not Reported	1.3	1.4	2.7
Total	656.1	480.8	1,136.90
<i>p – preliminary</i> <i>Note: Discrepancies due to rounding.</i>	<i>Source: Statistical Institute of Jamaica in Economic and Social Survey Jamaica (2008)</i>		

2.5. Recent major disasters in Jamaica

The Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica 2007 (2008), notes that in 2007 Jamaica was affected by 17 storms, 6 of which became hurricanes. Dean and Felix were both Category 5 storms on the Saffir-Simpson scale with winds in excess of 249 km/hour. Hurricane Dean (August 19, 2007) resulted in losses of J\$23 billion (US \$329.3 million). The major impact was on the productive sector and 6 percent of the population (179,552 individuals) from 169 communities was affected. Some 70,000 houses were damaged as well as schools and public educational institutions. Most affected were the vulnerable coastal communities of Old Harbour Bay, Rocky Point and Portland Cottage on the South Coast. There was also damage to coastal ecosystems, wildlife habitats and vegetation; and landslides also occurred.

The ESSJ (2008) also reports that the other major events during 2007 were floods from heavy rains in May which affected the parishes of St. Catherine, Clarendon and St Elizabeth. In June 2007, there was flooding in Montego Bay in St. James from poor drainage. Between October and November 2007 there were heavy rains associated with Hurricane Noel which resulted in one death, numerous landslides and mudslides, and extensive damage to road infrastructure (J\$650 million). Storm surges of 13 metres in height were reported in eastern and southern coastal areas, causing damage to buildings and roadways and resulting in loss of livestock and other agricultural products (ESSJ 2007, 2008, p. 3.9-3:10).

Between 10 and 11 September, 2004, Hurricane Ivan passed along the south coast of Jamaica with winds of 214 km/hr on the Pedro Bank, 90 km off the south coast. There were estimates of sustained winds of 180 km/hr across the island on 11 September. Ivan did not make landfall, but still resulted in 14 deaths, and significant damage across the island, especially in the southern parishes. Storm surges of three to four metres in some locations caused extensive damage to natural coastal systems and housing. Wind severely damaged vegetation and roofs particularly at higher elevations. Total direct and indirect damage was reportedly \$J35.9 billion (US\$595,000) (Carby 2005). Sex-disaggregated data were not available about the impact of this disaster.

3. Institutional assessments

3.1. Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM)

Profile of ODPEM

ODPEM is a government agency that has the main responsibility for disaster risk management, including coordination and monitoring national response to hazards as well as educating the nation on all aspects of disaster management. The agency is part of the National Disaster Committee (NDC), which is chaired by the Prime Minister. ODPEM started as the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Relief Coordination (ODIPERC), which was established in July 1980. In 1993, the ODIPERC was made into a statutory body and renamed the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM).

Legal framework

ODPEM was established under the provisions of Section 15 of the Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management Act. It operates out of the Ministry of Local Government and Environment, and a Board of Management oversees its activities.³

ODPEM operates the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC). It liaises with Parish Emergency Operation Centres (PEOCs) which are operated by Parish Disaster Committees and with Heads of specific agencies that commit manpower and other resources to preparedness and timeliness of response when required.⁴ ODPEM's revised mandate states that:

'the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management is committed to taking pro-active and timely measures to prevent and to reduce the impact of hazards on Jamaica, its people, natural resources and economy through its trained and professional staff, the use of appropriate technology and collaborative efforts with national, regional and international agencies.'

ODPEM's main objectives and functions are to:

- prepare and maintain mitigation plans and programmes for high-risk areas;
- ensure that development and resource management policies incorporated hazard and loss reduction components;
- encourage appropriate public response to actual disaster and emergency events;

³ ODPEM website: http://www.odpem.org.jm/about_us/index.html. Retrieved October 30 2008.

⁴ See ODPEM website.

- develop appropriate emergency contingency plans and disaster response capabilities, particularly in the emergency services and critical or essential industries;
- facilitate a rapid return to normality after a disaster.

