

Evaluation of the DIPECHO Action plans implemented in the Caribbean

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Abbreviations	
ADMD	Asociacion Dominicana de Mitigacion de Desastres
ADRA	Adventist Relief Agency
APS	Associazione per la Partecipazione allo Sviluppo
Batey	Poor settlement of rural workers (Haitians usually without tenancy rights)
CARDIN	Caribbean Disaster Information Network
CARIMAC	Caribbean Institute of Mass Communications
CARIPEDA	Caribbean Peoples Development Agency
CB	Radio system
CDERA	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency
CDMP	Caribbean Disaster Management Programme
CENAI	National Centre for Seismic Research (Cuba)
CLAMED	Centro Lationamericano de Medicina de Desastres
CRC	Cuban Red Cross
CRF	Croix Rouge Francaise
CRH	Croix Rouge Haitien
CRID	Regional Disaster Information Centre for Latin America
DFID	Department of International Development (British)
DIPECHO	ECHO's Disaster Preparedness Programme
DIU	Disaster Information Units
DPC	Directorate for Civil Protection (Haiti)
DR	Dominican Republic
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FRC	French Red Cross
IFRCS	International Federation of Red Cross Societies
INDAC	Dominican Republic NGO
INDESOC	Dominican Republic NGO
MdM-E	Medicos del Mundo, Espana
MOVIMONDO	Italian NGO
MPDL	Movimento por la Paz el Desarme y la Libertad
NATHAZ	Caribbean Natural Hazards and Disasters Database
NDO	National Disaster Office
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OAS / OEA	Organisation of American States
ODPEM	Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management
OFDA	Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
PAHO	Pan American Health Organisation
PCDPPP	Pan Caribbean Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Project
PFI	Public Facility Inspector
RSTS	Relief Supply Tracking Software
SCF	Save the Children Fund
SCMVD	Sociedad Cubana de Medicina Veternaria para Casos de Desastres
TOR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UTECH	University of Technology, Jamaica
UWI	University of the West Indies

1 Executive Summary

The cohesive and distinctive strategy adopted by DIPECHO for the Caribbean, as represented by the projects supported in the first two action plans, is positively contributing to disaster risk reduction within the region. Although it is too early to fully assess the long term impact of the projects, as many of them require more than one year to validate their effectiveness, there is strong evidence of all projects producing outputs which will protect livelihoods and development processes from hazard impacts within the region.

The projects have resulted in raised levels of preparedness whilst demonstrating the requirement of, and building the basis for, the wider adoption of longer-term mitigation measures. Within the region future suffering and losses will be reduced and disaster responses will be more timely and efficient. Crucially, the DIPECHO strategy has lessened requirements for post-facto and external humanitarian assistance after disasters. The DIPECHO approach in the region, allied with project performance, justify ECHO's commitment "to increase its involvement in disaster prevention and preparedness and to better target its actions to achieve greater over-all coherence."¹

DIPECHO projects have focused on, and resulted in advances with, institutional strengthening, training delivery and curricula development, methodological design and information sharing. All are necessary for a regional environment protected against and better able to respond to hazard occurrence. The DIPECHO outputs to date will result in a broader impact and replicable gains. The commitment of project partners, their mandates and the applicable nature of project outputs will ensure their continued and more widespread use.

Outputs demonstrate the appropriateness of the distinctive strategy applied by DIPECHO and its adaptation for the Caribbean. Affirmed results to date include:

- Preparedness; DIPECHO projects have raised levels of disaster preparedness and an ability to respond more effectively at all levels; regionally, nationally and at the community level. On a regional basis, information exchange, co-ordination and training has increased the human and material resource base available for emergency response. The IFRCS and CDERA have already used staff trained under their programmes for emergency responses in other islands.

At a national level there have been noticeable increases in capacities. The ODPEM, the DPC and National Red Cross Societies are already applying the benefits of improved co-ordination and role refinement vis-à-vis government and other actors. These raised levels of preparedness are as relevant to smaller scale hazard events as to those which effect a whole country.

The community level projects have directly resulted in heightened disaster awareness, community mobilisation and the introduction of locally managed hazard monitoring and response procedures. These have been tested under hazard conditions.

