

MINISTRY PAPER NO.: -

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

OVERVIEW

The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) continues to take the necessary proactive steps as defined by its mandate to advance the programme of Disaster Risk Reduction in Jamaica. In so doing the organization has articulated a comprehensive three year strategic plan for the period 2008/2011. It is envisioned that at the end of the period and with the support of its partners (local and international) a significant outcome will be an increase in the state of the Nation's Preparedness and that significant strides will be made towards the process of disaster mainstreaming in the sectors and a reduction in the level of impact of disasters on Jamaica its people and the economy.

The key technical Goal of the ODPEM is:

Sustainable development in Jamaica enhanced through Comprehensive Disaster Management:

- Strengthening the National Risk Management Framework
- Reducing loss of life and property
- Minimizing suffering and disruption caused by disasters
- Serving as the nation's focal point for disaster management information
- Project planning development and management integrated in ODPEM's framework to support disaster mitigation efforts.

NATIONAL IMPACT

The ODPEM's success depends on the involvement of a wide spectrum of stakeholders ranging from the Political Directorate, The International Development and Donor Partners, The Government Sector, Private Sector Civil Society Groups and the Community. Conversely the success of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Program will redound to the benefit of all of Jamaica most importantly the most vulnerable of our country. In this regard the Continuity of Government, Businesses, and Livelihoods resulting into a more sustained national development process.

ACHIEVEMENTS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2008/2009

During the year 2008/2009 the organization realized a real increase in budget allocation over the previous year. This facilitated, along with Donor Support the realization of several key achievements as listed below:

- Construction of Satellite Warehouse facility for Kingston and St. Andrew and Plans in place to establish a similar facility in St. James far advanced and funded by the United States Southern Command.

- Expansion of ODPEM Dedicated National Emergency Telecommunication facilities through the installation of five (5) additional repeaters to bring the number to 9 resulting in island wide coverage.
- Establishment of a National Land Search and Rescue Committee and Revision of National Search and Rescue Plan
- Revision of National Welfare and Shelter Policy
- Five New Community Disaster Management Committees formed
- Four (4) parish simulations exercises conducted and 16 Emergency Drills Conducted
- Establishment of a School and Community Based Preparedness and Emergency Response Corps. A total of 100 Cadets were trained in this regard.
- Over 11,500 persons trained in basic to advance disaster management programmes
- Media Disaster Management Sensitization Workshop
- Training of 200 persons in Initial Damage Assessment
- Formation a National Geographic Information Systems Mapping Team to Support Post Impact Assessment
- Drafting of Concept for Special Vulnerable Areas Precautionary Plan as outline in Draft Disaster Management Bill.
- Development Community Vulnerability Index
- Training Agencies and First Responders in Oil Spill Management Techniques
- Drafting of National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan
- Establish Disaster Pre Impact Data Capture Tool
- Mainstreaming Disaster Management in the Tourism and Agriculture Sector

PROJECTIONS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2009/2010

The priorities for 2009/2010 to be funded by the Government and Donor Agencies include:

- Acquisition of Administrative Offices and Warehouse Facility
- Robust Succession Planning Programme
- Information Technology and Business Continuity Programme Established
- Enhancement of National Search and Rescue Capabilities
- Anticipate Potential National Emergencies and Coordinate a Quick Response
- Participatory Community Development to improve the lives of vulnerable populations
- ***IDB- Hazard Mapping for Coastal Towns and Cities***
- ***CIDA – Building Community Resilience***
- ***DFID – Safer Housing – TS Gustav Recovery Project***

- Increased Emergency Warehouse capacity
- Enhance The National Shelter Management Programme
- Establish Mapping and Scenario and Modelling capabilities using GIS
- Contingency Planning (Influenza Pandemic, Earthquake and Oil Spill)
- Completion of Action Plan for Hazard Risk Reduction Policy
- Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in the Education Sector
- Identification of other sources of Risk Transfer (i.e. Credit Facilities and growing the National Disaster Fund)

KEY ISSUES

Climate Change Adaptation

The general scenario suggests implications for the water, health, agriculture sector as well as the likelihood of more severe weather related events (droughts and hurricanes). It is widely accepted that Land-Use Planning, Zoning and Mitigation will provide a significant buffer to our ability to be resilient in the face of the changing climatic scenario. Our current economic realities may not provide the space to immediately make these critical interventions but we must collectively draft the strategies for medium and long term implementation given the implications Macro-Economic and Development Planning. The challenges likely to be posed to habitats and livelihoods may trigger migratory behaviour both internally and externally as well and as such our policy making will need to anticipate such scenarios. This no doubt will have to be supported by scientific decision making tools which will provide credible impact scenarios.

Land Tenure and the implication for Vulnerability Reduction

The lessons derived from the last tropical cyclone impact and our recent re-roofing initiative for Tropical Storm Gustav victims revealed that a very significant number of the severely affected population is either on or below the poverty line and are primarily informal/illegal occupiers of land. The structures that are established under these conditions are substandard. They have also been found to be located on very environmentally sensitive, marginal lands or areas of extreme vulnerability.

Given the number of informal settlements across the island ODPEM will need to work immediately and systematically to reduce the incidence squatting in order to reduce vulnerability and the huge losses recorded in the housing sector after tropical cyclonic events.

CONCLUSION

The furtherance of achieving its mandate and in considering the challenges posed by the current fiscal realities the ODPEM will continue to lobby Donor partners and the local private sector towards partnerships aimed at reducing vulnerability.