



Avoidable Deaths Network



Symposium on Integrating Disaster Risk Management with Emergency Services and Defence to Reduce Avoidable Disaster Deaths

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Last but not least, we would like to thank the 16 highly esteemed speakers for accepting our invitation to speak at the Symposium and making it truly a historic and pathbreaking event.



Figure 1: A Screenshot of Some of Our Presenters, Moderators, Discussants and Viewers

Context

Whenever a disaster strikes, first responders from emergency services (fire, police, search-and-rescue), defence (navy and air force), humanitarian organisations and community volunteers are the critical actors in reducing avoidable deaths and providing critical assistance to the impacted populations. However, these actors often work within their own domains, and are neither coordinating their relief work nor sharing the learnings from their experiences. Additionally, the voices of the first responders are rarely heard or celebrated in the mainstream disaster risk reduction and development conferences and symposiums.

To address these gaps a one-day symposium, '**Integrating Disaster Risk management with Emergency Services and Defence to Reduce Avoidable Disaster Deaths**' was convened by the Avoidable Deaths Network on 10 December 2021, bringing together participants from emergency services, defence, researchers and policy influencers from the disaster and development sectors to understand the role that first responders play in reducing avoidable disaster deaths and the number of people impacted by disasters in the Caribbean region. The symposium explored:

- the strategies, tactics, and actions that emergency services and defence undertake in collaboration with disaster management authorities and alike to reduce avoidable disaster deaths;
- the challenges that they experience and the lessons that can be learned to improve disaster response and recovery; and
- the support that will be required for cross-pollination of cognate sectors (defence, emergency services, disaster, development) for mutual learning, capacity building, and partnerships.

The Symposium was organised in collaboration with Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT), Prepared International (PPI), Shared Aim, and Gannon Emergency Solutions. The regional partners comprised of Rights Insight, Caribbean Development Bank, Caribbean Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC) and Barbados Fire Services (BFS), and the Regional Security System (RSS). In total 16 esteemed speakers supported by six discussants presented a four-part agenda – Inaugural; Emergency Services; Defence Services; Closing. The Symposium, held virtually on Zoom with YouTube access, and attracted 473 viewers. The agenda and the list of speakers, discussants and moderators are provided in **Annexures I and II**. The individual presentations and questions from the Questions and Answers sessions are summarised in **Annexure III**.

The Symposium was a **path-breaking event**, bringing first responders' voices to the fore in exploring ways to cross-pollinate the cognate sectors for mutual learning, capacity building, and collaboration practices to reduce avoidable disaster deaths, and help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals addressing poverty (1), sustainable cities and communities (11) and climate action (13).

Highlights of the Proceedings

Over the course of the discussion, the following key issues were mentioned by the presenters:

- The Avoidable Deaths Network has been active since 2019 in promoting research and awareness on ways to reduce avoidable deaths through preventable measures, timely intervention measures, and disaster risk governance. Its unique focus on avoidable deaths has enabled it to address disaster risk reduction in all its different and varied dimensions, including the subject of this symposium, the coordination of first responders in the Caribbean region.
- The symposium spotlighted the critical role played by first responders, particularly in the Caribbean, a region particularly vulnerable to multiple natural hazards from climate change, volcano eruptions and other factors. This event could serve to integrate the first-hand knowledge of first responders into current disaster risk reduction (DRR) planning practices; it could also amplify their voices in the overall efforts to address the relevant Sendai Framework's goals and targets and increase their visibility and influence in global DRR consultation platforms.
- Emergency services (fire, police, navy, air force, defence and search and rescue services) are most effective when they collaborate with the communities they serve, who can address equipment deficiencies, provide forward deployment locations and safe houses, volunteer with skills and labour, and bring in private security agencies to help maintain law and order. To facilitate this collaboration, local actors should be actively engaged in disaster planning and management activities such as risk assessment, mitigation scenario-building and contingency planning. The valuable contributions from humanitarian Non-Governmental Organisations and private sector businesses should also be closely involved.
- With advances in forecasting of natural hazard events and early warning systems it is possible for emergency services agencies to effectively minimise avoidable deaths, provided that community volunteers are trained in basic emergency response techniques, including pre-and post-impact placement of vulnerable populations. The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency's role in coordinating inter-country support has also proved important in providing adequate response capacities.
- A factor often absent in disaster relief efforts is addressing the mental health of the first responders, given the stressful situations they deal with. Physical and mental well-being of these actors should be addressed in disaster relief plans and programmes.
- The role played by defence services in providing support to civil authorities has been critical in many of the major disaster events in the recent decade, helping fill capability gaps in transport systems, providing specialised rescue teams, enforcing security and civil order, and restoring essential infrastructure – electricity, water, communications, airfields, ports – after a disaster event. They are also often the first responders on the scene, providing a deep reserve of self-sufficient manpower and logistic capabilities. However, the critical support provided by defence services of the Caribbean region's international

