

Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA)

Americas Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

Final Summary Report

Sub Region: The Caribbean

Background and Introduction

This summary is a part of the review process undertaken on plans, actions, and the progress which has been made in support of the commitment to implement the HYOOGO Framework in the Caribbean region. The review is intended to facilitate the dialog at the 1st Session on the HFA Regional Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas. It complements the national reporting process related to the HFA, as well as companion reviews of the Central American activities and the wider hemispheric review for the Americas.

The agreed upon approach has been to focus on the issues, challenges and gaps, emerging from the disaster risk reduction and related HFA initiatives in the Caribbean.

An attempt has been made by means of a review of activities, trends and dialog with stakeholders to gain insights and indications of the extent to which [Wider] Caribbean [basin] stakeholders, interest groups, the private sector and civil society have in fact undertaken structured activities consistent with the Hyogo Framework for Action. The task has been somewhat complicated by the actuality of the regions long standing commitments to a variety of coping activities, systems, programmes and projects. Human societies in the Americas have always had the challenge of survival and resilience hence efforts to cope with and overcome these challenges abound.

The Caribbean states and territories has seen and taken advantage of many of the opportunities presented by the DRR processes which have emerged over the last several decades, commencing with the responses to severe and dramatic damaging events (such a hurricanes Flora (1963) David and Fredrick (1979)); the initiatives related to the WMO RAIV (North Atlantic Basin) Committee and the diverse risk related ctivities promoted by the Regional Pan Caribbean Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Project between 1980 and 1991.

The last few decades have seen the evolution and emergence of new approaches exemplified by the Inter American Strategic Plan and Policy for Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management, and Disaster Reduction (IASP) for the hemisphere, CEPREDENACs cluster of initiatives in Central America and the focused Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Strategy and Framework Programme for the CDERA Caribbean grouping.

The IASP and CDM initiatives, while very similar to the HFA, are not absolutely congruent with it. They represent concepts, insights and thinking on the same continuum, but prepared and presented for implementation at different points in time and apparently to slightly different interest and stakeholder groups. As there are significant overlaps and they share much with the HFA and its “platforms” based approach, one way to look at the situation is to recognise that the HFA PLATFORMS (Regional / National etc) can only succeed if PLANKS already identified by these prior conceptual approaches are appropriately co-opted, adapted and or adopted!

There is a great deal of convergence between the desired HFA outputs and outcomes related to the IASP / CDM and a significant opportunity in the Caribbean is to build the HFA Framework in such a way that it complements and extends the CDM and similar initiatives.

There is thus an opportunity to build on the significant widely accepted commonality and complementarity with the strategies, objectives and targets related to other initiatives in the Caribbean sub region notably, those

related to the Millennium Development Goals, and the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Caribbean region with its relatively large concentration of population and investment in the coastal zone of its island states, as well as the lowlying areas of continental states has particular developmental challenges arising from the significant and disproportionate concentrations of risk at the coasts subject to inundation from hurricanes or tsunamis. The impacts of coastal inundation, liquefaction, high winds or combinations of these impacts are capable of setting back development initiatives. The link between the national Sustainable Development aspirations, the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Programme of Action (established in Barbados in 1994 and updated in Mauritius in 2005 as well as the Millennium Development Goals and the Disaster Risk Reduction agenda appears to be well understood even if the implementation of concrete defined programmes lags behind the resolutions and rhetoric.

Initiatives such as the Regional Building Code, the Risk Reduction processes undertaken in the Tourism Sector (regionally and nationally), the Caribbean Catastrophic Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF) and the Caribbean Disaster Mitigation Programme vigorously promoted by CDERA to its members represent a cluster of early actions complementary to and convergent though not necessarily congruent with the HFA.

An effort is made in the next section of the Report to comment on the status of the Disaster Risk Reduction agenda and succinctly indicate issues, gaps and opportunities related to the cluster of agreed upon HFA outcomes. It should be noted that the HFA outcomes are expressed as strategic, quantifiable and measures of DRR progress and that the participating Caribbean states have made significant efforts to infuse and incorporate them into existing structures and modalities for loss reduction has been the availability of national and sectoral implementation.

An issue raised by many of the entities engaged in emergency management, disaster response planning, mitigation and loss reduction has been the availability of tools, management techniques, lessons learnt and resources to mentor, facilitate and implement the HFA processes given the urgent demands and needs related to short term responses to current events.

Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation

This priority area was highlighted by the HFA/ISDR and implies that renewed attention should be focused on DRR as a critical National Priority within development strategies, policies and plans (the “mainstreaming” process) and that a clearly defined focal mechanism is created, articulated and maintained. The ISDR / HFA term “platform” is appropriate as it incorporates metaphorically the concept of planks assembled through stakeholder teamwork and sustained multi sectoral / multidisciplinary effort. The ISDR / HFA formulation also encourages the platforms to address the linkages between societal, economic, physical exposures. Importantly risk transfer and the role of the private sector and civil society in the platform are addressed in the HFA roll out concept.

A wide range of activities have in fact been undertaken at the national and sectoral level to incorporate coping strategies appropriate to the Caribbean our region's exposure to a range of natural and other risks. These activities have been undertaken for many decades hence many activities related to disaster risk reduction have preceded the HFA. Of particular relevance in the Caribbean region has been the emergence of the Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) framework as the basis for national mainstreaming, and some regional regional cooperation among CDERA member states. The CDM and other initiatives has been significantly facilitated by the initiation and implementation of several regional cooperative mechanism including but not confined to those originally created to deal with response, emergency management and preparedness.

Notwithstanding the regions stated high-level commitment and acceptance of the high order targets the number of formally established HFA “Platforms” is small in the Caribbean.

Much progress has been made in efforts to implement disaster risk reduction and to achieve the HFA targets. Many of the countries have sought to incorporate the HFA into existing emergency management mechanism with mixed success. In general there is an acceptance of the urgent need to make the transition from current reactive response focused cluster of activities to a more proactive risk focus HFA platform like cluster.

An important gap which may require specific action is the need to clearly establish the link between Development and Disaster risks and the need to ensure that the ministries, agencies and entities currently engaged in facilitating 'development' processes, programmes and projects are dealing appropriately with risks including the risks from extreme events. This should be an important - indeed critical - 'plank' of the HFA platform at national, sectoral and regional levels. The recent exposures of many of the key players (Ministries of Finance, Cabinet level policy Units etc) to the shocks, crisis situations, and threats in the global financial system; the risks associated with climate change ; and pandemic threats are opportunities for national regional and global champions to advocate and promote closer attention to the HFA approach and for HFA type platforms as solutions to national risk management challenges!

In many of the Caribbean states, traditional National Emergency Coordinating mechanisms are struggling with the transition to National HFA Platforms and there is need to finalise a (Sub) Regional Platform design and implementation Plan to build on and facilitate this process. In this respect early work already discussed within the ACS grouping may require structured follow up and active resource mobilisation.

At the Caribbean regional level a decision has already been made by the Heads of the CARICOM grouping to transform the key entity , the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) into a new entity the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) within the calendar year 2009. This transition has the potential to add significant momentum to efforts already underway to achieve HFA targets, to create functional platforms and represents a significant opportunity for facilitating support and catalytic action by partners.

A significant challenge which still exists however, is the formal establishment of national platforms (or their equivalents) to promote and facilitate (“mainstream”) the DRR process including the CDM / HFA targets. In many cases while there is an agreement in principle on the need for a high level multi-stakeholder: and multi-sectoral group to lead the national HFA/CDM process it is clear that there are significant institutional, capacity, and resource constraints.

While many of the “planks” required to build (sectoral / national) platforms are visible and present the platform creation process may not always have been the highest priority activity of the National Disaster Focal points given their wide span of responsibilities, competing priorities, resource challenges and possibly their own orientation towards response modalities.

Among the opportunities for action therefore are addressing issues and challenges related to high level (political, strategy selection and implementation) engagement, and steps required to facilitate the DRR being accepted as a “National and Local Priority”. Specific structured efforts, plans and programmes are urgently required to link the Development agendas at all levels with the Risk agenda! Risk as a pervasive threat to development planning and Disaster Risk needs to be actively infused into the planning processes at Regional, National, sub national, municipal/local, community level, as well as sectorally and promoted by the state to its civil society, private sector and development partners.

In this regard the ISDR / HFA teams may wish to reflect on the lessons learnt in the UN system where secretariats responsible for Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) have in the period since Rio acquired new innovative insights in facilitating, mobilising and coordinating National, sub national and sectoral focal points around targets similar to those of the HFA and also garnering significant buy in from the private

sector and civil society. In this regard linkages with 'special' groups of society including the poor and marginalised may be a low hanging fruit not fully accessed by the HFA Caribbean initiatives.

There may be a need to clarify the role of the national focal points which the HFA platform structure implies and consider the provision of specific tools based on lesson learnt. It appears that a sub regional Caribbean focussed programme support co located or housed at an existing regional focal mechanisms (eg CDERA / CEPREDENAC).