The main duties of ODPEM in implementing its mission are to ‘develop and implement policies and programmes for the purpose of achieving and maintaining an appropriate state of national preparedness’ and to ‘encourage and support disaster preparedness and mitigation measures in all parishes in association with Local Government authorities, community based organisations and private and voluntary agencies’ (See ODPEM website).

During emergencies, ODPEM is responsible for: coordinating the activities of operational agencies; supporting the operational agencies by facilitating access to scarce resources; providing communication resources and back-up for key agencies; handling requests for external assistance; monitoring the emergency event and assessing longer term physical impact; informing the public of the event and of the appropriate response expected from them.

ODPEM works in partnership with the Red Cross, Food for the Poor (a charity linked to the Roman Catholic Church) and other non-government organisations (NGOs). This partnership provides assistance with shelter management, the distribution of food items and the repair of roofs damaged during natural events, as well as disaster recovery and reconstruction.

Leadership and staffing

Management Structure: ODPEM is headed by a Board of Management appointed by the portfolio Minister in the Ministry of Land and Environment. The Board of Management appoints the Director General who leads a staff complement which works in three divisions:

- a. Preparedness and Emergency Operations which coordinates responses to all disaster situations in order to reduce loss of life and property.
- b. Division of Mitigation, Planning and Research (MPRD), supports effective planning to minimise the impact of natural hazards.
- c. Projects Implementation, Development and Monitoring Unit which supports advocacy for bilateral funding for disaster management related projects.

ODPEM has generated work programmes under the following objectives: (i) Institutional Capacity Strengthening; (ii) Loss Reduction; (iii) Preparedness and Response (see ODPEM website).

Table 5: Gender profile of leadership and staffing at ODPEM

Staff	Total (#)	Men (#)	Men (%)	Women (#)	Women (%)
Director General	1	1	100	0	0
Other Directors	6	2	40	4	60
Management	11	5	45	6	55
Technical	15	11	73	4	27
Support	27	10	37	17	63
Totals	60	29	48	31	52

Note: data on volunteers not available.

Table 5 shows that although the gender distribution among the ODPEM staff was fairly even (52 percent females and 48 percent males), the top leadership is 100 percent male. The second tier leadership is predominantly female (60 percent), and at the senior management level the gender division is more equitable. However, the technical level is primarily male (73 percent), while support staff is primarily female (63 percent). Information was not available about the number and sex distribution of volunteers.

Plate 1: Hurricane Ivan in the vicinity of Jamaica, 2004



Image courtesy of MODIS Rapid Response Project at NASA/GSFCa

Major types of hazards in Jamaica

The Director General confirmed that hazards which most often threaten Jamaica, according to ODPEM, are all weather related: hurricanes, floods, tropical cyclones, fires, and landslides. However, more recently, oil spills have been added to this list.

Most vulnerable population groups

The sections of the population considered most vulnerable to hurricanes are people living in rural areas, persons living in low lying areas or living in rural communities close to sea coasts such as Portland Cottage, Old Harbour Bay, and Bushy Park, among others. Communities located on coastlines and in areas prone to flooding and landslides are particularly vulnerable. Among the vulnerable communities is the city of Portmore, a residential community of 70,000 persons which is located to the west of Kingston and borders the Kingston Harbour. Portmore is vulnerable to flooding but evacuation plans have been developed since 2000 and public education programmes reduce risks. Coastal areas of Clarendon, St. Elizabeth and St. James are also prone to flooding. Poor quality of housing is also a factor that increases vulnerability to disasters.

Sex-disaggregated data

The Director General explained that the instrument used to collect data on deaths, damage and losses caused by disasters does not facilitate the collection of sex-disaggregated data. As a result he could not indicate differences in how women and men are threatened or impacted by disasters caused by Hurricanes Gilbert, Ivan and Dean.

