

CONFERENCE MISSION STATEMENT

“To Promote Comprehensive Disaster Management”

INTRODUCTION

The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management presents its fifth National Disaster Management Conference to be held from June 27-29, 2007 at the Sunset Jamaica Grande Hotel in Ocho Rios. The Conference this year will address the topics of Slope Instability and Landslide Hazards and Earthquake Risk in Jamaica and the Caribbean. These have been identified as two critical subject areas of major import in the National and Regional Disaster Management Dialogue.

The Conference will enhance the efforts Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management in Jamaica to continue to lead in facilitating the dialogue and action towards the shift from a response driven Hazard Management Program to an ***Integrated Risk Management Approach***.

Slope Instability in Jamaica

Landslide hazards have become a major social, economic and environmental concern to Jamaica. Increase in rainfall and storm activities, changing land use and land degradation have exacerbated the threat of the hazard.

The encroachment of buildings and infrastructure on steeper and marginally stable land, clearance of land in response continued urbanization and development and population growth have combined with the increased problem of slope instability making the probability of this hazard occurring much greater.

In Jamaica landslides have caused injury, death, numerous financial losses and damage and destruction to infrastructure and economic facilities of varying degree. It is therefore prudent that we seek to identify and implement policies and strategies to mitigate the effects of this hazard. It is also critical that the approaches and strategies identified be sustainable.

Jamaica, Grenada, Dominica, St Vincent and St Lucia regularly suffer from slope erosion. This is an issue that has been well articulated – by the University of the West Indies, Environmental Solutions of Jamaica and the various country representatives of National Disaster Offices. Although some donor-sponsored activities are either still active or have been completed, there remains an urgent need for more resilient, environmentally friendly action.

At a recent planning meeting in St Lucia which asked National Disaster Office Coordinators from the region to list their primary concerns related to Risk Management, it was agreed that slope erosion and its ensuing aggravated risk was a major concern requiring urgent attention. The Office for Preparedness and Emergency Management in Jamaica has repeatedly warned that rural Kingston St Andrew and rural eastern Jamaica are particularly at risk with ongoing degradation of slopes due to continuing agricultural malpractice. The ODPEM is involved with key stakeholders to review biotechnology use in re-engineering slopes and mitigating against future slippage.

Earthquake Risk

Since the 1907 the earthquake Jamaica has perhaps only experienced two significant tremors of note, the 1957 Montego Bay Earthquake and the 1993 Earthquake that affected mainly Kingston and St. Andrew. These three events provided the Emergency Management Agencies and Jamaica's Policy Level Personnel with a number of lessons most of which we have yet to effectively address namely the finalization of the Review of the National Building Code, the need to re-establish a national telecommunications system capable of providing communication traffic during and after major emergencies/disasters, and the building of the capacities of the critical response agencies. The last three or so years have been replete with discussions on the possibilities of Tsunamis affecting Jamaica and the level of preparedness of the country for such an eventuality. The time is now opportune for us to engage the dialogue to bring towards a meaningful juncture necessary to inform and spur the planners and policy level actors into action.

In an account of the 1993 event Rafi Ahmad noted geologist and researcher in the an Article, "Primer on Earthquake Hazards and Disasters in Jamaica", published in 1999 in the Caribbean Geography Volume 10, #2, writes that 518 families were affected – 450 of which were from Kingston and St. Andrew with 7,871 insurance claims reporting J\$152 Million in damage/losses were filed. There were, he said massive landslides that occurred and millions of dollars in telecommunication equipment were lost or damaged.

The experts believe that without a doubt another massive earthquake is waiting in the wings to occur in fact it is believed that we are within the 80 – 110 year window of reoccurrence of magnitude 7 earthquakes. Are we ready? The population and infrastructure has grown significantly since the last magnitude 7 event – what are the challenges therefore, how will our critical infrastructure and utilities fare, what are the planning considerations, how can we prepare for and mitigate as much as possible the effects.

CONFERENCE PURPOSE and OBJECTIVES

PURPOSE

The main purpose of the National Disaster Management Conference (NDMC) is to invite the sharing of information on the concepts of Disaster Risk Management. The format of this year's conference is expected to advance regional collaboration and integration through the sharing of ideas.

Specific objectives of the Conference are:

- To facilitate the sharing of information on Landslide and Earthquake Risks, trends, emerging technologies, tools and innovations and best practices that can be employed to reduce the risk and vulnerability of to these hazards
- Begin to foster the development of capacities in risk management including vulnerability reduction.
- Identifying and fostering networks and partnerships in the area of slope stabilization and earthquake planning and management.

A. Exploring the Earthquake Hazard in Jamaica – *"Where every second counts"*

1. Shaping the preparedness for Jamaica's Next Great Quake
2. Seismic Risk Assessment and Impact Assessment
3. Issues in Earthquake Response and Recovery
4. Structural Earthquake Engineering and Hazard Impact Assessments in Structural Design

5. Earthquake Science in the 21st Century
6. The Role of Insurance in the Mitigation and Recovery Processes

B. Stabilizing our Slopes – *Economically Sustainable Approaches*

Specific Presentations will be invited from the following:

1. Country Case Studies to be presented by the National Disaster Offices of the following countries:
 - Jamaica
 - Grenada
 - Dominica
 - St. Lucia
 - St. Vincent and the Grenadines
2. Presentation on Bio Engineering Technique – Coco Technologies Corporation

CONFERENCE FORMAT

The Conference will constitute three (3) sessions over two days combining presentations, panel discussions and a field visit. Specific Panel Discussions will involve the following areas of discussion:

PRODUCTS / RESULTS

- Production of a “2007 Conference Multi-Media CD
- Capacity Gaps and Opportunities for programmatic actions.
- Conference dialogue document which will address specific ways to implement mitigation, both as ‘stand alone’ programmes or through input into other programmes as well as incorporating protection and loss reduction into existing systems, planning, programmes and policies in relation to Landslide and Earthquake Hazards.

PARTICIPANTS, STAKEHOLDERS AND TARGET AUDIENCES

The Conference content and approach will provide attractive outputs for disaster management practitioners, policymakers, decision-makers, hazard, physical and social science researchers as well as development specialists businesses.

It is anticipated that attendees will be drawn from CDERA Member States and the CDERA Coordinating Unit. A special effort will be made to attract private sector and civil society interests including the sectors such as information technology, tourism, health, agriculture, public utilities & transportation, as well as the insurance and financial sectors given the implications of disaster impact on these key societal elements.