

Caribbean Early Warning System Workshop

14-16 April 2016,
Barbados



Caribbean Early Warning System Workshop

Background

The Caribbean is a region prone to Earthquakes, and other phenomenon such as floods, hurricanes, terrestrial and submarine landslides and underwater volcanoes (Kick'em Jenny offshore of Grenada and the Grenadines) which are potentially tsunamigenic. In addition to a particular exposure, Caribbean countries have comparatively higher vulnerabilities caused by their lack of preparedness. Economic risks are also important since assets are concentrated in low-lying areas subject to flooding and coastal hazards.

It is therefore up to stakeholders to take an active role in enhancing their state of readiness, on a long term basis, as well as during disasters lead-time. Unfortunately, incentives are still largely dominated by the impact of disasters themselves. Currently, communication at the national level and in particular between, national disaster management authorities and communities is not efficient nor robust as there is not the necessary redundancy to support emergency situations. This has implications for effective preparation for and response to hazard events and related disasters. In addition specificities (disabled, minority groups, languages etc.) are not adequately considered by usual media such as the radio broadcast.

Early Warning Systems (EWS) are well recognized as a critical life-saving disaster risk reduction tool and it is internationally recommended that effective EWS shall reflect the following components:

- Risk Knowledge
- Monitoring and Warning Service
- Dissemination and Communication
- Response Capability

These four components need to be coordinated across many agencies at national to local levels for the system to work. Failure in one component or lack of coordination across them could lead to the failure of the whole system. The challenges of alerting are multiple including:

1. An effective alert must be issued in multiple formats to reach the largest proportion of the population.
2. It must be robust (consistent), intelligible and trusted.

Currently existing systems are challenged to reach all segments of the public in all times and in a coherent and effective manner. Additionally the issuance of warnings is a national responsibility; thus, roles and responsibilities of various public and private sector stakeholders for implementation of EWS

should be clarified and reflected in the national to local regulatory frameworks, planning, budgetary, coordination, and operational mechanisms.

Introduction

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 refers to early warning systems as a critical element for disaster risk reduction. One of the seven global targets is calling for a substantial increase of multi-hazard early warning systems which are also an important element to implement Priority Areas 1 and 4 of the Sendai Framework. Furthermore, the development, maintenance, sustainability and strengthening of early warning systems is part of the 2014-2024 CDM strategy. The third result under Outcome 4 refers to integrated, improved and enhanced community early warning systems.

Supporting the implementation of international and regional frameworks, early warning systems is one of the four key areas of the DIPECHO Action Plan for the Caribbean 2015-2016. During the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction Planning Workshop: the DIPECHO Action Plan 2015-2016¹, which took place in September 2015, refers to

1. The need to involve key stakeholders early in the process
2. Use established networks
3. The need for redundancy in the EWS, ensuring community needs are addressed and adapting systems to the local environment.

It was further indicated that there is a need to harmonize EWS across scale levels towards implementing national multi-hazard EWS; institutionalize roles and responsibilities of key actors, including the telecommunications sector, by reflecting on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in place; and to cater to the entire society noting vulnerable groups and special needs such as persons with disabilities, women, children and the elderly in particular.

Building on the workshop outcomes and on set goals defined as part of the UNDP, IFRC and UNISDR projects implemented under the framework of the DIPECHO Action Plan 2015-2016, a regional workshop is planned and seeks to support efforts to harmonize EWS in the Caribbean region.

¹ <http://www.dipecholac.net/contenido/122-caribbean-dipecho-workshop-2015.html>

Workshop objectives

The overall objective of the workshop is to contribute to an enhanced coordination among EWS partners towards the institutionalization and harmonization of multi-hazard, multi-level EWS in the Caribbean that are inclusive of vulnerable groups. Specifically the workshop seeks to:

- Provide an overview on gaps, lessons learnt and good practices in EWS.
- Define institutional arrangements for EWS – including review towards the revision of Standard Operating Procedures with special emphasis on telecommunications, monitoring agencies and non-state actors.
- Contribute to the harmonization of EWS - noting the various alerting methods and levels at which EWS are implemented; various tools available for hazards; integration for multi-hazard application.
- Provide overview and outline necessary requirements of Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) Based EWS with an emphasis on the Caribbean.
- Increase awareness of integration of vulnerable groups in EWS: Roles and considerations for vulnerable groups in EWS.