This suggests the need to revise the agency's data collection instrument to support the collection of sex disaggregated data and for gender training to facilitate analysis of the data from a gender perspective. These steps would enable the country to better understand how males and females of various ages, social, economic and ethnic groups are affected differently. Such data would also help to guide the development and use of gender sensitive interventions at all stages of disaster planning and management process and to measure changes over time.

Gender focus

ODPEM's Director General stated that the agency does not have a gender policy, strategy or the skills to mainstream gender in its work. However the agency is working on a new manifesto which is expected to support a more gender-sensitive approach to disaster management.

ODPEM had not made any specific attempts to undertake activities to promote gender equity in disaster management and the Director General noted that this was because gender was wide in scope and related to issues that are addressed indirectly in other key areas of the agency's work. A review of ODPEM's documents confirmed that gender was not integrated into its work programme or in public information and education activities. Nevertheless, ODPEM had participated in a public education seminar which focused on gender and disaster risk management, hosted by the Bureau of Women's Affairs (BWA) for International Women's Day in 2006.

Awareness of CDERA Action Plan and Hyogo Framework for Action

The Director General indicated that he was familiar to some extent with CDERA's Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming in Disaster Risk Reduction in the Caribbean (2005). This was in relation to Outcome #4 of the revised Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Strategy. He was also familiar with Jamaica's legislation and policies to promote equal opportunities for men and women, and with international policy statements on gender and disasters in relation to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and the Hyogo Framework for Action.

Policy work and coordination mechanisms

While ODPEM liaises with various institutions in the National Disaster Committee (NDC), there are no specific mechanisms for ODPEM to interface with BWA and other women's organisations which are not in the NDC. There has, however, been dialogue with BWA and the NGO Women's Resource and Outreach Centre (WROC), and there are also opportunities for inter-institutional dialogue, especially around the development of a gender policy on disaster risk management. Dialogue could also result in collaboration with relevant organisations to mainstream gender in disaster risk management programmes.

3.2. Profile of the Bureau of Women's Affairs (BWA)

Profile of the BWA

The Director of Research at the **Jamaica Bureau of Women's Affairs** was interviewed and she noted that the agency was established as a Women's Desk in October 1974 and was upgraded to the status of a Bureau in 1975. As a government agency, its main objective is to enable women to recognise their full potential as individuals and to create avenues for their integration into national development. The Bureau's Mission Statement states that BWA will:

'enable women to achieve their full potential as participants in Jamaica's social, cultural and economic development and with equitable access to and benefits from the country.'

The three main areas of work are: research and policy development; public education and training; and project planning and monitoring. The Director of Research noted that the Bureau's role is that of a catalyst, and that the agency works to ensure that the Government of Jamaica addresses the problems that confront women, taking into account patriarchy and sexism which create unequal relations between women and men.

Legal Framework

There is no specific legislation governing the operations of the Bureau of Women's Affairs but since September 2007, BWA reports to the Ministry of Information, Youth, Sports and Culture.

Leadership and Staffing

Table 6 shows that the leadership and staff of BWA are predominantly female. Females form the majority of staff in management and technical areas of work. There are more males than females among the support staff.

Table 6: Leadership and staffing at the Bureau of Women's Affairs

Staff	Total (#)	Women (#)	Women (%)	Men (#)	Men (%)
Executive Director	1	1	100	0	0
Management	5	4	80	1	20
Technical	13	12	92	1	8
Support	3	1	33	2	67
Total	22	18	82	4	18

Gender and Risk Configuration

The interview with the Director of Research confirmed that the Bureau has a clear appreciation of the differential risks faced by women and men in a disaster. She noted that women and men are differently exposed to disasters because they have different biological, sexual and reproductive health needs and these factors influence their experience during disasters. As examples, she noted that women menstruate, become pregnant and breastfeed and that such needs must be considered in a disaster. Women and men also face differences in specific health risks such as cancers: women have breast and cervical cancer while men have prostate cancer; both sexes may therefore require special care during a disaster. However, the BWA representative also observed that women's unequal socio-economic status makes them more vulnerable to disasters since they experience higher rates of poverty and unemployment than men.

