

**MESSAGE BY MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
HONOURABLE ANDREW A. FAHIE
FOR
INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION
THURSDAY 13TH OCTOBER, 2011**

Every year, the Virgin Islands and other countries around the world join the United Nations in celebrating the International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR). This year's theme, "Step Up For Disaster Risk Reduction", is about children and young people being partners in disaster risk reduction.

Our youth should be involved in our overall campaign to reduce our risk to disasters. This includes lobbying for the private sector and the Government to invest more seriously in Disaster Risk Reduction at the local and community levels. The actions to increase the overall level of safety needs to be recognized, and it should be made clear how these actions are linked to national and community development.

We can find ways to systematically include children and young people in decision-making processes for building disaster resilient societies. Policy makers should recognize that organizations and initiatives led by young people are valuable resources and should involve them in these efforts.

The DDM and the Ministry of Education and Culture have produced a Pre-School Activity Book which calls on those persons who are vital to infant and toddler development. This publication will teach out little ones about disasters while developing their basic skills in preparation for their first years of formal education. The authors of the book have ensured that it is relationship-based, which is geared towards making the children's learning time entertaining and memorable. This partnership, along with funding from the Department for International Development (DFID) has also seen to the birth of a Health and Safety Policy, complete with an Assessment Checklist and accompanying Database. This has resulted in Education being the first sector in the

Territory to implement a policy that addressed this most important issue of Health and Safety.

A similar partnership between the DDM and the Elmore Stoutt High School resulted in putting music to, and creating a video for the recently composed jingle on Earthquake and Tsunami Awareness, which will be aired locally this week.

These initiatives serve to connect and build bridges among children and young people, which should also encourage partnership across cultures. Through knowledge, the very young can be empowered and supported as agents of social inclusion and safety.

IDDR Day will also provide us with an opportunity to reflect on other initiatives and actions taken over the years to reduce vulnerability in our city and our communities, and allow solid reflection on what still needs to be done.

On the part of the DDM, there is a full schedule of activities planned for today, including radio and television programmes focused on this year's theme. I encourage you, and everyone, to listen and look out for these broadcasts, and to continue to play your part in making our Virgin Islands resilient against disasters. Let us move forward in keeping with the motto of the DDM:

“It is better to prepare and prevent than to repair and repent.”