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## **Promoting use of the Internet in the Disaster Management Community: The Caribbean Experience**

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper discusses the use of Internet for disaster management from the perspective of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) and the National Disaster Organisations (NDOs) of its Participating States. In doing so it chronicles efforts to establish a regional electronic information network to facilitate increased access to information and greater sharing of information and experiences.

The main purpose of the document is to highlight the Caribbean's experience for the benefit of those who wish to devise strategies for promoting Internet use as a mean for improving disaster management capability. It also identifies some of the challenges currently faced, issues that have arisen and ways in which some of these might be addressed.

The paper addresses the following:

- ▶ Background information on Internet in the Caribbean (e.g. availability, cost, type of services and service providers, etc.)
- ▶ Identification of main potential uses for Disaster Management in the region.
- ▶ Identification of the key issues to be addressed in promoting Internet use in this environment and the main constraints or obstacles to be overcome.
- ▶ Overview of current efforts by CDERA to promote Internet use among the Disaster Management community in the region in general and National Disaster Organisations in particular.
- ▶ Summary of experiences and lessons learnt so far. This will also address the experience of using Internet for emergency communications.
- ▶ Recommendations for actions to ensure that Disaster Management in the region derives the benefits available from Internet use.

The paper concludes that the Internet has provided the opportunity to satisfy a need that had long been identified - providing the regional disaster management community with an effective means for obtaining and sharing the information which it required. It also concludes that use of the Internet for disaster management purposes is likely to continue growing despite some technical difficulties and suggests that CDERA and other organisations need to continue facilitating this process.