

Implementing the Roadmap for a Caribbean First Responders Community (CFRC)

A proposal submitted by the Avoidable Deaths
Network (ADN) for consideration by the
Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management
Agency (CDEMA)

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CFRC	The Caribbean First Responders Community
CDEMA	The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
ADN	The Avoidable Deaths Network
CARICOM	The Caribbean Community
CDM	Comprehensive Disaster Management
CDM CHC	The CDM Coordination and Harmonisation Council
RMM	The Regional Response Mechanism
CDRU	The CARICOM Disaster Relief Unit
COST	The CARICOM Operational Support Team
CDAC	The CARICOM Disaster Assessment and Coordination unit
RNAT	The Rapid Needs Assessment Team
CDPDG	The Caribbean Development Partners Donor Group
RSS	The Regional Security System
FCDO (UK)	The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, UK
UNDP	The United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
KAPTC	The Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre

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Executive Summary

A region as diverse and vulnerable as the Caribbean requires a continually vigilant, collaborative and coordinated approach to major disaster events. To address these complexities the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), established by CARICOM to coordinate cross-border disaster management efforts of its constituent states, applies the principles and practice of Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM), acknowledging the need for an anticipatory approach to disaster management, viewing hazard exposure as an ongoing process of reducing vulnerability across all sectors.

The goal of the current CDM Strategy for the region, 2014-2024, to achieve the vision of a disaster resilient and sustainable Caribbean, is addressed through four priority areas: strengthened institutional arrangements; increased and sustained knowledge management and learning; improved integration of CDM at sectoral levels; and strengthened and sustained community resilience. CDEMA is responsible for operationalising the CDM, working through its Participating States. Oversight is provided by the CDM Coordination and Harmonisation Council (CDM CHC), convened by the CDEMA Coordinating Unit and including 23 other members from development partner representatives, sector leaders, Participating States and private sector.

When the capacity of an affected State to address a disaster event is overwhelmed, the Regional Response Mechanism (RRM) is activated. The RRM is a network of Participating States and national, regional and international stakeholders as the instrument for coordination external response and relief operations. It is guided by the CDEMA Coordinating Unit and works through the National Disaster Offices.

CDEMA's responsibility for coordinating the CDM strategy and the RRM can be complex and challenging, given the involvement of so many organisational entities, the large number of professionals they represent, and their mix of international, regional and national jurisdictions. Alleviating this challenge would go far in improving the ability of the RRM, and CDEMA in general, to achieve the vision of a disaster-resilient and sustainable Caribbean.

To examine this issue a virtual symposium, '**Integrating Disaster Risk Management with Emergency Services and Defence to Reduce Avoidable Disaster Deaths**' was convened by the Avoidable Deaths Network (ADN) on 10 December 2021. Among the items covered, one item stood out: the need for improving communication, coordination and collaboration (the "3C's") between the actors providing the first line of response in disaster situations – community volunteers, humanitarian organisations, emergency services, and defence agencies – and with critical support partners from governments, disaster coordination organisations, donor agencies, and private sector providers of logistical support. Accordingly, a key conclusion of the Symposium was to create a regional network connecting all first responders operating in the Caribbean and their critical support partners, in order to promote interaction and share knowledge and experience.

To assess the need for this network, ADN arranged a series of stakeholder consultations between April and July 2022, with financing from a grant from its host institute, the University of Leicester. Consultations revealed a strong interest from all parties in addressing capacity gaps and the 3C's through this network. It also received a positive reception from CDEMA, drawing on its coordination mandate to function as the network's convener.

The Caribbean First Responders Community. Drawing on the ideas and perspectives gained from the consultations, a "Roadmap" has been developed to establish the Caribbean First Responders Community (CFRC), connecting the key actors engaged in and supporting

efforts to respond to disaster events in the countries and sovereign territories of the Caribbean, through enhanced communication, coordination and collaboration, reinforcing the Regional CDM Strategy and the RRM, reducing avoidable disaster deaths and mitigating the extent of disruption. The Community – people with a common profession or interest coming together in a voluntary association to share knowledge and experience (without detracting from or duplicating their current affiliations) – would address issues drawn from the consultations: community-building, capacity-building, standardisation, team-building, and sustainability. Membership would be open to all professionals or volunteers involved with or interested in the various aspects of disaster response and reducing disaster deaths in the Caribbean, including Civil Society, NGOs, Emergency Services, Defence, critical support partners, specialists from academia, think tanks and consulting firms, the private sector, and the media. The Community would be convened by the CDEMA Coordinating Unit and guided by the CDM CHC (with the addition of ADN) acting as the Advisory Group. Members would participate in their personal capacities as professionals, interacting primarily over a virtual forum to share information, consult on challenges faced, collaborate on group assignments and engage target audiences through team-based interventions.

The Operating Model. The model suggested for building a Caribbean First Responders Community subscribes professionals to a moderated group forum with two channels – a social media channel (“Share”) for sharing of information, news and views, and an email-based consultation channel (“Consult”) for members to respond to queries or discussion questions posed by other members. These channels create the trust-based relationships necessary for collaboration on assignments and team-based interventions. The Consult process is structured and time-bound. The email thread is compiled and summarised in a Consolidated Reply, which is posted to the group and indexed in a public repository, making it available for reuse by anyone anywhere in the world with a similar challenge. Both channels are actively moderated by the community’s Facilitator, who monitors and approves all messages posted to the group to ensure they are positive and constructive, helps members frame queries for the Consult channel, guides conversation threads, prepares Consolidated Replies, and works behind the scenes to encourage member participation.

Beyond the Share and Consult virtual channels, the model uses a collaboration platform and tools for teams (“Action Groups”) to develop products – standardised guidelines, protocols, policies, etc. – generated by the consultations or sponsored by Advisory Group members. And subject to resource availability, the Community would meet face-to-face in an “Annual Forum,” applying time-tested interactive processes for maximising member interaction, networking, and peer-to-peer learning. Ultimately the Community is ready to take on team-based interventions, advocacy campaigns for Action Group products, and other forms of engagement that call for trust-based relationships.

Thus, the operating model is designed to increasingly deepen member interaction, beginning with the Share channel to build member familiarity, moving to the Consult channel where members develop trust-based professional relationships, which facilitates their participation in collaborative ventures and team-based engagements.

The Community Roadmap. The journey from sharing to consulting to collaborating to engaging is detailed as a Roadmap, provisionally lasting 18 to 24 months, depending on the size of the Community and the degree of trust-building required. Upon securing financing and approval, a 3-month Preparatory Phase puts in place the components necessary to operationalise the Community – staffing, training, platforms, subscribing members etc. The Start Up Phase (4-6 months) begins with the Community’s launch of the Share and Consult channels, which continue, as more members are added, up to the “proof-of-concept” point where the Advisory Group gauges its performance and, if satisfactory, approves extending operations into the Transition Phase. This Phase (4-6 months) continues the Share and Consult channels and member growth, adds collaboration activities (“Action Groups”), and,

funds permitting, arranges a face-to-face Annual Forum to strengthen Community cohesion. The Transition Phase is also when Advisory Group members agree to take over responsibility for financing Community operations and assure its sustainability as long as it remains valued and valuable to its members. The Institutionalisation Phase (7-9 months) adds team-based interventions and other engagement activities, and begins the Advisory Group financing arrangement, which marks the completion of the development effort and continuation of the initiative as a sustained, Community-led and -owned operation.

Implementation of this Roadmap would be through a project to reinforce the implementation of the CDM Strategy, reduce avoidable deaths, and mitigating the extent of disruption from disaster events in the countries and sovereign territories of the Caribbean region through the establishment of a vibrant, valued and sustained Caribbean First Responders Community. Once approved and funded, the project would deliver four outputs, corresponding to the four Roadmap phases (Preparatory, Start Up, Transition, Institutionalisation). Costed project inputs are relatively light, consisting primarily of a full-time Facilitator, with additional operating costs for communications, travel and translation, contributing to platform licenses, and finances permitting, convening an Annual Forum. Start-up costs entail contracted advisory services to field and train the facilitator and for providing on a gradually reducing level advice and guidance on the different aspects of the operating model.

