



**ADDRESS**

**by**

**THE HONOURBALE DONNA COX**

**MINISTER OF STATE**

**IN THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY**

**AND**

**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR LAVENTILLE EAST/MORVANT**

**at**

**THE OFFICE OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND  
MANAGEMENT**

**LAUNCH OF THE PILOT COMMUNITY DISASTER RISK  
MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME**

**PLACE:** Hyatt Regency, PoS

**DATE:** *Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2010*

**TIME:** 9:00 a.m.

- Honourable Members of Parliament:

The Honourable Dr. Amery Browne, Minister of Social Development

The Honourable Alicia Hospedales, Minister of State in the Ministry of Social Development

- Ms. Monica Williams, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Community Development Culture and Gender Affairs;
- Permanent Secretaries and Deputy Permanent Secretaries;
- Colonel George Robinson, Chief Executive Officer, ODPM;
- Mr. Justin Bowen, Chief Fire Officer of the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service;
- Ms. Susan Corbett, Director – Community Development Division, Ministry of Community Development Culture and Gender Affairs;
- CEOs of the Municipal Corporations;
- Representatives from our partner agencies: Habitat for Humanity, Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service and the Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross;

- Employees of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management;
- Employees of the Ministry of Community Development Culture and Gender Affairs;
- Specially Invited Guests;
- Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to be associated with the launch of this **"Pilot Community Disaster Risk**

***Management Programme.***” This programme is the continuation of another collaborative effort between the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management which falls under the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs.

This initiative is progressive and forward thinking because the aim is to build resilience in communities by providing residents with practical information and techniques to guide them through the fundamentals of home preparedness in the wake of natural and man-made hazards.

The programme is also built upon the pillars of Government’s Strategic Vision 2020 Plan which aims to

develop a cadre of innovative people and to refocus the approach to education and learning.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you are aware, through the creation and implementation of Early Warning Systems, we can now be aware of the impending occurrence of some natural hazards before they actually occur. Additionally, through the media, the ODPM communicates relevant information to citizens in real time in order to enable them to take the necessary steps to prevent and minimize the losses to lives and property.

However, it is crucial that communities are prepared to deal with the hazards that can confront us. Ladies and

gentleman, this essentially comes down to education and training which focuses on disaster risk management in all communities across Trinidad and Tobago. **This Pilot Programme is the first step in this process.**

The reality is that during and in the aftermath of a disaster, First Responders such as the Fire Service, the Police Service, the Defence Force and the Emergency Medical Services may not be able to reach everyone right away. Factors such as the number of victims, communication failures, road blockages and a number of other problems can prevent citizens from receiving emergency services.

Consequently, citizens may have to rely on each other for help until emergency services can reach them. This type of situation was evident in the aftermath of the Mexico City

Earthquake of April 2009. Following this crisis, family members, fellow employees, and neighbours spontaneously helped each other thus resulting in 800 lives being saved.

Therefore, it is absolutely necessary for citizens of Trinidad and Tobago to be prepared in the event they will be required to safeguard the lives of their families and neighbours. The Government through the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management, must ensure that citizens are always kept informed and are provided with the relevant disaster risk management training.

It is imperative to train individuals in the much needed life-saving skills with particular emphasis on decision-making, rescue safety and doing the greatest good for the greatest number of individuals.

Also community teams must be organised so that they become an extension of First Responder Services, thus offering immediate help to victims until the trained professionals arrive on the scene to assist.

**In this regard, it is crucial that citizens understand how to protect themselves and their families against all types of hazards.**

This community pilot programme will achieve this desired objective as resources from key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service and Non-

Governmental organizations (NGOs) like the Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross Society and the Habitat for Humanity will come together, with the aim of delivering a quality programme to citizens in the communities.

The programme will focus on seven core areas. They are as follows: –

1. Disaster Risk Management for the Community
2. Basic First Aid and CPR
3. The Incident Command System Training (ICS; training tailored for the community),
4. Fire drills and other emergency Evacuation Protocols;
5. a Volunteer and Skills Development Programme;
6. a Recovery Programme; and
7. the **“Securing of the Home”** programme which will promote best practices such as adhering to proper

building codes for home construction and other pertinent practices.

At the end of each presentation and exercise, members of the community will then become fully aware of the hazards that affect our region and what they can do at the community level to reduce their vulnerabilities and render assistance when necessary.

While this community programme is not the first of this nature for the ODPM, it is the first programme of this magnitude which will target each community, in each region in Trinidad. It is the firm belief of the Ministry of

National Security and by extension the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management that through coordination, cooperation and collaboration, many of our goals and objectives can be achieved.

Through the ethos of collaboration, cooperation and coordination of stakeholders, participants and partner agencies, the creation of disaster resilient communities and regions can be realized. This positive and realistic approach to emergency situations and disasters can ensure that citizens can take greater individual responsibility, manage themselves better and spontaneously volunteer to safeguard the communities and regions of our Republic.

It is my hope that everyone in all our communities embraces this progressive and beneficial project.

My sincere gratitude is extended to all the stakeholders involved in this project and all those who are working arduously behind the scenes to bring this programme to its ultimate fruition.

I thank you for your attention and I wish you a Happy and Productive 2010.

God bless our nation.