On the other hand, BWA representative expressed the view that communities seem to fare much better during natural disasters when women play a leadership role in early warning systems, in the management of shelters/interim housing, and in recovery and reconstruction activities.

During disasters, women who are displaced from their homes and have to move into shelters face several risks including the outbreak of diseases, especially when shelters are overcrowded, and have inadequate and poor sanitation facilities. She also observed that female-headed households are likely to be more negatively affected by disasters. In view of the above, while BWA is concerned about the different risks faced by both sexes, it focuses on and seeks to address the specific needs of women, who are the most vulnerable.

The Director of Research explained that Jamaica's complex family structure also poses certain risks. For example a man may have three or more 'baby mothers' in the same shelter, which could create conflicts among the females involved. Teenage girls are also more likely than teenage boys to be sexually abused in shelters. From the experience of recent disasters, the BWA Director of Research provided information on the differential gender needs of women and men, as presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Differential needs of men and women in disasters

Hurricanes	Males	Females
Gilbert (1988)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coping with the inconvenience associated with prostrate cancer in a shelter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of water and other basic needs for the menstruating females Poor facilities to accommodate pregnant females Lack of private areas for mothers in shelters to breast feed their babies Lack of facilities to cater to the basic needs of females with breast and cervical cancers Threat of sexual harassment of females by males in shelters
Ivan (2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor sanitary facilities in shelters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor and inadequate sanitation facilities to meet the needs of menstruating women
Dean (2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychological scars Lack of coping skills Not easily adjusting to the centre or after the disaster Increased alcoholism, anger, stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased risk of rape and incest Lack of condoms in shelters to reduce the risk of unplanned and unwanted pregnancies, and STI infection including HIV

Source: Compiled from Bureau of Women's Affairs data 2008.

While the Bureau has not carried out any specific research studies and did not have sex-disaggregated data on persons affected by the disasters, the Director of Research reflected on the experience of Hurricanes Gilbert, Ivan and Dean, and gave examples of how women and men were affected differently from their involvement in responses to recent hurricanes. During Hurricane Gilbert in 1988, several gender differences were noted:

- biological needs of women were not adequately met - the lack of water and sanitation in shelters had a major adverse impact on females who were menstruating, breastfeeding babies or were pregnant;

- there were no designated areas for mothers to breast feed young babies privately;
- there were no facilities for females with breast or cervical cancer, or for those who were menstruating;
- some women also experienced sexual harassment in shelters.

Psychological needs also varied and the BWA representative noted differences in coping skills of men and women, indicating that psychologically, men found it more difficult to adjust to being in a shelter with several people. Men also demonstrated poor coping skills in dealing with the after-effects of the Hurricanes Gilbert in 1988, Ivan 2004 and Dean 2007. This included symptoms such as alcoholism, anger, depression, and stress.

To increase public awareness of the importance of a gender focus in disaster risk management, BWA organised a workshop on Gender Issues in Disaster Risk Management for International Women's Day (IWD) 2006. The workshop focused on:

- an introduction to natural hazard risk reduction;
- development of disaster management in Jamaica;
- mainstreaming gender in natural hazard risk reduction;
- gender analysis tools and methodologies for mainstreaming.

Small group training sessions focused on:

- gender in community disaster planning and shelter management;
- gender in research training;
- strategies for gender mainstreaming in risk reduction in Jamaica.

ODPEM supported the workshop with presentations from staff including: 'A gendered approach to Natural Hazard Risk Management'; 'An Introduction to Natural Hazard Risk Reduction' and 'Development of Disaster Management in Jamaica'.