partners has not been closely integrated into national disaster events and management plans.

- Furthermore, engaging defence services from international partners can be challenging in light of the multiplicity of organisations, countries and sovereign territories involved in approving operations. The challenge calls for strong leadership and coordination skills of the key actors, and the ability to rely on mediating agencies such as Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency and the UN to facilitate formal processes.
- The Regional Security System has been effective in coordinating interventions from the Caribbean militaries under its purview. However, improving the capacities of defence services of the Caribbean nations is necessary, and should also be considered in disaster relief plans and programmes.
- Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, the UN and other international partners have been active in supporting disaster management efforts in the countries and sovereign territories in the Caribbean region, and their work has been welcomed by national and regional political bodies. Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency has been fully engaged in coordination across civilian and military agencies as well as with other regional bodies and development partners and sees itself continuing and strengthening these efforts.
- A key challenge for the region is attracting sufficient funding to address the economic impacts of disasters and promote preparedness, particularly given the loss in some countries of preferential treatment on the European market. A source of concessionary financing that countries can access for disaster risk management initiatives is available with the Caribbean Development Bank, but a larger pool of resources would be necessary.

Conclusions

There was a clear need identified for an opportunity to increase interaction and collaboration among all first responders in national disaster planning, relief, and mitigation efforts – emergency services, national and partner country defence agencies, humanitarian Non-Governmental Organizations, private sector organisations and local community leaders and volunteers in order to achieve the Sendai Framework’s first two global targets. Avenues for addressing this need which could be introduced in the short term include:

- Conducting joint drills for disaster events, to gain experience working collaboratively, identify duplications and gaps constraining seamless operations, and maximise the overall effectiveness of disaster interventions.
- Introduce training workshops for vulnerable communities offered by jointly organised teams, so they are clear on the different roles and responsibilities and can effectively play their part in collaborative disaster preparation, relief, and mitigation activities.
- Creating a regional operation network (virtual and hybrid) connecting the first responders of all the operational agencies in the Caribbean, to facilitate familiarity and trust, promote interaction, and share knowledge and experience.

- Working closely with Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, the Caribbean Development Bank, the UN, and other international partners to identify the additional financing for realising these activities, as well as investigating prospects for accessing the Caribbean Development Bank's existing concessionary financing facility.

In the longer term, these actions could lead to stronger disaster risk governance and interagency collaboration for the region, with a more prominent role for Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, and greater involvement and visibility in global platforms addressing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

In terms of next steps, Avoidable Deaths Network committed to achieve the following:

- To work closely in the coming months with the current partners including United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, Caribbean Development Bank, Prepared International, Disaster Medical Assistance Team, Shared Aim, Right Insights, Regional Security System, Caribbean Association of Fire Chiefs and Barbados Fire Service, to identify funding opportunities for stakeholders to further brainstorm on ideas for collaboration.
- To organise a virtual stakeholder meeting for the Caribbean region to discuss the current interventions to prevent avoidable deaths and how the Avoidable Deaths Network can support with capacity building, evidence generation and knowledge management.
- To apply for the Side Event at the upcoming United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction's (UNDRR) 'Global Platform for DRR 2022' in Indonesia to raise the visibility of the avoidable disaster deaths concept and the role that responders play in reducing them.

