

OCTOBER 25, 2015.

Tropical Storm EMA response



Resilient States · Safer Lives

by RONALD JACKSON

THE Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), successor to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency, came into being in September 2009. The Agency's mandate was enhanced in an effort to further member states' adoption of a disaster loss reduction and mitigation culture in the Caribbean. The agency, however, was still required to continue with the aspects of the CDERA 1991 mandate, including:

- Make immediate and coordinated response to its participating state after a disaster
- Mitigate disaster consequences in a participating state
- Securing, coordinating and channelling reliable information

Activating the Regional Response Mechanism

In an effort to maximize the principles of the regional integration and solidarity the agency has continued to invest in national and regional capacity capable of supporting the needs of each of its members in times of major emergencies and disasters.

When the need arises, the Regional Response Mechanism (RRM) is activated to support an impacted state.

The RRM has evolved through learning from historical events.

The impact of **Tropical** Storm Erika on Dominica follows previous rainfall impacts in 2011 and the Christmas rains in December 2013, which provided a signal of

what was likely, given a hazard event of the magnitude of Erika or greater. CDEMA anticipated that Erika would probably result in a need for the activation of the RRM in order to effectively respond to the humanitarian needs likely to be generated.

On August 27, 2015, immediately after the impact of **Erika** on Dominica, the executive director of CDEMA contacted the government of Dominica to determine the extent of the impact and initial support required.

Following this initial discussion and agreement the RRM was activated. The chairman of the council of ministers of CDEMA and the CDEMA Subregional Focal Point (Barbados), Attorney General Adriel Braithwaite, was briefed on the action to be taken.

An initial briefing was also provided to the Secretary General of CARICOM and discussions held with the United Nations (UN) resident coordinator Stephen O'Malley regarding the convening of the Eastern Caribbean Development Partners Group for Disaster Management, which is chaired by CDEMA and the United Nations Development Programme.

This allows for the coordination of development partner support to the humanitarian response activated by the CDEMA Coordinating Unit.

Logistics

One of the challenges for the regional system is logistics. Given this knowledge, formal letters were sent to the government of Trinidad and Tobago, the French Government



RONALD JACKSON (RC)

through the consulate in St Lucia and the British government liaison in Barbados to activate support and ccess to air and sea assets capable of addressing the situation.

Initial discussions were also held with the Caribbean Development Bank to access an Emergency Response Grant to support Dominica's initial humanitarian needs.

The CARICOM support through the Regional Response Mechanism was the first on the scene. In fact, the first asset to be utilised was the Trinidad and Tobago Air Guard, which transported the CDEMA assembled and led CARICOM Operational Support and Damage Assessment Coordination teams into Dominica the following day to help support the National Disaster Management Agency's in its response efforts.

The executive director led this mission and provided initial policy support to the Prime Minister of Dominica in matters related to disaster declaration, external

humanitarian assistance and determining Dominica's immediate needs.

Information for coordination

The information ascertained from the policy level interface and the work done on the ground by the CDEMA team informed the donor discussions held between CDEMA, the UN and the community of donors and facilitated the direction of support for the response operations.

The assessment received from the CDEMA deployed teams also served to inform the communication dispatched by the CDEMA executive director's office to all the CDEMA participating states to inform their consideration of support to Dominica.

The CDEMA RRM and the CDEMA technical support teams remained in Dominica on a rotational basis for about two months providing advice, technical support in relief management, coordination support in the National Emergency Operations Centre, damage assessment, needs analysis, logistics and guided the start of the recovery process.

Acknowledging support

We wish to thank all the governments, agencies, institutions and individuals who supported the efforts of the RRM. These include the participating states Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, St Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, Grenada, Guyana and Montserrat that contributed human resources and assets; our development partners, the British government for their quick response to our request to assist with the airlift, resources and manpower on board the RFA Lyme Bay and the governments of the Netherlands and France (Martinique).

