

DISASTER MANAGEMENT: A POLICY FRAMEWORK

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SECTION 1. DEFINITIONS

Disaster	A serious disruption of the functioning of a society, causing widespread human, material, or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected society to cope using its own resources.
Capability Assessment:	An assessment which is used to determine and agency's ability to effectively deal with identified hazards and disaster management functions and to identify shortfalls in capability.
Disaster Management:	A collective term encompassing all aspects of planning for and responding to emergencies and disasters, including both pre and post event activities. It refers to the management of both the risk and consequences of an event.
Hazard:	Natural or man-made occurrences that pose a threat to people, property and the environment and are capable of causing a disaster. Hazards include earthquakes, fire, explosion, chemical spillage, flood, epidemics, hurricanes, landslide, storm sure, tidal wave or volcanic eruption.
Mitigation:	Measures taken to reduce both the effect of the hazard itself and the vulnerable conditions to it in order to reduce the scale of a future disaster. Therefore mitigation activities can be focused on the hazard itself or the propensity to be damaged of the elements exposed to the threat.
Preparedness:	Measures taken to reduce to the minimum level possible, the loss of human life and damage to property, through the organizing of effective measures which will ensure timely and appropriate responses to a given hazard.

Prevention:	Measures taken for the purpose of preventing natural or man-caused phenomena from causing or giving rise to disasters or other emergency situations
Recovery:	<p>The restoration of basic services and the beginning of the repair of physical, social and economic damages.</p> <p>Short term rehabilitation and longer term reconstruction measures taken to achieve a rapid and durable recovery that does not reproduce the original vulnerable conditions.</p>
Response:	Actions carried out immediately before, during and after a hazard impact, which are aimed at saving lives, reducing economic losses and alleviating suffering.
Risk:	A measure of the expected losses due to a hazard event of a particular magnitude occurring in a given area over a specific time period.
Vulnerability:	The extent to which a community, structure, service, or geographic area is likely to be damaged or disrupted by the impact of a particular hazard.

SECTION 2. BACKGROUND

The British Virgin Islands are exposed to natural and man-made hazards, which have the potential to cause significant loss of life and property, as well as serious damage to the environment, and the economy.

The natural hazards to which the BVI is exposed consist primarily of earthquakes and the effects of tropical or related weather systems that include wind damage, land borne flooding and coastal flooding. Landslides also pose a minor threat.

Man-made hazards largely relate to the potential accidental exposure to hazardous chemicals, large explosions, and accidents related to mass transportation of people.

Of all hazards, hurricanes and earthquakes, because of their damage potential and high probability of occurrence pose the greatest threat to the BVI. This reality has steadily driven the BVI's progress and emphasis towards strengthening its disaster management capabilities.

When Hurricane Frederick struck the BVI it was the first storm to seriously affect the Territory in 55 years. In the early 1980's, as a result of the lessons learnt from Frederick, the Deputy Governor assumed responsibility for disaster management operations. It was through his efforts that the government began to implement programmes to establish a comprehensive disaster management programme.

Soon after came the establishment of the Pan Caribbean Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Programme funded by the United States Government, which aimed to offer training and resources to countries in the Caribbean to upgrade their institutional capacity to confront disasters.

The Office of Disaster Preparedness (now Department of Disaster Management (DDM)) was established in 1983 with a budget commitment of \$3000. The effects of Tropical Storm Klaus in 1984 further reinforced the need for disaster management in the Territory of the BVI. The overall damage estimates were at \$150 million dollars. In 1989 came Hurricane Hugo, which left \$40 million in damage. In 1990 the Government made a significant move by employing a full time National Disaster Coordinator, a major step in the effort to enhance the Territory's Disaster Management Programme. The BVI now possesses a fully established Department of Disaster Management, supported by a budget of nearly \$600,000 and a comprehensive

programme addressing the areas of Preparedness, Mitigation, Response and Recovery for all hazards likely to affect or impact the Islands.

This shift to comprehensive disaster management is indicative of changes in the Government's perception that disasters are not primarily rare occurrences managed by emergency rescue services. Instead of merely responding to events, when damage and losses have already occurred, the Government's approach is now to build a common awareness and shared responsibility for pre-emptive risk reduction.

However, because risk factors for disaster occurrences are interconnected and increasingly driven by patterns of developmental vulnerability, where development is threatened by disasters yet brings with it new risks and vulnerabilities, disaster management is becoming increasingly complex. Operations of greatly varying scales and diversity are now required when compared to previously limited responses to natural and man-made events.

Contingency Planning and response to emergency events triggered by both natural and man-made hazards are still required to reduce avoidable losses and hasten recovery. However, the comprehensive approach to disaster management, addressing all risks yet prioritizing those of most significance, calls for a significantly strengthened capacity to track, collate, monitor and disseminate information on hazard phenomena and to reach an understanding of the short and longer term consequences of hazard impact. The sharing of such information and creating awareness about the issues is critical for the implementation of risk reduction measures. It will enable all role players, including communities, to gain a better understanding of the relationship between human action, natural phenomena, vulnerability and risk.