Annexes

- I. Meeting Agenda
- II. List of Presenters and Discussants
- III. Record of Presentations

Annex I: Meeting Agenda

Symposium on Integrating Disaster Risk Management with Emergency Services and Defence to Reduce Avoidable Disaster Deaths

Friday, 10 December 2021 (over ZOOM, with YouTube access)

Agenda

SESSION 1: INAUGURAL

Greeting and welcoming speakers and audience

Introducing Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Sustainable Development

- Mr. Shawn Edward, Minister of Education, Sustainable Development, Innovation, Science, Technology and Vocational Training, St. Lucia
- Dr. Sanjay Badri-Maharaj, Independent Defence Analyst and Attorney at Law, Trinidad, and Tobago
- **Keynote Speaker:** Ms. Mami Mizutori, Head of UNDRR and Special Representative of the UN-Secretary-General for DRR

Introducing Avoidable Deaths and Disaster Responders in the Caribbean Region

- Dr. Nibedita Ray-Bennett (Avoidable Deaths Network/University of Leicester) and Prof. Alois Hirschmugl (Disaster Medical Assistance Team)

SESSION 2: EMERGENCY SERVICES

Voices of the Fire, Police, Search and Rescue Services in Reducing Avoidable Disaster Deaths in the Caribbean Region

- Commissioner Edvin Martin (Second Vice President of the ACCP, Grenada)
- Mr. Errol V Maynard (Caribbean Association of Fire Chiefs and Barbados Fire Service)
- Mr. Octavio Restrepo Calderon (Caribbean Urban Search and Rescue)

Discussants: Mr. David Wales, Mr. Daniel Cossio, Dr. Christian Morgner

SESSION 3: DEFENCE SERVICES

Voices of Military and Civilians - Disaster Response Mission Experiences to Reduce Avoidable Deaths in the Caribbean Region

- Lt. Col. Tony Cheales (Ministry of Defence, UK)
- Ms. Keisha Linton (Regional Security System, Caribbean)
- Major Rene Savelsbergh N9 Civil & Military Cooperation (CIMIC, Navy)
- Major Rogelio Pop (Defence Force, Belize)
- Ms. Priya Thirumur (K1 Direct, Saint Martin & Rapid Response, Switzerland)

Discussants: Dr. Albrecht Beck; Prof. Alois Hirschmugl; Mr. Daniel Mendez

SESSION 4: CLOSING SESSION

Closing the Symposium

- Mr. Paul Saunders (Caribbean Development Bank)
- **Keynote Speaker:** Ms. Elizabeth Riley (Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency)

Beginning of a Novel Chapter in the Caribbean Region

- Mr. Ronald Jackson (UNDP)

For more information visit <https://www.avoidable-deaths.net/events-2/symposium/>

Annex II: List of Presenters and Discussants

Presenter's Profiles

Ms. Mami Mizutori - The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for DRR and Head of the UNDRR, based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Mr. Shawn Edward - Senior member of the Government of Saint Lucia, Minister of Education, Sustainable Development, Innovation, Science, Technology and Vocational Training. He is also the Second Deputy Political Leader of the Saint Lucia Labour Party.

Dr. Sanjay Badri-Maharaj - Independent defence analyst and attorney-at-law based in Trinidad and Tobago. Dr. Badri-Maharaj is a Teaching Assistant at the Department of War Studies in Kings College London.

Dr. Nibedita S. Ray-Bennett - Associate Professor in Risk Management at the University of Leicester's School of Business and the Founding President of Avoidable Deaths Network and currently, she convenes the Network.

Professor Alois Hirschmugl - Regular Officer, Trainer/Expert for international disaster management, and Technical Director of Disaster Medical Assistance Team Consulting KG

Mr. Errol Vincent Maynard - Chief Fire Officer of the Barbados Fire Service. He is the current President of the Caribbean Association of Fire Chiefs, an Associate Member of the International Institute of Fire Engineers, and a Director of IFE CASA.