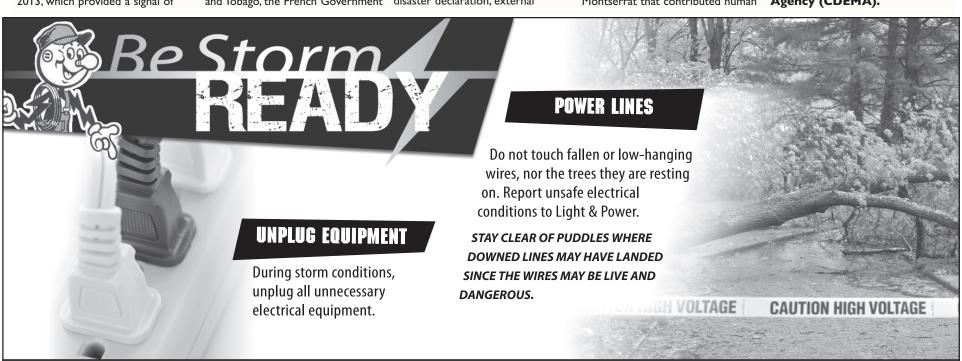
Moving Forward

One of the key messages communicated to the government of Dominica by CDEMA is the need to examine how land use and development occur in vulnerable areas in Dominica given the nature of the geography of the island.

The **Erika** event, though tragic in many ways, has provided another opportunity for the communities to be better rebuilt, stronger than before, and for further investment in community resilience building and infrastructure hardening.

This operation was important in many ways as it allowed the CDEMA system to express the capabilities of a maturing regional system working in concert with external partners to deliver the necessary support to one of its members. It is a realisation of the intent and aspirations of the CARICOM Integration movement in relation to disaster risk management and as expressed in the Articles of Agreement creating CDEMA.

- RONALD JACKSON is the executive director of the Caribbean Disaster **Emergency Management** Agency (CDEMA).





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<u> Erika – regional response</u>



by CHERYL HAREWOOD

THURSDAY, August 27, 2015, will forever be etched in the mind of Don Corriette, Dominica's National Disaster Coordinator.

While moderate rains had started around the hours of 2:30 a.m., Corriette and his team at the Office of Disaster Management felt no need to panic or fear.

The Barbados Meteorological
Forecasting Office, which was responsible for informing Dominica of any pending tropical system or storm, did not put Dominica under any storm watch or warning. **Tropical Storm Erika** was 100 miles off the east of the island, travelling west north-west towards the Lesser Antilles.

Via a telephone interview this past week, Corriette shared on how the island's infrastructure was not prepared for a rain event of such magnitude as was produced by **Tropical Storm Erika** which devastated parts of the island triggering the intervention of CDEMA's regional response.

"The night of Wednesday, August 26, into that Thursday morning, we were of the opinion that Dominica was in the clear," Corriette explained.

"However, my office did send out a release asking the general public to be on alert since **Tropical Storm Danny** had taken a sudden turn towards Dominica about a week prior to **Tropical Storm Erika**. Based on that pattern we asked the public to monitor and keep track of **Erika**,"Corriette said.

When one of his programme officers called around 3:30 a.m to indicate that he and some of his neighbours were "flooded out" in their Paradise Valley homes and needed to be

We'll colback back better

evacuated, Corriette then recognised the seriousness of the heavy rains which by that time had intensified. The evacuation process started around 4 a.m. and by 4:45 a.m. a national rescue system was activated.

"We did not know the magnitude of what we were dealing with. We left our homes to go to our office, but by then the roads were blocked by ravaging water and debris. We went back to the Dominica Broadcasting Services, the national radio station, located in the city. It was from there that we started to receive calls from districts about the effect of the rains," Corriette recalled.

