

# “Enhancing Gender Visibility in Disaster Risk Management: Jamaica Country Assessment”



**Authors:**

**Keino Senior and Leith Dunn**  
**Institute for Gender and Development Studies, Mona**  
**University of the West Indies**

**Presenter:**

**Keino Senior**  
**Institute for Gender and Development Studies, Mona**  
**University of the West Indies**

**ACRONYMS**

BWA The Jamaica Bureau of Women's Affairs  
CDM Comprehensive Disaster Management  
CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women  
CSW Commission on the Status of Women  
DDR Disaster Risk Reduction  
ELIAMEP Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy  
FHH Female Headed Household  
JSLC The Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions  
ODPEM Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management  
PAHO Pan American Health Organization  
SALISES Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies  
UNCCD United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification  
UNDP United Nations Development Program  
UN ECLAC United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean  
UNEP United Nations Environmental Program  
UNFPA United Nations Population Fund  
UNFCCC United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change  
UNIFEM United Nations Development Fund for Women  
WHO World Health Organization  
WTO World Trade Organization

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**Box 1: Agenda for Action to Mainstream Gender in Disaster Risk Management**

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

### 1.1 Background and Objectives

This country assessment on Jamaica is done against the background of the Hyogo Framework for Action from the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2005 and the CDERA Action Plan which commit the Government of Jamaica and other key stakeholders to integrate gender into disaster risk management policies and programmes.

Mr. Ronald Jackson Director General of Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) notes that “Jamaica because of its location, geology and geography is prone to several natural hazards. The major threats include landslides, hurricanes, floods, droughts and earthquakes. These hazards when combined with situations of high vulnerability usually result in disasters of varying severity.”<sup>1</sup>

These hazards often result in disasters that affect the lives of men and women and have a profound negative impact on the country and the development of its people especially the poorest. The island is particularly vulnerable to hurricanes because of it is located in the track of Atlantic hurricanes and within a seismically active plate boundary zone.

The impact of climate change is evident as disasters have been occurring more frequently in Jamaica in recent years. Among the most vulnerable are men and women living in rural areas, coastal zones, and low-lying areas. In Jamaica, women comprise just over half the population but represent 70% of persons living below the poverty line. This indicates that poverty is a gender issue. With higher levels of poverty, poor women are more vulnerable to the impact of natural hazards. They are also likely to bear the heaviest burdens when there are disasters from these natural hazards. At the same time, women are more often overlooked and are not visible in Disaster Management.

Consistent with the objectives of the CRMI project, this report uses data from the last three most devastating hurricanes in the Caribbean which had a severe impact on Jamaica: Gilbert (1988), Ivan (2004) and Dean (2007). It is based on consultations with three agencies involved in disaster risk management to assess the extent to which they are sensitive to gender as a cross cutting issue in their work. Table 1 presents a summary of the institutions consulted.

### **Table 1: Agencies Surveyed by Mandate and Sex of Head**

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<sup>1</sup> Jackson (2005). Managing Natural Hazards in Jamaica (2005)

Name of Agency	Area of Responsibility	Sex of Representative of Agency
The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPEM),	National Emergency Centre	Male
The Bureau of Women's Affairs (BWA), the national government machinery responsible for women and gender affairs;	Promoting women's rights and gender equality	Female
The UNDP which coordinates UN response in disasters;	Human development and disaster coordination	Male

Source: Compiled from interviews for this study.

Also consulted was the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute for Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) of the University of the West Indies which is not part of the national disaster machinery, but which has a Documentation Centre that includes several studies on disaster risk management in the Caribbean. An interview with Professor Neville Duncan, the Director of SALISES, confirmed that the Institute has interest in policy research on disaster risk management. Its mandate is graduate teaching and research in social and economic development, governance and public policy with special reference to small developing countries.

### **Findings from the Literature Review on Gender and Disaster Risk Management**

A common theme in the review of literature on gender and disaster risks management is that women are often more vulnerable to disasters than men because of their socially constructed roles and responsibilities, and because they are poorer. (Pan American Health Organization, 1998; Mitchell et al., 2007). Several studies highlight the links between pre-existing gender inequalities and increased vulnerability of women to disasters associated with natural hazards.

Enarson, (2000) for example indicates that women's vulnerability in disasters is linked to them having major responsibility for domestic tasks such as the collection and preparation of food, energy supply for the household as well as care-giving of children, sick, elderly, caring for the home and assets.

Hannan (2002) also notes that most of the worst effects of disasters associated with natural hazards are directly linked to human behaviours and that disasters tend to reveal inequalities in existing national, regional and global power structures as well as power relations in intimate relationships. How men and women are impacted by and respond to disasters is shown to be based directly on existing gender roles and relative socio-economic status in pre-disaster situations.

Patt et al. (2007) notes that the gender roles and responsibilities of women present challenges as they have to provide water, manage sanitation and health risks. This increases the burden of work on them as they have to combine their productive and reproductive work when a disaster occurs, even if they have lost their main source of livelihood. In many societies, socio-cultural norms and care giving responsibilities prevent women from moving to look for shelter when a disaster occurs. Self-sacrifice and caring for their family also hampers women's own rescue efforts

A very important contribution to the literature on gender and disaster risk reduction in the Jamaica is the report entitled "Assessment of the Socioeconomic and Environmental Impact of Hurricane Ivan on Jamaica" (ECLAC, UNDP and PIOJ, 2004). This comprehensive study by a multidisciplinary team, led by ECLAC, examined the vulnerability of women and children as well as the impact of Ivan on the social and productive sectors, infrastructure, the environment, a summary of damage and losses, and the macroeconomic effects. It concluded with guidelines for reconstruction and rehabilitation.

