

SUMMARY: EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS IN THE CARIBBEAN: A REFLECTION

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The British Caribbean has a long history of disaster experiences associated primarily with tropical cyclones, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. Over the last fifty years the sub-region has witnessed a substantial decline on the number of deaths and injuries associated with hazard impact. This is in a large measure associated with the improvements in Early Warning systems (EWS), especially in the area of monitoring and alerting.

Notwithstanding this progress, in recent times there has emerged a growing gap in the public confidence in the hurricane related EWS. The author in his panel intervention will seek to offer an explanation for this confidence gap and offer suggestions for its reduction.

In this intervention, the benefits of inter-governmental cooperation in facilitating EWS for cross boundary threats are noted. A call for better interface between the alert providers and the warning authorities is recognized as a key area for action. Also identified for better understanding is a sustained programme for making the public more aware of the inherent errors of trajectory forecasting, which in the context of Small Island Developing States can have serious implications.

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