The Bureau developed an Action Plan with recommendations from the workshop to improve the gender focus in national disaster risk management policies. It has continued to lobby for implementation of this action plan and to support the adoption of relevant legislation

Figure 1: BWA Agenda for Action to Mainstream Gender in Disaster Risk Management

Adequate assessments must be undertaken of the roles, responsibilities and access to resources of women and men in order to understand the extent of losses and costs to women compared with men and their potential for recovery. Recovery programmes and allocation of resources (including credit and alternative employment programmes) must be based on this assessment.

The needs and priorities at the household level for shelter, water, energy and food-supply, should be given adequate focus and resources, particularly those tasks which are the responsibility of women and girls.

Consultation processes and efforts to increase community participation and ownership of recovery processes must make explicit efforts to find ways and means of ensuring the full involvement of women as well as men.

Women's particular needs for dialogue and exchange with other women about their situations, priorities and constraints, and for specific support mechanisms, should be recognised since the gender mainstreaming approach does not preclude the need for initiatives targeted at women.

Capacity development initiatives should explicitly target women as well as men.

Source: Bureau of Women's Affairs, 2006

The BWA's Plan of Action also proposes:

- the separation of women and men in shelters;
- improvements in bathroom and kitchen facilities for large numbers of people;
- making facilities used for shelters adaptable for accommodating females so that pregnant women do not have to sleep on the floor;
- improving sanitation facilities to accommodate the physical needs of women to reduce the health risks faced by both men and women living in temporary shelters.

Policy work and coordinating mechanism

The Director of Research reported that the BWA is involved with ODPEM and other groups when disasters occur, and both respond to the needs of their stakeholders across the country. For example, when a disaster occurred in Portland and Clarendon, the BWA Officer visited and offered basic food items to both women and men during and after the hurricanes.

Awareness of the framework to promote gender in disaster risk management

The representative of the BWA indicated that she was not familiar with CDERA's Action Plan and the Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Strategy but obviously had a clear understanding of gender issues. The BWA also proposed that the following priorities should be considered by ODPEM:

- develop a policy on gender in disaster risk management jointly with the BWA;
- strengthen institutional partnerships that can provide essential items for the operation of shelters such as 'Food for the Poor', furniture stores and manufacturers of grocery items;
- greater involvement of the BWA in the national disaster response programme.

3.3. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Profile of UNDP

An interview with the UNDP Assistant Resident Representative in Jamaica revealed that the agency also covered The Bahamas, The Turks and Caicos Islands, and The Cayman Islands.

The UNDP mandate and programme supports countries in building and sharing solutions to the challenges of democratic governance, poverty reduction, crisis prevention and recovery, environment and energy and HIV/AIDS. UNDP also assists developing countries to attract and use aid effectively. In all of these activities the agency encourages the countries to protect human rights and promotes the empowerment of women.

The Assistant Resident Representative noted that UNDP is committed to promoting sustainable environmental practices that assist in the preservation of Jamaica's diverse natural resources, while contributing to efforts at reducing poverty and natural resource depletion. In Jamaica, UNDP's interventions include institutional strengthening of the key government institutions involved in coastal management, providing support for disaster risk management, as well as assisting the government with fulfilling the requirements of the international conventions and protocols to which the country is a signatory.

Table 8: Leadership and staffing at UNDP, Jamaica

Staff	Total (#)	Women (#)	Women (%)	Men (#)	Men (%)
Director	1	0	0	1	100
Management	3	1	25	2	75
Technical	5	4	80	1	20
Support	8	6	75	2	25
Total	17	11	65	6	35

Table 8 shows that the leadership and management of UNDP are male-dominated, while the technical and support staff are female-dominated. While specific figures were not available for volunteers, reports indicate that there were more men than women.

Gender and risk configuration of UNDP

The Assistant Resident Representative also noted that the main types of hazards that threaten Jamaica are hurricanes, flooding, fire and landslides. He also recognised that women and men have different levels of vulnerability related to their socio-economic status and other factors. However, he acknowledged that men generally tended to wait on what to do next, while women got working to repair the damage. He considered that the groups most vulnerable to disasters were people living in rural and coastal communities, particularly the elderly, disabled and people with poor housing.