A fundamental challenge in the disaster risk reduction platform roll out is the contradiction that national disaster coordinator with a traditional civil defence / emergency services / response background may not have the capacity or standing to effectively influence disaster risk reduction agendas which largely require influencing the national and sectoral DEVELOPMENT processes and investment issues. Actions to facilitate effective bridging of this cultural divide between the response and development planning community require action which has to be both urgent and sensitivity if the HFA targets are to be realised by 2015.

Fortunately, the collective decision already taken by the Caribbean heads of state to transition CDERA to CDEMA offers an approach and possible [partial] solution to this challenge. The establishment of the Caribbean Platform Programme (CPP) and formalising National DRR Focal Points / Platforms (or their equivalents) is an urgent high priority need and opportunity for action.

Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning

While efforts have been made within and between many Caribbean jurisdictions to systematically document societal risk and its distribution; to assess, and compile risk and vulnerability information; and to improve monitoring of the physical and social environment there is much remaining to be done in this priority area. Success in this area requires long term and sustained investment in human, institutional and technical capacity and the modernising, rationalising and maintenance of networks dedicated to the assessments, monitoring and communication functions associated with effective warning systems. Appropriate interfacing of the relevant elements of traditional coping mechanisms with the tools of modern science and technology within the current social setting remains a challenge although examples of successes and best practices are available and need to be more widely diffused in the region.

Meteorological warning arrangement relating to hurricanes and tropical cyclones are coordinated by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) RAIV Committee, with the Miami Hurricane Centre being the designated as the focal point for a well-established functional network of national meteorological services. Efforts are ongoing to develop flood risk maps and related products and to improve the observation / monitoring systems including modernising the meteorological (Doppler) radar network and facilitating the severe warning system. Challenges exist in scaling the systems up and down to address all levels (from local/community to the regional) and to ensure that the varied impacts of Climate Change are appropriately factored into EWS efforts as a matter of urgency.

Networks for monitoring seismic and volcanic phenomena exist in the region and are currently the subject of recent action to modernise, strengthen and rationalise the monitoring arrangements. Efforts to improve the collaboration and cooperation between seismic research networks with article references in improving the exchange of seismic information and establishing tsunami warning arrangements in the region are underway with the support of UNESCO and several bilateral agencies. At the moment the tsunami warning messages originate in the Pacific tsunami warning centre.

Local networks and systems to provide specific warning of riverine flooding, flash flooding and landslides are unevenly distributed and require significant efforts and collaboration between national and local levels of government and the genuine engagement of society and the private sector. Emerging issues related to climate change include droughts and possibly onset of conditions conducive to wildfires and these require further attention.

Addressing this priority requires continued investment in human and technical capacity within a sustainable institutional framework. It also implies a high degree of bilateral and multilateral collaboration since many of the exposures (Geologic, Meteorological, Health etc) are trans-boundary and shared between the Caribbean jurisdictions. A wide range of cooperative modalities have evolved (preceding the relatively recent advent of CDERA or the HFA) and a subtext of this Priority for Action is the need to strengthen, reinforce, build on and ramp out if appropriate these entities and arrangements.

The institutional, technical and human capacity challenges in this area requires continued attention and effort and could (should) be a priority area in the near future for the Regional Platform. Potentially, there is scope for development of partnerships, technical cooperation, and renewed research agendas if appropriate Centres of Excellence, Activity focal points and functional knowledge networks can be expanded, extended and created where gaps exist. This a low hanging fruit awaiting the launch of the regional platform.

With regard to EWS the situation is mixed with long existing, reliable networks existing close to areas with limited coverage. Many of the mature systems reflect the diverse disparate cultural and linguistic traditions of the region thus there are gaps requiring attention and action. Fortunately several initiatives are underway and the potential exists for more sharing of experiences and information to bring the monitoring, processing and warning systems up to acceptable standards. This is also an area of opportunity for functional Hemispheric and Regional platforms.

Closely allied to the above is the parallel need to expand and strengthen the areas capacity for scenario building modelling and utilisation of such products for awareness building through the dissemination of more sophisticated products to the development community. In this regard the ongoing work of the World Bank / GDRF et al in supporting CAPRA and in rolling out a CAPRA clone in the insular Caribbean is to be commended. The efforts of ECLAC CCCCC to to a Stern type report addressing Climate Change and its attendant risks also provides a model which should be noted and institutionalised.

