

Effects of Disasters on Development
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"ROLE OF WOMEN IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT"
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The PCDDPP and its parent organisation UNDR0 is very pleased to be a part of this initiative which was triggered by a joint visit of our team (representing the PAHO/WHO, LRCS and UNDR0 components) to Santo Domingo in 1987 when Hurricane Emily was striking. Any effort to explore the role of the majority of our population and increase the sensitivity to and awareness of the Women to the management issues involved in Disasters and Emergency loss reduction in the Caribbean is commendable. This paper will seek to outline the effects of disasters on the Caribbean with a special emphasis on the developmental implications.

The Caribbean island states are vulnerable to the effects of a variety of natural and man-caused disaster events. Their impact on the region has led to loss of life and injury; physical damage, destruction of property and infrastructure; economic loss and the setting back of efforts at development. Recent studies have indicated that the impact of extreme events on small island states may be a significant factor in setting back efforts at regional, national and local development.

It is a fact that many women have made significant contributions to disaster management in our region where for the last ten years the regional and national efforts at reducing the negative effects of disasters has been fairly consistent and methodical in several of the states.. Ten years ago in fact in June 1979, the regional meeting on disaster preparedness sponsored by US/AID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, the United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation (UNDR0). and other agencies directly led to the development of programmes for the strengthening of several of the regional and national systems for disaster loss reduction.

The history and impact of natural disasters on our region is well known. On numerous occasions Earthquakes, Volcanic Eruptions, Hurricanes, Floods, Landslides, Droughts, and other natural events have killed and injured persons in many of the territories of the Caribbean. Unfortunately, the social, psychological and economic impacts of these events are not as well documented as the physical impacts and the rather bald numbers relating to death and injury. Hurricanes Gilbert, Joan, and Hugo are therefore merely the most recent manifestations of an intrinsic element of the Caribbean environment. In the past the region has also been affected by major man caused disasters such as fires in urban areas and epidemics, and it appears that the potential for major future technological events (oil spills, air crashes etc) is quite significant.

Natural Disasters in the Caribbean