- Mitigation; All projects incorporated mitigation components. Whether as the main purpose of the project (PAHO, CARDIN, CLAMED) or in conjunction with preparedness activities. All DIPECHO partners are committed to addressing the underlying causes of disaster vulnerability. DIPECHO has afforded an opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of mitigation, to refine methodologies, to demonstrate their effectiveness, and to build the knowledge and resource base for its broader application. Results are apparent at all levels and with all projects.

At the community level, structures and methodologies, which facilitate vulnerable communities to introduce their own risk, reduction measures (APS, ADMD, ODPEM, IFRCS, and CDERA) have been tried and tested. At a national level (DPC, ODPEM, CLAMED), partner organisations have demonstrated risk reduction approaches to influence other government bodies and development initiatives. A contribution which should not be under-estimated. For example, both the DPC and ODPEM are in the process of devising national policies for risk reduction. Activities clearly assisted by the stimulus given by DIPECHO.

- The regional approach, fostering collaboration between project partners, has been shown to be meaningful and is appreciated by those receiving DIPECHO support. Many of who are taking a more strategic regional view of disaster management. A wide variety of expertise and knowledge exists within the region. The strategy confirms how disaster risk reduction initiatives will be more timely, appropriate, cost effective and sustainable if these capacities are utilised and shared. DIPECHO are seen by many to have supported a more locally informed and managed programme than those of other donors.

¹ Article 1 of Council Regulation No 1257/96 of 20/06/1996

- DIPECHO have afforded their partners the opportunity to demonstrate that effective preparedness and mitigation are inclusive processes which are accountable to individual and household needs pre and post disasters. All projects, whether those of a regional or national nature, have strengthened abilities to reduce risk where it is most needed - at the community level.
- The inclusive approach adopted by DIPECHO and project partners extends beyond gains for disaster specific organisations. All project holders have inter-acted with, and created new linkages between, a variety of government agencies, NGOs and representatives of civil society. Thus assisting the integration of risk reduction within normal development processes and societal functioning.
- The projects and the presence of the regional representative have further raised the profile of DIPECHO within the region. Apparently DIPECHO activities have stimulated DFID to further increase their disaster mitigation and preparedness involvement in the region.
- DIPECHO have funded projects which are usually not supported by other funders, especially much needed community level initiatives. In the case of PAHO, retrofitting of health facilities has previously (with two exceptions) only been funded after disaster occurrence.

These positive first action plan outcomes are the result of a well-considered strategy. One which compares favourably with, for example, the first DIPECHO action plan for South East Asia where such a definite strategy was not so apparent and where projects were implemented in isolation of each other and national planning systems. DIPECHO's flexibility in funding non-ECHO framework signatories (CDERA, ODPEM, DPC) is a successful departure from normal practice which has directly built regional capacities and strengthened the linkages between projects, differing sectors and operational levels. Another difference with other DIPECHO action plans (and particularly in SE Asia) is the seamless continuation of funding between the first and second action plans for many of the projects funded. This has allowed activities and progress to be maintained for projects (such as those of CARDIN and the IFRC) which will clearly take more than a year for their potential to be realised.

Commendable project and partner selection contributed to programme successes. All proposals were selected to augment the strategy's cohesion and over-all effectiveness. All partners demonstrate adequate levels of project management and technical know-how. More importantly, they have clear mandates and share the same collective vision.

Much credit is due to the regional DIPECHO office in the Dominican Republic. The stimulus, regional perspective and encouragement given by the regional representative strongly illustrate the importance of maintaining a regional DIPECHO representative and office within the region. An issue made more relevant in light of the impending re-structuring of European Commission development assistance and the devolution of managerial responsibilities to the delegations.

The over-all impression of the regional DIPECHO programme is very positive. However, its impact and success does require qualification. Outputs could have been improved upon in some areas and further opportunities taken to maximise outputs; both from a project and strategic viewpoint.

Many of the projects were over-ambitious in the scope of their activities. Either because of a lack of feasibility studies or because of the delays between project acceptance and fund-dispersal. Nearly all projects required extensions or had to reduce their planned activities. Five of the eleven projects had still to complete their year one programme at the time of evaluation. As a result their anticipated impacts have not been as extensive as originally envisaged, particularly with the community mitigation micro-projects which are of a variable quality.