Gender focus

The UNDP Assistant Resident Representative indicated that the UNDP Jamaica office does not have a gender strategy or policy, but the office is currently in the process of preparing one. It also has limited access to sex-disaggregated data on disasters. The UNDP officer also indicated that the UNDP Jamaica office promotes gender sensitivity when disasters strike and has worked with agencies like the Jamaica Red Cross which are sensitive to gender differences in disasters. However, the agency's staff has not had any training to mainstream gender in disaster risk management.

The agency has been involved in several initiatives, workshops and conferences on issues related to gender and disaster risk reduction. For example, CDERA has a Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) strategy. While it is not specific to gender, focal points are to develop a strategy to infuse CDM into the development and planning process within the region which lends itself to a focus on gender.

Collaboration with other agencies

UNDP works with a wide range of agencies with a division of responsibilities among the various agencies. The UNDP officer noted that one gender-related project had supported UNDP, the Red Cross and Food for the Poor. This was the Women's Resource and Outreach Centre (WROC). This project taught women how to rebuild their houses after a hurricane which was particularly useful as several women had lost their homes.

Awareness of CDERA Action Plan

The UNDP's Assistant Resident Representative indicated that he was somewhat familiar with the framework to promote gender in disaster risk management. This includes: CDERA's Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming in Disaster Risk Reduction in the Caribbean (2005); legislation and policies to promote equal opportunities for men and women; and the international policy on gender and disasters in relation to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and the Hyogo Framework for Action.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1. Conclusions

The results of this assessment show that gender consideration is not included in disaster management policies, programmes and strategies. Awareness of the differences in how men and women are affected by disasters varied and there was greater sensitivity to gender issues in the responses of the Bureau of Women's Affairs. There was consensus that poor women in single female-headed households and their children are among the poorest and most vulnerable groups in the population. Other conclusions from the review of institutions consulted and data examined are summarized in the sections below:

Legislative and policy framework

Jamaica is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Belem do Para Convention to prevent and punish violence against women; and the Hyogo Framework. However, the results show that the country's national disaster response mechanism is not guided by legislation or policy, to ensure that gender is integrated into disaster risk management legislation, policies, or strategies.

Leadership and staffing

Special training is needed for staff and heads of agencies in integrating gender considerations into programme activities.

Gender and risk configuration

There was general consensus on the main types of disasters affecting the country and the locations considered more vulnerable to the risks of disasters. This knowledge can be used to plan gender sensitive strategies to identify and map risks, update early warning systems disaster communication, and recovery and reconstruction programmes.

The two main institutions reflect 'gender blindness' which means that there is an assumption that the situation of men and women is the same; and regardless of differences in sex, age, class and ethnicity that everyone should be treated in the same way. Without gender analysis, this assumption can have an adverse effect on women, since their specific concerns are not likely to be taken into account.

- The BWA is more aware and better equipped to implement the integration of gender issues in disaster preparedness, response, relief, and recovery programmes. This knowledge and skill are assets that should be better utilised at the national level to develop training programmes and to make relevant policies more gender sensitive.

- The lack of sex-disaggregated data made it difficult to access relevant information on deaths, damages and losses resulting from recent disasters. The collection of such data therefore needs to be institutionalised. Protocols and standards for the collection and sharing of information need to be developed. Channels for disseminating this data also need to be agreed on so as to make information more easily accessible for public education, policy making and planning.

Policy and coordinating mechanisms

ODPEM has a well developed institutional framework to coordinate disaster response but there is limited awareness of gender and capacity to mainstream gender in the agency's work.