"Between that time and up to 11 a.m., we activated the Regional Response Mechanism (RRM) through the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency. By then, our telephone system was not working properly. Lines were down and the systems were overloaded by people making calls"

Corriette was forced to send out **WhatsApp** messages to CDEMA and officials in Trinidad and Tobago. He reported



THE DOMINICA AIRPORT RUNWAY under water after the passage of Tropical Storm Erika. (FP)

that Dominica was under torrential rains and required help. A call from CDEMA's executive director Ronald Jackson was what was needed to activate emergency response partners into action. Martinique and Trinidad and Tobago governments responded on that same day.

"From there," according to Corriette, "we coordinated activities through CDEMA in St Lucia, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago. The Regional Security System (RSS) was also activated. Trinidad and Tobago Air Guard responded from day one, while their Coast

Guard and that of Barbados and St Lucia responded two days later. These responses were effective and quick."

Following initial responses from Martinique and Trinidad and Tobago, Corriette worked with Dominica's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Emergency Operating Centre (EOC) received help from the British, Dutch and Venezuelan governments.

"Through the RRM for CDEMA, we were able to fly our Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit, who was out of the the island back to Dominica.

"We all worked feverishly and stood resolute in bringing Dominica back to a state of normalcy.

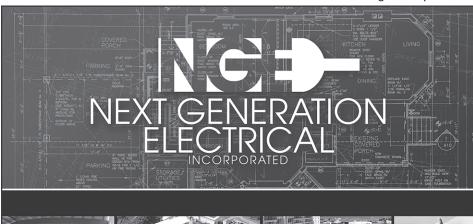
"We have been battered by avalanches of mud, rubble, stones and everything else, best described by many as a land tsunami.

Corriette further explained that close to 700 people were displaced in Petit Savanne and other areas and that relocation, resettlement, housing, and care management were still top priorities

"We need to provide everything for those who have lost their houses and possessions. We are in need of building materials, the psychological needs continue to be a priority, and people still require nutritious food.

"Dominica is also in need of skilled professionals such as engineers, geologists and structural engineers; While we are making strides, it will take a massive effort and assistance, given the level of devastation." Corriette stressed.

He added with much optimism, "We still have countries providing us with regional and international assistance and more is expected going forward and for that we are forever thankful. We are determined to build back Dominica better than it was before."





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Erika – Regional response





THE ERIKA EVENT in Dominica saw a Level Three activation of the RRM. A synopsis of the key aspects are illustrated in the infographic (above).

by PAMELA KNIGHTS

DURING THE EARLY HOURS of Thursday, August 27, the centre of **Tropical Storm Erika** passed about 90 miles to the north of Dominica producing intense rainfall across the island. Reports reaching the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) on that day indicated that severe flooding and landslides had occurred and there was widespread damage to housing and infrastructure throughout the island. Social media was being used to share photographs of the destruction and report on casualities and people caught in the landslides.

A situation was unfolding in Dominica that would lead to a Level Three activation of the Regional Response Mechanism (RRM).

This is a system that is coordinated by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency to provide humanitarian and technical support in a timely manner if requested by any of the CDEMA's 18 participating states.

Since 1991, on the establishment of the CDEMA (formerly the CDERA) by the heads of governments of CARICOM, response coordination to disaster events has been its primary role. From 1992 to 2015, the Regional Response Mechanism has been in action 17 times, and in many instances to multiple islands at the same time. The response has been to disasters resulting from volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and weather related events.

The level of activation or support provided through the RRM is determined by the country's ability to cope with a disaster event. Of the three levels within the RRM, direct support is provided in response to a Level Two or Level Three event and monitoring and reporting for a Level One.

A Level Two disaster event is a situation where the country may or may not have declared a disaster but may not have the resources to fully manage the event. The affected country will indicate to CDEMA the type of external assistance required and the CDEMA Coordinating Unit will mobilise and deploy the relevant personnel and equipment.