The section of the report entitled "Vulnerability of Women and Children" noted that people who are most vulnerable before a disaster become the most affected in times of crisis such as natural disasters and in 2002 approximately 45.5 per cent of households reported females as the head of households (FHHs). The rate of FHH's was higher in the Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA) (50.8 percent), followed by Other Towns (45.6 percent) and lowest in 'Rural Areas' (40.1 per cent). FHHs were over represented in each category of type of damage reported. Among persons who reported that their houses had been completely destroyed, 48 per cent were FHH. Among those who reported severe damage and minor damage, 57 per cent and 54 per cent were FHHs respectively. The report further noted that these findings were consistent with the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (JSLC) which reported that FHHs tend to have more children than male-headed households and have a higher proportion of other adult females, suggesting intergenerational families.

The report further indicated that the higher vulnerability women and children was also related to women's labour force participation rate in 2003 of 53.2 per cent compared to 71.4 per cent for males) and a higher unemployment rate for women of 17.6 per cent compared to 9.7 per cent for men. Ivan's destruction of livelihoods, delays before the productive section became fully operational and women's ability to meet the needs of themselves and their families was even more challenging. Citing "Jamaica Children and Their Families: A Situation Assessment and Analysis 1999-2000, the report highlighting children's vulnerability. It also noted that this was linked to children living in poor families in remote rural areas, overcrowded inner city slums, or in households dependent on female wage earners whose income is less than men and who are usually paid less than men for the same work. (ECLAC, UNDP and PIOJ, 2004, p.10).

## **1.2 Structure of the Report**

The first section of this report provides a socio-economic context for understanding issues of vulnerability related to gender inequality and the environment in Jamaica. The

second section presents the findings of consultations with each of the three agencies. The third section addresses conclusions and recommendations to address the findings. A list of references used is also included.

## 2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC OVERVIEW OF JAMAICA<sup>2</sup>

### *a. The Land*

Jamaica has an area of 10,991 km<sup>2</sup> and is located at 18 15 N, 77 30 W. The coastline is 1,022 km and the climate is hot and humid. The terrain is mountainous with narrow, discontinuous coastal plains on which significant numbers of the population live. The highest elevation is the Blue Mountain Peak at 2,256 m. The main natural hazards affecting the country are hurricanes and the official hurricane season is between June 1 and November 30.

### *b. Population Profile*

The *ESSJ 2008* notes that in 2007 the disaggregated by sex was 1,321,600 (49.3 per cent males) and 1,360,500 (50.7 per cent ) females. The resulting in a sex ratio of 97.1 males to 100 females though there are variations within broad age groups. The main trends noted were decline in the age group 0-14 years, an increase in the working age group 15-64 years) and a rapidly growing dependent elderly group of persons aged 65 years and over. Data from the 2001 census show that the majority of the population is black (91 per cent) is black with smaller proportions of East Indians, Chinese, white and mixtures of other racial groups.

The majority of the population lives in Kingston and St Andrew (24.7 per cent) and St Catherine (18.5 per cent). The lowest proportion lives in Hanover (2.6 percent). live Population density is 259 people per sq km land area. Life expectancy at birth was 73.59 years (*Males*: 71.88 years; *Females*: 75.38 years (2008 est.)). The Total Fertility Rate was 2.3 children born/woman (2008 est.). The Total Literacy rate was 87.9 per cent (*Males*: 84.1% and *Females*: 91.6% ) (2003 est.).

### *c. The Economy*

Jamaica's economy is heavily dependent on services, (60% of GDP), as well as tourism, remittances, and bauxite/alumina. Which are important sources of foreign exchange. Remittances account for nearly 20% of GDP and are equivalent to tourism revenues. Jamaica's economy is currently challenged by high oil prices; sluggish growth, as well as economic setbacks from damage caused by Hurricane Dean in August 2007 and Gustav in 2008. Economic problems are also related to: increased foreign competition related to globalization and liberalization of the economy, high but declining interest rates, exchange rate instability, a sizable merchandise trade deficit, large-scale unemployment and underemployment, and a debt-to-GDP ratio of 135%.

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<sup>2</sup> Some of the statistical data reported in this section was obtained from the website: [exxun.com](http://exxun.com) website Retrieved on July 05 2008 . Data from the Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica 2007 (2008) is also included.

#### *d. Gender and Economic Vulnerability*

The feminization of poverty in Jamaica is also a factor that increases the vulnerability of women when there is a disaster. Poverty levels in 2006 were estimated at 14.3 per cent (ESSJ 2007 p. 25.15) and most of the beneficiaries under the Public assistance programme were women. UNICEF (2007) in their Situation Analysis on Gender Disparities in Jamaica 2007, quoting from the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2005 and noted that almost half of Jamaican households are headed by a woman (46.3 per cent) and in the poorest quintile of the population, this proportion increases to 54 per cent, while in the richest quintile only 37 per cent of households are headed by women. Characteristics of female headed households (FHH) the report also noted are: they are larger in size than Male Headed Households, with a greater number and proportion of children than in Male Headed Households (MHH) (37 per cent and 28 per cent respectively). The report further notes that in more than 78 per cent of cases, FHH are single (and therefore poorer).

Women's higher levels of poverty and increased vulnerability to disasters is related to their unequal participation in the labour force, lower rates of employment, and higher rates of unemployment. The ESSJ 2008 notes that in 2007, the working age population (15-65 years) was 64.4 per cent of the total population. The labour force was 1,261,300 persons; males accounted for 55.4 per cent and *females accounted for 44.6 per cent*. The employed labour force was 1,136,900: males accounted for 57.7 per cent while *females accounted for 42.3 per cent*. Table 2 from the ESSJ 2008, shows women's unequal position in the labour force.