The project would be managed by the relevant unit in the CDEMA Coordinating Unit, assisted by the Facilitator for reporting and budget management. Community organisation would follow the operating model – The CDM CHC (with the ADN) would function as the Advisory Group to set priorities and performance targets, review progress and impact and encourage participation. The head of the CDEMA Coordinating Unit would be the Community Convener, to organise the Community and host and supervise the Facilitator, who manages the services provided to the Community. Community performance would be measured using a time-tested system of metrics derived from targets set by the Advisory Group and surveys rating member satisfaction. Impact indicators would track member feedback on the usefulness of the consultations and Action Group deliverables, and ratings from the Advisory Group on the impact of the Community on addressing the CDM agenda.

The Community would rely on project financing for the initial 12-15 months of operations, after which the Advisory Group would commit to generating resources to sustain operations for the remaining 7-9 months and continuing beyond the project period for as long as the Community remains valuable to its members.

The Value Proposition. A Caribbean Community of First Responders reduces avoidable deaths and mitigates disruption for vulnerable local communities, improves Community members' effectiveness and expands their professional networks, open up research opportunities through ADN's international network of research hubs, as well as capacity-building training and study opportunities through access to comparative experiences, expertise and resources available globally, improve the capacity of the Regional Training Centre, implementation of the Regional CDM Strategy, and contribute to the implementation of the United Nations Sendai Framework's targets and priorities globally.

Considerations. The document responds to potential concerns and constraints to Roadmap implementation, including design issues, constraints to membership and participation, and technology issues.

Project Proposal for Implementing the Roadmap for a Caribbean First Responders Community (CFRC)

I. Context and Justification

The vulnerability of the Caribbean region to a wide range of hazards is well known. Most of the countries in the Caribbean are within the recognised "hurricane belt" and prone to storm impacts. These countries also experience seismic and frequent volcanic activity, landslides, floods and severe droughts. Being situated along major international transportation routes exposes the Caribbean to the threat of global disease epidemics and pollution of marine environments. With countries becoming more industrialised, the possibility of major hazardous material accidents and mass casualty incidents also increases.

The Caribbean is the world's second most hazard-prone region, with many examples of crippling hazard impacts. For some disasters triggered by natural hazards, damages well exceed the size of the country's economy.¹ Regular annual disaster losses have been estimated at US\$3 billion with significant losses to social and productive sectors². Impacts from climate-related hazards will only intensify as a result of climate change.

Added to the geophysical challenges facing the region is the fact that the Caribbean consists of 33 sovereign countries and dependent territories, departments and municipalities of European nations,³ only 20 of which are full or associate members of the region's political body, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The region has four national languages – English, Spanish, French and Dutch. Construction standards and other legal regulations are based on British, French, Dutch, Spanish and American systems. And national economies are generally small (including several Least Developed Countries (LDC)), with limited resource bases and high levels of external debt.

Comprehensive Disaster Management

A region this diverse and this vulnerable, along with the relatively small sized, widely dispersed locations and limited capacities of most of its countries and territories, requires a continuously vigilant, collaborative and coordinated approach to major disaster events. Accordingly, in 1991 CARICOM established the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Relief Agency – CDERA – to coordinate cross-border disaster relief efforts of its constituent states. In 2009 CDERA transitioned to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency – CDEMA – to fully embrace the principles and practice of Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM), acknowledging the need to shift from a reactive approach to disaster management, focusing on individual hazards, to an anticipatory approach, where hazard exposure is viewed as an ongoing process of reducing vulnerability across all sectors.

¹ For instance, Dominica suffered damages amounting to 226 percent of GDP from the impact of hurricanes Maria and Irma in 2017. This meant that Dominica's output was to take at least 5 years to recover to pre-hurricane levels (Muñoz, S. and Ötger, I. (2018) 'Building Resilience to Natural Disasters in the Caribbean Requires Greater Preparedness'. International Monetary Fund. Available online: <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2018/12/07/NA120718-Building-Resilience-to-Natural-Disasters-in-Caribbean-Requires-Greater-Preparedness>)

² CDEMA (2014) *Regional Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy & Results Framework, 2014-2024*, p.17. CDEMA publication. This figure from 2014 has undoubtedly increased significantly.

³ Including Bermuda

Key features of Comprehensive Disaster Management are that it (i) recognises that strengthening preparedness for better response is critical, (ii) considers all types of hazards, (iii) addresses all phases of the disaster management cycle, i.e., prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and rehabilitation, (iv) promotes a “culture of safety”, (v) encourages strategic partner alliances, and (vi) advocates for the empowerment of sector partners to take responsibility for promoting and leading the advancement of CDM in their constituencies⁴. Three CDM strategies for the Caribbean Region have been produced by CDEMA, 2001-2006, 2007-2012, and the current version, 2014-2024.

The goal of the current CDM Strategy for the region is to achieve the vision of a disaster-resilient and sustainable Caribbean, addressed through four priority areas: strengthened institutional arrangements for CDM; increased and sustained knowledge management and learning for CDM; improved integration of CDM at sectoral levels; and strengthened and sustained community resilience. Each priority is to be delivered through a set of “Regional Outcomes,” complemented with cross-cutting themes for gender, climate change, information and communications technology, and environmental sustainability. To track CDM implementation a Performance Monitoring Framework has been established, with specific measurable indicators for the overall goal, priority areas and each regional outcome and cross-cutting theme.

CDEMA is responsible for operationalising the CDM, working with its Participating States. Oversight is provided by the CDM Coordination and Harmonisation Council (CDM CHC), convened by the CDEMA Coordinating Unit and including 23 other members from development partner representatives, sector leaders, Participating States and the private sector. The Council has the following key functions:

- To provide overall guidance to CDM development and implementation.
- To facilitate the effective coordination and harmonisation of the CDM implementation process.
- To facilitate learning and knowledge management of CDM among key stakeholders.

The Regional Response Mechanism (RRM)⁵

The Regional Response Mechanism (RRM) is a network of CDEMA Participating States and national, regional and international disaster stakeholders through which external response and relief operations in support of an impacted CDEMA Participating State are coordinated. It is the implementation instrument for the Regional Disaster Support Doctrine, developed in response to the mandate of CDEMA to provide disaster response support.

The RRM is activated when the capacity of the affected State to address a disaster event is overwhelmed. Operations are based on four fundamental principles:

- **Respect for Sovereignty** by all external partners, so that assistance from external responding parties are always in support of the national mechanism.
- **Regional Solidarity**, where all Participating States adhere to the regional philosophy of Comprehensive Disaster Management and operate using the same models and standards
- **Compliance with International Humanitarian Principles**, covering the major international humanitarian law instruments on Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality and Independence

⁴ *Regional Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy & Results Framework, 2014-2024*, p.7

⁵ CDEMA (2016) *The Regional Response Mechanism*. CDEMA Publication.

- **Adherence to Principles of Partnership** – transparency, result-oriented approach, responsibility and complementarity.

The RRM is coordinated by the CDEMA Coordinating Unit, working through the National Disaster Offices of the Participating States. Coverage is divided into four sub-regions – North-Western, Eastern, Central, and Southern – to allow for better coordination of operations. Five standard regional response units provide surge capacity to an impacted Participating State – CARICOM Disaster Relief Unit (CDRU); CARICOM Operational Support Team (COST) for emergency coordination; CARICOM Disaster Assessment and Coordination (CDAC) for initial humanitarian needs assessments; Rapid Needs Assessment Team (RNAT) for initial sectoral assessments; and Regional Search and Rescue Team (RSART) for search and rescue. The RRM can also mobilise specialised Technical Support Teams based on the nature of the hazard and request from the impacted state.

