

SPEAKING POINTS

Didier Trebucq - UNDP Deputy Resident Representative

Event: Workshop on Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis (DANA) and integrated Web-based Disaster Management platform
(“Strengthening National and Local Capacity for Disaster Response and Risk Reduction” GoG-UNDP project)

Date: January 12, 2010, 09:00

Venue: Regency Suites/Hotel, Hadfield St, Georgetown

Director General of the CDC, Colonel Ramsarup,

Media,

Esteemed Colleagues – participants in the workshop,

I am glad to be with you today, one year after we launched a new major cooperation between UNDP and the GoG to reduce natural disaster risks in the Country, and to witness the progresses made. This four-year project is aimed at strengthening the country capacity to reduce disaster risks and is a joint initiative of the Government of Guyana, Inter-American Development Bank, and UNDP; it is worth of over 2 million USD and will continue until the end of 2012.

I’d like first to set the context of our intervention: In the modern world disasters pose imminent threat to sustainable development. During the period from June 2008 to June 2009, 343 disasters linked to natural hazards affected more than 42 million people, taking more than 14,000 lives and causing economic damage totaling \$57.4 billion (*2009 Report of the UN Secretary-General on Implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction*, www.unisdr.org).

Floods, droughts, storms, earthquakes, fires and other events, when combined with 'risk drivers' such as increasing urbanization, poor urban governance, vulnerable rural livelihoods and the decline of ecosystems, can lead to massive human misery and crippling economic losses.

Although for some of us the statistics on disasters may seem to be an abstract set of figures, disasters are always a bitter reality. Guyana experienced that in 2005, when the January floods affected one-third of the country's population and caused losses equivalent to 60% of GDP for that year.

We also know that the risk of natural disasters is vastly exacerbated by the effects of climate change and global warming. For example the sea level rise, which in the Caribbean is expected to be faster than the world's average, combined with expected increase in extreme weather events, put the country at risk. This is for all of us a great call for action.

I wish to assure you that UNDP is committed worldwide to develop local capacities to reduce disasters risks, and I'm very pleased to witness these efforts materializing in Guyana through our cooperation with the Government of Guyana.

Over the last year UNDP supported the Civil Defence Commission to be better prepared to manage disasters. We provided required equipment and initiated several longer-term activities, such as the update of the National Disaster Preparedness Plan and related trainings, enhancing the Early Warning systems at national and community levels, support to vulnerable communities to assist them in planning their preparedness; lastly, all these measures will contribute to reduce the people's vulnerabilities to crisis.

Today's training workshop is devoted to one of the essential components of effective Disaster Management – The assessment of damage caused by disasters and analysis of the needs of the affected people.

Quick, accurate and reliable identification of needs is the precondition for timely and effective relief to the victims of disaster.

I'm very glad to see here today representatives of different ministries and agencies, as effective disaster management is not an isolated task for one entity but a result of collective efforts of government, private and non-state actors.

Nowadays the modern technologies are serving people in various areas of our life. So they do in disaster management. CDC is now launching a web-based disaster management platform – a WEB National Emergency Operations Centre- to apply most up-to-date achievements of the technical progress to reduce the impact of natural calamities on the people of Guyana. By applying different modern approaches and techniques we do look forward to an effective and efficient national disaster management system of Guyana.

I would like to use this occasion to thank the Office of the President and the Civil Defence Commission – our project partners – and other involved agencies for their devotion and efforts in our joint endeavor to reduce the risk of natural disasters in Guyana. From my side I can assure you that UNDP will stay committed to support the people of Guyana in this important issue.

I wish you all a very productive and fruitful workshop. Thank you.