**Table 2 MAIN LABOUR FORCE INDICATORS BY GENDER, 2007 ('000)**

MAIN INDICATORS	2007 <sup>p</sup> Annual Average		
	Male	Female	Both Sexes
Labour Force	699.1	562.2	1,261.30
Employed Labour Force	656.1	480.8	1,136.90
Unemployed Labour Force	43.1	81.4	124.5
Unemployment Rate (%)	6.2	14.5	9.9
Job-Seeking Rate (%)	4.1	8.3	5.9
Labour Force Participation Rate	73.6	56.5	64.8

Note: Discrepancies due to rounding.

p – preliminary

Source: Statistical Institute of Jamaica

*Taken from Economic and Social Survey Jamaica, 2008.*

**Table 3 EMPLOYED LABOUR FORCE BY OCCUPATION GROUP, 2007 ('000)**

OCCUPATION GROUP	2007 <sup>p</sup> Annual Average		
	MALE	FEMALE	BOTH SEXES
Professionals, Senior Officials & Technicians	88.9	128	216.9
Clerks	24.2	76.2	100.4
Service Workers, Shop & Market Sales Workers	78.1	129.2	207.3
Skilled Agricultural & Fishery Workers	161.8	35.4	197.2
Craft & Related Trades Workers	156.8	18.5	175.3
Plant & Machine Operators & Assemblers	63.9	4.9	68.7
Elementary Occupations	81.7	88.4	170.1
Occupation not specified	0.8	0.4	1.1
Total	<b>656.1</b>	<b>480.8</b>	<b>1,136.90</b>

p – preliminary

Note: Discrepancies due to rounding.

Source: Statistical Institute of Jamaica in *Economic and Social Survey Jamaica, 2008*.

Table 3 from the ESSJ 2008 shows that in 2007, the majority of the employed labour force (19.1%) was classified as Professionals, Senior Official and Technicians and females were the majority in this group (26.7%). Women were also highly represented in the category of Service Workers, Shop & Market Sales Workers (26.8%). However, there were more males in the category of Skilled Agricultural & Fishery Workers (25%), Craft & Related Trades Workers (24%) and Plant and machinery Operators and Assemblers. Wages in most of the occupational groups dominated by women are low-paid (clerks, service workers elementary occupations).

**Table 4 EMPLOYED LABOUR FORCE BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS, 2007 ('000)**

EMPLOYMENT STATUS	2007 <sup>p</sup> Annual Average		
	Male	Female	Both Sexes
Paid Government Employee	56.4	82.7	139.2
Paid Non-Government Employee	329.5	244.6	574
Unpaid Worker	3.7	10.6	14.3
Employer	21.8	9.2	31
Own Account Worker	243.5	132.4	375.8
Not Reported	1.3	1.4	2.7
Total	<b>656.1</b>	<b>480.8</b>	<b>1,136.90</b>

Note: Discrepancies due to rounding.

p - preliminary

Source: Statistical Institute of Jamaica

*Economic and Social Survey Jamaica, 2008*.

Table 4 from the ESSJ 2008 shows that women were the majority of paid government employees, and unpaid workers while males dominated as employers, paid non-government employees and own account workers.

Gender roles also result in women having the major responsibility for the care of children, the sick and elderly relatives which are factors which increase their vulnerability.

*e. Recent Major Disasters in Jamaica*

The Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica 2007 (2008) notes that in 2007, Jamaica was affected by 17 storms: six of which became hurricanes. Dean and Felix were category 5 on the Saffir Simpson scale with winds in excess of 249 km/hour). Hurricane Dean (August 19 2007) resulted in losses of J\$23 billion (US\$329.3m). The major impact was on the productive sector and 6% of the population (179,552 persons from 169 communities were affected. Some 70,000 houses were damaged as well as schools and public educational institutions. Most affected were the vulnerable coastal communities of Old Harbour Bay, Rocky Point and Portland Cottage on the South Coast. There was also damage to coastal ecosystems, wildlife habitats, landslides and vegetation.

The ESSJ (2008) also reports that the other major events during 2007 were floods from heavy rains in May which affected the parishes of St Catherine, Clarendon and St Elizabeth. In June 2007 there was flooding in Montego Bay St. James from poor drainage. Between October and November 2007 there were heavy rains associated with Hurricane Noel, which resulted in *one (1) death*, numerous landslides and mudslides, and extensive damage to road infrastructure (\$650 million). Storm surges of 13 metres in height were reported in eastern and southern coastal areas, which caused damage to buildings roadways and resulted in loss of livestock and other agricultural products. (ESSJ 2007 p. 3.9-3:10).

Between September 10 – 11 2004, Hurricane Ivan, passed along the south coast of Jamaica with winds of 214km/hr on the Pedro Bank, 90 km off the south coast. There were estimates of sustained winds of 180km/h across the island on September 11. Ivan did not make landfall, but resulted in *14 deaths*, and significant damage across the island, especially in the southern parishes. Storm surges of 3-4 metres in some locations caused extensive damage to natural coastal systems and housing. Wind damaged severe vegetation and roofs particularly at higher elevations. Total direct and indirect damage was \$J 35.9billion (US\$ 595,000). (Dr Barbara E. Carby 2006).

<b>Table 5: Recent Disasters in Jamaica</b>	<b>Year</b>
Hurricane Ivan - Sept (14 deaths)	2004
Hurricane Dean -August	2007
Hurricane Felix	2007
Tropical Storm Olga – May – June caused Floods	2007
Hurricane Noel (Oct/Nov) - One death Heavy rains also fell for six weeks between October and November	2007
Hurricanes Gustav, Hanna, Ike 25/08- 12/09/2008	2008

Compiled from various sources

Note: Sex disaggregated data were not available on the impact of these disasters.

*f. Factors Contributing to Vulnerability*

Communities located on coastlines, areas prone to flooding and landslides are particularly vulnerable. Among the vulnerable communities is the city of Portmore a residential community of some 70,000 persons which is located to the west of Kingston and is on the Kingston Harbour. Portmore is vulnerable to flooding but evacuation plans have been developed since 2000 and public education programmes reduce risks. Coastal areas of Clarendon, St Elizabeth and St James are also prone to flooding. Poor quality of housing is also a factor that increases vulnerability to disasters.