The RRM includes the Regional Security System (RSS), which supports the “disciplined forces” (fire, police and military) with training and capacity development through its Regional Training Centre (RTC) and, as part of the CDRU, provides logistic support to CDEMA’s response teams, supplies and equipment and for performing reconnaissance missions over impacted areas. Finally, the CDEMA Coordinating Unit also co-chairs with the UN Resident Coordinator in Barbados the Caribbean Development Partners Donor Group (CDPDG) to coordinate international support from development partners.

The RRM is currently benefiting from the project “Targeted Support to CDEMA,” funded by Canada, intended to strengthen its capacity to fulfil its mandate by improving CDM within the Participating States, with particular emphasis on women and other vulnerable groups in disaster-prone areas.

The involvement of so many organisational entities, the large number of professionals they represent, and their mix of international, regional and national jurisdictions can make CDEMA’s coordination responsibility complex and challenging. Ameliorating this challenge would go far in improving the ability of the RRM, and CDEMA in general, to achieve the vision articulated in the CDM Strategy of a disaster resilient and sustainable Caribbean.

The Symposium on Reducing Avoidable Deaths, December 2021

Whenever a disaster strikes, first responders from emergency services, defence agencies, 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 domains, and are neither coordinating their relief work nor sharing the learnings from their experiences.

To examine this issue in greater depth a one-day virtual symposium, **Integrating Disaster Risk management with Emergency Services and Defence to Reduce Avoidable Disaster Deaths**⁶ was convened by the Avoidable Deaths Network (ADN) on 10 December 2021. The symposium attracted more than 500 viewers, and featured 16 presenters and 6 discussants from emergency services, defence, researchers and policy influencers from the disaster and development sectors to explore:

- the strategies, tactics, and actions that emergency services and defence undertake in collaboration with disaster management authorities and alike to reduce avoidable disaster deaths;

⁶ Avoidable Deaths Network (2021) *Integrating Disaster Risk management with Emergency Services and Defence to Reduce Avoidable Disaster Deaths*. <https://www.avoidable-deaths.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Symposium-Report-FINAL.pdf>

- 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.

Among the items covered by the symposium presenters and discussants, one item stood out: the need for improving communication, coordination and collaboration (the “3C’s”) between the multiple actors providing the first line of response in disaster situations. Each type of first responder has a specific role to play in disaster situations that, if taken advantage of, would provide a unique and critical contribution to an overall coordinated effort:

- Community volunteers (local community-based organisations and volunteer associations) are the first persons on the scene of a disaster and can provide immediate assistance. They can also help other first responders 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.
- Humanitarian organisations (local and international Non-Governmental Organisations) provide relief supplies, assistance with medical care and trauma counselling etc.
- Emergency services (fire, police, search and rescue) have the expertise and equipment needed to stabilise a disaster situation and save lives and property
- Defence agencies (national and international military services) add critical capacity to larger-scale events, offering self-supported units that can deploy in any location or situation.
- Critical support partners (local and national government authorities, disaster coordination agencies, financing agencies, and private sector organisations providing logistical support – communications, supplies, equipment etc.) ensure that the first responders are effectively guided, coordinated, resourced and equipped to perform their roles effectively.

Although the opportunity was acknowledged, Symposium discussions touched on the complexities involved in working more closely as a team, including differing operating protocols, jurisdictional issues, hierarchy issues, and lack of interaction constraining closer personal connections.

Reflecting on these discussions, a key conclusion of the Symposium was the clear need to increase interaction and collaboration among all first responders in national disaster planning, relief and mitigation efforts. Two important avenues mentioned for addressing this need were jointly organised drills and training workshops and creating a regional network connecting first responders of all agencies operating in the Caribbean to facilitate familiarity and trust, promote interaction, and share knowledge and experience.

In terms of the next steps, the Avoidable Deaths Network committed, among other items, to organise a virtual stakeholder meeting for the Caribbean Region to discuss how the ADN can support the first responders in the region with capacity building, evidence generation and knowledge management.

The Consultation Process, April-July 2022

To meet this commitment, the ADN succeeded in obtaining a grant from its host agency, the University of Leicester, directed towards maximising the benefits that the University’s research and academic knowledge bring to the external, non-academic world. The project, “Exploring the Feasibility and Value of a Regional Network for First Responders (RN4FR) to Reduce Avoidable Deaths in the Caribbean Region,” intended to develop a roadmap for the

creation of this regional network, through a series of stakeholder consultations using a combination of online surveys, virtual sessions, and a face-to-face meeting with the principal stakeholders in Bridgetown, Barbados. The key issues addressed were organised around stakeholders' views on capacity gaps of first responder organisations, opportunities for improved communication, consultation and collaboration (3C's), and interest in participating in a regional network for first responders. The level of stakeholder engagement was relatively strong and representative – 71 surveys were received from defence, emergency services, humanitarian/community and critical support partner representatives; separate virtual sessions held for humanitarian organisation/ community groups, emergency services and defence agencies attracted 16, 12, and 9 participants, respectively; a final virtual “Stakeholders Workshop” brought together 33 participants, including many of the December Symposium presenters, to review and build on the findings of the survey and virtual events; the wrap-up sessions in Bridgetown included a “hybrid” session with 15 participants chaired by the Regional Security System (RSS), and one-on-one meetings between the ADN team and FCDO (UK), UNDP, Caribbean Development Bank, Barbados Fire Service, RSS, Queen Elizabeth Hospital Emergency Ambulance Service and Barbados Red Cross, concluding with a final session with CDEMA.

In general, the consultations revealed a strong interest from all parties in addressing capacity gaps and the 3C's through a network of first responders, as well as a positive reception from CDEMA, drawing on its coordination mandate, to function as the network's convener. Also, an opportunity to collaborate with ADN to develop the capacity of the Regional Training Centre.

The successful conclusion of the grant award saw the key stakeholders confirming the feasibility and value of the Regional Network for First Responders in the Caribbean, and the consultations brought out the key features needed for more effective implementation of the CDM Strategy and the RRM.

II. The Caribbean First Responders Community

Community Identity

While there was general agreement that the first responders and their support partners would benefit from continual virtual interaction, the idea that it should be a new network was perceived as adding one more organisational entity to a landscape already crowded with networks, committees and other groupings designed for similar purposes. (Respondents to the survey question “Are you aware of any existing networks of first responders in the Caribbean region?” identified sixteen.) During the consultations, it was recommended that a better way to conceptualise the intention is to frame it as the “community” of first responders in the Caribbean. Unlike a structured “network” a community is a group of people with a common profession or interest, usually working in different organisations, who come together in a voluntary association to share knowledge and experience, generate familiarity and trust, and build personal and professional bonds for increasing individual effectiveness and collective influence. Professional Associations are a good example – professionals come from varied, even competing companies, but they have a common interest in networking with peers and learning of new developments in their field. For first responders in the Caribbean, offering membership in a community of like-minded professionals is a better way for them to interact without detracting from or duplicating any of their current affiliations.

Before work can begin on a roadmap for a community, the nature of its identity – what motivates the members to come together – should be clearly articulated through the following four dimensions:

- **Focus** (“Who we are”): Spells out the purpose of the community – its overall intentions and aspirations, including how it supports the fulfilment of a global, regional or country mandate.
- **Scope** (“What we talk about”): The main issues addressed by the community, organised around topics that members can consult the group to obtain experiences, insights and advice.
- **Membership** (“Who should join”): The range of professionals interested in belonging to a community that shares their purpose and the issues they are concerned with.
- **Leadership** (“Who guides the community”): Specifies the agency convening the community and describes the members of the community’s oversight body (the “Advisory Group.”)

These four dimensions of a Caribbean First Responders Community are captured in a one-page “Leaflet,” presented in **Annex 1**, and elaborated in more detail below. The wording of the text would be subject to discussion, and then formalised in the Community’s “Charter.”