Awareness is essential to inform and prompt the increased commitments to prevention and mitigation actions required from all to reduce the probability and severity of disaster events. Government, the private sector and civil society all have roles in risk reduction.

SECTION 3. INTRODUCTION

This Disaster Management Policy demonstrates government's commitment to disaster management. Past experiences have shown that disasters can cause extensive damage to life and property and can adversely affect the economic condition of the Territory. In light of this, the Government is committed to taking a pro-active, comprehensive and sustained approach to

disaster management that encourages buy-in by all players and that is focused on risk and vulnerability reduction.

Disaster management is shared responsibility between government, the private sector and civil society. Partnerships between government and the private sector is a prerequisite in order for sustainable and effective disaster management to take place. Similarly cooperation between government agencies is equally important due to the crosscutting nature of disaster management.

The approach of fully integrating comprehensive disaster management into sustainable development planning, along with the diversity of actions and responsibilities required, is increasingly being incorporated into the policies, plans and projects of the BVI government as well as policies and practices of the private sector.

Several of the key elements to maintaining such a system are already in place with the establishment of the Department of Disaster Management, the development of the National Integrated Development strategy, the introduction of the Disaster Management Act of 2003 and the endorsement of the Mitigation & Development Planning Framework, 2002 by Executive Council is significant as it establishes the government's commitment to mitigation and provides a framework for the administration and implementation of mitigation activities.

SECTION 4. VISION

The Government of the BVI envisages a Territory in which the negative effects and impacts of hazards will be reduced to a minimum through the implementation of sound policies, practices and programmes aimed at reducing risk and vulnerability.

SECTION 5. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

This document sets out the government's disaster management policy for the British Virgin Islands. It involves all government institutions, the private sector and civil society and other players, as well as all activities related to disaster management.

In keeping with the aims and objectives of the National Integrated Development Strategy, the goal of this policy is to reinforce the development potential of the BVI by reducing risks from all hazards.

The fundamental purpose of the policy is to advance an approach to disaster management that focuses on reducing risks - the risk of loss of life, economic disruption and damage to the environment and property, especially to those sections of the population who are most vulnerable due to poverty and a general lack of resources

The policy document aims to

- Inform governmental and non-governmental agencies of these objectives and what they need to do to achieve these objectives.
- Inform the public of the government's disaster management objectives and how the government intends to achieve these objectives.

SECTION 6. OBJECTIVES

To establish necessary systems, structures, programmes, resources, capabilities and guiding principles for reducing disaster risks and preparing for and responding to disasters in order to:

- I. Minimize human suffering from natural and man-made hazards
- II. Reduce economic loss from hazard impacts
- III. Protecting the integrity of the terrestrial and marine environments

SECTION 7. PRIORITIES

1. Timely, coordinated and focused direction of resources towards the disaster management system's effective operation.
2. Maintain institutions that are technically capable of efficiently executing the Territory's comprehensive disaster management programme.
3. Developing local expertise capable of operating and maintaining the disaster management system.

4. Ensuring that the public is well-informed and educated about disasters, their consequences and preventive and mitigation measures.
5. Creating an environment in which the private and non-government sectors contribute meaningfully to the comprehensive disaster management effort.

These priorities give rise to the following strategies:

- The urgent integration of risk reduction strategies into development initiatives and all development planning.
- The development and maintenance of a mitigation strategy to reduce the vulnerability of the BVI to disasters.
- The upkeep of a Department of Disaster Management and National Emergency Operations Centre to:
 - Ensure that an effective disaster management strategy is established and implemented.
 - Coordinate disaster management at various levels of government.
 - Promote and assist the implementation and institutionalization of disaster management activities in all sectors of society.
 - Act as a repository and conduit of information pertaining to disaster management.
 - Ensure that the capacity for tracking, monitoring and disseminating information on phenomena and activities that trigger disaster events is established and maintained.
- The introduction of a new disaster management funding system which:
 - Ensures that risk reduction measures are implemented.
 - Builds sufficient capacity to respond to disasters.
 - Provides for adequate post-disaster relief and recovery.
- The implementation of the Disaster Management Act which:

- Brings about a uniform approach to disaster management.
- Addresses legislative shortcomings
- The establishment of a framework to enable communities to be informed, alert and self-reliant and capable of supporting and cooperating with government in disaster prevention and mitigation
- The establishment of a framework for coordinating and strengthening the current fragmented training and community awareness initiatives.

SECTION 8. SPECIFIC POLICY GUIDELINES

8.1 LEGISLATION

The Disaster Management Act, 2003 clarifies and allocates responsibilities within government for disaster management and provides for more effective organization of the mitigation of, preparedness for, response to and recovery from, emergencies and disasters in the Virgin Islands. Government will provide the resources necessary to ensure compliance with the legislation and where appropriate to take steps to provide more detailed regulations in any subject area, which are consistent with the intentions of the Act.