Expected Outcomes

- Shared understanding of the status of EWS in the Caribbean and requirements of key partners to successfully implement EWS in the Caribbean.
- Increased awareness and capacity among regional and national partners for the successful implementation of EWS.
- Identification of specific actions that can be considered for integrating vulnerable groups into EWS.
- Partners/country representatives have a deeper understanding of the requirements (technical, human resources) needed to operate and maintain CAP Based EWS.
- Technical capacity of CAP Based EWS increased in the Caribbean.
- Standardised approach to EWS SOPs agreed.

Proposal

UNDP Barbados the and OECS, IFRC (CADRIM) and UNISDR, in close collaboration with CDEMA, will jointly host a three (3) day workshop seeking to bring the region closer in standardising the approach to early warning systems, as well as discuss many of the key thematic areas relating to EWS in the region including:

1. Outline and indication of EWS in the region between 2000-2015: Highlights, gaps and lessons learnt – Information will feed into the EWS toolkit that is being developed.
2. Regulatory requirements in telecommunications for implementing EWS. Goal is to enhance the technical capacity to EWS, particularly Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) based EWS in the region.
3. Harmonisation of EWS including presentation of some best practices that exist in the region.
4. Community Based EWS (to be discussed)

5. Standard Operating Procedures: institutionalizing EWS reflecting the 4 Pillars of EWS (to be discussed)
6. Vulnerable groups in EWS: Roles and considerations for vulnerable groups in EWS; good practices focusing on contributions and/or special consideration of vulnerable groups in EWS

The DIPECHO Action Plan 2015-2016 Petit Comité on “Early Warning System”, composed by partners such as UNDP/ ACPP/ UNESCO (Dominican Republic), UNDP (Cuba), and French Red Cross will be consulted to define the detailed agenda of the workshop. The Petit Comité partners have committed to work together throughout the DIPECHO Action Plan to ensure that identified priorities will be accomplished.

To ensure continued follow up on the EWS in the Caribbean, an idea was to create a Caribbean wide network of expert that meet on a regular basis to discuss specific issues of common concern. In this regard, the workshop seeks to relaunch the Think Tank terms of reference that calls for the establishment of a working group of scientists, political leaders and civil society.

Intended Audience

- National Telecommunications Regulatory Commissions
- National Disaster Management Offices
- National Meteorological Services
- Community Representatives
- Partner Agencies (CIMH, CTIC, CDEMA, OAS, CDB, UNICEF, OECS Commission, PAHO/WHO, ITU, UNFPA, UNESCO/IOC, OCHA, WMO)
- Private Sector (e.g. Digicel, LIME)
- Tourism and agriculture sector
- Donor Agencies (JICA, ECHO, EU, USAID/OFDA, DFTAD, WorldBank)
- Representatives from vulnerable groups (blind, persons living with non-communicable diseases/ conditions, elderly, youth, differently abled persons, children, women, indigenous communities)
- Caribbean Red Cross National Societies

Schedule

The proposed three-day workshop is scheduled for 14 to 16 April 2016.

Location

Barbados

Agenda

Time	April 14, 2016	April 15, 2016	April 16, 2016
08:00-08:30	Registration of Participants	Recap of Day 1	Recap of Day 1& 2
08:30-09:00	Opening Ceremony	Session 4a: Harmonization of EWS towards multi-hazard application	Session 6b: Integrate vulnerable groups in the development and implementation of EWS
09:00 - 10:30	Session 1: EWS in the Caribbean (2000 – 2015): highlights, gaps, lessons learnt and key points		
10:30-11:00	Coffee Break		
11:00-12:30	Session 2a: Institutional arrangements for EWS in the Caribbean: Regional to local	Session 4b: Harmonization of EWS towards multi-hazard application	Session 6b: Integrate vulnerable groups in the development and implementation of EWS
12:30-13:30	Lunch Break		Closing Session
13:30-15:30	Session 2b: Institutional arrangements for EWS in the Caribbean	Session 5: Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) based EWS	
15:30-16:00	Coffee Break		Lunch Break
16:00-17:30	Session 3: Knowledge Fair	Session 6a: Integrate vulnerable groups in the development and implementation of EWS	