Focus (who we are). Suggested text: *The Caribbean First Responders Community connects the key actors engaged in and supporting efforts to respond to disaster events in the countries and sovereign territories of the Caribbean, leveraging the power of community to reinforce the Regional Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Strategy, reduce avoidable disaster deaths, and mitigate the extent of disruption through enhanced communication, coordination and collaboration.*

The focus of the Community for Caribbean First Responders represents a job objective of every Community member, both first responders themselves and those working in their supporting partner organisations. It touches on the disaster response dimension of all four priority areas of the Regional Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy and the principles of the Regional Response Mechanism developed by CDEMA as the unifying approach to disaster management for its 20 participating states and is applicable to non-CDEMA countries and sovereign territories as well. And it clarifies the Community’s purpose of reinforcing CDM and RRM implementation by enhancing the “3C’s” – communication, coordination and collaboration.

Scope (what we talk about). Suggested text: *The Community addresses the full range of relevant issues, including*

- **Community-building** – creating familiarity and trust among stakeholders; information-sharing; knowledge-networking
- **Capacity-building** – ensuring adequate staffing, **training**⁷, systems, budgets and equipment of first responder organisations
- **Standardisation** – of systems and procedures for disaster response and training across First Responders and Caribbean countries and sovereign territories
- **Team-building** – a common communications platform; joint exercises; intervention planning
- **Sustainability** – sufficient secure financing; institutionalised governance arrangements

⁷ See Annex 4: Capacity Building Plan in Phases

These five issues were derived from the consultations to determine the interest in and viability of a Regional Network for First Responders. Sample statements are below:

Community-building – creating familiarity and trust among stakeholders; information-sharing; knowledge-networking

- *“No organisation can operate alone, and as such human relations or lack of it is a critical gap which is transversal across departments, agencies and countries.”*
- *“Mutual respect;” “build effective trust”*
- *“Establish a shared vision and objectives”*
- *“Better understanding of each other’s roles and mandates”*
- *“If we work on building relationship in peace or normal times, then in disaster times it would be easier to work cross border”*

Capacity-building – ensuring adequate staffing, training, systems, budgets and equipment of first responder organisations

- *“Lack of training and equipment, lack of financial support, lack of organisational support, lack of manpower [Emergency Services]”*
- *“There are not enough volunteers as first responders and then there are not enough resources to meet the needs for same [Humanitarian]”*
- *“There are limited trained individuals and those that are available the organisations are under-resourced: financially and limited assets [Humanitarian]”*
- *“We need common exercises and a strategic common capacity development [Emergency Services]”*
- *“The capacity gaps depend on the commanders’ intent. We have an obligation to serve NATO and secure Home nation’s borders [Defence]”*

Standardisation – of systems and procedures for disaster response and training across First Responders and Caribbean countries and sovereign territories

- *“We need standardisation in the region with clear roles and responsibilities. Oftentimes we work in isolation or as seen as competition in our own country”*
- *“Common systems, collaborative training and exercising, understanding the hazard and vulnerability assessment”*
- *“Standardisation of management structures, or a similar framework based on the ICS that can be adopted by all parties”*
- *“Joint committees on operational standards and training with all key stakeholders would facilitate closer and enhanced “3C’s” among these groups and remove many of the barriers between civilian and military agencies”*
- *“Interoperability of operations”*
- *“Standardised training because the region is small”*
- *“One level of technical skill that can be understood by the community of first responders”*

Team-building – a common communications platform; joint exercises; intervention planning

- *“Knowledge of other organisation’s capacities - who to call for assistance or where to access assistance/support”*
- *“Cross-sectoral coordination with actions that support each other instead of actions that overlap”*

- *“Common training and especially exercises.” “Organise a training and exercise system for the Caribbean, supported by a strategy and analysis for capacity development”*
- *“Implement and use common communication networks”*
- *“Strengthen existing coordination mechanisms”*

Sustainability – sufficient secure financing; institutionalised governance arrangements

- *“Commitment from the governmental level first and foremost so that the framework/resources can then be allocated for interagency 3C’s.”*
- *“Once our leaders are fully committed (and not just paying lip service), the resources will follow as in my experience I have seen that persons are willing to help, we just don’t know how to.”*
- *“Policies and procedures to be documented to be able to gain political support”*
- *“An established framework that is supported by senior management that covers areas such as interagency 3C’s, training, the authority having jurisdiction, first among equals etc.”*
- *“Advocacy for legislation;” “Update or introduce policies”*

These topics group the broad range of issues relevant to Caribbean first responders, so that any issue of relevance to this Community would fall within one or the other topic. As such, they are not intended to be exclusive; rather, they should capture everything that the Community members would be interested in addressing with their peers.

Membership (who should join). Suggested text: *You should join this Community if you are a professional or volunteer involved with or interested in the various aspects of disaster response and reducing disaster deaths in the Caribbean, are located within or outside of the region, and are*

- *from an NGO or Civil Society Organisation providing humanitarian assistance in disaster situations,*
- *an officer or technician of an Emergency Service – Fire, Police, Search & Rescue*
- *from a national or international Defence Service*
- *working for a critical support partner providing coordination, financing, relief supplies, or logistics*
- *an official or authority from a relevant national, local or community-level government administration or political body; a community leader*
- *a specialist working in a think tank, academia or as an independent consultant*
- *from the business community*
- *from the media*

Membership is comparable to a professional association – even though members work in very different organisations, they all have a common interest in minimising deaths and disruption from disaster events. Bringing them together in an impartial informal platform helps them connect and interact as professional peers, to build familiarity and trust, and help each other work more effectively. In addition improving capacities and the “3C’s,” humanitarian, emergency service and defence officials and practitioners tap into the Community for comparable experiences to address an unfamiliar challenge; Government officials and authorities use it to help shape policies and ensure appropriateness and relevance; donor officials get feedback on project designs so they don’t reinvent the wheel; academics, researchers and private sector members identify knowledge or resource gaps they could help address; media professionals get compelling stories for

their audiences. The forum also helps the Community as a whole to be more effective, as existing practices are sharpened and new insights and innovations disseminated.

Leadership (who guides the community). Suggested text: *The Community is convened by the Caribbean Emergency Disaster Management Agency (CDEMA) and guided by the CDM Coordination and Harmonisation Council, representing the key actors in the implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy, acting as the Community's Advisory Group.*

A community's convener is the person in the position of authority to take responsibility for organising the community, and who hosts and supervises the Facilitation Team that manages the services provided to the community. Given that CDEMA's mandate covers coordination of Caribbean disaster management agencies, it would be the most appropriate organisation to convene the Community, facilitating its coordination efforts by providing an informal forum where partners continually communicate.

A community's "Advisory Group" represents its key institutional actors and speaks on behalf of the community's membership. It is typically between 15-25 members, but the numbers are flexible. Its role is to guide and advise on the overall direction of the community, set targets and monitor performance and impact, encourage membership growth and participation, and commission discussions and small-group assignments on the key issues facing, in this case, Caribbean disaster response. Given that composition and responsibilities of the CDM Coordination and Harmonisation Council are closely aligned with this responsibility, it would be advantageous to add Community operations to its regular meetings as an agenda item rather than creating a separate arrangement. The ADN would be added to the group with respect to this item, in light of its association with the activities of the Community.

What participation entails. Suggested text: *Members of the Community interact primarily over a virtual forum to **share** information, **consult** on challenges faced, **collaborate** on group assignments and **engage** target audiences through team-based interventions. They participate in their personal capacities as professionals. See [[website](#)] for more information and to sign up.*

This is a brief descriptive paragraph explaining what professionals can expect by becoming members. The different offerings are spelled out in the "Operating Model," below.

III. The Operating Model

The Community-building Process

Establishing a vibrant and successful community is done through a process called "community-building" – connecting professionals from disparate levels, situations and outlooks but common goals and offering them a forum where they can share information, consult each other on challenges faced, and collaborate on assignments and, in this case, team-based interventions for disaster events. Community-building can be a relatively complex process. It calls for building trust among its members before sharing and collaboration can take place – if you don't trust someone you will not trust the knowledge they offer, nor can you rely on them when collaboration is called for. And it must be managed by a skilled facilitator to guide community interaction, encourage participation, keep conversations positive and constructive, and leverage trust-building opportunities.

