

Jamaica

**Country Brief prepared for the GFMD Thematic Workshop on
“Climate change and human mobility: towards dignified, coordinated and sustainable solutions”
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As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) located in the Caribbean Region, Jamaica is perennially subject to natural hazards and sensitive to climate change. **Climate change exacerbates the likelihood of natural disasters happening** and is expected to increase the frequency and severity of hydrometeorological hazards. *In fact, the region within which we are situated, in the Americas, has in recent years been confronted with a growing number of natural disasters.*¹ Based on this trajectory it is estimated that Jamaica will likely experience increasing adverse effects of climate change with more intense tropical storms, excessive rainfall, warmer seas and rising sea levels, coastal flooding, saltwater intrusion into groundwater sources, coastal/beach erosion and coral bleaching, longer periods of drought, , and increase in vector borne diseases. These will be exacerbated by our small size and limited resource base.

In Jamaica the most vulnerable populations live in rural communities, the coastal zone and low-lying flood-prone areas. (Currently, approximately sixty percent (60%) of Jamaica’s population live along the coastline, or within 2km of the coast.) Given the scale and gravity of the challenges posed by climate change and the limited human and financial resources available to address them, it is important to systematically identify the communities most at risk in order to prioritise intervention programmes to address vulnerability. This is an exercise that needs to be undertaken on a regular basis as levels of vulnerability frequently change.

Internal displacement in Jamaica is experienced in times of natural hazards. Research has shown that within the last 25 – 30 years, the impact of these hazards has proven to be disastrous, in several instances resulting in significant social dislocation and tremendous economic losses. Between 1998 and 2004, the country experienced approximately 10 major weather related disastrous events with significant economic implications.

The report - *The State of the Jamaican Climate 2012* - suggests that Jamaica’s climate is changing and that the country will experience significant climatic changes that could have a negative impact on various sectors. Data collected for the island for 1992 to 2010 show a warming trend for the country of about 0.1 degrees Celsius per decade. There is greater warming projected across the central and eastern interior of the island. Projections for future rainfall for the country indicate that the island will transition to a much drier state by the end of the century. The country will also become more vulnerable to more intense

¹ The Americas is the region with the third highest number of reported disasters, after Asia and Africa, with more than 100 disasters reported each year and a total of 1,241 disasters over 2005-2014 period. Information based on EM-DAT data and sourced from International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), *World Disasters Report 2015* (2015) <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/1293600-World-Disasters-Report-2015_en.pdf> p.216-240.

storms, more extreme periods of rainfall and periods of drought. We have thus sought to put policies and mechanisms in place for such an eventuality.

The Government of Jamaica, in consultation with key stakeholders, has formulated the *Climate Change Policy Framework for Jamaica*. The policy framework creates mechanisms to facilitate the development, coordination and implementation of policies, sectoral plans, programmes, strategies and legislation to address the impact of climate change. The Government of Jamaica has also created a *Draft National Policy and Plan of Action on International Migration and Development*. Both the *Climate Change Policy Framework for Jamaica* and the *Draft National Policy and Plan of Action on International Migration and Development* are intended to support Jamaica's advancement towards achieving developed country status by 2030 as is articulated in the country's first long-term national development plan – the goals of the **Vision 2030 Jamaica**. The Government of Jamaica has also adopted the Disaster Risk Management Act, 2015 which addresses disaster risk management nationally and locally.

The *Draft National Policy and Plan of Action on International Migration and Development* seeks to integrate the issue of climate change or protection issues for people displaced in the context of climate change. It recognizes that the provision of mechanisms to safeguard migrants' rights must be based on humanitarian principles and human rights laws. Consequently, dialogue has commenced with regard to Jamaica's adoption of a Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF), which is based on the understanding that States bear the primary responsibility to protect and assist crisis-affected persons residing on their territory in a manner consistent with international humanitarian and human rights law.

The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) is the Government agency responsible for providing disaster management functions in Jamaica. Disaster Management encompasses all aspects of planning for and responding to disasters, including the before, during, and after disaster activities. It refers to both the risk and consequences of a disaster. ODPEM works with international organizations, all relevant MDAs and civil society bodies across Jamaica to adequately and proactively coordinate and implement Jamaica's Disaster Management Framework using a tiered approach: national, parish and community levels. As such, all persons domiciled in Jamaica during a crisis or disaster is offered support and concrete services to protect and safeguard their well-being. Similarly, the MCOF, as an international framework, seeks to improve and systematize IOM's response to migration crises by bringing together its different sectors of assistance within a pragmatic and evolving approach, while upholding human rights and humanitarian principles and promoting longer-term development goals.

Given the identified vulnerabilities of the Latin America and Caribbean Region, regional authorities met in Costa Rica from 17-18 February 2016, under the auspices of the Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) Initiative to discuss and draw on each other's experiences and examine the various types of responsibility afforded to migrants in countries of destination and transit caught in crisis. This regional consultation workshop focused on the three phases of migration due to crisis, namely; the pre-crisis, emergency and post-crisis phases.