All projects require follow-up to the activities carried out in the first year if outputs are to be optimised. Especially the direct implementation projects and where training materials have been introduced towards the end of the project period. In most cases follow-up will occur though in others its scope is not yet apparent. In others, organisational attention will shift to new areas in the second year of DIPECHO support. There is a danger the pace of regional collaboration is being forced within the second action plan. Care must be taken to consolidate the progress made under the first action plan whilst embarking upon these new and potentially difficult intra-regional initiatives.

These shortcomings indicate areas for refining the selection of projects, how they are operationalised and the DIPECHO support mechanisms. The main weakness with the majority of projects was a lack of base-line data and the selection of impact indicators. In effect, all DIPECHO projects must be seen as demonstration projects. Their aim, and one shared by all project partners, is to show an often sceptical audience the benefits of taking pre-emptive actions before disasters. Feasibility studies, base-line data and impact indicators will contribute to project outputs, allow a greater understanding of their effectiveness, assist with recognition of areas of improvement and vitally allow successes to be articulated to others.

The DIPECHO funding cycle and ECHO's mandate for humanitarian assistance, question whether DIPECHO is a suitable mechanism to support longer-term risk reduction projects and whether more emphasis should be placed upon improving the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The considerable gains made in regional levels of disaster preparedness since the 1997 diagnostic, allied with project partners' appreciation of DIPECHO's support for mitigation activities (they are best placed to understand regional risk reduction requirements) strongly point to a continued, and even expanded, DIPECHO role supporting longer term mitigation measures.

Since Hurricane Mitch disaster vulnerability reduction is increasingly on other donors' agenda. Recent regional initiatives include those of the Inter American Development Bank, the World Bank (through its island mitigation projects and its "Provention" consortium), USAID, DFID, and the UNDP. The question for DIPECHO is how to best assist this process. Many of these other actors are equipped with long held regional experience, technical expertise and a larger funding base than DIPECHO. They welcome DIPECHO's contribution but see the real benefit of DIPECHO's presence to be the potential it carries to influence the policies and development strategies of the European Commission. Unfortunately examples of the Commission incorporating risk reduction or promoting it at a policy level are few and far between.

There are numerous choices facing future DIPECHO programmes. These are; placing an increased emphasis on preparedness and the conditions for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, continuing with the present mix of preparedness and mitigation, or embracing more mitigation (and particularly inter-sectoral) projects. Of these, it is not considered pertinent to focus solely on preparedness because of the evidently raised capacities for regional emergency response and the capabilities provided by other actors in the region. The other two options are not exclusive of each other. However, the scope the types of mitigation projects and the extent of interaction with the delegations development programmes depends on ECHO's commitment to longer term risk reduction and clarification of DIPECHO's role vis-à-vis the delegations. Even if DIPECHO continue with their current balance of projects, and there is no formal linking of DIPECHO and Delegation activities, future programme impact can be bolstered by improved operational mechanisms and more interaction with the Delegations and member states.

1.1 Summary recommendations

The following are all recommended to build upon the fine start made and to optimise DIPECHO's impact. They embrace options for a strategic refinement, options to bring the position of influence held by the EU into play, and a revision of DIPECHO's operational mechanisms. A clear rationale and further detail on each is presented in the main body of the report.

1. DIPECHO should maintain support for preparedness activities to address weaknesses in current response capabilities. Haiti and community level preparedness remain as priority areas for assistance. Other projects should be justified by clear presentation of unfilled needs and anticipated requirements for future humanitarian assistance. It is recommended that standards for emergency assistance (e.g. the Sphere guidelines) be used as a benchmark to assist the selection process.

Mitigation activities should continue to be supported, especially those offering protection or risk reduction to non-disaster sector initiatives. Ideally the funding cycle for these initiatives would be longer. Under the existing framework, because of current demands for identifiable and rapid impact, stringent selection criteria are required for mitigation projects. Consideration should only be given to projects with firm prospects for sustainability after a year long period. This implies DIPECHO funds components of agencies' longer term programmes rather than initiate entirely new ones. For example, PAHO retrofitting initiatives can result in demonstrable results after a year period whilst contributing to PAHO's longer-term strategy.