The model suggested for building a Caribbean First Responders Community is to subscribe members to a moderated group forum with two channels – a social media platform for sharing of information, news and views, and a consultation platform for members to respond to queries or discussion questions posed by other members. These channels create the trust-based relationships necessary for collaboration on assignments and team-based interventions.

The social media channel, called “Share,” uses one of the many social networking applications available for informal group interaction – Slack, Discourse, Tribe, etc. – for members to post event announcements, job opportunities, articles and podcasts of interest, reference material, etc. that others would find of interest, as well as respond to simple “one-answer questions” to information requests. In sharing information, members learn more about each other’s interests and areas of expertise, generating familiarity and collegial relationships across professional affiliations.

The consultation channel, called “Consult,” uses an email group application – Mailman, Groups.io etc. – for Community members facing a challenge to tap into their colleagues’ knowledge to obtain experiences, insights and solutions to help with problem-solving. While Share uses a fast-turnaround format for exchanging information, Consult relies on email to encourage considered, thought-through messages. The Consult process is structured: a member sends a query about their challenge to the group; other members respond with recommended resources – comparable experiences elsewhere, documents to read, organisations and experts working on the subject etc. – up to a given reply-by date (anywhere from three days to three weeks); the thread is compiled and summarised in a *Consolidated Reply*, which is both posted to the group and indexed in a public repository, making it available for reuse by anyone anywhere in the world with a similar challenge.

Both channels are actively moderated by the community’s Facilitator, a relatively senior professional who is both well respected within the domain and skilled in keeping the group vibrant and valued by its members. The Facilitator monitors and approves all messages posted to the group to ensure they are positive and constructive, helps members frame queries for the Consult channel, guides conversation threads, prepares Consolidated Replies, and works behind the scenes to encourage member participation. Over time, as members convince their colleagues to join and the Community grows in size, and funds become available, the Advisory Group could authorise a junior Research Assistant to join the Facilitator for supporting group moderation, preparing Consolidated Replies, and maintaining the Community’s website and online presence.

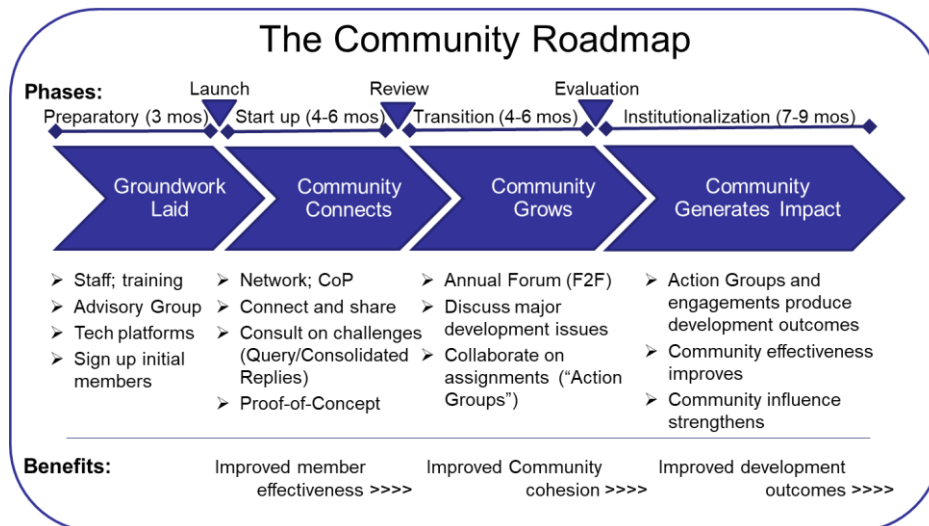
Beyond the Share and Consult virtual channels, the model uses off-the-shelf collaboration platforms and tools for teams (“Action Groups”) for developing products – standardised guidelines, protocols, policies, etc. generated by the consultations or sponsored by Advisory Group members. And subject to resource availability or the opportunity to add on to an existing event, the Community would meet face-to-face in an “Annual Forum,” applying time-tested interactive processes for maximising member interaction, networking, and peer-to-peer learning. Ultimately the Community is ready to take on team-based interventions, advocacy campaigns for Action Group products, and other forms of engagement that call for trust-based relationships.

Thus, the community-building approach is designed to increasingly deepen member interaction, beginning with the Share channel to build member familiarity, moving to the Consult channel where members develop trust-based professional relationships, which facilitates their participation in collaborative ventures and team-based engagements.

IV. The Community Roadmap

The journey from sharing to consulting to collaborating to engaging is detailed as a Roadmap, provisionally lasting 18 to 24 months, depending on the size of the Community and the degree of trust-building required. After a Preparatory Phase, it proceeds through a Start Up Phase, a Transition Phase, and an Institutionalisation Phase (see Figure 1).

Figure 1



- The Preparatory Phase (3 months) puts in place the components necessary to operationalise the Community – establishing and organising the first meeting of the Advisory Group, recruiting and training the Facilitator, setting up the Community’s Share and Consult platforms, and signing up an initial group of members (minimum 150) in preparation for the community launch.
- The Start Up Phase (4 to 6 months) begins with the launch of the Share and Consult channels, with the latter becoming gradually more active as the Share channel generates familiarity, motivating the initial members to invite colleagues to sign up. As sharing and consultations continue and membership grows, community performance is tracked against provisional targets established by the Advisory Group with the intention of determining “Proof-of-Concept” (whether the experience is sufficiently promising to continue as a full-fledged effort) by the end of the phase.
- The Transition Phase (4 to 6 months) begins with the Proof-of-Concept established and agreement reached to continue the initiative, continuing community sharing and consultations and membership growth, tracking performance and impact, and introducing group-based collaborative ventures (“Action Groups”) for developing actionable products derived from the consultations. Funds (and travel restrictions) permitting, an Annual Forum is convened for face-to-face interaction, and the document repository is set up for indexing Consolidated Replies, reference documents and other resources shared by members. Toward the end of this phase an independent evaluation is commissioned to determine impact and cost-effectiveness, and if positive commitments are obtained from the Advisory Group to take over the responsibility for the financing (directly and/or mobilising sponsors) for Community operations upon the phasing out of project funding, thereby ensuring financial sustainability for as long as the Community provides value to its members.
- The Institutionalisation Phase (7 to 9 months) is when the initiatives developed in the Transition Phase roll out and take root. Community sharing, consultations, collaboration and collection continue, along with membership growth and tracking performance and

impact. Members engage with local communities and other target audiences to introduce Action Group products and team-based interventions. And the Advisory Group takes over the financing responsibility, marking the completion of the development effort and continuation of the initiative as a sustained, Community-led and -owned operation.

V. The Roadmap Implementation Project

Project Strategy

The project to implement a Roadmap for the Caribbean First Responders Community would have a single objective: To reinforce the implementation of the Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy, reduce avoidable deaths, and mitigate the extent of disruption from disaster events in the countries and sovereign territories of the Caribbean region through the establishment of a vibrant, valued and sustained Caribbean First Responders Community.

Project Outputs and Activities

Pre-project. Work in this phase leads up to the approval of a project document by the Convening Agency and funding sponsors, enabling project activities to begin. For this, the draft project proposal (the current document), including the Community “Leaflet,” is reviewed by the key stakeholders and finalised taking their feedback into account. CDEMA accepts its role as Convening Agency for the Community and submits the proposal to potential funding sponsors. Once a funding source is identified, the project document is finalised in the required format and processed for approval.

The Preparatory Phase. Project approval initiates the Preparatory Phase of the Community Roadmap. The tasks in this phase put in place the components necessary to operationalise the Community – the Advisory Group, the Facilitator and the Share and Consult platforms, signing up the initial group of Community members, and preparing for the Community launch. The initial group of members would be sourced from the contacts of the Advisory Group and the professionals who participated in the consultations and surveys. Subscribing members would be done strategically, working closely with the national disaster management agencies and political authorities willing to become the initial focus of attention.