Mr. Octavio Restrepo Calderon - President & Director of Caribbean Urban Search and Rescue. He is also a Risk Consultant, Rescue Instructor, and Team Coordinator for Urban Search & Rescue USAR Curacao.

Commissioner Edvin Martin - The Commissioner of Police of the Royal Grenada Police Force.

Lieutenant Colonel Tony Cheales - Commanding Officer, 66 Works Group Royal Engineers, Ministry of Defence, UK.

Mrs. Keisha Linton - Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance Officer at the Regional Security Systems, Headquarters, Barbados.

Major Rene Savelsbergh - Dutch Civil-Military Advisor for the Caribbean Region based at the Naval Headquarters in Curacao.

Major Rojelio S. Pop - SO2 G3 Principal Staff Officer responsible for Operations, Training and Doctrine and Military Education.

Ms. Priya Thirumur - A Charitable Director and International Project Manager, and co-founder K1 Britannia Foundation.

Mr. Paul Saunders - Operations Officer (Environmental Sustainability) in the Environmental Sustainability Unit of the Caribbean Development Bank.

Ms. Elizabeth Riley - Executive Director at the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency.

Mr. Ronald Jackson - Head of Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery Team for Building Resilience in UNDP in Geneva, Switzerland.

Discussant's Profiles

Mr. David Wales - Founder of SharedAim and is an Advisory Panel member for the Crisis Response Journal.

Dr. Christian Morgner - Senior Lecturer in Cultural and Creative Industries, Management School at the University of Sheffield and the lead author on the European Union's education and cultural inclusion report *Science for Disaster Risk Management 2020*.

Mr. Daniel Mendez - consultant for UNICEF Belize, and Regional Coordinator of Avoidable Deaths Network.

Dr. Albrecht Beck - Director of Prepared International.

Mr. Daniel Cossio - CFO and senior partner at Gannon Emergency Solutions, a consultancy company with offices in London, Bolivia, and the USA.

Mr. Krishna Clarke - Risk Analyst at the Caribbean Development Bank and Regional Coordinator of Avoidable Deaths Network.

For further details please visit the following weblink <https://www.avoidable-deaths.net/events-2/symposium/#Biographies>

Annex III: Record of Presentations

Below are the notes reflecting the main points made by each Presenter.

Session One: Inaugural Session

1st Section: Introducing Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Sustainable Development

Ms. Mami Mizutori, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Keynote Speaker

- The goal of Avoidable Deaths Network resonates with the key mandate of UNDRR, which is to reduce preventable deaths through preparedness and risk reduction.
- Prevention and preparedness should be actively prioritised.
- There is a need to increase resources and capacities of our first-hand responders and integrate their first-hand knowledge into current DRR planning practices.
- Emphasised achieving target results for Caribbean under Making Cities Resilient 2030 (MCR2030).

Hon. Mr. Shawn Edward, Government of St. Lucia

- Stressed on the importance of preparedness to ensure that avoidable deaths are timely prevented.
- Through Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency and support from inter agency partners, UN, St. Lucia has been able to work towards risk reduction and early warning systems.
- Highlighted the critical role of early warning systems in mitigating the impact of extreme weather events and other disasters.

Dr. Sanjay Badri-Maharaj, Independent Defence Analyst (Trinidad and Tobago)

- Emphasised resource constraints such as lack of transport systems and sufficient specialised rescue teams. Coordinating training of regional forces in disaster management needs further improvement.
- The first responders such as armed forces have contributed hugely with regards to disaster response, however, their capacities further need to be improved.

