

Barbados

National Society Preparedness

Case Study



Barbados country snapshot

Barbados is among one of the top developed countries according to various statistical studies, e.g. Human Development Index value of Barbados is at 0.81 in 2018-positioning it at 56 out of 189 developed countries¹. Since 1990 life expectancy, years of schooling and income have been steadily increasing.

Compared to other Caribbean islands, where there is a high exposure of hurricanes, droughts, floods and volcanic eruptions, Barbados ranks as having very low risk². With moderate risks of tropical cyclones and tsunami.

Background

The Barbados Red Cross Society (BRCS) began operations in 1960, initially as a British Red Cross branch, then in 1969 by an Act of Parliament, it was incorporated as a Voluntary Aid Society, auxiliary to the public authorities. Key services that the BRCS provides are first aid, its meals on wheels service, ambulance services, youth and other public health and social development programmes, and disaster management. The BRCS currently has 10 staff members and 120 active volunteers.

1. United Nations Development Program. Human Development Report 2019
2. Index for Risk Management 2019

Overview

Disaster Management is one of the key services provided by the BRCS, in 2018 the National Society (NS) embarked upon the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) process, with an overall goal to strengthen its disaster management capacities. In coordination with the Country Cluster Support Team of English-speaking Caribbean under the "Capacity Building Initiative" (CBI) for Disaster Response in Caribbean National Societies (CBI) project funded by the Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance

(US AID OFDA) project was timely, in that it has enabled the BRCS to undertake key activities such as strategic planning, leadership coaching, Disaster Management related trainings, strengthening of technical skills, and volunteer engagement. The momentum gained after the assessment to transform the priorities indicated from the PER was complimented by a specific budget line for follow up enabled through the CBI OFDA programme, which allowed financial support to the progress and later satisfaction by BRCS team in achieving actions from the assessment.

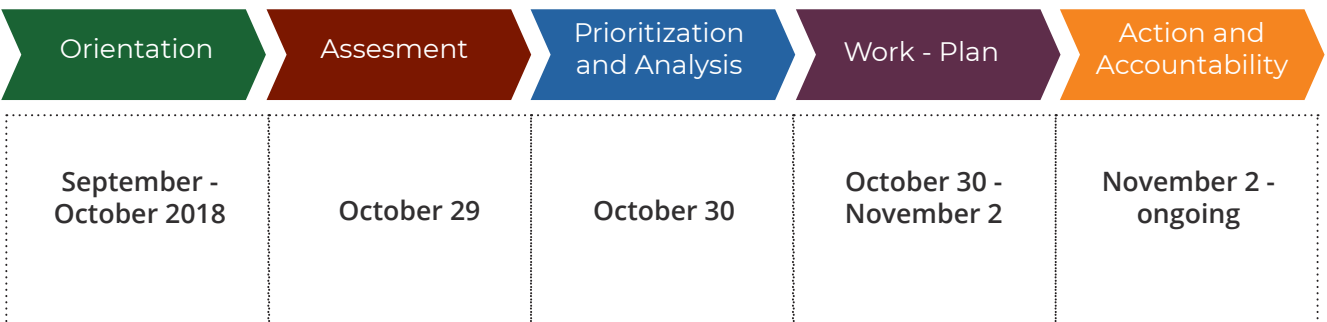


Methodological approach

NS Preparedness for Effective Response is an approach built on nearly two decades of the Movement's experiences, practices and tools toward better response preparedness.

It consists of five important phases of (1) NS orientation, (2) Assessment, (3) Prioritisation and Analysis, (4) Developing a work-plan, (5) Action and Accountability.

The timeline of the Preparedness for Effective process with the BRCS is as follows:



Enabling environments for the process

First and foremost, the BRCS was willing to engage in the process to invest its time and resources in the change process of improving its response capacity. This was seen through the appointment of the focal point for the process to drive the PER within the NS, as an interlocutor of the PER process internally with the NS, externally with the Movement and other stakeholders. Furthermore, the President of the NS was present during the orientation process to better understand the commitments required from the organisation. The President ensured the participation of the NS leadership, technical staff, and heads of the departments throughout the entire PER orientation, assessment, prioritisation and analysis phases which resulted in a work-plan that was developed with personnel from different departments; functioning with one goal of increasing the BRCS response preparedness to disasters and crises.

Another factor towards a successful PER process was a well-coordinated approach between the Movement partners including the IFRC Country Cluster Support Team of the Caribbean, IFRC Geneva, Partner National Society and the BRCS

as a key actor. The PER assessment and work-plan was facilitated by the representatives from the IFRC offices and Canadian Red Cross, which resulted in the Country Cluster Support Team closest to the NS providing continued technical support and identification of different expertise within the Movement to better support the BRCS response preparedness.

The PER process continuity – The BRCS was able to draw on resources available under the CBI OFDA project to implement a number of initial activities that were identified as “key next steps” within the PER Assessment. The CBI OFDA project was timely, in that it has enabled the BRCS to undertake key activities such as strategic planning, leadership coaching, DM-related trainings and fortifying the skills, as well as engagement of the BRCS volunteerbase. The momentum gained after the assessment to transform the priorities indicated from the PER was complimented by a specific budget line for follow up enabled through the CBI OFDA project. It gave the team the financial resources to actively see progress and satisfy actions coming out of the assessment.

Additionally, as it was a plan constructed by the team and management there was no need for secondary approvals on the activities, as it was already endorsed through the plan and teams were familiar with the actions needed.



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Results and impact

1. Preparedness for Effective Response provides practical, adaptable and scalable solutions

Initially there was a concern on the extensive nature of the PER implementation process in the context of a NS with limited human resource capacity. This was addressed through adapting the self-assessment methodology through the use of interactive and visual tools in order to keep staff engaged throughout the process. After looking into their overall response capacities, the BRCS determined the NS' priorities – identifying the critical and realistic elements to be addressed at this stage given the current resources and capacities. This resulted in the development of a practical and adapted work-plan that meets the needs of the NS.

"For a small NS, what we faced after the assessment was a little daunting, because there is so much to be done. But the process was able to help us to identify the low hanging fruits and where can we start now, as opposed to looking into this as a huge thing that we need to accomplish immediately"

NS Programme Coordinator

2. Participatory and inclusive planning

Upholding one of the key guiding principles of the PER process, i.e. that disaster management is not a one department role, the process brings together staff and volunteers from different departments, support services and technical sectors. The PER orientation and assessment phases were attended by a diverse and representative group of staff and volunteers from the BRCS (BRCS President, Programmes Coordinator, CEA Field Officers, Youth Department, First Aid Department and Disaster Management Department). This resulted in a more participatory and inclusive planning process with one common objective of improving the NS' response preparedness.

3. Improvement in internal coordination and communication

The DM capacity of the BRCS was tested with the potential threat posed by the passage of Hurricane Dorian in 2019. In preparation for carrying out its' role of providing First Aid to Hurricane Shelters, an internal system was developed assigning available volunteers to the shelters within their neighbouring communities. Additionally, the President of the BRCS was an active participant in the national EOC, and shared timely updates with an emergency whatsapp group that was created for the Heads of Department. This alert system was maintained for the duration of the time that the national EOC was in existence.

This synergy has progressively been built through ongoing Heads of Department meetings that were implemented coming out of the PER process.

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