The launch is the occasion to initiate the Share channel, with the Facilitator encouraging a few “ice-breakers” to spark conversation, and to post the first query on the Consult channel. The query would typically be from a member of the Advisory Group in the form of an e-discussion on a broad, pressing issue intended to elicit an active response. These initial postings set the tone for member interaction, with the Facilitator working actively behind the scenes to ensure the Community gets off to a vibrant start.

Community rollout. Once launched, the Community would proceed as per the Roadmap, through the Start Up, Transition and Institutionalisation phases, taking increased advantage of the Share and Consult channels, and collaborating in “Action Groups” and team-based interventions as member familiarity and trust increases. Over the project duration communication becomes more fluid, cooperation increases, and the Community becomes more cohesive as a Caribbean-wide disaster relief operation.

The key implementation milestones are the project approval that initiates the Preparatory Phase; the launch event that begins the Start Up Phase; the determination of Proof-of-Concept by the Advisory Board that begins the Transition Phase; the transition to Advisory Board implementation responsibilities that begin the Institutionalisation Phase; and the

completion of project activities, when the Community is regularised as a self-sustaining entity.

Project Inputs

Relative to its potential impact, costed project inputs are relatively minimal, consisting primarily of a full-time Facilitator. Other operating costs would cover part-time support for communications and website content (or possibly covered through Community volunteers or interns⁸), contributing to platform licensing costs, translation of documentation and communications material and interpretation for virtual and face-to-face events, travel expenses for the Convener and the Facilitator to attend relevant events as presenters or exhibitors, and finances permitting, convening an Annual Forum in the Transition Phase. If membership grows and community interactions increase a Research Assistant could be added to support the Facilitator. Non-budgeted inputs include time availability of the Convener and Advisory Group members to participate in the periodic virtual meetings and a face-to-face session on the occasion of the Annual Forum.

In addition, contracted advisory services would be needed to support preparatory and start up activities, including fielding and training the Facilitator and installing platform licenses, and to support on a gradually reducing level all project phases with advice and guidance on the different aspects of the operating model, including performance monitoring.

Detailed Terms of Reference for the project's budgeted personnel (Facilitator and contracted advisory services) are spelled out in **Annex 2**.

VI. Organisational and Operational Arrangements

Project Organisation

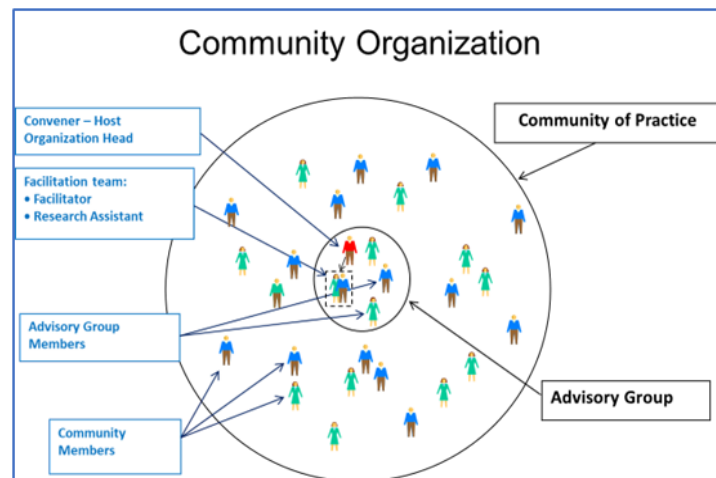
The head of the relevant unit in CDEMA, as the Community Convener, would function as the project manager, responsible for managing the operating budget, supervising the Facilitator, and ensuring delivery of project outputs. The Facilitator would provide the Convener with any assistance needed for these tasks, including the preparation of project reports, which would be provided to the CDM CHC as an agenda item for their regularly scheduled meetings.

⁸ The ADN's "Future Leaders" programme could be tapped for additional support from graduate interns under the partnership arrangement proposed with UWI and CDEMA (see "benefits for research," below)

Community Organisation

Community organisation for this operating model is straightforward, comprised of an Advisory Group, a Community Convener, a Facilitation Team and the community members (see Figure 2). The Advisory Group are representatives of the key agencies and actors in the field (typically 15-25 members) who meet briefly twice a year to set the community's priorities and performance targets, review progress and impact, and encourage participation. Advisory Group members also contribute

Figure 2 Community Organisation



or mobilise the initiative's operating costs once its viability and value is demonstrated. The Community Convener is the person in the position of authority to take responsibility for organising the community, and who hosts and supervises the Facilitation Team, which manages the services provided to the community. The Facilitation Team consists of a Facilitator who animates community interaction and a Research Assistant who manages the Query-Consolidated Reply process and helps identify opportunities, sponsors and resources for Action Groups to develop products and undertake action- and evidence-based research

For the Caribbean First Responders Community, as noted in the section on the Leaflet, the Community's Advisory Group would be the CDM Coordination and Harmonisation Council plus the Avoidable Deaths Network, the Community Convener would be the Executive Director of the CDEMA Coordinating Unit, and the Facilitation Team would initially be one full-time Facilitator, joined later on, if warranted, by a Research Assistant.

Assessing Community Performance and Impact

Gauging community performance and impact would be done using a combination of metrics and feedback surveys. Performance metrics would be derived from targets set by the Advisory Group for member growth, organisational and locational balance, community vibrancy, and the number of and turnaround time for producing Consolidated Replies (Consult channel). Quarterly surveys would ask a sampling of members to rate their level of satisfaction with the community. Impact indicators tracked would be the ratings given by the members who consulted the community on the usefulness of the responses received, the ratings by Action Group sponsors on the usefulness of their Group's deliverable, and the ratings by the Advisory Group on the impact of the Community as a whole on addressing the CDM agenda.

A "Theory of Change" diagram, laying out the project's output, outcome and impact, along with key assumptions for each, is attached as **Annex 3**.

Financing and Sustainability

The Caribbean First Responders Community would rely on project financing for its initial 12-15 months. Responsibility for ensuring continued operations would then fall to the CDM CHC as the Advisory Group, which, as a representative body of key actors in the domain (including funding agencies,) would be in the best position to appreciate the value of the

Community to its members and to the CDM Strategy and the RRM. As such, the CDM CHC members would be expected to take the steps necessary to contribute or raise funds to ensure the Community's continuing operations as a self-sustaining entity beyond the project duration.

VII. Value Proposition

A Caribbean community of First Responders offers a range of advantages and opportunities for enhancing their ability to respond to disaster events rapidly and effectively, reducing avoidable deaths and mitigating disruption.

Benefits to vulnerable communities. Establishing the Caribbean First Responders Community offers the opportunity to increase effectiveness and efficiency of the participating first responder organisations and support partners. The familiarity and trust generated by the operating model's structured and curated approach is leveraged to collectively address organisational capacity gaps, establish fluid communications systems, take advantage of coordination and collaboration opportunities, and develop a team-based approach to disaster response where all the actors have clearly delineated specialised roles and are sufficiently capacitated, well-practiced and well-coordinated. Vulnerable communities benefit from a faster and more coordinated response to disaster events, minimising avoidable deaths, expediting relief and counselling, stabilising the emergency phase and facilitating subsequent recovery efforts.

Benefits to first responders and partners. Members of the Community can stay abreast of relevant developments on the Share channel, get advice and insights from colleagues to challenges faced on the Consult channel, collaborate to create new products and processes that enhance the effectiveness of their field, standardise existing processes across the Caribbean countries and territories, and build a strong and cohesive group to advocate for their cause with policy-makers and funding sponsors. Beyond these benefits, Community members build close working relationships with colleagues from different organisations and perspectives, including members from other regions, which can be leveraged for job opportunities or career advancement. And participation is empowering to members on the front line who may not be as credentialed as their colleagues, as they realise that the insights and ideas drawn from deep experience is as valuable as the expert knowledge contributed by the higher-up professionals.