8.2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Government recognizes that this policy will require a significantly improved capacity to track, monitor and disseminate information on phenomena and activities that trigger disaster events. This policy envisages a multi-agency effort led by the DDM supported by the heads of all government agencies and representatives and the private and non-governmental sectors. It also implies an increased commitment to strategies to prevent disasters and mitigate their severity.

In short, the policy aims to:

- Provide an enabling environment for disaster management.
- Promote proactive comprehensive disaster management through risk reduction programmes.

- Improve the BVI's ability to manage emergencies or disasters and their consequences in a coordinated, efficient and effective manner.
- Promote integrated and coordinated disaster management through partnerships between different stakeholders and through cooperative relations between all sectors of government.
- Ensure that adequate financial arrangements are in place.
- Outlining the general terms for sourcing external assistance in times of disaster.
- Promote disaster management training and community awareness.

8.3 MITIGATION

The Hazard Mitigation Policy focuses on sustainable development and implies a commitment to a more broader and more long-term development process. Emphasis will be placed on developing communities, building institutions and capabilities to reduce vulnerability, and expanded information bases, up to date scientific information, local knowledge and expertise as well as the involvements of all level of the society.

Resources will be provided on the basis of a mitigation strategy and programme, which identifies priority areas for investment and action.

8.4 PLANNING

This policy statement involves a shift away from a perception that disasters are rare occurrences managed by emergency rescue and support services. Government will provide the leadership, which will promote a shared awareness of the realization that all agencies, community organizations and individual households must come together to reduced risk and vulnerability. Several time horizons will be used; these include a 10-year mitigation strategy, a five-year CDM Plan and annual work programmes. In addition all national level contingency plans will be revised and or updated at least once every five years.

The expertise of members of the DDM should be drawn on for the preparation and compilation of disaster management plans and strategies.

8.5 RESOURCE ALLOCATION

The implementation of this policy will require the management of human, material and financial resources to achieve the stated goals and objectives.

- Government is committed to ensuring that the DDM retains a full compliment of staff at all times and to providing the where with all for the staff to function at a high level of proficiency. Since the DDM is to function as the node for communication, liaison and advice, it is expected that a significant portion of the budget will be allocated to acquire appropriate technical skills and expertise to staff the Department, as well as dedicated information technology, telecommunications and early warning systems.
- Financial resources will be allocated for disaster management from both the capital and recurrent budgets subject to the administrative procedures necessary to ensure the integrity of the budgetary allocation process.
- Government will take all necessary steps to ensure that the heads of public sector agencies receive necessary training and orientation to enable them to execute their disaster management related functions.
- Departments and organizations other than the DDM will be encouraged to dedicate some of their financial resources towards mitigation measures in general and preparedness and response in particular as part of their annual recurrent budget.

There are currently no criteria for disaster prevention, mitigation or preparedness when assessing funding administered by the Government. This means that the government time and time again pays costs of recurring disasters. No, or little, action is taken to reduce the risk of similar disasters in the future. There is little incentive for government agencies to spend money on effective risk reduction programmes and activities. There is no comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of mitigation and surveillance activities and there is little accountability for the success or failure of funded prevention programmes. Government will explore creative ways to provide incentives for public and private sector entities to spend money on effective risk reduction programmes in preference to merely waiting to respond after a hazard impact.

8.5.1 FINANCIAL

- Financial resource management will be guided by the principles shown below:
 - Encourage all levels of government to take measures to minimize the impact and reduce the likelihood of disasters. Where feasible, incentives should be provided for the taking of such measures.
 - Meet clearly stated objectives of any disaster management strategy or plan in a timely and efficient manner that is consistent with the financial policies of government
 - Encourage response to disasters at the most localized level of responsibility possible. Government only should only provide additional funding when the capacity and resources have been exhausted or are absent.

Government will maintain The Emergency Disaster Fund to provide relief after the impact of a disaster.

Financial arrangements for disaster management will be put in place to allow for the release of funds in emergency situations from the Emergency Disaster Fund to defray expenditure that is provided for the current budget, and which cannot be postponed until the next budget. These funds will be used to provide immediate relief for affected people or for emergency services when necessary. The decision to release funds should be guided by established criteria and guidelines. To prevent the fund from being used for recurring or foreseeable disasters in the same areas, a post disaster review should automatically be conducted whenever funds are drawn from the fund.

8.5.2 MATERIAL

Disaster Management requires a wide range of tools, equipment and supplies many of which must be held in readiness until required in emergency situations. Government will ensure that there is an adequate stock of material resources available to mount an initial response to any emergency or disaster situation. The intention will be to provide such resources that would enable the Territory to save lives and reduce suffering until external assistance arrives.

8.5.3 HUMAN

Government recognizes its responsibility to ensure that all persons engaged in disaster management activities have the necessary skills to execute their functions in an effective and timely manner. This means that training in disaster management must be multi agency, multi sector and multi level. It will also vary from the institutional to the informal. The DDM will be supported in its coordinating role to deliver and or obtain training in disaster management not only for its own staff but also for the staff of other agencies and volunteers from the private sector and community based organizations.