2nd Section: Introducing Avoidable Deaths and Disaster Responders in the Caribbean Region

Dr. Nibedita S. Ray-Bennett, Avoidable Deaths Network and University of Leicester

- Provided a brief insight into her work on the inception of Avoidable Deaths Network in 2018 and how the Network was initiated to raise awareness, knowledge and research around avoidable disaster deaths during disasters and crises.
- Avoidable Deaths Network is based on the premise of avoiding deaths through preventable measures, amenable or timely intervention measures, and disaster risk governance.
- Some of the innovative areas Avoidable Deaths Network has looked into besides traditional areas include deaths due to snakebite during disasters, drowning deaths during flooding – among others.

Professor Alois Hirschmugl, Disaster Medical Assistance Team Consulting KG

- Emphasised on the role of military and civil defence in Southeast Asia during the Tsunami response.
- Critical to evaluate if the military can be put under correction and guidance of the civilian actors.
- Training of military units on various response and recovery initiatives is very essential for sustainability of their operations and activities in a crisis situation.

Session Two: Emergency Services

Voices of the Fire, Police, Search and Rescue Services in Reducing Avoidable Disaster Deaths in the Caribbean Region

Commissioner Edvin Martin, Royal Grenada Police Force

- Mentioned collaborating with stakeholders to mitigate and bridge equipment deficiencies.
- Affirmed the use of forward deployment locations and safe houses to save the lives of police officers and members of the public, thereby reducing avoidable disaster deaths.
- They collaborate with private security to tap into their footprint to maintain law and order.
- Use of risk identification and mitigation matrix to develop contingency measures and prioritise forward deployment locations to provide good quality service and significantly reduce avoidable disaster deaths.

Mr. Errol V. Maynard, Barbados Fire Service

- Emphasised the use of forecasting and early warning systems to notify the population to act and prevent dormancy during disasters
- The use of proper training and education to enhance effective response capabilities of the personnel to reduce avoidable disaster deaths.
- Mentioned about the Memorandum of Understanding with Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency to respond with resources from different territories or countries to save lives and reduce avoidable disaster deaths.
- Mentioned about the training on community and volunteers on basic response techniques to apply before the arrival of the formal responders to the scene.
- Carry out pre- and post-impact placement of the vulnerable people to a safe harbour.

Mr. Octavio R. Calderon, Caribbean Urban Search and Rescue

- They collaborate with different teams and responders to guarantee the safety and integrity of rescue operations to reduce avoidable disaster deaths.
- Organise training workshops for vulnerable communities to minimise the impact and loss of life.
- Conduct joint drills on search and rescue with other responders for seamless operations during disasters.
- Supports community rehabilitation post-disaster situations.

The speakers were followed by brief presentations from the discussants: Mr. David Wales, Shared Aim; Mr. Daniel Cossio, Gannon Emergency Solutions; and Dr. Christian Morgner, University of Sheffield

Session Three: Defence Services

Voices of Military and Civilians - Disaster Response Mission Experiences to Reduce Avoidable Deaths in the Caribbean Region

Lt. Col. Tony Cheales, Royal Engineers, Ministry of Defence, UK

- Shared the role of the military engineering corps and the vital role that the corps provide in restoring essential services such as electricity, water purification, communications and any such crucial system following a disaster event as an integral part of avoiding additional disaster deaths.

Ms. Priya Thirumur, K1 Direct (UK); Rapid Response (Switzerland)

- K1 Direct and Rapid Response are non-profit humanitarian organisations that organise volunteers to provide rapid emergency response in disaster situations, and work closely with the military from many countries. Military operations provide the most valuable assets that a country can have in a time of crisis, as the military is usually the first stakeholder

available to assist, has a high availability of manpower and has effective logistic capabilities following a disaster event.

- Humanitarian organisations have a unique capability to work effectively with local communities, contributing critical services from trained disaster specialists in important but sometimes overlooked areas such as trauma counselling.

Ms. Keisha Linton, Regional Security Systems

- In saving lives following a disaster event, training and equipment is paramount to Regional Security System in helping the organisation to deploy confidently when the need arises following a disaster.
- The mental health of those deployed by Regional Security System is of the utmost importance.