*Hurricane Ivan in the vicinity of Jamaica, 2004.*  
(Image courtesy of MODIS Rapid Response Project at NASA/GSFC)



Damage done by Hurricane Dean in urban Jamaica (Source: [www.jamaica.com](http://www.jamaica.com))

### **3: RESULTS OF INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENTS**

#### **3.1. OFFICE OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (ODPEM)**

##### **PROFILE OF ODPEM**

Mr. Ronald Jackson, the Director General of ODPEM was interviewed in his office on June 4, 2008 and the results of this interview and a review of ODPEM's website have guided the information presented on the agency.

ODPEM is one of six committees of the National Disaster Committee (NDC) chaired by the Prime Minister and the NDC is the main coordinating body for disasters affecting the country. The Chairman is the overall manager of the nation's preparedness, mitigation, recovery and rehabilitation efforts. ODPEM is a government agency that has the main responsibility for disaster risk management, coordination and monitoring national response to hazards as well as educating the nation on all aspects of disaster management. The National Disaster Committee is responsible for: Administration Finance & Planning Committee; Damage Assessment – Recovery & Rehabilitation Committee; Emergency Operation Communication Transport; Health Planning; Public Information and Education; Welfare Shelter – Relief Clearance.

ODPEM started as the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Relief Coordination (ODIPERC), which was established in July 1980. In 1993, the name ODIPERC was changed to the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), a statutory body.

##### ***Legal Framework***

ODPEM was established under the provisions of Section 15 of the Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management Act. The agency operates out of the Ministry of Local Government and Environment and a Board of Management oversees its activities.<sup>3</sup>

ODPEM operates the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC). It liaises with Parish Emergency Operation Centres (PEOCs) which are operated by Parish Disaster Committees and with Heads of specific agencies that commit manpower and other resources to preparedness and timeliness of response when required. (ODPEM website).

ODPEM's revised mandate states that:

“the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management is committed to taking pro-active and timely measures to prevent and to reduce the impact of hazards on Jamaica, its people, natural resources and economy through its trained and professional staff, the use of appropriate technology and collaborative efforts with national, regional and international agencies”.

<sup>3</sup> ODPEM website: [http://www.odpem.org.jm/about\\_us/index.html](http://www.odpem.org.jm/about_us/index.html). Retrieved October 30 2008.

ODPEM's main objectives and functions as indicated on their website are to:

- Prepare and maintain mitigation plans and programmes for high-risk areas.
- Ensure that development and resource management policies incorporated hazard and loss reduction components.
- Encourage appropriate public response to actual disaster and emergency events.
- Develop appropriate emergency contingency plans and disaster response capabilities, particularly in the emergency services and critical or essential industries
- Facilitate a rapid return to normality after a disaster.

The main duties of ODPEM in implementing its mission are to “develop and implement policies and programmes for the purpose of achieving and maintaining an appropriate state of national preparedness” and to “encourage and support disaster preparedness and mitigation measures in all parishes in association with Local Government authorities, community based organizations and private and voluntary agencies”. (See ODPEM website).

During emergencies ODPEM is responsible for: coordinating the activities of operational agencies ; supporting the operational agencies by facilitating access to scarce resources; providing communication resources and back-up for key agencies; handling requests for external assistance; monitoring the emergency event and assessing longer term physical impact ; informing the public of the event and appropriate response expected from the public.

ODPEM works in partnership with the Red Cross, Food for the Poor (a charity linked to the Roman Catholic Church) and other NGOs, to provide assistance with shelter management, the distribution of food items and the repair of roofs damaged during disasters, as well as disaster recovery and reconstruction. ODPEM also works with churches and schools in affected areas. This collaboration is part of the general response to disasters and is not specific to gender issues.

*This review of ODPEM's structure, management, objectives and functions from their website, provides further confirmation that gender is not a cross cutting theme in the agency's work and identifies specific areas for gender mainstreaming.*

### ***Leadership and Staffing***

Management Structure: ODPEM is headed by a Board of Management appointed by the portfolio Minister in the Ministry of Land and Environment. The Board of Management

appoints the Director General who leads a staff complement which works in three divisions: Corporate Services; Preparedness and Emergency Operations and Mitigation, Planning and Research. The work of these divisions is supported by the Projects Implementation, Development and Monitoring Unit under the Director General. ODPEM has generated work programmes under the following objectives: (i) Institutional Capacity Strengthening; (ii) Loss Reduction; (iii) Preparedness and Response (see ODPEM website).

**ODPEM’s staff is deployed over three divisions:**

*a. Preparedness and Emergency Operations* which coordinates responses to all disaster situations in order to reduce loss of life and property. This includes coordination of relief activities and the aim is to strengthen the level of preparedness and response capability at a parish/regional level. This Division ensures that the national mechanism is in a position to act effectively at all times in emergency situations.

*b. The division of Mitigation, Planning and Research (MPRD)*, supports effective planning to minimise the impact of natural hazards.

*c. The Projects Implementation, Development and Monitoring Unit* which supports advocacy for bilateral funding for disaster management related projects. The **Corporate Services Division** supports national efforts to prepare for and effectively cope with disasters by ensuring the availability of all necessary human and material resources. It also serves as the secretariat and executing arm of the National Disaster Committee, with responsibility for maintaining links with other agencies.

**Table 6: Gender Profile of Leadership and Staffing at ODPEM**

STAFF	Total #	Women - #	Women %	Men - #	Men %
Director General	1	0	0	1	100
Other Directors	6	4	67	2	33
Management	11	6	55	5	45
Technical	15	4	27	11	73
Support	27	17	63	10	37
Totals	60	31	52	29	48

Note: data on volunteers not available.