8.6 WELFARE ASSISTANCE IN DISASTERS

Government's intention is to provide such immediate assistance as will minimize the suffering and material losses brought about by disasters. In particular, government will undertake to provide and maintain emergency shelters, relief supplies and material assistance to persons most directly affected by a disaster or emergency. In particular, assistance will be provided through the Disaster Emergency Fund to assist those persons who may have lost the capacity to earn income through direct losses sustained in a disaster. Any assistance provided will be executed consistent with all appropriate regulations and within the administrative frameworks established by the National Disaster Management Council.

Specifically government will:

1. Ensure that persons rendered homeless by a disaster will be provided with temporary shelter with particular attention given to low-income groups, the elderly, the handicapped and other vulnerable groups.
2. Encourage the cooperation and consultation of the appropriate public, private and non-governmental entities in ensuring the provision of relief assistance.
3. Take action to support programmes that will expedite the rehabilitation of homeless victims of a disaster.
4. Make budgetary provision for the maintenance, stocking and outfitting of emergency shelters.
5. Maintain and retrofit emergency shelters in accordance with expert advice.

6. Enter into memoranda of understanding with the owners or suppliers of critical infrastructure necessary in an emergency.
7. Sustain the cost of returning any privately owned facilities used to their pre-disaster state.

Government assistance in such circumstance should not be perceived as a replacement for insurance.

8.7 DISASTER RECOVERY

Recovery is a vital aspect of disaster management as the affects of disasters continue long after the immediate threats to life and property have diminished. The goal of the recovery effort will be to facilitate the recovery of affected individuals, districts, communities and the social and economic infrastructure as quickly as possible in an effective, efficient and sustainable manner. The following will be the primary strategies:

1. Identify and prioritize recovery activities
2. Promote effective coordinated actions among all agencies.
3. Promote timely decision making and implementation of decision
4. Eliminate duplication of effort and waste of resources
5. Provide appropriate accounting and reporting arrangements
6. Ensure dissemination of public information
7. Reduce vulnerability to hazards in the future
8. Maintain a culture of accountability in the use of disaster relief funds and materials.

8.8 ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Government will maintain a consultative and collaborative approach with the private sector based upon the initiatives shown below:

1. Capacity building options – public-private sector partnerships in the provision of emergency services; development of community support for disaster prevention and management; utilization of disaster management volunteer services to improve

- capacity and increase public awareness; provide an enabling environment for disaster management.
2. Incentives – provide duty free concessions of particular items to encourage disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts
 3. Insurance – Government should explore insurance options for low-income individuals, communities and small-scale farmers.
 4. Funding for training and community awareness programmes – funding should be provided to the DDM to undertake needs analysis and identifying priorities for training needs; conducting capability assessments, evaluating current disaster management training material, setting of standards and for research and monitoring.
 5. Private sector representation on all national level disaster management related committees or decision-making bodies.

8.9 ROLE OF THE NON-GOVERNMENT SECTOR

Comprehensive disaster management requires the active participation of community organizations and representatives of such organization in disaster management activities. Government will support and maintain the necessary administrative arrangements to allow for the full participation of residents in DM activities through their organizations and representatives. Specifically, government will undertake to:

1. Support the disaster management related activities of the BVI Red Cross and all other service organizations.
2. Allocate resources to assist in the further development of the Disaster Auxiliary Corps
3. Pay special attention to the development of community capacity in the sister islands
4. Promoting a spirit of mutual support among residents throughout the Territory.

8.10 WARNING SYSTEMS

An early warning system is a critical ingredient of an effective disaster management system. The backbone of the system in the BVI is the National Emergency Alert System (NEAS). The system has the capacity to deliver audible warnings through all major media outlets. It is bolstered by a siren system, which will ultimately encompass most areas of the territory.

Government will ensure that local capacity exists to maintain and where necessary upgrade the NEAS as technological changes arise. Further government will enable the DDM to function in such a way that audible warnings will be delivered to the public in any threatening situation with a minimum of delay.

Specifically government will ensure that:

1. An effective NEAS management strategy is established and implemented
2. Broadcasting licenses will contain conditions for mandatory participation of stations in the NEAS
3. Coordination of the NEAS at various levels of government

8.11 RESPONSE MECHANISMS

Emergency response requires the coordinated actions of a variety of agencies representing the health, law enforcement, fire & rescue sectors. It is vital that these agencies be provided with the necessary equipment training and supplies to enable them to execute their primary mandate of saving lives in emergency situations. In addition, they must work together in a coordinated fashion such that all efforts are directed at the same end. Government will maintain its policy of providing critical resources for these agencies and support the DDM in sourcing necessary broad based training for all key responders. Increasingly, agencies will be encouraged to regard emergency resources as a single pool available to all agencies to provide the critical response required for any major incident.

