



BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Country Statements to the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas III Session



COUNTRY DECLARATION ON BEHALF OF THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS.

A. MAIN TENDENCIES

- The Government of The British Virgin Islands (GBVI), through its Department of Disaster Management (DDM) has embraced the Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) conceptual approach and has applied it to form the basis of strategic planning for sustainable disaster risk reduction.
- DRR planning activities are guided by The British Virgin Islands CDM Policy, Strategy and Programming Framework and the Disaster Management Act; with a goal to reinforce the development potential of the Territory by reducing risks to all hazards.
- The DDM serves as the administrators of integration of DRR measures into ecologically sustainable development policies, planning and programming activities with special emphasis on disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness and vulnerability reduction.

B. ACHIEVEMENTS

The British Virgin Islands boasts a measure of successful sustained achievements in DRR. Major achievement in DRR in the areas of:

- **Planning** – In light of specific factors such as increasing population growth, limited areas/space for physical development, small territory (space) size, and the escalating cost of disaster impacts; it is imperative for the BVI to identify and implement DRR measures to protect the population and lessen the need for assistance follow impacts. This is achieved through:
 - Physical and Engineering Mitigation Works particularly in developing supporting plans and legislation based on results of hazard mapping, vulnerability and risk assessments. Furthermore, implementation strategies have been articulated, with prioritisation of mitigation measures, along with a mechanism and database for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of these plans and policies. Although some community plans and profiles exist, community-specific human vulnerability assessments do not. Focused work with communities are expected to commence in this area in 2013 with support from the BVI Red Cross.
 - Land Use Planning and Building Codes – The BVI has a well structured Physical Planning Act and Building Regulations which are used to guide planning and development in the Territory. The Planning Authority and Building Authority review of all proposed structures forms the basis of a dual track system in obtaining approval for housing or commercial developments and serves to ensure that building codes are adhered to in so far as applications are made. Commercial Developers are required to undertake hazard vulnerability assessments (HVA) and environmental impact assessments (EIA) and develop disaster management plans for both the construction and operational phases.



Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction of the Americas

Investing for resilience - Third Session - Santiago de Chile -26-28 November, 2012



- Capacity Building for Building Professionals - Capacity building for local building professionals i.e. architects, engineers, heavy equipment operators, planners and contractors in safer building techniques and the use of the updated hazard information for slope vulnerability and slope stabilisation. The certification awarded to contractors upon completion of the Safer Building Programme is tied to the renewal of trade licences, these is an added measure taken to ensure that all contractors operating in the BVI are knowledgeable of safer construction methods for the specific geology of the Territory.
- Update of Hazard Atlas – The hazard atlas was updated with the incorporation of slope vulnerability due to the geology and recommended cuts for slope stabilisation. The Atlas now includes flood maps and models for the Road Town catchment basin, high resolution storm surge and tsunami induction maps and modules to better plan for development in coastal areas and evacuations if necessary. Microzonation maps are expected to be incorporated in 2013.
- **Policy and Legislature** - The Physical Planning Act, the CDM Policy and the Disaster Management Act give government scope to deal with development and hazard mitigation, preparedness, response and recover. There are also a number of other legal instruments which give authority to coordinate activities in crisis situations. The GBVI depends heavily on a cohesive mechanism for DRR mainstreaming, planning and recovery through its National Disaster Management Council (NDMC) whose role is to review policy and develop national plans and procedures to address hazards.
 - The BVI Disaster Management Act recently underwent a revision to ensure a CDM approach is utilised, this revision perpetuated the development of a number of regulations.
- **Involvement At All Levels Of Intervention** – focuses on disaster preparedness and incorporates the range of activities undertaken prior to the impact of a hazard to ensure effective response to the impact, including issuance of timely and effective early warnings and the temporary evacuation of persons from threatened locations.
 - In such the GBVI has attempted to and continues to mainstream CDM into all sectors aimed at DRR. Presently, it is a requirement for all government agencies to develop, test and update agency specific disaster contingency plans. Currently over 66% of government agencies have approved disaster contingency plans.
 - DDM in partnership with the Ministry of Education assisted in the development of contingency planning template for all schools and day care facilities, and it is expected in the near future all educational institutes will have developed and practiced their respective contingency plans. Safety Assessments were also undertaken of all institutes to determine their level of disaster preparedness, health and safety and integration of climate smart measures. These assessments are linked to a certification mechanism for “Safe Green Spaces,” and are expected to be tied to the schools fulfillment of accreditation requirements.
 - There are further plans to incorporate DRR into the National curriculum and at present the BVI has a nascent offering of such with implementation at the grade 7 level under the Social Studies subject matter. The DDM has also produced a wide range of educational material, posters, workbooks etc. for school children ages 3 – 16.