Table 6 shows that although the gender distribution among the ODPEM staff was fairly even (52% females and 48% males), the top leadership is 100% male. The second tier leadership is predominantly female (67%), and at the senior management level the gender division is more equitable. At the technical level however, the gender distribution is male dominated (73%). The support staff is female dominated (63%). Information was not available on the number and sex distribution of volunteers.

## **Gender and Risk Configuration of ODPEM**

### ***Major Types of Disasters in Jamaica***

Mr. Jackson confirmed that the major types of disasters which most often threaten Jamaica, according to ODPEM, are all weather related: hurricanes, floods, tropical cyclones, fires, and landslides. However, more recently, oil spills have been added to this list.

### ***Most Vulnerable Population Groups***

The sections of the population considered most vulnerable to hurricanes are people living in rural areas, persons living in low lying areas or living in rural communities close to sea coasts as Portland Cottage, Old Harbour Bay, and Bushy Park, among others.

Mr. Jackson was indicated that differences in the impact of hurricanes on some ethnic groups depended on the parish that was hit by the disaster: some parishes have more of some ethnic groups than others. For example, Vere in Clarendon he noted has a higher proportion of East Indians than other parts of Jamaica.

### ***Sex disaggregated data:***

Mr. Jackson explained that the instrument used to collect data on deaths, damage and losses caused by disasters does not facilitate the collection of sex disaggregated data. As a result he could not indicate differences in how women and men are threatened and impacted by recent disasters Gilbert, Ivan and Dean.

This suggests the need to revise the agency's data collection instrument to support the collection of sex disaggregated data. Gender training would also be needed to analyse the data from a gender perspective. These steps would enable the country to better understand how males and females of various ages, social and economic and ethnic groups are affected differently. This data would also help to guide the development and use of gender sensitive interventions at all stages of disaster planning and management process and to measure changes over time.

## **Gender Focus**

ODPEM's Director General stated that the agency does not have a gender policy, strategy or skills to mainstream gender in their work. They are however working on a new manifesto which would hopefully include some sensitivity to gender issues.

ODPEM had not made any specific attempts to undertake activities to promote gender equity in disaster management, Mr. Jackson noted that this was because gender was wide in scope and related issues are addressed indirectly in other key areas of the agency's work. A review of ODPEM's documents confirmed that gender was not integrated into their work program, and this included public information and education.

Although ODPEM had reportedly not made any specific attempt to undertake activities to promote gender equity in disaster management, they participated in a public education seminar which focused on gender and disaster risk management, hosted by the Bureau of Women's Affairs for International Women's Day in 2006.

### ***Awareness of CDERA Action Plan and Hyogo Framework of Action***

Mr. Jackson indicated that he was familiar to some extent with *CDERA's Action Plan for gender mainstreaming in disaster risk reduction in the Caribbean (2005)*. This was in relation to Outcome #4 of the revised Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Strategy. He was also familiar with Jamaica's legislation and policies to promote equal opportunities for men and women and international policy statements on gender and disasters in relation to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and the Hyogo Framework of Action.

### ***Policy Work and Coordination Mechanisms***

While ODPEM liaises with various institutions in the National Disaster Committee, there are no specific mechanisms for ODPEM to interface with the Bureau of Women's Affairs and other women's organizations which are not in the NDC. There has however been dialogue with the BWA and the Women's Resource and Outreach Centre (WROC) (an NGO). There are however opportunities for inter-institutional dialogue, especially around the development of a gender policy on disaster risk management. Dialogue could also result in collaboration with relevant organizations to mainstream gender in disaster risk management programmes.

### **Observations**

ODPEM has a well developed institutional framework to coordinate disaster response but there is limited awareness of gender and capacity to mainstream gender in the agency's work.

## **3.2. PROFILE OF THE BUREAU OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS (BWA)**

### **PROFILE OF THE BWA**

Mrs. Jennifer Williams the Director of Research at the Jamaica Bureau of Women's was interviewed on February 29<sup>th</sup> 2008. She noted that the agency was established as a Women's Desk in October 1974 and was upgraded to the status of a Bureau in 1975. It is a government agency and its main objective is to enable women to recognize their full potential as individuals and to create avenues for their integration into national development. The Bureau's *Mission Statement* states that the BWA will:

“enable women to achieve their full potential as participants in Jamaica's social, cultural and economic development and with equitable access to and benefits from

the country”. The three main areas of work are: Research and Policy Development; Public Education and Training and Project Planning and Monitoring.”

Mrs. Williams noted that the Bureau’s role is that of a catalyst and the agency works to ensure that the Government of Jamaica addresses the problems that confront women, given the impact of patriarchy and sexism which create unequal relations between women and men.

### ***Legal Framework***

There is no specific law governing the operations of the Bureau of Women’s Affairs but since September 2007, the BWA reports to the Ministry of Information, Youth, Sports and Culture.

### ***Leadership and Staffing***

**Table 7: Leadership and Staffing at the Bureau of Women’s Affairs**

<b>STAFF</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Women #</b>	<b>Women %</b>	<b>Men %</b>	<b>Men %</b>
Executive Director	1	1	100	0	0
Management	5	4	80	1	20
Technical	13	12	92	1	8
Support	3	1	33	2	67
Total	22	18	82	4	18

Table 7 shows that the leadership and staff of the BWA is predominantly female as would be expected. Females also dominate in management and technical areas of work but males dominate among the support staff.

### **Gender and Risk Configuration**

The interview with Mrs. Williams confirmed that the Bureau has a clear appreciation of the differential risks faced by women and men in a disaster. She noted that women and men are differently exposed to disasters because they have *different biological, sexual and reproductive health needs* and these factors influence their experience of disasters. As examples, she noted that women menstruate, become pregnant and breastfeed and such their needs must be considered in a disaster. Women and men also face *differences in specific health risks* such as cancers: women have breast and cervical cancer while men have prostate cancer. Both sexes may require care during a disaster. However, Mrs. Williams observed that women’s *unequal socio-economic status* makes them more vulnerable to disasters. For example, they experience higher rates of poverty and unemployment than men as previously mentioned. Mrs. Williams also stated that, communities fare much better during natural disasters when women play a leadership role in early warning systems, shelters/interim housing, recovery and reconstruction.