8.12 EXERCISES AND DRILLS

Proficiency in any skill is honed and enhanced by practice. It is therefore necessary that all emergency response agencies continue to hone the skills of their staff through participation in regular drills and exercises. There will be at least one major full-scale emergency response exercise per year supported by tabletop exercises and drills all aimed at boosting or maintaining emergency response skills.

8.13 MUTUAL AID ASSISTANCE AND AGREEMENTS

The Territory has a number of mutual assistance agreements in disaster management at the regional and international levels. However it is necessary to ensure that a agreements with the USVI and the British Government in (the context of Disaster Management) are clearly articulated and understood at all times. Further, government will continue its policy of preparing detailed memoranda of understanding with all private and nongovernmental agencies that can contribute significantly to the goal of risk and vulnerability reduction. Such agreements will include Memoranda of Understandings, which are aimed primarily at protecting the terrestrial or marine environments.

The BVI will maintain its policy of providing assistance to any country, which suffers the effects of a disaster. However, such assistance will predicated on the official identification of needs and the observance of the appropriate regional or international protocols.

ANNEX 1

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTEXT

LOCAL CONTEXT

The National Emergency Organization (NEO) is the name given to the umbrella network of units and authorities concerned with the various aspects of Disaster Management in the Territory of the British Virgin Islands as specified in the Disaster Management Act 2003 (DMA) and the National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP).

The National Disaster Management Council is the central institution of the NEO as established by the DMA. Its role is to review the national strategy for, and the state of, disaster management ("DM") in the Territory and make recommendations to government. It has several sub-committees, which are required to develop national plans and procedures to deal with the impact of hazards in their areas of responsibility. The Governor is Chairman and the Chief Minister Deputy Chairman of the NDMC.

The main sub-committee of the Council is the National Emergency Executive Committee (NEEC). The NEEC acts for the Council between meetings; it serves as a sounding board on DM issues, reviews the work of other sub-committees and give guidance, and provides technical support to the DDM. The NEEC meets on a quarterly basis or as required in an emergency. The Governor may call the Committee to meet if he thinks fit or is requested so to do by the Chief Minister.

The main executing agency established by the DMA is the DDM. The vision and mission of the DDM are shown below:

Vision

An organisation which perform successfully as a catalyst in mobilizing all sectors of the community, government and non government, to take effective action to significantly reduce vulnerability to hazards of all kinds.

Mission

The DDM will seek to reduce loss of life and property within the Territory of the BVI attributable to disasters by ensuring that adequate preparedness and mitigation measures, and response and recovery mechanisms are established to counteract the impact of natural and technological hazards.

The Administrative Head of the DDM is the Director who reports to the Chairman of the NDMC through the Deputy Governor. The Deputy Governor presently serves as Director of the National Emergency Operations Center, once activated, with the Director of Disaster Management serving as Operations Officer.

The DDM was officially designated as the department to plan, coordinate and manage a comprehensive disaster management programme in the BVI. The DDM is expected to work with established services to achieve its mission of reducing the loss of life and property within the Territory of the BVI by ensuring that adequate preparedness and mitigation measures and response recovery mechanisms are established to counteract the impact of natural and man-made hazards. The first responders to emergencies remain the Fire, Police and Health Services. When an incident requires a coordinated multi-agency response the DDM assumes the leadership and coordinating role. If necessary the NEOC is activated.

The DDM will work with Zonal Committees at the community level to coordinate disaster management functions at the local level.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA)

The Government of the BVI is a signatory to the Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), September 1989. CDERA is a regional inter-governmental agency established by an Agreement of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to be responsible for disaster management. There are presently sixteen (16) Participating States within CDERA's membership.

CDERA's main function is to make an immediate and coordinated response to any disastrous event affecting any Participating State, once the state requests such assistance.

The Chief Minister is a Council Member and the Director, Disaster Management is a Board Member of CDERA.

Agreement Between Member States And The Association Of Caribbean States (ACS) For Regional Cooperation On Natural Disasters.

Signed in Colombia on July 24th, 1994, DDM, as the agency charged with overall coordination responsibility for disaster management, also works to promote the achievement of the objectives of this agreement. This agreement is still to be ratified.

The relevant Articles are included in the annex however the primary objective of this Agreement is to develop a network of legally binding mechanisms that promote co-operation for prevention, mitigation and management of natural disasters, through the collaboration of the contracting parties among themselves and with organizations, which work in the field of natural disasters in the region.

Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO)/CPC

The Disaster Management Program of the PAHO CPC Office seeks to improve the ability of the health sector to prepare, prevent, mitigate and respond to natural and manmade disasters. The program operates in collaboration with countries and regional institutions throughout the Caribbean including the English, Spanish, French and Dutch speaking countries.

A major component of the program is training in various aspects of disaster management in order to ensure that each country has a cadre of adequately trained local personnel.

There is a long history of PAHO involvement in the Caribbean as far back as 1951. In 1978 the Office of Caribbean Program Coordination was established in Barbados in recognition of the commonality of health problems in the sub-region. This similarity of health systems originated in the common historical development and the long-standing tradition of collaboration in health among these countries.

