



“Can one day change the habits for thousands in the Caribbean?”

A review of the one day Disaster Preparedness and First Aid training programme after Hurricane Tomas

By St John International & St John St Lucia



Abstract

The Order of St John is a major international charity, accredited to the United Nations, whose organisations provide first aid, health care and support services in over 40 countries around the world. In 2009, the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin and the German NGO, The Johanniter, funded a Disaster Preparedness project in 7 countries in the Caribbean (Antigua and Barbuda; Barbados; Dominica; Grenada; Guyana; Jamaica; and Saint Lucia), which was delivered by local St John organisations. The aim of the project was to deliver free, one day training in disaster and hazard awareness and emergency First Aid in order to increase the resilience of vulnerable communities. By December 2010, 13,255 people had been trained across the region and a focus group run by St John St Lucia after the impact of Hurricane Tomas was organised. Participants show that the key benefits of the project were the new knowledge of First Aid and the information on disasters and hazards. Participants had used their first aid skills during the hurricane, as well as daily life and many of them had changed their behaviour in terms of preparation – checking hazards at home, creating 72 hour emergency kits, purchasing and storing food items. However, none had created a complete family emergency plan.

Results suggest that some changes need to be made to the course and training methodology in order to maximise the potential to create behaviour change, however people from St Lucia and across the region found the training and new knowledge incredibly valuable. St John believes that this project is an example of how, with relatively small levels of funding and local programme ownership a project can really impact upon disaster preparedness and community resilience.

Contents:

- **Overview of the project**
- **What people say about the project?**
- **Focus group discussion**
 - **Details**
 - **Methodology**
- **Results:**
 - **Ranking exercise**
 - **Summary of discussions**
- **Success and challenges**
- **Conclusions**

Overview of project:

Type of project	One day Disaster preparedness and first aid training
Main objectives	Increase resilience of vulnerable communities in order for them to better to prepare and respond to natural disasters
Beneficiaries	General population of the 7 Caribbean project countries
Location	Caribbean (Antigua and Barbuda; Barbados; Dominica; Grenada; Guyana; Jamaica; and Saint Lucia
Project delivered by	St John International and St John organisations in Antigua and Barbuda; Barbados; Dominica; Grenada; Guyana; Jamaica; and Saint Lucia
Timescale	18 months
Funding	162,000 Euros
Funders	Federal Foreign Office, Berlin and The Johanniter

In 2009, the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin and the German NGO, The Johanniter, funded a Disaster Preparedness project in 7 countries in the Caribbean, which was delivered by local St John organisations. Countries involved were: Antigua and Barbuda; Barbados; Dominica; Grenada; Guyana; Jamaica; and St Lucia.

The aim of the project was to train 12,600 people across the seven countries in disaster and hazard awareness and emergency first aid (1800 in each country). The overall aim was to increase the resilience of vulnerable communities to better respond to disasters through training and skills developments.

Using funds made available for the project, St John St Lucia employed a trainer and part time administrator to deliver the project in August 2009. The project manager (based in London), in consultation with the St John organisations in the Caribbean and CDEMA, developed a one day curriculum on disaster awareness and emergency first aid.

The trainers from each country were trained as trainers and then went back to their countries to begin marketing the courses and training communities.

Radio spots were created which provided tips on hazard awareness and emergency first aid – so these acted as an awareness tool, as well as marketing for the course. No specific group were targeted – but there was a keen focus on trying to engage with those communities and people who were already involved in responding to disasters at a community level such as Village Disaster Committees, schools etc.

The one day course was provided free of charge to the participants. It covered the following topics:

- What to do before a disaster
- Creating a family emergency plan
- What to do during different types of disasters
- What to do after
- Emergency First aid
 - Dealing with multiple casualties
 - Wounds and bleeding
 - CPR
 - Moving a casualty safely
 - Bone and joint injuries

During the training the participants received the following to take away with them:

- Basic first aid kit
- First Aid reference booklet
- Booklet on how to create a Family Emergency Plan (written by CDEMA)

- Certificate of attendance

By the end of the project in December 2010, St John St Lucia had trained 1832 people (13,255 had been trained across the region).

The total cost of the project in the seven countries (including procurement of goods and materials and salaries for trainers and coordinators) was around 162,000 Euro.

Of that, St John St Lucia spent a total of \$41,000 ECD (around 11,000 Euro) during the 16 month project on:

- Salary for the trainer for 16 months
- Salary for the administrator for 16 months
- Costs for trainings (transport, venue hire, snacks for participants)
- Stationary, marketing, and radio spots

The evaluations forms which were completed by participants who attended the training have provide valuable feedback to the impact of the project.

Participants were very keen to get more information about the variety of disasters that affect the region, as opposed to the focus on hurricanes. Knowledge of first aid was relatively low so people continue to come back to St John to request more training.

Following the passage of Hurricane Tomas, St John St Lucia was keen to find out if the training which participants had received made a difference to their behaviour. The following report documents the discussion at the focus group attended by participants who had been trained.