During a disaster, women who are displaced from their homes and have to move into a shelter, face several risks: the out break of diseases, especially when shelters are overcrowded and inadequate and poor sanitation facilities. Female headed households she observed are also likely to be greatly affected as women are the main breadwinners but must also care for their family's financial needs. As a result the BWA focuses on the different risks faced by both sexes but tries to address the specific needs of women.

Mrs. Williams further explained that Jamaica's *complex family structure* also poses certain risks. For example a man may have three or more 'baby mothers' in the same shelter, which could create conflicts among the females affected. Teenage girls are also more likely than teenage boys to be sexually abused in shelters. Mrs. Williams also provided information on the differential gender needs of women and men from the experience of recent disasters, which are provided below:

**Table 8: Differential Gender Needs in Disasters**

Hurricanes	Males	Females
Gilbert (1988)	Managing Prostrate Cancer in a shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of water and other basic needs for the menstruating females</li> <li>• Poor facilities to accommodate pregnant females</li> <li>• Lack of private areas for mothers in shelters to breast feed their babies</li> <li>• Lack of facilities to cater to the basic needs of females with breast and cervical cancers</li> <li>• Threat of sexual harassment of females by males in shelters</li> </ul>
Ivan (2004)	Poor sanitary facilities in shelters	Poor /inadequate sanitation facilities to meet the needs of menstruating women resulting in females disposing of their used sanitary pads publicly
Dean (2007)	Psychological scars  Lack of coping skills  Not easy to adjust to the centre or after the disaster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased risk of rape and incest</li> <li>• Lack of condoms in shelters to reduce the risk of unplanned and unwanted pregnancies, and STI infection including HIV</li> </ul>

**Source: Compiled from Bureau of Women's Affairs data 2008.**

The data show ways in which men and women were affected differently during the three most recent disasters which impacted Jamaica.

**Research:** While the Bureau has not done any specific studies, Mrs. Williams reflected on the experience of hurricanes Gilbert, Ivan and Dean, and gave examples of how women and men were affected differently from their involvement in responses to recent hurricanes. During Hurricane Gilbert in 1988, several gender differences were noted: Biological needs of women were not adequately met: the lack of water and sanitation in shelters had a major adverse impact on females who were menstruating, breastfeeding babies or were pregnant. There were no designated areas for mothers to breast feed young babies privately; no facilities for females with breast or cervical cancer or were menstruating. The latter had to dispose of their pads publicly. Some women also experienced sexual harassment in shelters.

Psychological needs also varied and the BWA representative noted differences in coping skills of men and women, noting psychologically, *men* found it more difficult to adjust to being in a shelter with several people. Men also demonstrated poor coping skills in dealing with the after-effects of the hurricanes Gilbert in 1988, Ivan 2004 and Dean 2007.

***Sex disaggregated data:*** Mrs. Williams indicated that the Bureau did not have *sex-disaggregated data* on persons affected by the disasters but they were aware of the differential gender impact of disasters.

To increase public awareness of the importance of a gender focus in disaster risk management, the BWA had organised a workshop on *Gender issues in Disaster Risk Management for International Women's Day 2006*. Workshop presentations focused on: An Introduction to Natural Hazard Risk Reduction, Development of Disaster Management in Jamaica, Mainstreaming Gender in Natural Hazard Risk Reduction and Gender analysis tools and methodologies for mainstreaming. Small group training sessions focused on: Gender in Community Disaster Planning and Shelter Management; Gender in Research Training; Strategies for gender mainstreaming in risk reduction in Jamaica. ODPEM had supported the IWD workshop with Dr Barbara Carby, the former Director General of ODPEM who had presented the feature address entitled: "A gendered approach to Natural Hazard Risk Management". Other ODPEM staff making presentations were: Ms. Nadene Newsome on "An Introduction to Natural Hazard Risk Reduction" and Mr. Ronald Jackson, the current Director General of ODPEM gave a presentation on "Development of Disaster Management in Jamaica".

Suggestions on how to improve the gender focus in national disaster risk management policies had emerged from the workshop and the BWA has continued to lobby for implementation of this action plan and to support the adoption of relevant legislation:

***Box 1: Agenda for Action to Mainstream Gender in Disaster Risk Management***

- Adequate assessments must be undertaken of the roles, responsibilities and access to resources of women and men, in order to understand the extent of losses and costs to women relative to men and their potential for recovery. Recovery programmes and allocation of resources (including credit and alternative employment programmes) must be based on this assessment.
  - The needs and priorities at the household level for shelter, water, energy, food-supply, should be given adequate focus and resources, particularly those tasks which are the responsibility of women and girls.
  - Consultation processes and efforts to increase community participation and ownership of recovery process must make explicit efforts to find ways and means of ensuring the full involvement of women as well as men.
  - Women's particular needs for dialogue and exchange with other women on their situations, priorities and constraints, and for specific support mechanisms, should be recognized since the gender mainstreaming approach does not preclude the need for initiatives targeted at women.
  - Capacity development initiatives should explicitly target women as well as men.
- Source: Bureau of Women's Affairs 2006**

***The BWA's Plan of Action also proposes:***

- The separation of women and men in shelters
- Improvements in bathroom and kitchen facilities for large numbers of people;
- Making facilities used for shelters adaptable for accommodating females so that pregnant women do not have to sleep on the floor
- Improving sanitation facilities to accommodate the physical needs of women to reduce the health risks faced by both men and women living in temporary shelters.