The functions and responsibilities of the PAHO CPC Office include the development and execution of bilateral technical cooperation programs with the British Overseas Territories. In addition the Office is tasked with developing and executing multi-country and/or sub-regional programs to address the common needs of and to complement the individual country Technical Cooperation (TC) programs; serving as the focal point for PAHO's cooperation at the sub-regional level with Caribbean regional institution and international development and/or financing institutions; coordinating PAHO's sub-regional and regional resources; and supporting, upon request from other PAHO Caribbean Offices, national programming needs of "non-CPC" countries.

Traditionally, technical cooperation includes interventions by experts from within or outside the region working in close collaboration with nationals to:

- Develop national plans, policies and norms;
- Define, design and implement logistical systems to support the delivery of health services;
- Train health-related professionals and lay persons to support the plans for health and development;
- Promote and or execute basic and applied research;
- Disseminate information to public and health-related sectors;
- Mobilize national and international resources for execution of projects.

Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)

OFDA/LAC is the regional office of the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) responsible for Latin America and the Caribbean and the headquarters is located in Costa Rica. OFDA is part of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). OFDA/LAC's principal function is to provide technical assistance, emergency relief supplies, and funding for emergency response programs to countries in the region affected by disasters. Furthermore, OFDA/LAC provides functional and risk management training for the prevention and mitigation of disasters.

The enabling legislation and mandate are stipulated by the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act (Sections 491-493), which reads as follows:

"...the President is authorized to furnish assistance to any foreign country, international organization, or private voluntary organization...for international disaster relief and rehabilitation, including assistance relating to disaster preparedness, and to the prediction of, and contingency planning for natural disasters abroad."

And, "...the President shall insure that the assistance provided by the United States shall, to the greatest extent possible, reach those most in need of relief and rehabilitation as a result of natural and manmade disasters."

OFDA's mission is to save lives, alleviate human suffering and reduce the economic impact of disasters, which can be achieved through disaster prevention, mitigation and response.

In the event of a disaster declaration OFDA could:

- Provide \$50,000 (in accordance with OFDA's Disaster Assistance Authority) to the affected country, through the United States Embassy or non-governmental organizations, to alleviate the immediate needs of the disaster victims;
- Provide relief commodities and equipment for the disaster from one of the five OFDA warehouses;
- Deploy regional advisors, an assessment team and/or consultants to the disaster site;
- Send a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to the affected country;
- Fund proposals from non-governmental organizations, private voluntary organizations, international organizations or United Nations agencies for relief assistance activities.
- OFDA's Disaster Response and Mitigation Division (DRM) provide assistance to areas at risk for the prevention, preparedness and/or mitigation of disasters. This type of assistance does not require a disaster declaration

Network of Emergency Managers of Overseas Territories (NEMOT)

The Network of Emergency managers of Overseas Territories created in 2000 succeeded the Association of Disaster Coordinators of the Overseas Territories which had been established in

1994 to facilitate activities among the Overseas Territories and to provide mutual support by way of exchange of information, best practices, training, liaison, expertise and coordinated approaches to relevant organizations. The objectives of NEMOT are:

1. To identify common areas of disaster programme design and development;
2. To set targets and promote activities based on the realistic achievement of acceptable levels of comprehensive disaster management;
3. To promote the integration of disaster management into the development planning process of the Overseas Territories;
4. To promote the implementation of adequate measures in the Overseas Territories to prevent, mitigate against, prepare for, respond to and recover from the impacts of major incidents or disasters
5. To utilize the disaster management capability existing within the Overseas Territories;
6. To access support for joint disaster programme development and implementation from the UK Government as well as through bilateral or multilateral agreements with other relevant organizations;
7. To establish and maintain links with regional and international agencies for the purposes of technology transfer and information exchanges;
8. To enhance capacity in the Overseas Territories by building on each other's disaster management related experiences.

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The following international trends in disaster management must be considered.

1. A considerable amount of both indigenous and scientific knowledge exists on natural and technological threats. There has been an increase in the literature on environmental and disaster management. In recent times, there has also been an increased understanding of the important relationship between certain environmental vulnerabilities and human action. This rapidly expanding body of knowledge can greatly improve local forecasting of natural and technological threats. A prerequisite, however, is adequate investment in information systems and information management.

2. In many countries, improved information dissemination, emergency response services and community action has allowed for a greater sensitivity to and understanding of early warning signals. This offers the opportunity to minimize human economic losses by timely intervention, such as the evacuation of communities at risk in flood areas.
3. Largely as a result of the United Nations International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (UNIDDR), there is increasing pressure for greater investment in prevention and mitigation actions that avert the need for expensive and often repeated assistance.
4. Funding that could support ongoing development initiatives are being diverted to provide relief for those affected by fires, floods and drought. Similarly, disaster-stricken households are obliged to reallocate their resources and energies to recovery efforts, rather than development activities.
5. Studies in Latin America and Asia suggest that the devastating effects of human and economic losses of poorer households in small community disasters are often overshadowed by rarer and more sensational disaster events. This issue has particular relevance where the absence of national and local systems for tracking disaster losses makes it impossible to accurately estimate the uninsured costs that are silently borne by the poorest households and communities.
6. Experts in disaster management are increasingly calling for a broader engagement with civil society as a whole – including the private sector, development practitioners, educators and policy makers – as a way of forming cooperative partnerships in the struggle to minimize damage caused by disasters.

