

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Resident Representative and UN Resident Co-ordinator, Dr. Arun Kashyap, says [Disaster Risk Reduction is an integral component](#) of equitable and inclusive development for all nation states.

“It is clear from a development perspective, that disaster risk reduction is vital for building a more equitable and sustainable future,” he added.

Dr. Kashyap pointed out that this is why the Millennium Declaration has called on the global community to ‘intensify our collective efforts to reduce the number and impacts of natural hazards and man-made disasters.’

The UNDP Representative was speaking at the Country Risk Management stakeholders’ consultation workshop, held at the Jamaica Conference Centre in downtown Kingston on Wednesday (August 29).

The workshop, organised by the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), HelpAge International and the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO), was held in an effort to develop a country document for disaster risk reduction for Jamaica.

Dr. Kashyap noted that disasters not only reveal underlying social, economic and development vulnerabilities in many developing countries, but also contribute to worsening these conditions.

“It is the marginalised, including women and girls, that constitute the most vulnerable population and have a higher burden in terms of proportional loss of their assets and lives, and suffer the greatest impact,” he argued.

Dr. Kashyap further informed that average fatalities for major disaster events have been approximately 40 times higher in low-income countries, as compared to high-income earning

countries, and direct asset losses as a percentage of gross national income, have averaged three times more.

He noted that 95 per cent of disaster related deaths occur in developing countries. "For instance, fewer than two per cent of global deaths from cyclones occur in countries with high levels of development, while more than half of cyclone related deaths occur in the least developed nations," he said.

The UNDP Representative pointed out that given the fact that the 2015 deadline for most of the Millennium Development Goals was only three years away, it is critical that disaster risk reduction becomes an integral part of development planning and action for all developing nations.

The development of a Disaster Risk Reduction country document for Jamaica falls under the 'Helping Vulnerable Populations and Communities to Manage Risks Associated with Hurricanes and Floods' project, which is being funded by ECHO and implemented by HelpAge and the ODPEM. The project will take place in 10 communities in the parishes of St. Catherine and Portland.

Regional Director, HelpAge International, Jeffrey James, said the country document is expected to present a holistic vision of disaster risk reduction at the national level, and as such, it should reflect the input of all stakeholders involved in disaster risk reduction in Jamaica.

The exercise, he said, forms part of the 2011/2012 Disaster Preparedness Programme of the European Community Humanitarian Office (DIPECHO) Action Plan for the Caribbean, which is funded by ECHO. "This is the eighth round of projects that ECHO is supporting in the Caribbean," he informed.

The present action plan includes 11 projects, four in Haiti, three in the Dominican Republic, three regional projects and one in Jamaica.

Mr. James also informed that the country document is expected to provide a comprehensive

overview of the status of disaster risk reduction in the country; the progress made in reducing risk; the definition of priorities and strategies; the major challenges faced in reducing the loss of lives; as well as the economic, social and environmental impact of risks.