Disaster events such as **Hurricane Andrew** – The Bahamas, 1992; **Debby** – St Lucia, 1994; **Keith** – Belize, 2000; and **Tomas** – St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, 2010; and **Hurricane Joaquin** – The Bahamas, 2015 have seen countries benefiting from a Level Two response.

CDEMA will trigger a Level Three response when there is a devastating event that overwhelms a country's capacity to cope and which causes a government to declare disaster areas or a national disaster. The Haiti earthquake in 2010,

Continued on next page.

How a region responds

THE LEVEL OF ACTIVATION or support provided through the RRM is determined by the country's ability to cope with a disaster event. (FP)



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<u>Erika – Regional response</u>







AT THE HEADQUARTERS ASHORE Second Officer Phil Harris and LMA Lauren Armour (far left) distributing disposable diapers and baby formula to a Dominican woman (GP)

MEXEFLOTE deploys from the Royal Fleet Auxillary Lyme Bay to shore with support vehicles. (GP)

Timing a critical factor

• From Page 3.

Hurricane Ivan (Grenada, 2004), Montserrat volcano crisis 1995-1996 all resulted in full-scale operations of the RRM at Level Three.

The RRM is extremely dependent on the readiness and willingness of the governments of the CDEMA participating states, regional institutions, key development partners, agencies of the United Nations and humanitarian partners to work together when the call comes from the CDEMA Coordinating Unit.

The support may include the provision and distribution of relief supplies, logistics for security and movement of supplies from national or regional warehouses, search and rescue, health and medical assistance, emergency operations management, emergency communications, damage and needs assessments.

It is the responsibility of the CDEMA Coordinating Unit to ensure that regional response teams are trained and ready for deployment at short notice. The pool of the technical teams are drawn from universities, national disaster offices, emergency response services such as fire and medical, disciplined services, regional specialised institutions such as the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology, the Seismic Research Centre in Trinidad and Tobago, and the Regional Security System.

On activation, the RRM is managed through the Regional Coordination Centre (RCC) which is located at the CDEMA Coordinating Unit in Barbados with the support from the country designated as the sub-regional focal point (SRFP) for the impacted country.

CDEMA has four SRFPs in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. As soon as the executive director of CDEMA receives a request for external assistance, the RCC is activated and key partners are notified. The response teams that are initially placed on standby when a country faces an imminent threat are also notified of deployment arrangements.

also notified of deployment arrangements.

A critical function of the RCC is ensuring timely and efficient coordination for mobilisation and deployment of personnel, relief supplies, and other assets to the affected state. Meetings of the Eastern Caribbean Development Partners Group for Disaster Management and the sharing of information by the various response agencies on the ground are also key to providing a coordinated and effective response.

RCC is responsible for collating and sharing all official information received from partners and teams on the ground. The RCC and RRM are deactivated when the country is better able to cope in the aftermath of the event or has moved from relief and response operations and is beginning to look at its recovery from the disaster.

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Erika – regional response



Hinds: All systems in place

by CHERYL HAREWOOD

WHILE THE CARIBBEAN Disaster Emergency Management Agency's (CDEMA) Coordinating Unit is the focal point for effecting the regional response mechanism plan in the face of a disaster in CDEMA's 18-member participating states of Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands and the Virgin Islands, these countries are grouped into four sub-regions, each of which is headed by an operations unit known as a subregional focal point (SRFP).

The SRFPs, which are managed and coordinated through CDEMA's Coordination Unit, are CDEMA's frontline response to member states. They assist with better managing, coordinating and responding effectively to various states during or after a disaster.

Barbados is the SRFP for the central region, which comprises

Dominica, St Lucia, and St Vincent and the Grenadines. As such, through the Department of Emergency Management (DEM), Barbados played a pivotal role in providing assistance to Dominica – working in collaboration with CDEMA's Coordinating Unit; participating states; and national, regional and international agencies.

