

Integrating Vulnerable Groups in the Development and Implementation of Early Warning Systems

“Increasing the Disaster Response Mechanism for Persons with Disabilities through Early Warning Systems

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Presented by

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Increasing the Disaster Response Mechanism for Persons with Disabilities through Early Warning Systems

The Combined Disabilities Association (CDA)

- A cross disability, non-profit organization which advocates on the rights of persons with disabilities in Jamaica through Government and Civil society. Also network with other organizations locally, regionally and internationally to learn and share best practices on issues relevant to this very vulnerable group.

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The relationship with CDA and Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM)

- The CDA and ODPEM forged a relationship from which a number of workshops and seminars have been conducted, highlighting the needs of people with disabilities in the event of disasters.

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Relationship with PANOS Caribbean – the project

- PANOS Caribbean contacted the organization regarding their project on climate change. Hence CDA's involvement with the final development of the project “Increasing the Disaster Response Mechanism for Persons with Disabilities through Early Warning System -- October 2011 to June 2013.
 - Three communities within the municipality of Portmore, St. Catherine was identified as “flood prone” areas and has a large number of persons with disabilities as residents.

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- Sensitization sessions with persons with disabilities living in “flood prone” areas. Portmore in St. Catherine, Kingston and Portland. Persons with disabilities are: Physical Disabilities, persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, blind and low vision, persons with mental health issues and intellectual disabilities.

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- Sensitization sessions with disaster responders, Community Development Officers, Parish Council Personnel, Citizens' Association Representatives.
 - Focus was on understanding disabilities, persons living with disabilities and their special needs, during, before and after a disaster.

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- Sensitization of the media on climate change information and its impact on vulnerable groups.

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- The core component of the project was the development of the early warning system.

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- The system has three devices;
 - A smart phone (Android) distributed to “Point persons” in the community of persons with disabilities who reside within the communities where the project was focused.

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- Another device is controlled by ODPEM and it is referred to as a wall mount and is used for sending out messages.
- The third one is a F.M. pager which is carried by the emergency responder

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- Another component of the project was infrastructural modification. This involved the infrastructural improvement of a shelter which is centrally located in Portmore.

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The ODPEM was very impressed with the outcome of the Pilot Project and have indicated an interest in replicating the early warning system for persons with disabilities nationally.