While ODPEM manages disaster responses, BWA, which has sensitivity to issues of gender in disasters, is not part of the national coordinating mechanism. This robs the national disaster management network of much needed expertise and should be addressed by ensuring that BWA becomes a member of ODPEM and the NDC. Including BWA would be strategic since it has been proactive in promoting a gender-sensitive approach to disaster risk management through a public education workshop and development of an Action Plan; it has continued its advocacy to promote gender awareness in disaster response. ODPEM should also be encouraged to use resource materials from such events and to ensure training for those working in disaster management so that they can better support the implementation of the CDERA Action Plan and the Hyogo Framework.

Within the United Nations Country Team, several agencies (including UNDP) have a gender policy to guide programming. Partnerships in building institutional capacity to implement the CDERA Action Plan and the Hyogo Framework would include CDERA, but consideration should also be given to the two UWI institutions involved in this project - SALISES and the Centre for Gender and Development Studies - to support research and training on gender and disaster risk management.

Partnerships with civil society and the private sector are also essential to promote a more gender-sensitive approach to disaster risk management. This requires expanding the training and awareness programmes to include churches, women's groups, community associations, staff of volunteer organisations, etc. Project partnerships such as the one between UNDP and WROC can be expanded.

The expanded partnership with agencies such as the BWA and other NGOs could also support the integration of gender considerations in:

- Shelter services – temporary shelter, house rebuilding, roof repair, separate shelter facilities for males, and for females and children, evacuation assistance; addressing special needs of women and of men;
- Care services – Care of boys and girls, care for the elderly, sick and disabled males and females; meeting the needs of pregnant and lactating women;
- Counselling services – needed before and after disasters; development of coping skills; dealing with sexual and other types of abuse; special attention is required to the needs of males who emerged as more at risk psychologically in coping with disasters;

- Relief, supplies and resources – money, food, other supplies - given the varying economic needs especially of poor single female heads of households; support for rebuilding households and livelihoods after a disaster; child care to enable mothers to seek employment.

Awareness of the CDERA Action Plan and the Hyogo Framework

The limited awareness of these agreements and the limited capacity to implement them highlight the need for more awareness-building and training programmes on these frameworks within and outside the relevant agencies. Ideally, this training should highlight links with other national and international instruments that promote the human rights of all citizens but especially those supporting women's rights such as CEDAW and the Belem do Para Convention, as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

4.2. Recommendations

Against this background the recommendations are to:

1. develop a project to review policies, plans and legislation, and to develop models that can be used to support implementation of the CDERA Action Plan;
2. develop a technical assistance project which can support CDERA member countries in integrating gender considerations in plans and legislation;
3. organise training programmes to increase awareness of the CDERA Action Plan and the Hyogo Framework, as well as promoting linkages with human rights commitments such as CEDAW, CRC, and the Belem Convention;
4. develop protocols and standards to collect and share sex-disaggregated data on deaths, damage and losses resulting from disasters. Make the information easily accessible for public education, policy making and planning;
5. develop a protocol for cooperation among the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES), the Centre for Gender and Development Studies (CGDS), and UNECLAC to conduct research and to train trainers to integrate gender into disaster risk management policies and programmes. Data from this and other projects could also be used to develop courses and programmes for undergraduate and postgraduate students in gender and development studies which include disaster risk reduction and social policy among other areas of specialised work.

In summary, there is urgent need to integrate gender into Jamaica's national disaster policies, plans legislation and programmes. Without more committed efforts, global and national development targets and progress will be eroded. Taking no action will, in effect, undermine human rights commitments to promote gender equality.

Jamaica, as a Small Island Developing State, faces increased threats from frequent and more intense natural hazards such as hurricanes and floods, and the country's vulnerability to rising sea levels and floods demands urgent action. The global economic recession, the increased threat of poverty and existing inequality provide overwhelming reasons to integrate gender into all facets of disaster risk management. Without such action, levels of vulnerability, including gender inequalities in access to and the sharing of resources, will exacerbate the impact of disasters on men, women and children and will increase poverty. The technical resources are available to enhance gender sensitivity and it is therefore urgent that more concerted efforts be made to implement the CDERA Action Plan and the Hyogo Framework, and to support global commitment to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

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