The SRFP for the eastern region is led by Antigua and Barbuda and comprises Anguilla, Monserrat, St Kitts and Nevis and the British Virgin Islands.

The north-western subregion is led by Jamaica and comprises Belize, Haiti, The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos, while the southern subregion's focal point is Trinidad and Tobago. Within this region are Grenada, Guyana and Suriname.

According to Kerry Hinds, acting director of the DEM: "Barbados saw the need for a significant response to assist Dominicans in their time of need, through the CDEMA Coordination Unit, which triggered the response mechanism after Dominica requested support from CDEMA during



Tropical Storm Erika.

"Since Barbados is the focal point for Dominica and based on our geographical location, CDEMA turned to Barbados first by contacting the DEM.We had our systems in place to respond," Hinds said.

It was the head of CDEMA, executive director Ronald Jackson who led a CDEMA team to Dominica on board a helicopter provided by the government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Part of Jackson's task involved reporting to Dominica's national coordinator Don Corriette, Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit, and other



MEMBERS OF the Barbados Coast Guard in action during the Tropical Storm Erika response. Inset is Kerry Hinds, acting director of the Department of Emergency Management. (FPs)

government officials, to determine the immediate needs of Dominicans, carry out rapid assessments, and get an overview and insight of what was taking place in Dominica.

Jackson and his team fed their information back to the DEM, advising this department to provide search and rescue personnel and equipment.

Hinds explained: "Quite a lot of requirements were presented to the DEM. We immediately called the chief fire officer who deployed six fire officers led by divisional officer Gordon Boxill and another team was placed on standby.

"As the SRFP for Dominica, we also enlisted the assistance of the Barbados Coast Guard, mobilising their two sea assets the **Trident** and **HMBS Leonard Banfield**.

These vessels travelled back and forth transporting emergency supplies, emergency response personnel, including the search and rescue teams and media personnel."

Hinds continues to work with CDEMA and donor agencies in monitoring the needs of Dominica as this country and its people continue their long rebuilding process.

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<u> Erika – regional response</u>

ime wasted



by CHERYL HAREWOOD

THE UNITED NATIONS (UN) wasted no time or effort in reaching out to the people of Dominica in the aftermath of **Tropical Storm Erika**, which wreaked havoc on this CARICOM country on August 27.

Through its resident coordinator for Barbados and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Steve O'Malley, the UN was one of the international bodies which quickly provided aid to Dominica's Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit and Dominicans at large.

at large.
O'Malley and his team joined forces with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), which the UN views as the responsible regional response organisation when disasters strike.
"We have our own



KITS WITH sanitary items were provided for the women of Dominica. (GP)

arrangements with CDEMA so if there is a large-scale disaster we work with them as part of the Eastern Caribbean Development Partners Group, an entity which I co-chair with CDEMA's executive director Ronald Jackson.

"We bring together the donors, the development banks, the Disaster Emergency Management and the Regional Security System to discuss how to respond to disasters like Dominica.

"Our co-shared roles ensure that any country where disaster strikes receives the most coherent response," O'Malley explained.

"CDEMA organised emergency teams to enter Dominica, while from a United Nations' perspective, the Ministry of

Health requested the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to deploy their emergency teams."

These scenarios played out as PAHO inspected Dominica and responded to the island's immediate needs, which included ensuring that health facilities were operational, and the environmental health of Dominicans, including their drinking water and sanitation needs were being met.



Three days after **Tropical Storm Erika**, which left 14 dead, 16 still missing, and hundreds homeless, the PAHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) began the task of sending aid to Dominica thanks to the Barbados Coast Guard's vessel, **The Trident**. UNICEF also provided counselling, school kits and other items as requested. Today, the UN is still providing a range of assistance as the country tries to rebuild and resettle people.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had already mobilised finances to the tune of US\$50 000 (BDS100 000) to Dominica's Office of Disaster Management, headed by national disaster coordinator Don Corriette. These funds were made possible via the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in New York.

