



# **CASE STUDY: PREPAREDNESS FOR EFFECTIVE RESPONSE IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION**

**2023**

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## 1.0 Introduction

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian organization, which started with one man's vision to help those affected during the Battle of Solferino. It has since grown into a large network providing support and aid to those impacted by crises and disasters through National Societies established in over 191 countries. The IFRC acts before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of the vulnerable<sup>1</sup>.

Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies are meant to work in partnership with their local public authorities while adhering to international and national laws. They work closely with their local national disaster offices (NDOs) and other pertinent stakeholders, playing an auxiliary role in local humanitarian efforts. They are impartial and neutral and work in accordance with the seven (7) IFRC fundamental principles<sup>2</sup>. The mandate of each National Society varies depending on the needs of the local communities and the relationship with local organizations. However, they all provide support towards enhancing community disaster resilience through enhanced preparedness and response measures for disasters and health emergencies.

The English and Dutch speaking Caribbean is comprised of 13 National Societies which can be considerably small compared to other global National Societies. On average, the number of staff in each of the island-based National Society is five (5), while the average number of staff in the larger National Societies is 20. Therefore, National Societies within the region must work closely with volunteers and volunteer response groups such as trained Community Disaster Response Teams (CDRTs) in order to fulfil their preparedness and response mandate.

The IFRC utilizes several tools and methodologies to build disaster risk reduction (DRR) capacities in National Societies so they can better serve their vulnerable communities. The National Society Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) Approach is one such methodology, which was developed to enable National Societies to fulfil their auxiliary role by strengthening local preparedness capabilities to ensure timely and effective humanitarian assistance.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ifrc.org/who-we-are/about-ifrc>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ifrc.org/who-we-are/international-red-cross-and-red-crescent-movement/about-national-societies>

This case study will look at the way in which the Caribbean region has used the PER approach, the challenges faced, as well as the benefits and solutions utilized by the National Societies.

## 2.0 Methodology

### 2.1 Primary Research

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the appointed PER Focal Points within the eight (8) National Societies that underwent at least the orientation phase of the PER approach. The questions posed to the Focal Points aimed at better understanding the phases of the PER approach that the National Societies are at, some of the challenges faced and ways in which the National Societies used the PER mechanism other than during the assessment phase.

Additionally, virtual semi-structured interviews were conducted with persons who facilitated PER in the region to get a perception of the ease at which National Societies engaged with the PER mechanism, challenges faced and possible solutions.

### 2.2 Secondary Research

A desk review was completed of all relevant documents, reports and other case studies previously done on the PER mechanism and its implementation. Information was also obtained from PER resources created for and shared with the global PER pool of facilitators.

## 3.0 PER Approach

This section will give a brief overview of the PER approach.

Currently, National Societies undergo in-depth assessments to test their systems. The Organisational Capacity Assessment & Certification Process (OCAC) and the Branch Organisational Capacity Assessment (BOCA) are examples of such assessments. In this vein, the PER Approach was developed to assess, measure and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of a National Society's response system cyclically, in order to develop remedial

actions based on best practices<sup>3</sup>. The PER approach is not new as it is based on two decades worth of response experience and the merged learnings from the National Disaster Preparedness and Response Mechanism (NDPRM), the Well-Prepared National Society (WPNS) and the Disaster Risk Capacity Enhancement (DRCE)<sup>4</sup>.

### 3.1 PER Objectives

The PER Approach has the following objectives:

- 1) Reinforce the role of a NS within national and local emergency management systems.
- 2) Empower National Societies to continuously adapt to changing risk landscapes and the needs of affected populations.
- 3) Improve the quality and accountability of disaster preparedness and response, including international support from the IFRC network.
- 4) Contribute to the coordination of the local, national and global systems.
- 5) Continuously learn from preparedness programmes and emergency operations' experience.

### 3.2 PER Guiding Principles

PER facilitators should be guided by the following seven (7) principles when conducting a PER to increase its chances of success:

- a) Ownership and commitment: NS's leadership owns its preparedness capacity strengthening efforts and commits to continued investment.
- b) Participation and inclusion: Build preparedness solutions around the inclusion of all teams and all levels (Leadership, HQ, branches).
- c) System-wide perspectives: Look at NS capacity as a whole to understand the complexity and interconnectedness of preparedness, anticipation, response and recovery actions.
- d) Evidence and objectivity: Build on evidence and objectivity to measure, analyse and track progress over time.
- e) Practicality and adaptability: Practically adapt the approach to accommodate varying contexts, opportunities and challenges and ensure the objective is met.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/PER-Summary-1.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Introduction to PER Approach document

- f) Harmonisation and coordination: Invest in harmonization and coordination to optimize resources and align efforts of all stakeholders.
- g) Continuous learning and improvement: Nurture a culture of learning and excellence for improved humanitarian assistance.