***Policy Work and Coordinating Mechanism***

Mrs. Williams reported that the BWA is involved with ODPEM and other groups when disasters occur, and respond to the needs of their stakeholder groups across the country. When a disaster occurred in Portland and Clarendon, for example, the BWA Officer visited and offered basic food items to both women and men during and after the hurricanes. Males who had lost their homes during one of the hurricanes were with provided food and other forms of support.

### *Awareness of the Framework to Promote Gender in Disaster Risk Management*

Mrs. Williams indicated that she was not familiar with CDERA's Action Plan and the Disaster Management (CDM) Strategy but obviously had a clear understanding of the issues. The BWA also proposed that the following priorities should be considered by ODPEM:

- Develop a policy on gender in disaster risk management jointly with the BWA;
- Strengthen institutional partnerships that can provide essential items for the operation of shelters such as 'Food for the Poor, furniture stores and manufacturers of grocery items;
- Greater involvement of the BWA in the national disaster response programme.

## **3.3 UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)**

### **PROFILE OF THE UNDP**

An interview was conducted with Dr. David Smith, UNDP's Assistant Resident Representative on March 3, 2008. The UNDP office in Jamaica serves: Jamaica, The Bahamas, The Turks and Caicos Islands, and The Cayman Islands. The UNDP's mandate and programme promote:

- a. good governance;
- b. poverty reduction;
- c. sound environmental management;
- d. quality advisory and support services and
- e. the building of strategic partnerships for HIV and AIDS.

The UNDP office helps countries to build and share solutions to the challenges of Democratic Governance, Poverty Reduction, Crisis Prevention and Recovery, Environment and Energy and HIV/AIDS. UNDP also assists developing countries to attract and use aid effectively. In all these activities, the agency encourages the countries to protect human rights and promotes the empowerment of women.

Dr Smith noted that UNDP is committed to promoting sustainable environmental practices that assist in the preservation of Jamaica's diverse natural resources, while contributing to efforts at reducing poverty and natural resource depletion. In Jamaica, UNDP's interventions include: institutional strengthening of the key government institutions involved in coastal management, as well as assisting the government with fulfilling the requirements of the international conventions and protocols to which the country is a signatory. Cooperation includes disaster risk management.

**Table 9: Leadership and Staffing at UNDP, Jamaica**

STAFF	Total (N)	Women - #	Women %	Men - #	Men %
Director	1	0	0	1	100
Management	3	1	25	2	75
Technical	5	4	80	1	20
Support	8	6	75	2	25
Total	17	11	65	6	35

Table 9 shows that the leadership, management and volunteers of UNDP are male-dominated, while the technical and support staff are female-dominated. While specific figures were not available for volunteers, reports indicate that there were more men than women.

### **Gender and Risk Configuration of UNDP**

Dr Smith also noted that the main types of disasters that threaten Jamaica are: hurricanes, flooding, fire and land slides.

#### ***Most Vulnerable Groups***

Like Mrs. Williams, Dr Smith also recognized that women and men have different types of vulnerability related to their socio-economic status and other factors. In addition, he felt that women tend to cope better than men in natural disasters, especially after the disaster has occurred. He also felt that in single parent families, women with children tend to cope better than men with children and noted that in general women tend to have better coping skills than men in disasters. Men tend to wait on what to do next, while women get working to repair the damage. He considered that the groups most vulnerable to disasters were people living in rural and coastal communities, the elderly, disabled and people with poor housing.

### **Gender Focus**

Dr Smith indicated that UNDP does not have a gender strategy or policy, but the office is currently in the process of preparing one. They also have limited access to sex disaggregated data on disasters.

The agency has been involved in several initiatives, workshops and conferences on issues related to gender and disaster risk reduction. For example, a project on Comprehensive Approaches to Disaster Management (CDM) is not to gender but focal points are to develop a strategy to infuse CDM into the development and planning process within the region which lends itself to a focus on gender. The project aims to strengthen CDERA's ability to effectively implement CDM at the regional level and to build support at the national level. Dr Smith also indicated that UNDP Jamaica promotes gender sensitivity when disasters strike and has worked agencies like the Jamaica Red Cross, which are

sensitive to gender differences in disasters. However, the staff has not had any training to mainstream gender in disaster risk management.

### ***Collaboration with other Agencies***

As indicated in the profile of ODPEM, the UNDP is part of the National Disaster Committee and as such works with a wide range of agencies with a division of responsibilities between the various agencies. Dr Smith noted that one gender-related project supported by UNDP, the Red Cross and Food for the Poor, was the Women's Resource and Outreach Centre (WROC). This project taught women how to rebuild their houses after a hurricane which was particularly useful as several women had lost their homes.

### ***Awareness of CDERA Action Plan***

Dr Smith indicated that he was vaguely familiar with framework to promote gender in disaster risk management. This includes: CDERA's Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming in Disaster Risk Reduction in the Caribbean (2005); legislation and policies to promote equal opportunities for men and women; and the international policy on gender and disasters in relation to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and the Hyogo Framework of Action.



Women running to shelter during the passing of Hurricane Ivan in Portland, Jamaica  
(Source: cbs.com)

## **4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusions**

The results of this assessment show that while men and women both suffer when there is a disaster, the impact is greater on women, because of their socially prescribed roles and responsibilities and their unequal social and economic positions in the society. The impact of disasters on both men and women is influenced by factors such as age, race,

ethnicity, ability, as well as urban and rural residence. There was consensus that poor women in single female headed households and their children are among the most vulnerable groups in the population. Other conclusions from the review of institutions consulted and data examined are summarized below:

### ***1. Legislative and Policy Framework***

Jamaica is a signatory to the CEDAW Women's Right's Convention and the Belem do Para Convention to eliminate violence against women as well as commitments to the CDERA Action Plan and the Hyogo Protocol. However the results show that the country's national disaster response mechanism is not guided by either legislation or a policy to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in disaster risk management consistent with these agreements.