Major Rene Savelsbergh, Civil and Military Cooperation, Dutch Navy, Caribbean Region

- Highlighted the difficulties that are faced by military when dealing with the multiple organisations, Countries and Sovereign Territories within the region
- Strong leadership and coordination skills are critical

Major Rogelio Pop, Defence Force, Belize

- Emphasised on the critical role played in Belize by the National Emergency Management Organisation (NEMA) at a national level which help save lives in times of crisis and disaster.

The speakers were followed by brief presentations from the discussants: Dr. Albrecht Beck, Prepared International; Prof. Alois Hirschmugl, Disaster Medical Assistance Team; and Mr. Daniel Mendez, Avoidable Deaths Network's Regional Coordinator- Belize.

Session Four: Closing Session

1st Section: Closing the Session

Mr. Paul Saunders, Caribbean Development Bank

- Mentioned about the Caribbean Development Bank's special development fund.
- The Caribbean Development Bank over years has supported countries with funding for disaster risk management related initiatives.
- The Caribbean Development Bank recognises that there should also be grant funding in order to incentivise countries to do more in disaster risk management and climate change.

Ms. Elizabeth Riley, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency

- Resilience building is key to Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency's operations.
- Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency works very closely with the civil military coordination as well as the body working on crime and security.
- Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency has been putting a lot of effort on resource mobilisation and coordination between the national agencies such as fire, police, military etc.
- Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency follows a comprehensive disaster management strategy hence the participating states and partners in building resilience are already working towards meeting these targets.

2nd Section: Beginning of a Novel Chapter in the Caribbean Region

Mr. Ronald Jackson, Disaster Risk and Recovery Team, UNDP

- Building strong disaster risk governance across countries and globally.

- Strengthening inter agency collaboration for better reach and partnership across the stakeholders and maximise the impact.
- Moving forward, it would be critical to work closely with Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency to respond to crisis in a timely manner and prepare for any future disaster.
- Also with COVID19 and restrictions in mobility, it would be great if Avoidable Deaths Network can bring in a few innovations and digitalisation into the current strategies and initiatives.

Audience Questions and Answers

1) How could a regional human security force use forecast threshold triggers to activate rapid risk reduction & preparedness SOPs combining military logistical/service delivery w/social service systems?

There is a regional coordination system led by Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency and its leads and works on the Early Warning Systems to support the member states and work with national focal points which reach out to them to mitigate national triggers. Then both regionally and nationally the emergency response coordination body work towards responding to various triggers by activating the emergency response coordination systems.

2) How do you perceive yourself and your institution within the broader disaster risk management system?

- The Royal Granada Police Force must adopt a learning mindset to disaster risk management issues, engaging with all stakeholders by continually training and evolving to meet the risk that potentially can come from the system.
- The Caribbean Association of Fire Chief are pivotal to disaster risk management through continuous training on issues impacting the region.
- At Caribbean Urban Search and Rescue, we are always prepared and in constant training by adapting to varying response scenarios because of the changing dynamics of disasters.

3) Do you think there is an opportunity to improve the public good in times of crisis through togetherness and partnership amongst civilians, defence, emergency services, the UN, CDEMA, for example?

- We cannot afford to operate in silos to protect lives and properties, hence the need to continue collaborating with stakeholders and the community because partnership bridges deficiency and improves capabilities.
- All stakeholders like the police, fire, ambulance VDS, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency must work together with the community. Stakeholders' collaboration is needed to create a resilient community and region.
- Educating and guiding the community in disaster management will minimise damage and losses. Collaboration and joint exercises with the authorities & stakeholders are essential.

4) How critical are early warning systems to the risk reduction planning process?

- Early warning systems creates the best opportunity to plan, prepare and respond to disasters. Besides, any improvement in the early warning system will certainly enhance our response and preparation and prepare the community for the disaster.
- Early warning systems prepare the responders and move persons from dangerous and susceptible areas into a safe zone. It is critical considering its role in the volcanic eruption in St Vincent and the Grenadines and other hurricanes.
- Early warning systems are vital and helpful to disaster risk reduction.