The approach provides a representation of every National Society's Response Mechanism through five key overarching Areas, which are broken down into the 37 Components that represent the functions, capacity, processes, and tools a National Society needs to respond. The five areas are Policy, Strategy and Standards; Analysis and Planning; Operational Capacity; Coordination and Operations Support. Figure 1 below represents the Response Mechanism's areas and components.

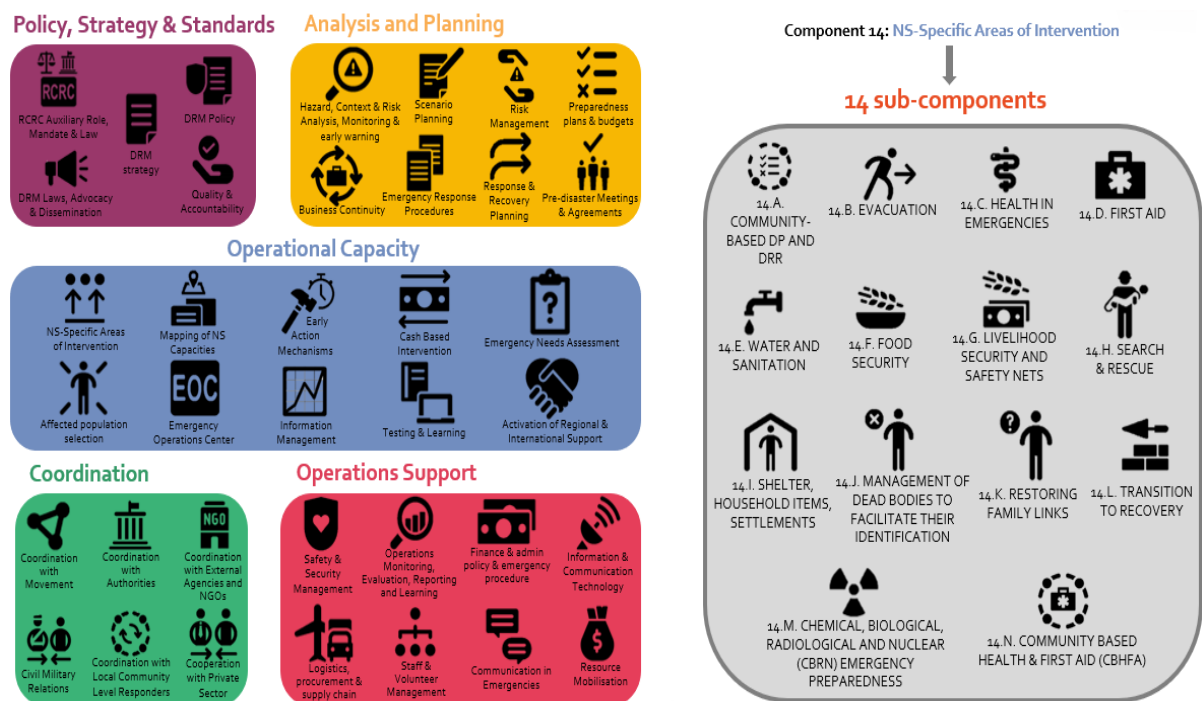


Figure 1: PER Areas and Components

### 3.3 PER PHASES

The PER approach comprises of five (5) phases aimed at walking National Societies through the process of understanding their needs, strengths and weaknesses as it relates to

preparedness and response and implementing actions to get them to where they envision themselves. The following are the phases<sup>5</sup>:

- 1) Orientation - During the orientation, representatives from the National Society's leadership, staff and volunteers are given an overview of the approach and what is needed from the National Society in order to complete the different phases.
- 2) Assessment - During this phase the National Society fully engages with the PER mechanism (areas, components and benchmarks) and are asked to assess what works well and what doesn't for every component. Ratings are based on past response activities and the systems in place. It should be noted that there are four types of assessments: self-assessment; simulation; operational and post-operational.
- 3) Prioritisation and Analysis - Based on the findings of the assessment, the National Society prioritises components and analyses the root-causes of the challenges identified, in order to assign the remedial actions needed for improvement.
- 4) Workplan - During this phase, the National Society creates a work-plan made of the identified remedial actions, and it builds an accountability framework by defining clear targets, outcomes, timelines and accountable people.
- 5) Action and Accountability - The National Society implements the workplan and tracks its progress.

