

**WORKSHOP ON CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION, DEVELOPMENT  
AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

**Strengthening Community Resilience in the Caribbean region**

**Port of Spain, February 19-20, 2008**

The Provention Consortium (a global partnership on disaster risk reduction), in collaboration with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' Regional Caribbean Office, will host a workshop on Climate Change Adaptation, Development and Disaster Risk Reduction in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago from February 19-20, 2008. It will engage a wide variety of actors drawn from civil society, Red Cross, national and local government, intergovernmental organisations, academic institutions, private sector and the media.

**Towards a Caribbean Programme of Action**

The objective of the meeting is to develop a Caribbean Programme of Action for strengthening community resilience and local adaptive capacity in a changing Caribbean climate. This will be done through a combination of brief presentations, working groups and plenary discussions. The approach of the workshop will be participatory cutting across institutional, sectoral and geographical boundaries.

Potential sub-themes for the proposed plan of action, which will focus on practical, implementable ideas, include:

- Institutional partnerships
- Innovative communication tools
- Community organization
- Resource mobilization

The results of this workshop will be presented during a press conference on February 21<sup>st</sup> in Port of Spain. They will also be a key feature in the Annual Provention Forum (Panama, April 8-10 2008), entitled "From Grassroots to Global: People-Centered Disaster Risk Reduction". A video synthesizing the outcomes of the workshop will be produced and widely distributed among climate, disasters and development practitioners in the region.

**Impetus for this workshop: Climate Change and the Caribbean Region**

The global climate is changing, and the Caribbean region is feeling the change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in its Fourth Assessment Report (2007), stated that climate change is unequivocal. Observed trends include higher global surface temperatures, sea level rise, changes in rainfall patterns, and higher frequency and intensity of extreme events such as floods, droughts and heat waves. The impacts of climate change are particularly worrying for the Caribbean, with many small island states that are extremely vulnerable:

- Hurricanes have increased in intensity since the 1970s, and it is likely that we will see further increases during the 21<sup>st</sup> century

- Sea level rise is expected to exacerbate inundation, storm surge and other coastal hazards. Coastal conditions are likely to deteriorate, for example through beach erosion and coral bleaching.
- Water resources in many islands are expected to become insufficient to meet demand during low-rainfall periods.
- New climate patterns are expected to change the geographic range of mosquito-borne diseases (such as malaria and dengue), as well as increase heat stroke and other health risks, notably for children and the elderly.

The potential implications of these climatic changes are enormous, not only from the perspective of disaster risk reduction but also with regards to regional development. Economic activities such as tourism, fisheries and agriculture are very sensitive to climatic conditions. Climate change threatens vital infrastructure, settlements and facilities that support livelihoods.

While the worst long-term effects may still be avoided if greenhouse gas emissions are drastically reduced, global climate change is here to stay – and will accelerate. The Caribbean region has no choice but to cope with the impacts of climate change, which may be aggravated by increasing vulnerability resulting from unsound environmental practices, demographic changes, social inequities and economic short-sightedness. Additionally, there is the risk that the increased occurrence of climate-related disasters may trap people in vicious circles: if the most vulnerable communities are hit more frequently or intensely, they become even more vulnerable to disasters.

### **Integrating climate, development and humanitarian issues**

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While many initiatives have begun to tackle the scientific and policy implications of climate change for the Caribbean region, the magnitude of the challenge calls for innovative thinking and action. It is thus necessary to link climate adaptation strategies with development, poverty reduction and disaster risk reduction efforts in the region. A multi-stakeholder approach, involving civil society, national and local governments, knowledge centers, regional inter-governmental bodies, media and the private sector is required to deal with climate risks in an integrated manner.

From grassroots to global, each constituency has a specific role to play in this respect: research, communication, awareness raising, advocacy, resource development, capacity building, concrete implementation and other dimensions of climate change adaptation need to be debated in the Caribbean region, with adequate attention to local perspectives and experiences in order to influence national and regional policies.

This workshop will draw from case studies involving ongoing projects at the community level. Activities are designed to enable participants to formulate the questions that can facilitate the emergence of constructive ideas for improved, innovative approaches to policymaking and transformative action. A key goal of this event is the integration of lessons learned from the field and priorities expressed by local voices into decision making at all scales.

### **About the ProVention Consortium**

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Launched by the World Bank and other partners in 2000, the ProVention Consortium ([www.proventionconsortium.org](http://www.proventionconsortium.org)) serves as a forum for a broad set of actors to address gaps in undertaking effective disaster risk reduction in poor communities around the world. The ProVention Secretariat has been hosted by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) since 2003.

ProVention provides a unique space in which partners can come together informally to discuss a wide range of issues related to disaster risk reduction. The Consortium has provided the

neutral ground to bring together development organizations, donor agencies, IFIs, the Red Cross/Red Crescent, NGOs, academic institutions, private sector and other key stakeholders. Increasingly ProVention is also reaching out to additional actors, including national governments, local authorities and grassroots groups to bridge the divides between international, national, and local levels and to promote greater sharing of learning between professional fields and sectors. ProVention has also provided a means to support critical research studies and evaluations, pilot tests and start-up phases for new risk reduction tools, and workshops and other forums to extend the disaster risk reduction (DRR) dialogue.