

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

10th December 2021

About the Symposium

When your house is on fire, who do you call?

When your house is flooded or about to flood, who do you call?

When you need help to evacuate your house, who do you call?

When a national government is overwhelmed with an emergency, who do they call?

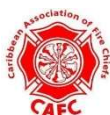
Answers to all these questions are the first responders (aka category 1 responders).

First responders consist of the affected community, emergency services, and defence (Ray-Bennett, 2018).

The one-day symposium entitled ‘**Integrating Disaster Risk management with Defence and Emergency Services for Avoidable Disaster Deaths**’ will bring together the emergency services (viz. fire and rescue, ambulance) and defence (viz. Navy, Air Force and Army) to understand the role that they play in reducing avoidable disaster deaths in the Caribbean region. Avoidable deaths are those deaths that can be avoided through preventable measures (public health intervention), amenable measures (timely intervention), and disaster risk governance (Ray-

Bennett *et al.*, forthcoming). Avoiding disaster deaths and the number of people affected by disasters is currently part of the UN’s Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction’s first two Global Targets.

This one-day symposium will explore the strategies, tactics, and actions that the emergency services and defence undertake in collaboration with disaster management authorities and alike, to reduce avoidable disaster deaths. Also, it will explore the challenges that they experience and the lessons that can be learned from these challenges to improve their practice in the Caribbean region.



The Caribbean region is highly hazard-prone. Between 2000 and 2020, the Caribbean region experienced 359 disaster events which resulted in cumulative totals of 241,346 deaths, 616,327 people injured, 379,999,322 people affected by a disaster, and 574,678 people were left homeless (EM-DAT, 2021). Although data related to emergency services and defence's role during these disasters in the Caribbean region is lacking, in 2017 following the passage of category 5 Hurricane Maria over the island of Dominica, Badri-Maharaj (2017) noted the role that the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) played in coordinating the disaster response, spearheaded by the defence forces of Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Barbados and the Bahamas. Police departments from Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Grenada, Saint Lucia and Jamaica were also deployed for disaster response (Badri-Maharaj, 2017).

As climate-induced natural hazards continue to increase at a rapid scale due to global warming, these responders will play an even more critical role than ever to reduce the number of avoidable disaster deaths and people affected by disasters. It is therefore important to maintain records of the roles that the defence and the emergency services play during disasters to improve policy. It is equally important to hear their voices and experiences so that lessons can be learnt to put in place (e.g., for capacity-building measures) to improve disaster response and recovery.

Currently, the voices of the first-level responders are either not heard or are not celebrated in the mainstream disaster risk reduction and development conferences or symposiums. They discuss and celebrate their experiences within the confines of their domains, departments, and platforms. This symposium will therefore be path-breaking by bringing the voices of first-level disaster responders to the fore, and cross-pollinate cognate services including the emergency services, defence and disaster management authorities for mutual learning, capacity building, and reimagine practices for collaboration to reduce avoidable disaster deaths to achieve the UNs Sustainable Development Goals 1 (No Poverty), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and 13 (Climate Action). These Goals and their specific Targets (1.5, 3.8, 11.5 and 13.1) are directly connected to the Sendai Framework's Goals of reducing the number of disaster deaths and the number of people affected by disasters (UN, 2015, UNISDR, 2017).



More Information

For more information, please follow this website: <https://www.avoidable-deaths.net/events-2/symposium/>

References

Badri-Maharaj, S. (2017) *The Response of CARICOM Armed Forces to Hurricane Maria*. Available at: https://idsa.in/idsacomments/the-response-of-caricom-armed-forces-to-hurricane-maria_sbmarharaj_061217 [Accessed 9 Sept 2021]

EM-DAT (2021) *Public Data*. Available at: <https://public.emdat.be/data> [Accessed 20 August 2021].

Ray-Bennett, N.S. (2018) *Avoidable Deaths: A Systems Failure Approach to Disaster Risk Management*. Switzerland: Springer Nature.

Ray-Bennett, N.S. et al., (forthcoming) *Avoidable Deaths from the Impact of COVID-19 and Economic Lockdown in India*. <https://www.avoidable-deaths.net/ongoing-projects/project-avoidable-deaths-covid-report/>

UN (2015) *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*. Geneva: UNISDR. Available at: <http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/43291> [Accessed 9 September 2021].

UNISDR (2017) *Technical Guidance for Monitoring and Reporting on Progress in Achieving the Global Targets of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction: Collection of Technical Notes on Data and Methodology*. UNISDR. Available at: <https://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/54970> [Accessed 9 September 2021].

Note

The description of the symposium is written by Dr Nibedita S. Ray-Bennett, Mr Julian Coetzee, Mr Daniel Mendez and Mr Krishna Clarke.

Image: Copyright of Alois Hirschmugl, D.M.A.T.

© Avoidable Deaths Network (2021)