Benefits for research. The Avoidable Deaths Network has played a catalytic role in bringing about the Caribbean First Responders Community. Founded in 2019 as a collaboration between the University of Leicester, UK, and Kansai University, Japan, two academic institutes on the forefront of disaster risk management research, the ADN is a global membership network dedicated to avoiding human deaths from natural hazards, naturally triggered technological hazards and human-made disasters in low- and middle-income countries. It offers experts, practitioners, researchers and organisational partners a dynamic forum to identify and promote theoretical and practical solutions to reducing avoidable deaths, helping policy makers, practitioners, researchers make better decisions to save lives and livelihoods for sustainable development. The ADN has a wide network of regional coordinators, multi-disciplinary and world class advisors and research hubs across Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. The ADN is also an acknowledged Network for the UNDRR's Sendai Framework's Voluntary Commitments (VC) platform for Targets A and B at the

interface with four Sustainable Development Goals (SDG, 3, 11, 13, 17)⁹. Going forward, ADN would be partnering with CDEMA and the University of West Indies for action and evidence-based research, enabling these organisations to access and sponsor global research and study opportunities.

Benefits for capacity-building and advanced study. Community membership of professionals outside the Caribbean expands access to comparative experiences, expertise and resources available globally, including innovative capacity-building strategies and practices applied in resource-strapped environments. Among other possibilities, a training course could be developed based on the one for West Africa run by the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), which employs a unique approach to strengthening participants' capacities for effective humanitarian assistance by enhancing interaction and mutual understanding between actors from civil protection authorities, security forces, and NGOs involved in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Additional capacity-building opportunities include cooperation and exchange programmes with Kansai University's Civil Safety Unit, Leicester's Research Institute for Environmental Futures and School of Business, and Makerere University, among others. And the above-mentioned partnering arrangement between ADN and CDEMA and the University of West Indies could include exchange programmes and new courses for advanced study in disaster risk management, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development, and avoidable disaster deaths.

Benefits to the Region and the Regional CDM Strategy. The Community supports the implementation of the disaster response dimension of all four CDM priority areas – strengthened institutional arrangements for CDM; increased and sustained knowledge management and learning for CDM; improved integration of CDM at sectoral levels; and strengthened and sustained community resilience – by increasing communication, coordination and collaboration among First Responder agencies and supporting partners. And it directly addresses the disaster response dimension of CDM Priority Area #2, Regional Outcomes 2.1, a Regional Disaster Risk Management Network to improve informed decision-making at all levels, and 2.4, improved and standardised CDM educational and training materials applied in the region.

Benefits to global Disaster Risk Management efforts. The work of the Community is also intricately linked to addressing the Sendai Framework's first two Global Targets: “substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030” (Target A) and “substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030” (Target B), and Priority 2, strengthening disaster risk governance, in one of the world's most disaster-prone regions. More valuable than directly helping meet global targets, however, would be the increased recognition and reputation of the Caribbean experience as being on the forefront of disaster response, attracting attention from other countries interested in replicating the experience and leading to improved disaster response capabilities globally.

VIII. Considerations

The following considerations address issues flagged in the course of consultations on the feasibility and viability of creating a Caribbean First Responders Community.

⁹ ADN's webpage on UNDRR's VC platform can be viewed through this link: https://sendaicommitments.undrr.org/commitments/20211123_001

Design issues

Would operating the Caribbean First Responders Community increase already stretched workloads?

The proposal has been designed to minimise the additional workload of staff of CDEMA, the Convening Agency. A full-time project-funded Facilitator, reporting to the head of the unit responsible for managing the project, would absorb the additional work involved in running the Community. If Community activity warrants and funds are available, a Research Assistant could support the Facilitator. To minimise the Advisory Groups' time spent on Community issues, this role is proposed to be taken on by the existing CDM oversight body, the CDM Coordination and Harmonisation Council, as a standing agenda item in their regularly scheduled meetings.

Is it realistic to expect the initiative could obtain the financing needed? Could it be done with less cost?

The initiative is designed in such a way that initial donor financing would be phased out in the Institutionalisation Phase (beginning from project month 11 or 15), after which the members of the Community's advisory group, the CDM CHC, would be expected to secure sustainable financing. Financing for the initial project period would therefore be roughly one-year's cost of a small-scale project, where the one professional – the Facilitator – is approximately two-thirds of the total budget. Since the Community would be an important feature for successful CDM implementation, and potential funding sponsors would be represented on the Advisory Group and would themselves be participants in Community activity, it may not prove difficult to attract financing.

The inputs specified are derived from extensive experience with the level of investment needed for a successful operation. In situations where cost-cutting was attempted, such as using a part-time or less qualified Facilitator, community momentum was not sustained. There are, however, other cost-reduction opportunities, such as limiting project-funded expenses for the Annual Forum.

Constraints to membership

What would motivate professionals to join?

First Responders are typically action-oriented and may be hesitant to sign up to a voluntary initiative if they perceive it to be one more distracting social network. To be successful, Community interaction should be perceived as a valuable contribution to their work rather than additional chore, a means to improve their effectiveness, make useful connections and help them realise professional goals. The ADN-sponsored consultations revealed multiple challenges frustrating progress, so there is not likely to be a dearth of opportunities to address areas needing improvement.

The best way to attract First Responders into the Community is through word-of-mouth recommendations from trusted member-colleagues attesting to how membership enhances their ability to save lives and property. This approach, however, is only successful if Community interactions on the Share and Consult channels are in fact producing this result. Here the Community Facilitator plays a key role, by directing the conversations and consultations towards key concerns, and working behind the scenes to encourage contributions from professionals having practical insights and advice.

Would there be too many messages filling up overcrowded mailboxes?

A typical query posted in the Consult channel of a 1,000-member community would get a relatively modest number of response (between 12 and 20) over a two-week response period, representing those community members having the specific knowledge being requested. If a query is sufficiently compelling to garner a larger number of responses, the facilitator could aggregate several messages into a single “multiple responses” format. Other available options for individual users to limit their message traffic are opting to receive a single daily or weekly digest of messages posted in that period, to receive only Consolidated Replies, or to opt out of message threads from queries of lesser relevance.

The aim, of course, would make Community messages “must read” material for learning about issues relevant to the work of its members. The bracketed prefix appended to these messages make them easily identifiable within an email inbox.

Constraints to participation

Would officials from government, defence agencies or other formal organisations actively participate in their personal capacity?

Based on experience, officials in formal hierarchical organisations can be hesitant to contribute to informal community conversations. Those that do sign up typically start by quietly listening in to the conversations to gain an appreciation of the issues. Eventually some officials will jump in and become active participants, opening up a new way of interacting with their constituents and professional peers. In fact the risk level can be low for emailed messages, which can first be vetted by their superiors before posting.

With this potential challenge in mind, the proposal applies a “trust-building” approach (through actively moderated Share and Consult channels along with virtual events and occasions promoting rapport-building), combined with a start-up process strategically targeted towards countries and territories having national disaster management agencies and political authorities willing to participate actively.

How will language issues be addressed?

Ensuring seamless interaction between all community members speaking different languages would be critical to success. Language differences are less a concern than previously with the advent of powerful and accessible translation software. During the project’s preparatory phase translation options would be investigated to identify the best tool for automatic message translation.

Importantly, though, the Facilitator should ideally have multilingual capabilities to be able to verbally communicate with any of the Community’s members and polish any translated communications intended for wider circulation. If this is not feasible then it should be possible to occasionally draw on multilingual members willing to volunteer their time for this purpose.

Finally, funds would also be budgeted for simultaneous interpretation in Zoom and face-to-face conferences and other events

Technology issues

How would the selection of applications for sharing, consulting and collaborating be determined?

An early decision in the Preparatory Phase is to identify the most suitable platforms for the Share and Consult channels and for collaboration activities. Dozens of applications, called “Community Platforms,” have both social media and collaboration spaces that could be used for the Share channel and for collaboration, and the advisory services team would take responsibility for recommending the most appropriate one. For the Consult channel, basic email is the preferred option, using an application that allows for moderated group interaction. Long experience confirms that email remains the best platform for virtual consultations. Compared to the plethora of online social media platforms designed for community interaction, email is far better suited to composing well-considered, thoughtful and sometimes lengthy messages. It also has a lower barrier of entry (everyone has an email address, and professionals generally check their email regularly), is better suited for professional communication (think LinkedIn vs. Facebook), works across all platforms, and comes directly into your inbox rather than you having to open another (password-protected) application to access it. If the community members work in organisations where the mode of daily communication is through email, then community members should consult with each other through email. Where e-mail is not the norm, the application should also have an online alternative for viewing and sending messages from a website.

