

HURRICANE SEASON 2017

Hurricanes Irma and Maria Response Assessment underway

The University of the West Indies (UWI) Disaster Risk Reduction Centre (DRRC) is conducting an assessment of the Hurricanes Irma and Maria response which will examine the efforts of the Regional Response Mechanism (RRM) in responding to humanitarian needs arising from the impact of these events. This independent review is being undertaken on behalf of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). Findings will identify lessons for the continuing programme, inform ongoing support, and guide future programming.

From the 5th to the 20th of September 2017, the Caribbean region was impacted by two major sequential Hurricane systems, Irma and Maria, both Category 5 systems, resulting in multi-island impacts. Hurricane Irma became a Category 5 hurricane in the Eastern Atlantic Ocean on Tuesday September 5, 2017, with maximum sustained winds near 185 mph. It impacted the CDEMA Participating States of Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Virgin Islands (UK), Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis and Montserrat, the northern border of Haiti, Turks and Caicos Islands and the south-eastern Islands of the Bahamas. A combination of strong winds, storm surge, intense rainfall from Hurricane Irma, resulted in loss of lives and significant damage to homes, critical infrastructure and sectors throughout the affected islands. During this same period, Hurricane Jose a Category 3 cyclone posed a threat to the Northern Leeward Islands but fortunately did not result in any impacts.

Hurricane Maria became a Category 5 hurricane near the Leeward Islands on Monday September 18th, 2017 and impacted Dominica at approximately 9:35pm on September 18th as an extremely strong hurricane with wind speeds of 155 mph. It then impacted St. Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and Barbuda and the Virgin Islands between September 19–20, 2017, and rapidly progressed to a major hurricane (Category 3) within 48 hours and subsequently to a catastrophic hurricane (Category 5) just 8 hours later.

The passage of these two systems and their impact on areas in the Caribbean represented a worst case scenario of meteorological hazards and their impact on our

Caribbean Countries. The Real Time Review of the systems and operations of the CDEMA RRM during the Irma and Maria Events, will examine the humanitarian response, provide an opportunity for real-time learning and immediate adjustment to the current operational standards offering solutions for further interventions for future impacts. The Review will also seek to understand good practices, common issues and emerging lessons and make recommendations from the Hurricanes Irma and Maria response.