In addition, the International Telecommunications Union provided 15 Iridium Satellite phones, four Broadband Global Area Network terminals and two personnel who were used for assessment missions and to support communication linkages with those in isolated areas. These phones are still being used.

Another UN agency to offer assistance was the United Nations Population Fund, which provided Dominican women with hygienic kits, and worked hand in hand with the United Nations Women, an organisation dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Dominica government felt that while aid in the form of items was being provided, it was important to procure as much as possible in Dominica to keep businesses open and Dominicans employed.

To this end, the UNDP received additional funding which, among other purposes, was used to deploy a resettlement

IN responses

advisor to help Dominica's government look at resettling those who were displaced.

Additional assistance came from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, which launched an ongoing programme to clear and rebuild water courses and small agricultural feeder roads.

O'Malley, who visited Dominica a week after the disaster to take part in meetings with CDEMA, UN personnel and the Dominica government, described witnessing the damage as "impactful".

"It makes an impact on you when you see how a relatively short period of heavy rainfall can affect a country."

Last week, the UNDP and CDEMA again looked at

Dominica's resettlement stages. Discussions and dialogue regarding further assistance are ongoing.

"It is clear that some residents will have to be relocated and government is desirous of ensuring they are moved to safer locations. We must look at ways of how to do this and how to mitigate the risks involved," O'Malley sadd.

He added, "Many people in Dominica have always lived by rivers, slopes and hills. [In this aftermath], Government sees this as an opportunity to ensure that they build back better in order to reduce the risk of potential disasters."

O'Malley has praised CDEMA for its work and response actions.

"CDEMA has been able to advise the Dominican government on its response and coordination measures and how best to start on the road to recovery.

"The real strength of CDEMA is preparedness and being able to quickly deploy emergency personnel from across the region to assist when disasters strike. Dominica has a long road ahead to rebuild and a good sense of how this must be done," O'Malley concluded



A MESSAGE The President Of Tropical Shipping

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Rick Murrell President and CEO Tropical Shipping



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Erika – Regional response

Regional Institutions	
CARICOM Secretariat	Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH)
Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)	Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA
CARICOM Development Fund	
Development Partners and No	on-CDEMA Participating States
European Union	2000 0.000
29 ** (200 (200)) 200 10	United Nations Agencies
Government of Canada	Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)
Government of France	International Telecommunications Union (ITU)
Government of Japan	Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)
	UNOCHA through United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Government of the United Kingdom	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
Government of the United States of America	United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Government of the United States Virgin Islands	United Nations Women
International Federation of the Red Cross	World Bank
Organization of American States	



STAFF MEMBERS of the Caribbean **Disaster Emergency** Management Agency. (RC)

swering the call

THE CARICOM PARTICIPATING STATES of Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, St Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, Guyana, Grenada and Montserrat, including many key private, public and international entities. responded to the distress calls of Dominica and quickly helped to put this country back to a state of relative

normalcy.

The needs in Dominica are still great but with the help of CDEMA and its partners, Dominicans are using this chapter in their lives to better rebuild their communities, as they look with hope towards the future.

Above are various organisations and entities that also united to assist Dominica:



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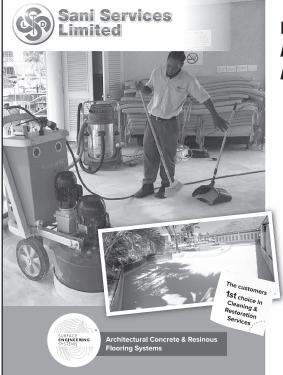
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CDEMA is also grateful to the management and staff of the CDEMA Coordinating Unit for their effort in coordinating the publication of this special feature to highlight the work of the Regional Response Mechanism. Special thanks to Leslie Walling and Pamela Knights for leading the process. CDEMA also takes this opportunity to thank all those who contributed to the CDEMA coordinated response effort to Dominica.