The anticipated outcome of the consultation was to produce a set of non-binding, voluntary guidelines that set out principles, roles and responsibilities of different stakeholder vis-a-vis migrants in countries in situation of acute crisis. The consultation also served to contribute to the development of a MICIC Global Guideline.

A few key considerations were raised during the consultations. These included, but were not limited to:

- The importance of protecting the human rights of migrants at all times thus ensuring the protection of migrants during times of crisis. **“Save first, ask later”** should be the guiding principle for humanitarian assistance.
- The importance of the inclusion of the needs of vulnerable groups of migrants (children, elderly, disabled) in the preparation of crisis management strategies.
- The role of technology and social media in communicating with migrants at all phases of a crisis.
- The need for regional migration dialogues for the development of cross-border cooperation in disaster preparedness and response, including the issuance humanitarian visas as well as the provision of psychological and psychosocial support to migrants in times of crisis.
- Reintegration of migrants after a crisis.
- The role of migrants in the development and reconstruction of countries following a crisis.

Based on Jamaica’s participation in the foregoing regional consultation workshop, our authorities have determined that work towards the adoption of a Migration Crisis Operational Framework, which takes into account migration management tools that complement humanitarian efforts among countries to ensure the protection and safety of migration in countries of crisis and strategies to allow for their return to countries of origin, should be accelerated. To this end, the authorities will invite the IOM to make a presentation to national stakeholders on the IOM Migration Crisis Operational Framework. They are also deliberating with the aim of convening discussions on the elements of Migrants in Countries in Crisis with the anticipation of including them in Jamaica’s Diaspora Policy Document.

As the National Working Group on International Migration and Development (NWGIMD) seeks to complete and operationalize Jamaica’s IMD Policy, the following actions have been identified for operationalisation, consistent with the 15 guidelines to protect migrants in countries experiencing conflict or natural disaster:-

Pre-crisis Phase

- *The inclusion of migrants in natural disaster preparedness strategies – which will require revisiting and if necessary developing national emergency contingency plans and strategies to prepare and respond to natural disasters.*
- The establishment of consular crisis management systems at the pre-crisis phase plays a central role in ensuring both swift and effective mobilisation of actors and instruments in case of emergency so as to support nationals abroad caught in a conflict or a disaster. Consular crisis management systems at the pre-crisis phase are to be incorporated in the Diaspora Policy/strategy being crafted by the MFAFT.
- Working with the private sector as a facilitator and promoter of transnational savings products and its role in developing innovative financial and insurance products aimed at protecting the flow of remittances after a negative shock, or in developing new remittance technologies through partnerships between banks and mobile operators, are critical in the pre-crisis phase.

Emergency Phase

- MFAFT is to further explore the use of humanitarian visas as a mechanism that will respond to the gaps that arise when migrants are displaced in disasters and is exploring possible areas to foster cooperation in this field. Cooperation between border agencies as well as with humanitarian actors in this area to include institutionalised information exchange and joint operations.
- During the emergency phase, saving lives is the top priority. GOJ does not differentiate migrants from its citizens in this instance. However, with respect to migrants, these operations can be strengthened through the coordination between countries of origin, destination, and transit, as well as international and civil society organisations, and the private sector. Special attention will also be paid to vulnerable groups that represent a proportion of irregular migrants, migrants in transit, undocumented workers, migrant women and children, as well as victims of trafficking and smuggled migrants.

Post –crisis Phase

- Jamaica Plan of Action for the reintegration of its migrants defines programme options to facilitate the smooth transitioning and reintegration of forced returned migrants. MFAFT continues to work with its diaspora groups to devise measures to facilitate and address the immediate, medium and long term needs of returning migrants as same is also covered in Jamaica’s IMD Policy under the thematic area of return, integration and reintegration, as planning for return and reintegration as well as other long term solutions for migrants caught in countries in crisis are essential components of a country’s recovery plans.
- Jamaica recognizes the need to and has started to localize migration and development planning. This step is seen as a critical step in this process is measuring the socio-economic impacts of migrants return on development – focus on community and national levels. Through the engagement of the local authority ways are being sought to identify forward-looking measures as well as cooperation mechanisms to reduce the adverse impacts of migration on development, as mass returns of migrants in the aftermath of a crisis can have tremendous socio-economic effects on the development of countries of origin, transit and destination depending on the situation of the country, as such returns have the potential to severely impact food insecurity and create land and property challenges.
- Jamaica recognizes the importance that its diaspora plays in post-crisis recovery and rehabilitation processes but their positive contribution to recovery, is also dependent on the prevailing conditions in destination countries. As with hurricane recovery efforts Jamaica has seen the tremendous contribution of its diaspora population in the provision of items needed for post recovery rebuilding efforts

The outcome of Jamaica’s participation in the GFMD Thematic Session on *Climate Change and Human Mobility: towards dignified, coordinated and sustainable solutions* will be used to inform and contribute to our work towards the envisaged adoption of a Migration Crisis Operational Framework.