## 4.0 PER Within The English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean National Societies

Since its first introduction in the region in 2018, nine (9) of the thirteen National Societies of the English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean have undergone at least the orientation phase of the PER approach. These countries were: the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Jamaica, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago.

The following gives a brief overview of the use of PER within the region based on discussions held with PER Focal Points. This section will not highlight challenges as these will be outlined in another section.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/PER-Summary-1.pdf>



## 4.1 Bahamas

The Bahamas is made up of 700 islands, of which only 30 are inhabited. As of August 2023, the Bahamas Red Cross has 20 paid staff members and three (3) branches. In September 2019, Hurricane Dorian was a category 5 hurricane when it made landfall on the Bahamas, causing major damage on the islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama and resulted in the deaths of 74 people<sup>6</sup>. These damages were estimated at \$3.4 billion which amounted to over a quarter of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP<sup>7</sup>). Due to the devastation caused by the hurricane, the Canadian Red Cross saw a need to improve the National Society's response capacity and took the opportunity to introduce it to the PER approach.

A PER orientation was conducted in February 2020, after which the National Society conducted a self-assessment in April 2020 via an online modality. It involved branches in the smaller islands as well as the staff at the headquarters on Nassau Island. It should be noted that after the workplan phase, there was a large turnover of staff and therefore the activities included in the PER workplan could not be implemented as the financial resources were reallocated based on the emerging need to train new staff.

The National Society revisited the approach in 2022 by conducting a refresher orientation, followed by a self-assessment. A second workplan was created and the National Society is currently in the Action and Accountability phase.

## 4.2 Barbados

The Barbados Red Cross is a small national society with eight (8) staff members. The PER orientation and self-assessment were completed in 2018 and the National Society is in the process of completing the long-term actions identified in the workplan.

The National Society is currently using the findings of the PER assessment and the related workplan actions to guide the new direction of the National Society especially as a new

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<sup>6</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/bahamas/facts-hurricane-dorian-s-devastating-effect-bahamas>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.iadb.org/en/news/damages-and-other-impacts-bahamas-hurricane-dorian-estimated-34-billion-report>

governing board was recently elected. More details are outlined in the section on PER benefits and success stories.

### 4.3 Belize



Belize is located on the coastline of Central America and has one of the largest National Societies in the region. The National Society comprises a Headquarters located in the capital, which is supported by six (6) branches. The PER approach was first introduced to the Belize Red Cross Society during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, therefore, the orientation was undertaken via an online modality as a deliverable under the Capacity Building Initiative (CBI) III project.

A self-assessment was conducted in July 2021, which was also facilitated online. It should be noted that the National Society staff, volunteers and branch representatives gathered at the office, while the facilitators, who were unable to be present in-person, provided guidance over Zoom. The National Society created a workplan and is currently in the Action and Accountability phase.

### 4.4 Dominica



The Dominica Red Cross is a small national society with only four (4) staff members. The National Society was introduced to the PER approach in 2019. In the same year, the National Society completed the orientation and the self-assessment and developed a workplan.

The Society is in the Action and Accountability phase and therefore, is in the process of implementing the remedial actions identified in the PER workplan by integrating those activities into upcoming projects.

### 4.5 Guyana



Guyana is the only English-speaking country in the South American continent. The National Society is made up of one branch and is staffed by 12 people. The Guyana Red Cross did the orientation in 2022, however, the National Society's leadership decided not to move

forward to the Assessment phase due to competing priorities. The National Society is currently working on developing and strengthening income-generating activities such as its first aid programme as well as the development of its Disaster management programme.

The National Society is committed to revisiting the PER approach in the future.

#### 4.6 Jamaica



Jamaica has one of the largest National Societies with 26 staff and 13 branches. The National Society underwent the orientation phase twice. The first iteration was done during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 via an online modality, which was not best suited for the culture of the National Society as leadership and staff preferred in-person meetings as those are more engaging. The second iteration of the orientation was done using a hybrid modality, with most people being present in-person and some joining online.