A consistent effort is needed to establish Risk related information as a essential “Public Good” in the Caribbean region. An urgent requirement if this is to address the “Capacity Gap” by appropriate investment in institutional and human capital.

Should climate change variability and CCA be mentioned with issues of local involvement in monitoring and reporting (along with computer models and scaling up and down), short term need to adjust ecosystem management approaches affecting key sectors such as tourism?

Fortunately, there is considerable work now ongoing related to the Caribbean risks related of Climate Change and Variability and significant opportunities for continued close collaboration between the CCCCC based in Belize and the several other entities dealing with Risk Reduction (including but not confined to CDERA, the UWI ISD / DRRC etc) in order to rapidly advance or achieve the Capacity Building targets related to modelling, scenario building, future casting etc specific and critical to climate change adaptation which are also important if the disaster risk issues are to be addressed under this element of the HFA.

Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels

The products of the above risk identification processes need to be systematically infused into the knowledge base so that it can contribute to societal efforts to achieve strategic targets such as the MDGs, poverty reduction, public safety and well being. Functional linkages with efforts to modernise and develop capacity need to be the subject of specific action plans engaging all sectors but placing particular emphasis on expanding human capital and the knowledge base accessible to all sectors through systematic and sustained investment in research, education and training.

An opportunity here is for the functional cooperation, based on genuine partnerships and exchanges to be established between Centres of Excellence, research facilities and agencies with common mandates in the

region. Full utilisation and inclusion of professionals, specialists, from academia, governments and the private sector requires innovative approaches including exploration of modalities offered by informatics and information technology.

Reduce the underlying risk factors

Commitments have been made to tackle the underlying risk factors by changing the Development agenda. The achievement of this target depends heavily on successful action related to Priority Actions 1 - 3 early in the HFA decade. In many jurisdictions fundamental components of establishing a 'chain' of reduction actions (Building and Zoning Standards; Risk and Vulnerability analysis and mapping; critical infrastructure analysis, hazard zoning) In addition renewed efforts need to be made to share and diffuse risk reduction techniques directly to municipalities, local governments, key sectors Energy, Tourism , Transportation, Communication and to address the specific sectoral needs such as their access to risk transfer processes including appropriate insurance measures etc.

The identification and Hardening of Critical Infrastructure; Analysis of Sectoral Vulnerability; Assessment of Environmental, Food, Energy Security etc; Creating Risk focused capacity etc) remain indicative targets and in some cases may be able to be addressed as matters of urgency compared to other elements of the state structure.

The gaps in global, sectoral and national risk exposure revealed by the recent financial, energy, climate change crises have been a wake up call to many unaware of how poor the current risk management systems are, and the need to improve them. The current review will confine itself to pointing out this significant gap and indicating that the complementary opportunity requires strategic intervention by a suite of stakeholders including national authorities, specialists, development partners etc.

Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels

The Caribbean jurisdictions have a long history of preparedness and response. The states have in the last few decades developed formal emergency focused structures and response mechanisms. Many of the measures are focused on traditional exposures particularly hurricanes, tropical storms and related phenomena. Mature efforts are underway treating with policy, emergency legislation, skill and capacity enhancement and technical cooperation.

Nonetheless there is a [perceived] need to improve contingencies related to other hazards and extreme including volcanic crises, primary and secondary seismic impacts, droughts etc. To a great extent the challenge in this priority area is one of full engagement, participation, and resource mobilisation (including fully engaging the civil society and key sectors such as tourism and agriculture). A comprehensive regional platform can facilitate improved exchanges across all the networks to build upon and expand the exchanges and sharing of experiences.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The pervasive influence of global climate is effectively a 'gap' that requires and deserves additional and particular attention in the context of the Caribbean. The national, sub-national and sectoral risk reduction challenges are not confined to the preparedness measures. The investment in the capacity required to cope with the range of credible impacts projected by the IPCC experts needs to be undertaken as a matter of urgency. . There is also an urgent need to increase the capacity of both the emergency management and development community to conceptualise, design, and implement the suite of short, medium and long term coping arrangements.

The closest possible collaboration is called for between the regional and national entities (CDERA, CCCCC etc) to ensure that the risks associated with the Climate Change scenarios are adequately addressed and that the

HFA platforms play a role in ensuring that the challenges related to Climate volatility are incorporated in their risk reducing processes. An opportunity here is to ensure that the methods, principles and practices infused from these urgent climate change challenges are infused and institutionalised in all 5 Priority areas and in the DRR / HFA processes generally.