- Mainstreaming activities have also been incorporated into the Planning and Development Sector, the Health Sector, Tourism and Telecommunications. Emphasis will be placed on the Financial Services Sector and the Agriculture and Fisheries sector in 2013.

C. CHALLENGES

- **Investments** : Even though hazard maps are made available to the insurance industry there are no monitoring mechanisms to see how/ if they are applied. The role of the insurance company in risk transfer needs to be re-examined especially from the perspective of participating in meetings and engaging with decision makers.
 - There is a need to establish a national register of insured public and private properties and to determine what portion of the population is uninsured.
 - The DDM has plans to initiate a Risk Reduction Incentive Scheme with the banking and insurance industries; and has identified the need for technical expertise/resources in this area to help facilitate the incentive schemes in the Territory.
 - Incorporating DRR into Economic/Financial Sectors with consideration given to incentives to support such efforts has not yet been fully achieved. There is support for this initiative and provisions have been made in the new Disaster Management Act, 2011 to support the planned activities. Risk Management procedures are now being incorporated into financial management processes being led by the Ministry of Finance.
- **Private Sector Disaster Preparedness** - There is a need to increase the level of awareness and preparedness among private sector organisations.
 - It would appear from various analysis of the BVI disaster programme that there is also a need for greater community involvement in disaster preparedness, hazard identification and analysis processes. At present, not all communities are covered; however through public education and the new schools programme (pilot programme on general disaster awareness and preparedness at home and school, to be expanded to all schools), community involvement should increase.
 - Education training and awareness about Risks and Prevention is being targeted among the growing Latin population. There is capacity within the DDM to support the translation of public messages and other material for distribution. Emergency Shelter and Tourism preparedness information is available in several languages. The BVI has transitioned its public information and education programme to adapt a multilingual, multimedia approach based on findings from a Knowledge, Aptitude and Perception survey. There are specific programmes and activities targeted at the school population and the general public. The website is very well populated as there are so many requests from the general public and social media outlets are being fully utilized. There is a understanding that the programme must also continue to focus on building resiliency into its National Emergency Alert, Broadcast and Telecommunications systems that will ensure that and persons who cannot access the new technologies (elderly, less fortunate, hearing impaired, physically and mentally challenged) can continue to receive information.



- **Cost Benefit Analysis** – There is a need for development of a comprehensive system that not only assesses hazard impact and provides recommendations but also analyses cost benefit of these to demonstrate financial savings.

D. WAYS FORWARD

- Economic development oftentimes conflict with environmental and sustainable development planning and policies. However, it is expected that through the CDM Policy and Strategy 2009 – 2013, greater activities aimed at enforcing development land use will be initiated and implemented.
- Enhanced integration of DRR into preparedness of all sectors through development of a scheme with Governments Insurance and banking sectors will provide rewards for developers who invest in risk reduction measures.
- Adaptation of a cost benefit analyses methodology to guide national project planning and financial management activities
- Implementation of measures to address DRR and Climate change within all sectors and to establish demonstration projects to guide recommended actions.