During the second orientation, the Jamaica Red Cross indulged in a long discussion about the type of assessment that should be conducted. This was as a result of the National Society undergoing a DRCE the year before and therefore some felt that a simulation would yield better results, giving a better comparison of the progress made by the National Society. Despite these discussions, the National Society opted to defer further engagement with the PER approach.

The National Society plans to revisit the PER approach in the future focusing only on the relevant components.

#### 4.7 St. Kitts and Nevis



St. Kitts and Nevis is a twin island state with St. Kitts being the larger of the two. The National Society is one of the smallest in the region with six (6) staff members and approximately 153 volunteers. As part of the Capacity Building Project, the St. Kitts and Nevis Red Cross completed the PER orientation in October 2019, but did not proceed to the assessment phase immediately. A refresher orientation was conducted virtually in September 2021 which was followed by an assessment, also conducted via an online modality. The assessment was not completed as the right internal stakeholders could not attend the sessions.

The National Society plans to revisit the PER approach in the future.

#### 4.8 St. Vincent and the Grenadines



St. Vincent and the Grenadines consists of 32 islands and cays<sup>8</sup> located in the Caribbean. The National Society is staffed by six (6) people and supported by approximately 300 volunteers. The National Society did the PER orientation and a self-assessment in March 2020 and developed a workplan. Another self-assessment in 2022 to compare the progress made since the first assessment in 2020.

The National Society is currently in the Action and Accountability phase of the approach.

#### 4.9 Trinidad and Tobago



Even though Trinidad and Tobago is a small twin island state, the National Society is one of the larger ones in the region with 27 staff members. An orientation was done in 2019 after the DREF operations were conducted for the large-scale flooding event that occurred in the island of Trinidad. A self-assessment was conducted in-person in 2020 with staff and volunteers under the CBI III project. The National Society is currently in the Action and Accountability phase working on fulfilling the long-term remedial activities that are in alignment with their five (5) year plan.

The National Society aims to use the information gathered from the assessment and integrate the identified activities into their annual plans.

It should be noted that a PER learning series was created based on the experience of the National Society during and after the orientation and assessment phases. These videos can be found on the CADRIM website<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gfdr.org/sites/default/files/publication/drm-country-note-2010-st-vincent-grenadines>.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cadrim.org/per-learningseries>

## 5.0 Perceptions And Challenges With The Different Phases

### 5.1 Orientation Phase

The PER Focal Points in all eight (8) countries approached stated that enough information was received about the PER approach during the orientation phase and there was a general understanding among the staff and volunteers about what the approach entailed and how the assessment will be conducted. The general consensus showed that the information and guidance provided by facilitators during the orientation process was clear, understandable and sufficient. One facilitator expressed a need for more emphasis to be placed on the utility of the mechanism and the different modalities of the approach.

The Bahamas, Belize and Jamaica underwent the orientation via an online modality. Even though the Bahamas Red Cross progressed to the workplan phase, conducting the orientation online had many challenges. There were connectivity issues experienced during the sessions, especially on the smaller islands. It was the first time that so many people had to participate in an online meeting for such an extended period of time, as each session was held for approximately three (3) hours. Retaining the attention of participants and obtaining feedback was difficult at times. Similar issues were faced in Jamaica, as it was also difficult to retain engagement with key persons during the first orientation held online.

### 5.2 Assessment Phase

At the start of the assessment phase, the National Societies were given an overview of all 37 components. Feedback from a few of the National Societies showed this to be unnecessary and made the process seem overwhelming as they were not responsible for or contributed towards the services and processes related to some of the components. A few felt demotivated by this as they felt that they were expected to provide the services outlined in the 37 components. However, one National Society saw value in having the overview done as some of the staff and volunteers within the society did not know about them previous to the assessment.

The National Societies stated that people generally felt comfortable expressing their views openly during the self-assessment and even when there were disagreements, they felt that they were able to come to a consensus through the guidance of the facilitators who helped to keep the discussions on track.

Feedback was also received where one National Society felt that the ranking of the components was not done in a realistic manner by the branches. The National Society plans to have individual PER sessions with the branches in order to get more realistic feedback.

Another National Society expressed concern over the ranking of the components, stating that persons were aware of their roles and responsibilities in a response, but may not have processes documented, or may not have things in place like other larger global National Societies and therefore, had to give the component a low ranking which made staff and volunteers feel demotivated. It was felt that concessions must be made to smaller National Societies.