ANNEX 2

FUNCTIONS OF THE NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

The functions of the NDMC are as follows:

- Provide policy directives for the organs comprising the NEO
- Review and monitor the national strategy for dealing with disasters, which addresses the areas of Preparedness, Mitigation, Response and Recovery.
- Assign responsibilities to the NEO
- Make recommendations to government on manpower and physical resources for operations before, during and after a national disaster
- Review and evaluate national plans and procedures
- Review the work of the National Sub-committees
- Monitor and supervise the annual work programme of the DDM
- Advise on the overall coordination and planning of disaster related activities

FUNCTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT

The primary functions of the department of disaster management are as follows to:

1. Laws and Authorities - Ensure that revision of laws and regulations that establish the legal authority for the development and implementation of the disaster management programme and define emergency powers, authorities and responsibilities.
2. Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment – identification of hazards and the assessment of risk to persons, public and private property, environment and structures.
3. Hazard Management – ensure appropriate mitigation measure are being implemented and promote the use of hazard information and recommendations contained in studies conducted by the DDM to lessen the effects of disasters to the population, communities, businesses, industries and government.

4. Resource Management – Development of methodologies for the prompt and effective identification, acquisition, distributing, accounting and use of personnel, facilities and major items of equipment for essential emergency functions.
5. Planning – The development of national, sectoral and community plans that focus on the areas of mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.
6. Direction, Control and Coordination – analysis of emergency and disaster situations and provide direction and coordination support to ensure a quick and effective response and effective and efficient use of available resources.
7. Communications and Warning Technology – Establishing, using, maintaining, augmenting and providing back up for all types of communications devices required for emergency and response operations.
8. Operations and Procedures – Develop, Coordinate and implement operational plans and procedures that are fundamental to effective disaster response and recovery.
9. Logistics and Facilities – Identify, locate, acquire, distribute and account for services, resources, material, facilities required to adequately support disaster management activities.
10. Training – Assess, develop and implement training/educational programmes for public/private official and emergency response personnel
11. Exercises – Establish a programme of regularly scheduled exercises, designed for assessment and evaluation of emergency response plans and capabilities.
12. Public Information and Education – Provide the general public with education on the nature of hazards, protective measures, and an awareness of the responsibilities of government and citizens in an emergency/disaster. Provide accurate, timely and useful information and instructions to people at risk in the community during an emergency period
13. Finance and Administration – Adherence to and development of fiscal and administrative procedures.
14. Recovery Coordination – assist in the re-establishment of a stable social, physical and economic basis to a community affected by a disaster.

FUNCTIONS OF THE CARIBBEAN DISASTER EMERGENCY RESPONSE AGENCY (CDERA)

The main functions of CDERA include:

- Securing, collating and channelling to interested governmental and non-governmental organizations, comprehensive and reliable information on disasters affecting the region.
- Mitigating or eliminating as far as possible, the consequences of disasters affecting Participating States.
- Establishing and maintaining on a sustainable basis, adequate disaster response capabilities among Participating States.
- Mobilizing and coordinating disaster relief from governmental and non-governmental organizations for affected Participating States.

There are two Articles, which define the commitment of the Government of the BVI, and these are outlined in Articles 12 and 13 of this agreement.

Article 13 – Undertaking of Participating States of CDERA

Without prejudice to the requirement to discharge any other obligations assumed under or in connection with this Agreement, Participating States undertake:

- a. To establish or maintain, as the case may be, national relief organizations capable of responding swiftly, effectively and in a coordinated manner to disasters in Participating States;
- b. To establish emergency disaster planning groups and define national policies and priorities in the event of disasters;
- c. Provide national relief organizations with adequate support including named emergency coordinators, liaison officers with key Ministries, emergency services and the like;
- d. To task the named agencies (including the emergency services, health and public works) and their coordinators with specific functions and responsibilities to ensure the development of an adequate response capability to support national disaster action;