What do people say about the project?

"The Disaster Preparedness and First Aid training that was undertaken by St John St Lucia is so vital. It has indeed built confidence our volunteers and after the passage of Hurricane Tomas, the manner in which they responded is testament of the excellent training that St John provided."

Simone Mondesir – St Lucia National Emergency Management Organisation (NEMO)
Soufriere

"A good effort at educating the nation – keep up the good work"

Participant, St Lucia

"I am only 12years old and I found this course was great and easy to understand. I would highly recommend it to others!"

Participant, St Lucia

"The POSITIVE impact that this training has had on the people who've been trained is overwhelming. It gives me such joy when I meet people who have received this valuable training – they walk up to me at the supermarket, on the road or on a bus and relate their stories and express gratitude for such treasured knowledge. We NEED to continue as this information is necessary to saving lives"

Glenn Wilson, Disaster Preparedness Trainer – St John St Lucia

"The training that I was able to receive from St John-St Lucia was worthwhile because it can be applicable in any situation even at home. I learnt how to take care of a casualty in times of a disaster or emergency, therefore limiting further harm to him/her. The training is the whole reason why I have that level of confidence to now provide much needed assistance to my fellowmen who are in distress. I want to say a heartfelt thanks to St John for such a great work. More training and more in-depth knowledge would be most welcomed. This should be done on a continuous basis since first aid seems to be so dynamic and protocols change."

Jean-Claude Philgence – National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) Volunteer
Soufriere

Focus group discussion:

Methodology:

Planning for data collection:

A focus group was chosen as the main method of research to ensure that any pre-existing expectations from the research team had a limited influence on the results (through the use of open-ended questions and less rigid structure). In terms of evaluation research, learning directly from people about their experiences and thoughts is invaluable, and if supported by other sources of information, provides a comprehensive data set from which to draw valid conclusions.

The key research questions were devised and agreed which then informed the questions for the focus group discussion.

The facilitator recruited was the project trainer (Glenn Wilson), and while research suggests that an internal facilitator is not necessarily ideal for evaluation purposes there are many benefits. There is familiarity with the project and beneficiaries, sensitivity to personal issues as well as experience of group facilitation.

Recording equipment was organised and tested to ensure that it would provide clear records of the discussion for transcription and analysis.

The focus group discussion took place on the Thursday 24th February 2011 at the Ministry of Education Sub Office Conference Room in Vieux-Fort, St Lucia. The project trainer facilitated the group discussion in addition to two volunteers who took notes and observed the group.

Thirty four participants took part in the whole of the discussion. Participants were purposively sampled from regions around St Lucia that were prone to natural disasters or had in recent time's experienced natural disasters e.g. Dennery, Soufriere, Anse La Raye and Vieux Fort. The participants would either be directly affected or have experience in the field. There were also efforts to get people from the north of the island; although they did not suffer the same extent of damage, but it would have been interesting to determine what their preparation practices were.

Nineteen of the participants were women and fifteen were men. There were five young people (under 25 years). All the participants had previously attended training in Disaster Preparedness and First Aid run by St John St Lucia.

Data collection:

The exercise began at 10:30 am with introductions of participants including names, place of residence, profession or area of work, involvement in the project and other personal information that they wished to share. The participants were briefed on the purpose of the Focus Group and its objectives as well as the format in which it would be done.

The group discussion began with a ranking exercise in which participants had to place seven proposed benefits of the disaster preparedness project in order of their importance. This acted as an 'ice-breaker' by stimulating discussion around a particular topic.

After the ranking exercise the facilitator asked a series of planned questions to prompt discussion and encouraged people to speak about a particular topic if they had not spoken.

After the session, recordings of the discussion (from the tape and video equipment) were passed to a third party for transcription and summarising.

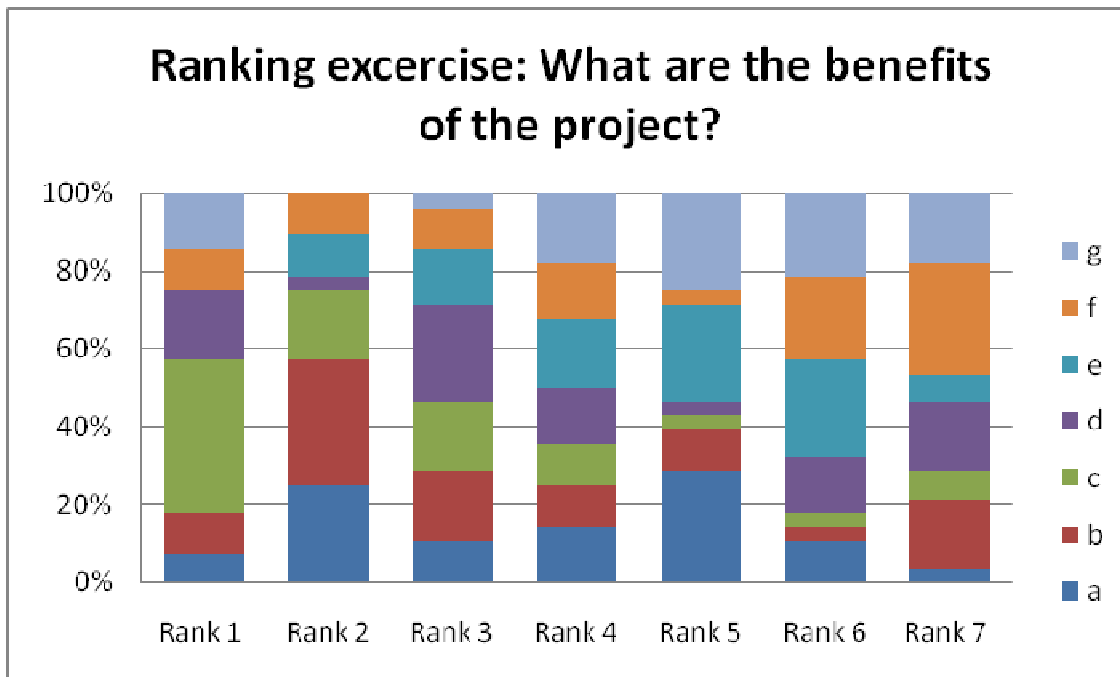
Results:

Ranking Exercise:

Participants were asked to rank the following potential benefits of the project in order of importance:

- a. increased confidence and better able to inform people of what I have learnt
- b. finding out new information about what to do during a disaster
- c. learning about how to provide first aid during an emergency
- d. Increased readiness of the community to face natural disasters
- e. Increase of trained citizens, prepared to assist in a meaningful way
- f. personal development and improving my overall skill set
- g. Reduction in the risk of chaos and resulting damage that may result when fear is high

% of participants selecting the benefit



Rank 1 = most important; Rank 7 = least important

The results show that:

- **Learning how to provide first aid during an emergency** was viewed by the most participants as the top benefit of the project
- **Learning new information on what to do during disasters** was the second highest ranked benefit
- **Increased readiness of the community** was seen as the third most important benefit

The group discussion highlighted a number of positive effects of the training course, including the development of:

- Skills to prepare plans and secure homes / schools/ workplaces to minimise the impact of a disaster.
- An increased awareness of risks and the need to remain focused and calm in an emergency.
- Skills to respond in everyday first aid situations involving friends and relatives.

Reasons for attending the training course ranged from a desire to be capable of responding to household emergencies involving loved ones, to the broadening of professional skills.

Many participants added that the free cost of the training course was a major incentive, as similar training schemes can cost as much as \$500. The resources provided on the training course received particularly positive feedback. The First Aid and Family Emergency Plan booklets were described as very family friendly, informative and easy to understand.

Has behaviour changed?

When asked whether the training had made a difference to the participants' response to Hurricane Tomas, many said they had felt more confident in their knowledge and preparation. There were examples of participants visually inspecting buildings and repairing vulnerable parts, taping their windows, leaving doors ajar and placing emergency bags next to household exits to minimise the impact of the hurricane. Many had also used their first aid skills at the time of the hurricane and in everyday life, and most felt they had an increased awareness of emergency preparation and response. While some participants had created emergency kits and food supplies, but none had yet prepared an emergency plan for their families, work places or community groups. It was also thought likely that behaviour may return to former practices without ongoing training courses and refresher sessions.

Success and challenges

Successes:

- Over 13,000 people vulnerable to natural disasters trained in DP and FA in the region
- Increase in knowledge of both hazard and disaster awareness and emergency first aid
- Evidence of behaviour change in St Lucia and use of newly acquired skills in first aid
- St John providing increased linkages between communities and government agencies
- Training needs to fit in with national and regional disaster management plans and programmes

Challenges

- Some of the materials were not specific to the Caribbean and need to be changed
- Time constraints vs depth of knowledge
- Some budget allowances for training costs
- Costs of marketing

Conclusions

The focus group participants clearly felt that the training had been very valuable to them and that more training should occur. The majority considered the knowledge they gained in First Aid was the key benefit of the project, and said they felt they were better able to support their families and communities in a disaster, as well as day to day. Participants felt secure in their preventative measures and one commented that she had slept soundly through Hurricane Tomas because she was so confident in her preparation.

Information on types of disasters and hazards, including man-made disasters, and understanding of measures to minimise their impact, was viewed as very important. Participants felt that continuous training and a focus on Caribbean issues may lead to people changing their behaviour. It was also suggested that training would have most impact immediately prior to the hurricane season (from March), and should be tailored to target the specific risks of different occupations such as fishermen and bus drivers. Overall, the Programme review highlighted the need and demand for continuing work in Disaster Preparedness and First Aid training in the Caribbean region.

St John International aims to highlight this project as an excellent example of the positive impact which can be made at the community level in relation to disaster preparedness, with relatively small amounts of money. It hopes to continue to run the programme in the Caribbean with modifications as well as replicate and adapt the design in other countries in which it works around the world, particularly in Africa and the Pacific.