Overall, the National Societies expressed that good guidance was provided by the facilitators.

### **5.3 Prioritization And Analysis And The Workplan Phases**

It is important to reiterate that the 13 National Societies are considered small with limited staff and funding. The main challenges, which will be highlighted in another section, were linked to those limitations.

One National Society expressed a need to have an open discussion about funding during these phases as oftentimes, assessments and tools are introduced, however, it is left to the National Society to find ways to fund the compliance of these, which is difficult for small National Societies. There is also a need to include discussions on the type of capacity-building support that will be provided to ensure compliance with best practices.

### **5.4 Action and Accountability**

Most National Societies are at this phase of the approach and are working on implementing some of the long-term actions agreed on in their PER workplans. National Societies expressed that full implementation will take some time due to the aforementioned limitations with resources. A few National Societies also expressed the need for more capacity building training to enable better achievement of outcomes of the PER Plan of Action (POA).

## 6.0 Additional PER Challenges And Solutions

### 6.1 Insufficient Resources

National Societies identified funding as a major barrier to the implementation of their POA, especially with big budget activities that were more long-term or sustainable. In the past, the PER approach was introduced to some of the National Societies as a component of the Capacity Building Initiative (CBI) and once that project ended, the funding also stopped.

One National Society stated that an honest conversation about available funding should be included in the early phases of the approach since it is not practical to include actions that require a lot of funding in the workplan. This leads to another issue which is the development of unrealistic workplans. One of the facilitators interviewed stated that National Societies, at times, develop “ambitious plans” as they do not fully consider their resource limitations needed to bridge these gaps.

Lack of sufficient human resources is another limitation in the region. The following table shows the current number of paid staff in each of the eight National Societies.

National Society	Number Of Staff
Bahamas	20
Barbados	8
Belize	17
Dominica	4
Guyana	12
Jamaica	26
St. Kitts and Nevis	6
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	6
Trinidad and Tobago	27

Table 1: Number of staff as of August 2023

It was observed that during the workplan phase, National Societies may put activities in their plans without having the required human resources. The options of hiring additional support staff may also be limited as externally funded projects may contain stipulations that prevent this. Therefore, adding further activities without introducing more staff can put an additional strain on the National Society.

The workplan created should realistically consider the National Society’s capacity. If the plan contains activities that cannot be implement, then this leads to the National Society thinking of the PER workplan as separate from their strategic plan.

National Societies can benefit from increased capacity in Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER). Being better trained in PMER would help them be more realistic with their planning as they would more accurately identify the resources and activities needed in order to achieve the desired outcome and develop methods of measuring progress in a more meaningful way.

## **6.2 Project VS Programme**

As previously mentioned, most National Societies were introduced to PER under the CBI Projects and as such, they view PER as a requisite of a project or as a checkbox activity under it.

It is important for National Societies to make the shift and treat PER as a programme. Therefore, PER needs to be marketed as part of what the National Society does for its own capacity enhancement, and not as part of a project that reaches an end. Linkages should be made to show that the PER approach is cyclical.

The capacity to develop programmes should be enhanced in National Societies as many within the Caribbean are project oriented and a shift has to be made towards becoming more programme based. This is an important step towards streamlining the PER workplan with other National Society plans and integrating the remedial actions into the daily work of staff.

The timing of conducting PER in National Societies is another crucial factor. The PER assessment should be done before the development of an annual plan or strategic plan, as this can ensure that the PER workplan is not left as a standalone document but one that is used to inform future National Society developmental actions.

## **6.3 Limited Support For National Societies**

Another regional challenge is the lack of trained PER facilitators to provide the level of follow-up and support needed by the National Societies. At the Port of Spain Country Cluster Delegation, there is only one trained PER Focal Point to provide assistance. There was a need to train and develop a cadre of PER facilitators within the region who can provide more support and guidance to National Societies.

In March 2023, a Regional PER Facilitator Training was conducted to sixteen participants; seven (7) from the IFRC, seven (7) from National Societies and two (2) from Partner National



Societies. Participants gained in-depth knowledge of the PER approach and got hands-on practice with using the PER mechanism over five (5) days of training and were again participants at a refresher training held in August 2023. The hope is that trained persons will also act as PER ambassadors within their own National Societies as well as provide the support and assistance needed to complete the PER cycles. Next steps include allowing the recently trained participants to partake in upcoming planned PER sessions to get more hands-on practice.