### ***2. Leadership and Staffing***

ODPEM is the main disaster response agency and the overall gender distribution is 52 per cent males to 48 per cent females. UNDP is also a major actor and there the distribution is 65 per cent females to 35 per cent males and for the BWA it is 82 per cent females and 18 per cent males. Within each agency the distribution varies. The leadership of ODPEM and UNDP is male and the BWA is female. In ODPEM most of the other Directors are females, the technical team is male-dominated while the support staff is female dominated. In UNDP, the management is male dominated while the technical and support staff is female dominated. The BWA staff is female dominated at all levels except support staff.

### ***3. Gender and Risk Configuration***

There was general consensus on the main types of disasters affecting the country and the locations considered more vulnerable to the risk of disaster. However, there was less consensus on and awareness of the differential gender impact of disasters on men viz and viz women based on the responses from ODPEM and the UNDP. As a result, gender was not factored into national strategies for risk identification and mapping, early warning systems disaster communication, and recovery and reconstruction, although women and children were given priority in evacuation procedures.

The two institutional approaches reflect 'gender blindness' which means that there is an assumption that the situation of all persons is the same regardless of sex, age, class and ethnicity and everyone should therefore be treated equally. As a result the programmes do not indicate that the differential needs of males and females are considered.

In contrast to these approaches the responses of the representative of the BWA indicated a clearer understanding of vulnerability related to pre-existing gender differences which increase disaster risks. There was also concrete evidence to show different ways in which women and men experience and cope with disasters. It is therefore important to build the institutional capacity of the BWA to enable them to play a more strategic role in mainstreaming gender in the national disaster agencies. This would enable all agencies to conduct the kind of research and analysis demonstrated in the ECLAC Report on the impact of Ivan on Jamaica in 2004.

***Sex-disaggregated data:*** Developing this capacity therefore means institutionalizing the collection of sex disaggregated data on deaths, damage and losses caused by disasters and coordinating and sharing this database to guide national disaster planning and interventions across all the relevant agencies. ODPEM is well positioned to undertake the collection of this sex disaggregated data with input from the various disaster agencies. Ensuing access to the data is also important which means regular maintenance of the websites of ODPEM, UNDP and other agencies.

***Policy and Coordinating Mechanisms***

Only two of the three agencies consulted (ODPEM and UNDP) are part of the state machinery to manage disasters- the National Disaster Committee – the BWA is not. Implementation of the CDERA Action Plan and the Hyogo Protocol therefore means ensuring that the BWA becomes an official member of the ODPEM and NDC network. Their inclusion would be strategic as they have been proactive in promoting a gender sensitive approach to disaster risk management through a public education workshop, development of an Action Plan and their continued advocacy to promote gender awareness in disaster response.

UNDP as leader of the UN Country Team, comprised of all the UN agencies in Jamaica, has a strategic role which can help to ensure that the disaster response programmes of all UN agencies in Jamaica are gender sensitive.

Partnerships in building institutional capacity to implement the CDERA Action Plan and the Hyogo Protocol would include CDERA but consideration should also be given to the two UWI institutions involved in this project - SALISES and the Centre for Gender and Development Studies to support research and training on gender and disaster risk management.

Partnerships with civil society and the private sector are also essential to promote a more gender sensitive approach to disaster risk management. This implies expanding the training and awareness programmes to include churches, women’s groups, community associations, staff of volunteer organizations etc. Project partnerships such as the one between UNDP and WROC can be expanded. The expanded partnership with the BWA could also support the integration of gender considerations in:

- Shelter Services – temporary shelter, house rebuilding, roof repair, separate shelter facilities for males and for females and children, transportation between shelters and homes; addressing special needs of women and of men;
- Care Services- Care of boys and girls, care for elderly, sick and disabled males and females; meeting the needs of pregnant and lactating women;
- Counseling Services- before and after disasters, trauma, coping skills, motivation, sexual abuse; with special attention to the needs of males who emerged as more at risk psychologically in coping with disasters;
- Relief, Supplies and Resources- money, food, other supplies- given the varying economic needs especially of poor single female heads of households; support for

rebuilding households and livelihoods after a disaster; child care to enable mothers to seek employment.

### ***Awareness of the CDERA Action Plan and the Hyogo Protocol***

The limited awareness of these agreements and the limited capacity to implement them highlight the need for more awareness building and training programmes on these frameworks within and outside the relevant agencies. This training should highlight links with other national and international instruments that promote the human rights of all citizens but especially those supporting women's rights such as CEDAW and the Belem do Para Convention as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **Recommendations**

Against this background the recommendations are to:

1. Strengthen the legislative and policy framework by enacting laws and a gender policy to support implementation of the CDERA Action Plan, the Hyogo Protocol and to ensure consistency with other human rights commitments such as CEDAW, CRC, and the Belem Conventions.
2. Organise an *awareness building programme* for the staff of agencies, stake holders and partners to build institutional capacity and to encourage the use of 'gender sensitive' policies, programmes and strategies. The objective would be to increase knowledge of the CDERA Action Plan, the Hyogo Protocol and other commitments to promote gender equality such as CEDAW; Belem do Para Convention to eliminate violence against women.
3. Develop a special time-bound training project to implement the CDERA Action Plan; and develop skills to mainstream gender in ODPEM, UNDP and the BWA with a view to them training other disaster related agencies.
4. Develop a project to support the collection, analysis and use of sex disaggregated data in all disaster related institutions and to share this information on websites.
5. Strengthen policy and coordinating mechanisms by including the BWA and other gender sensitive partners in civil society in the National Disaster Committee and especially in ODPEM.
6. Collaborate with SALISES the CGDS to implement research and gender training in the gender and disaster risk management. This could include research on priority issues to be determined as well as the development of academic programmes at UWI to train undergraduate and postgraduate students in this specialised field of work and study.

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