In any event, the Share and Consult channels would not rely exclusively on messaging formats and would allow interaction through the various multimedia formats, which can often be a more effective way to deliver content than blog posts or articles.

The Caribbean First Responders Community

The communicative space for the key actors in disaster response

Focus (Who We Are)

The Caribbean First Responders Community connects the key actors engaged in and supporting efforts to respond to disaster events in the countries and sovereign territories of the Caribbean, leveraging the power of community to reinforce the Regional Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Strategy, reduce avoidable disaster deaths, and mitigate the extent of disruption through enhanced communication, coordination and collaboration.

Scope (What We Talk About)

The Community addresses the full range of relevant issues, including

- **Community-building** – creating familiarity and trust among stakeholders; information-sharing; knowledge-networking
- **Capacity-building** – ensuring adequate staffing, training, systems, budgets and equipment of first responder organisations
- **Standardisation** – of systems and procedures for disaster response and training across First Responders and Caribbean countries and sovereign territories
- **Team-building** – a common communications platform; joint exercises; intervention planning
- **Sustainability** – sufficient secure financing; institutionalised governance arrangements

Membership (Who Should Join)

You should join this Community if you are a professional or volunteer involved with or interested in the various aspects of disaster response and reducing disasters deaths in the Caribbean, are located within or outside of the region, and are

- from an NGO or Civil Society Organisation providing humanitarian assistance in disaster situations,
- an officer or technician of an Emergency Service – Fire, Police, Search & Rescue
- from a national or international Defence Service
- working for a critical support partner providing coordination, financing, relief supplies, or logistics
- an official or authority from a relevant national, local or community-level government administration or political body; a community leader
- a specialist working in a think tank, academia or as an independent consultant
- from the business community
- from the media

Leadership (Who Guides the Community)

The Community is convened by the Caribbean Emergency Disaster Management Agency (CDEMA) and guided by the CDM Coordination and Harmonisation Council, representing the key actors in the implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy, acting as the Community’s Advisory Group.

What Participation Entails

Members of the Community interact primarily over a virtual forum to **share** information, **consult** on challenges faced, **collaborate** on group assignments, and **engage** target audiences through team-based interventions. They participate in their personal capacities as professionals. See [\[website\]](#) for more information and to sign up.

Annex 2: Terms of Reference for the Budgeted Personnel

This Annex details the roles, responsibilities and qualifications for the Community Facilitator and the contracted advisory services.

Community Facilitator

Working under the supervision of the Community Convener, the Community Facilitator's role is to build, manage and motivate the members of the Caribbean First Responders Community, striving to meet the performance targets set by the Advisory Group denoting a healthy, valuable and valued Community.

Specific responsibilities are as follows:

- Supports development of the Community – solicits new members; facilitates and encourages member participation; organises workshops and webinars and participates in events as presenter or exhibitor; organises the Community's Annual Forum.
- Manages the Community's virtual Share and Consult channels – moderates and edits messages; encourages contributions; facilitates discussions; contributes supplementary documentation; compiles, issues and indexes Consolidated Replies (synthesised responses to community member requests for advice and assistance); conducts follow-up interviews with contributors.
- Identifies and advises the Community Convener and Advisory Group on cutting edge issues of concern to the Community; organises Community team collaborations ("Action Groups") to develop strategies, programmes or projects to address them.
- Keeps the Convener and Advisory Group apprised of progress and performance – drafts progress and performance reports; acts as member-secretary for Advisory Group meetings; prepares briefings and briefing notes as needed.

The incumbent should have at least 8-10 years of relevant experience in disaster response in the Caribbean and be well-known and trusted by their professional peers. The key attribute for this position is a demonstrated talent for networking with professional peers working in the various first responder entities. Multilingual capabilities is an advantage.

Contract duration is nine months initially, extendable subject to satisfactory performance and the continuation of project activities to the full two-year duration of the project.

Contracted Advisory Services

Project inputs include contracted advisory services, a team consisting of a specialist in community-building and creating knowledge networks and a specialist in knowledge networking facilitation. The role of the team is to provide the technical advice and support needed to ensure successful project performance. The team reports to the Community Convener and would be contracted for four fixed-duration assignments corresponding to the project's Preparation, Start Up, Transition and Institutionalisation phases.

- During the Preparation phase, the team would be involved with putting in place the necessary systems, processes and IT platforms, and supporting the fielding and training of the Facilitator
- During the Start Up phase, the team would advise and support the Convener, Facilitator and the Advisory Group in carrying out their responsibilities, help set and monitor

provisional performance targets and Proof-of-Concept indicators, and provide systems administration for the Community's IT platforms, as needed.

- During the Transition and Institutionalisation phases, the team would provide ongoing advice and guidance to the Convener, Facilitator and Advisory Group, as needed, continue performance and impact monitoring and IT systems administration, and assist with the Annual Forum.

Services provided for the Preparation and Start Up phases would be intensive and hands-on; services provided for the other phases would be less intensive, delivered as needed on an ongoing basis.

Implementing the Roadmap for the Caribbean First Responders Community

THEORY OF CHANGE

IMPACT

Progress is made toward the CDM vision of a disaster resilient and sustainable Caribbean, and the Sendai Framework's first two Global Targets, to substantially reduce global disaster mortality and the number of affected people by 2030, and Priority 2, strengthening disaster risk governance, in one of the world's most disaster-prone regions

Improved disaster response capabilities globally, due to increased recognition of the successful Caribbean experience leading to replication of the model by other countries

Assumptions:

- The Caribbean First Responders Community helps substantially reduce avoidable disaster deaths and mitigate disruption in the Caribbean
- The operating model and implementation strategy can be replicated

OUTCOME

Improved implementation of the disaster response dimension of the Caribbean CDM Strategy by increasing communication, coordination and collaboration among First Responders and supporting partners

Improved informed decision-making at all levels in disaster response situations (CDM priority outcome 2.1)

Assumptions:

- The operating model and implementation strategy proposed for the project produce the intended results
- Guidelines, standards and policy recommendations generated by the Community to promote common region-wide approaches and team-based engagements are adopted by the participating states

OUTPUT (Project Objective)

A vibrant, valued and sustained Caribbean Community of First Responder professionals from all the concerned entities and support partners, who come together to share experiences and knowledge, generate familiarity and trust, and leverage the power of community to increase effectiveness in reducing avoidable disaster deaths and mitigating disruption in the Caribbean region

Assumptions:

- "Considerations" (potential project implementation constraints) spelled out in the project proposal, and others arising, are effectively addressed
- Financial sustainability of the Community can be achieved based on the value to its members and the willingness of the Advisory Group to agree to be responsible for sustaining its financing

Annex 4: Capacity Building Plan in Phases

This Annex details the plan and phases envisaged for capacity-building for the CDEMA's Regional Training Centre (RTC).

Preparatory Phase

Draw specific collaboration agreements between ADN, ADN collaborators, CDEMA and the University of West Indies on developing training courses that will enhance the capacity of "disciplined forces" and other stakeholders for improved implementation of disaster response and reduce avoidable disaster deaths.

Need Assessment Phase

Review existing courses, engage with Caribbean First Responders Community (CFRC) through share and consult platforms, and outline the details of specific capacity-building courses. The courses could be short courses or continuing professional development or certificate level.

Development and Approval Phase

Develop the course content and seek approval from the Learning and Teaching Committees at the Universities of West Indies and Leicester and further accreditation from regional organisations in the Caribbean region. The courses will have training of trainers' element for sustainability.

Delivery Phase

Recruit participants and tutors and deliver the courses. Evaluate the courses and update the content if need be.