#### **6.4 Only Useful Within The Movement**

One National Society stated that the findings of a PER assessment could not be used as a resource mobilization tool as external donor agencies such as the United Nations and the European Union often have their own form of assessments which are more globally recognized. It was felt that PER is not currently recognized as a standard outside of the movement and was therefore viewed as yet another assessment with few benefits. It was expressed that until the PER approach becomes more recognized, National Societies will struggle to get funding and meet implementation deadlines.

The main goal of the PER approach is not to be used as a resource mobilization tool, but to help National Societies better understand their strengths and weaknesses and identify changes needed that could result in more effective responses. An example of this is the Belize Red Cross. Through using the PER mechanism, the National Society was able to pinpoint communication between headquarters and branches as well as with volunteers as a major gap that affected their ability to respond. They took action by hiring a Volunteer and Youth Development Manager to act as a liaison to strengthen these relationships. The St Vincent and the Grenadines identified a similar issue and are finding new ways to engage with volunteers. It is important that National Societies see the added benefits of the PER approach. Peer-to-peer learnings should be encouraged as National Societies can better learn about the PER approach and the different modalities of using the mechanism from regional success stories.

#### **6.5 Need For Contextualization Of The PER Approach**

The context of the National Societies within the region is different from those in other parts of the world. There are some functions that the region's National Societies do not support as these falls under the purview of the national disaster offices or other governmental

organizations. There is a need to tailor the PER approach to suit the needs and the high priority areas of focus under the mandate of the National Societies.

There is a need to review the way in which the orientation and assessment phases are done and the way in which National Societies are asked to engage with the PER mechanism. National Societies can first be introduced to the components that are linked to their mandate and existing country plans and strategic plans, similar to what is done for the readiness check. A readiness check is a check on the current National Society Response Capacity to quickly review with respective teams if the required personnel, equipment, and resources are ready to respond to likely or impending crisis situations<sup>10</sup>.

## 7.0 Regional PER Benefits And Success Stories

### 7.1 The Belize Red Cross Experience

The Belize Red Cross Society demonstrated how useful the PER mechanism can be once there is sufficient buy-in from leadership. This National Society is the only one currently utilizing the mechanism outside of the assessment phase. The following are examples of how they used the mechanism to enhance their capacity.

#### 7.1.1 Operational Lessons Learned

Having used the mechanism previously, and witnessing firsthand how it can be used to identify and strengthen its weaknesses, the leadership of Belize Red Cross saw value in further using the mechanism as part of its Operational Lessons Learned after its response to Hurricane Lisa in March 2023. The system caused severe flooding and damage to the Belize District, which resulted in approximately 5000 persons seeking shelter. Additional information from NEMO showed that at least 39% of the total population of Belize (approximately 160,000 people) were affected and resulted in US\$10 million in damages in just the housing sector<sup>11</sup>. Staff and volunteers who provided assistance during the response participated in the session.

The National Society chose to review the PER components and the corresponding benchmarks relevant to the type of support provided by the National society during the response. By completing this exercise, the headquarter staff and volunteers from the Belize district were able to better pinpoint the key issues. Realistic remedial actions related to the root causes of the issues were identified and incorporated into the everyday tasks of the key

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<sup>10</sup> IFRC Preparedness for Effective Response Approach: Introduction

<sup>11</sup> <https://site.nemo.org.bz/>

personnel responsible for those actions. This was a crucial step to strengthening areas that were identified as weaknesses such as some concerns stemming from its cash voucher assistance processes and procurement issues. The National Society is reviewing existing and developing new MOUs with supermarkets.

### 7.1.2 Introducing PER To The National Disaster Office

The National Emergency Management Organisation (NEMO) monitors all hazards in the country and is responsible for comprehensive disaster management activities. The organization does this through its 15 national operational committees which are supported by the public sector, the private sector, civil societies and nine (9) District Emergency Committees<sup>12</sup>. It should be noted that the Belize Red Cross is cited as one of its supporting members.

In 2023, NEMO conducted its own operational lessons learned of its response to Hurricane Lisa. As a supporting member, the Director General of the Belize National Society attended this meeting, during which she spoke about the usefulness of using the PER mechanism in strengthening the National Society's own response system. The national disaster office expressed an interest in learning more about PER so the organization can also utilize the mechanism for its internal use. The National Society is currently awaiting more feedback from NEMO but is more than willing to provide any additional support needed.

