

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND DISASTER PREVENTION IN THE CARIBBEAN BASIN

MAJOR RICHARD B. REESE

OFFICE OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATION

12 CAMP ROAD, KINGSTON 4, JAMAICA W.I.

THE REGIONAL DISASTER SYSTEM AND ITS FUNCTION

The Caribbean Regional Disaster Management system which includes all Caribbean Economic Community countries (CARICOM), was formally established following a Heads of Agreement in August 1990, and it is aimed at providing a Regional response mechanism for rapid onset disasters. The ultimate goal is the implementation of a regional response unit which will be responsible for planning, coordinating, training and response following the completion of the Pan Caribbean Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Project (PCDPPP) in Antigua on or about December 1990.

The PCDPPP which has operated since 1981, has been the instrument through which national disaster preparation, coordination and relief arrangements have been established and assisted. This project, however, has not ventured into the establishment of any regional coordinating mechanism although it maintained close liaison with regional entities.

The ratification of the CARICOM heads of agreement was further influenced by two major factors since hurricane Gilbert, namely:

Hurricane Hugo which occurred in 1989 and devastated that Eastern Caribbean and, the coup attempt and hostage incident in Trinidad in August 1990 when the Parliament building was seized while the Cabinet was in session.

THE ECONOMIC LOSSES TO THE REGION FOLLOWING THE PASSAGE OF HURRICANE GILBERT AND HUGO.

Both hurricanes caused severe

dislocation to all sectors of the economies of affected CARICOM and non-CARICOM states which has now highlighted a need for a response system to include all countries in the Caribbean Basin; however, the present arrangements are specific to CARICOM member states, but does not prevent mutual aid agreements between countries which are closely located to each other.

In order to highlight the level of losses following Gilbert, a summary of some of the affected sectors are listed at Table 1 below:

TABLE 1

<u>Sector</u>	<u>Loss</u>
<i>ALL SECTORS</i>	J\$7 billion
Tourism Revenue	J\$90 Million
Manufacturing	J\$50 Million
Housing (low income)	J\$550 Million
Housing (other)	J\$1.4 billion
Public construction	J\$202.06 Mil.
Roads & Bridges	J\$57 Million
Electricity	J\$579.8 Mill
Water	J\$63.04 Mill.
Ports	J\$16.39 Mill.
Schools	J\$387.50 Mill.
Aviation	J\$25.6 Mill.
Health	J\$156.8 Mill.

NB: (i) J\$7 equivalent US\$1
(ii) Total deaths - 45

As is illustrated the sectors to receive the most damage due to a major hurricane are, housing, agriculture and Government capital Stock which is usually not covered by insurance.

THE CARIBBEAN RESPONSE MECHANISM

Although a regional unit has not yet been established a preliminary assessment of the ability of member states to re-