

Natural Hazards and Hazard Management in the Greater Caribbean and Latin America

It has been estimated that during 1960 to 1989 natural disasters in the Latin American and Caribbean region have killed 180,000 people, disrupted the lives of 100 million more, and caused more than US \$54 billion in property damage. Rates of destruction, both from the large-scale disasters and recurrent small-scale hydrogeologic disasters (landslides and floods), increase decade after decade. The anthropogenic modifications to the physical environment without a proper understanding of the natural constraints on the land-use often exacerbate the impact of geohazards. As a result, a significant portion of the national capital which would have been otherwise available for the benefit of the Society is being consumed for rehabilitation and reconstruction in the wake of disasters.

The most effective approach to reducing the vulnerability to natural hazards is to understand the hazardous geologic processes, their effects, how can these effects be avoided and/or reduced, and make this information available to the Society.

Natural Hazards and Hazard Management in the Greater Caribbean and Latin America incorporates papers on the above themes, including recent case examples, and is a University of the West Indies contribution to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR). This volume is an outgrowth of the Second Caribbean Conference on Natural Hazards and Disasters, 1996 organized by Unit for Disaster Studies, Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, the University of the West Indies, Mona.

The objective of this volume is to promote greater awareness of the need for disaster reduction in the Greater Caribbean and Latin American region among both experts and non-experts. It will interest lay persons, commercial interests, school and university students, teachers, and technical people including: civil officials and disaster managers responsible for disaster mitigation and prevention, health practitioners, scientists, engineers, planners, social scientists, and communication specialists.

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