### 7.1.3 Guiding Hurricane Preparedness

The region is prone to hurricanes and every year before the start of the Hurricane Season in June, National Societies embark on a series of preparedness activities geared towards increasing their level of preparedness as well as that of communities.

In May 2023, the Belize Red Cross used the PER mechanism to guide discussions during the preparedness meetings with volunteers and staff from the headquarters and branches. The mechanism was useful in reviewing roles and responsibilities and ensuring that sufficient measures were implemented to strengthen their systems and that the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) requirements were met. These types of in-depth discussions were

not held previously with the various branches but the exposure to the PER approach changed the strategies used by the National Society.

## **7.2 The Dominica Experience**

The PER Focal Points in the Dominica Red Cross and the Barbados Red Cross also stated that PER mechanism was used as a tool to assist with their pre-hurricane season activities.

### **7.2.1 Using The Workplan As A Guide**

The National Society uses the workplan developed during the PER approach throughout the year to identify preparedness measures to take before the Hurricane season as well as before the updating of any policy and strategic documents. The National Society also used the benchmarks of the PER mechanism while reviewing and updating its Disaster Response Plan to ensure that the plan was in alignment with the best practices outlined in the mechanism.

### **7.2.2 Integrating PER Workplan Actions Into Upcoming Projects**

Lack of funding was identified as a major reason for why National Societies were unable to implement the PER workplan activities. As a solution to this, the Dominica Red Cross always reviews the PER workplan before an upcoming project is undertaken, to find synergies between the project and the PER workplan actions. Therefore, the National Society tries to integrate relevant capacity enhancement activities into the upcoming projects as a means of obtaining the funding needed for implementation.

## **7.3 The Barbados Experience**

### **7.3.1 Using The Mechanism To Develop Standard Operating Procedures**

Similarly, to Dominica Red Cross, the National Society in Barbados used the PER mechanism and its considerations to develop various Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to respond to different types of emergencies as well as the incorporation of Protection, Gender and Inclusion considerations to guide public engagement and distributions. The mechanism was also integral in updating the National Society's operational plan.

### **7.3.2 Using The PER Workplan To Chart A New Way Forward**

Barbados Red Cross recently changed the members of its governing board. The National Society used the findings of the PER Assessment to provide guidance to the new governance board on what works well and what are the challenges, to chart a new way forward for the

National Society. The findings were used to outline the needs of the National Society, especially as it relates to resource mobilization. It is the intention of the governing board to have staff incorporate activities from the PER workplan into their day-to-day responsibilities.

### 7.3.3 Changing Volunteer Management

As with all National Societies, volunteers are integral to implementing preparedness and response actions. Undergoing the PER assessment helped highlight the need for better volunteer engagement and management and as such prompted the National Society to change the method used to engage with volunteers. They invested in the “my impact” software to manage and track volunteer engagement. This resulted in an increase in coordinated activities with volunteers. The National Society is also looking at new ways to keep volunteers informed and to help them better understand the different tools, processes and systems utilized by the National Society. The idea is to create short videos that would be uploaded to the “my impact” application in the aim of orienting new volunteers on tools used. One of the videos can present the PER mechanism.

## 8.0 Moving Forward

The IFRC Port of Spain Country Cluster Delegation, aims to improve the way in which National Societies utilize the PER approach. It is clear that PER has many benefits, especially as it relates to helping National Societies identify the root causes to issues in their response system and to take both simple and more robust actions towards strengthening their response capacity, processes and tools. Understanding the perspective of the National Societies and collating information on the challenges faced when using the PER approach is the first step towards developing a plan of action to propel the use of the PER approach and the mechanism within the region.

Steps to address the challenges expressed by National Societies started to be taken and will continue in the future, for example:

- A PER Facilitator Training was conducted to raise the proper understanding of the approach in the region and put together a team that can bolster the support and guidance given to National Societies in a way that is in alignment with the Caribbean context.
- Moving forward, PER will no longer be a requirement of a project, which should help to bring about a mindset shift in the perception that PER is separate from what the National Society does and that the PER workplan is just a checkbox activity.

- A close collaboration between the IFRC Port of Spain Country Cluster Delegation and the Global PER Core Group will allow the constant research for practical solutions regarding the challenges felt by National Societies.

The information found in this case study will be used to charter a way forward and to bring about meaningful changes in the way that National Societies utilize the mechanism in the future.