- e. To define the role and functions of key agencies such as Security Services, Health and Public Works in disaster emergency response management and establish a system for regular review of their procedures for coordinated response;
- f. Establish and equip a suitable emergency operations center capable of handling emergency telecommunications and coordinating emergency responses involving many services;
- g. Develop and maintain an emergency telecommunications system based on the most appropriate technology to ensure the coordination of emergency operations involving the emergency services mentioned above as well as voluntary private sector services;
- h. To establish and strengthen procedures for coping with major disaster threats and scenarios and review systems for testing the procedures by drills and simulations;
- i. To review and rationalize legal arrangements for disaster mitigation and emergency action;
- j. To review and catalog past disaster events and list credible future emergency event scenarios and identify and map areas with special problems like flood prone areas;
- k. To establish data bases of key resources, both human and material and a system for keeping them current and to computerize and integrate them into an automated emergency information system;
- l. To develop, in collaboration with competent governmental agencies, an emergency shelter policy and programme involving the full participation of local officials in community based organizations;
- m. To develop and review a system for community participation, local mobilization and counter disaster action in the event of isolation;
- n. To develop strategies for loss reduction in the public and private sectors focusing on vital economic activities and life line activities like water supply;
- o. To develop a system and procedures for damage assessment in order to facilitate rapid and effective post impact evaluation;
- p. To develop and implement a comprehensive disaster public awareness, information and education programme involving media houses, schools, voluntary agencies and other institutions in order to ensure public participation and community involvement in the disaster management system;

- q. To develop and implement appropriate training programmes for persons involved in the disaster management system;
- r. To identify and seek participation in bilateral and multilateral technical cooperation programme designed to develop disaster management capabilities;
- s. To identify, maintain in a state of readiness and make available immediately on request by the Coordinator relevant material and human resources in the event of disaster

AGREEMENT BETWEEN MEMBER STATES AND THE ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS) FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION ON NATURAL DISASTERS.

ARTICLE

Highly Vulnerable Areas

The Contracting Parties may, when necessary, declare within their territory, their territories or specific zones, Highly Vulnerable Areas, with a view to developing plans for co-operation in the prevention and management of natural disasters.

In order to establish a Highly Vulnerable Area, the Contracting Parties must take the following procedure into account:

1. The Party that exercises sovereignty, or sovereign rights or jurisdiction over a Highly Vulnerable Area shall submit its nomination for inclusion in the registry of Highly Vulnerable Areas of the Association of Caribbean States, which will be created and updated by the Secretariat, on the basis of the nomination approved by the Special Committee responsible for the subject of Natural Disasters.
2. The nominations shall be presented in accordance with the guidelines and criteria concerning the identification and selection of the Highly Vulnerable Areas, which are determined by the Contracting Parties, on the advice of the Special Committee responsible for the subject of Natural Disasters.

3. Each Party, which submits a nomination, shall make available to the Contracting Parties, through the ACS Secretariat, the following information on their Highly Vulnerable Areas:

- a) name of the area;
- b) bio-geography of the area (limits, physical characteristics, climate, social composition, etc.);
- c) vulnerability of the area;
- d) management programmes and plans;
- e) research programmes;
- f) characteristics of the status of disaster prevention and/or mitigation.

In order to develop fully co-operation among the Contracting Parties in the management of Highly Vulnerable Areas and to ensure effective fulfillment of the obligations outlined in this Agreement, it is recommended that each Party adopt and implement measures for planning, management, surveillance and control, which shall include at least the following:

- (i) formulation and adoption of disaster management guidelines suited to the Highly Vulnerable Areas;
- (ii) adoption of a management plan which outlines the legal and institutional framework and the protective measures suitable for the Highly Vulnerable Area or Areas;
- (iii) development of awareness programmes, local organisation for emergencies and education of the population and decision-makers, to reinforce the prevention and/or mitigation measures;
- (iv) active participation of local communities, whenever their direct presence is required, in planning, assistance, and training of the local population;
- (v) adoption of mechanisms for financing the development and effective management of the Highly Vulnerable Areas and the promotion of programmes of mutual assistance;
- (vi) establishment of procedures for regulating or authorizing activities compatible with the common guidelines and criteria established by the Contracting Parties;
- (vii) development of adequate infrastructure and training of interdisciplinary technical staff competent in the management of disasters.

ARTICLE 4

Mutual Co-operation and Assistance

The Contracting Parties shall promote:

1. The formulation and implementation of standards and laws, policies and programmes for the management and prevention of natural disasters, in a gradual and progressive manner;
2. Joint actions, with a view to identifying, planning and undertaking programmes for the management of natural disasters, with the assistance of specialized natural disaster organizations operating in the region;
3. Co-operation in the formulation, funding and implementation of aid programmes for those Parties that request them, especially with regard to assistance from regional and international organizations. These programmes shall be oriented towards educating the population in the ways of preventing and coping with natural disasters, training of scientific, technical and administrative staff, as well as the acquisition, use, design and development of suitable equipment;
4. Periodic exchange of information, by diverse means, concerning their best experiences in the reduction of disasters;
5. The adoption of existing standards for the classification and management of humanitarian supplies and donations with the purpose of improved transparency and efficiency in humanitarian assistance.

The mobilization of the necessary resources for responding to natural disasters among the Contracting Parties shall always be done at the request of the affected Party and shall be done in accordance with the principles and norms of international law, and existing co-operation agreements, particularly with respect to sovereignty and self-determination of the affected Party.