2. The role of DIPECHO requires clarification and definition in relation to the Delegations and development divisions of the Commission. If complementarity of purpose is achieved, the prospects for a unique and effective impact on reducing risk will be considerable. The planned reforms to external assistance announced in May 2000 provide an opportunity for ECHO. Efforts should be taken to inform the soon to be transformed Common Service for External Relations (SCR) of the need for risk reduction and of the contribution DIPECHO or ECHO can offer to Commission assistance programmes.

Ideally DIPECHO would have an established advisory role to suggest how mitigation can be built into Commission programmes. An approach used in the past by OFDA to strengthen USAID development programmes. When action plans are being drawn up, project could be requested which introduce risk reduction components into, or alongside, Commission programmes.

Even without a formal adjustment of DIPECHO's role, a more pro-active stance can be taken towards the delegations and the member states in the region. Suggestions include; regular information flows, not just of DIPECHO documentation and of projects, but information to assist the delegation's activities – areas at risk, where technical assistance is available etc.

3. Opportunities of DIPECHO informing ECHO rehabilitation initiatives should be investigated. There have been few examples of linkages to date and opportunities to ally rehabilitation with risk reduction have not been taken. Though ECHO is committed to disaster mitigation and preparedness in Article 1 of Council Regulation No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996, little definition is given of how ECHO should inter-act with DIPECHO. A clearer definition would consolidate the DIPECHO programme and also ECHO's emergency response and rehabilitation activities.

It is apparent that doubts exist within ECHO over the effectiveness and complementarity of the DIPECHO strategy. These will be reduced if DIPECHO's impact and the links to humanitarian assistance are demonstrated. With the shift in responsibility for preparedness and mitigation to the units, it is worth considering whether a sensitisation/training activity should be conducted for ECHO country desk officers in Brussels.

4. Revising Action plan formulation. The DIPECHO method of deciding its strategy and selecting the projects on the basis of a diagnostic has proven to be worthwhile. However, refinement is required within a changing environment. Though the diagnostic is a cumbersome document, is vague in parts and covers both the Caribbean and Central America, it is not considered worthwhile to update it at this stage. A more rational method would be to conduct a situation review before new project calls are made and Action plans formulated. If done annually each action plan would be informed by the findings of new reports and knowledge as it develops. The action plan should be prepared before a call for projects is issued.

The call for proposals should present the revised strategy, criteria and expectations for DIPECHO support along with the budgetary allocation to continuation projects. If done, perceptions of DIPECHO being a club for select organisations will be diminished.

5. The regional presence of DIPECHO, through its office and regional representative, should be maintained. The new representative should have, or be able to access (from local institutions), a broader technical knowledge of disaster management implementation. This would assist initial project selection, subsequent planning (i.e. reducing the dangers of over-ambition) and qualitative but constructive monitoring during the project cycle. A closer dialogue should be built with other funding agencies in the region, and particularly those also supporting DIPECHO partners. If the role of DIPECHO vis-à-vis the Delegations is expanded, the importance of the regional office and its technical requirements will be magnified.
6. There is no interaction between DIPECHO's regional offices in SE Asia, Caribbean and Central America or between project holders. Communication will help share experiences and to consolidate the DIPECHO approach. Any such dialogue should be matched with similar consultations between the ECHO desks in Brussels.
7. Project performance would be improved and streamlined if DIPECHO considered adapting their partner support mechanisms:
 - Two to three year funding cycles should be considered.
 - DIPECHO need to protect, or institutionalise, the dates for project calls, decisions and the releases for funds. Past DIPECHO performance has been weak in all of these areas.
 - The approval process and transfer of funds should be more efficient. Various project partners complained about the delays to receiving affirmative project decisions, the backdating of project start dates (to before the approval date) and the slow transfer of funds.
8. DIPECHO's project selection can be consolidated. Not only with the types of projects (more which are inter-sectoral and linked with development or the delegations) but also with the quality of project selection. Though the projects funded to date are bearing results, many of the difficulties encountered could have been avoided;
 - A transparent technical appraisal of projects is required. Opportunities to invoke a regional project review board should be investigated.
 - The selection of community micro-projects should be more rigorous and informed by needs assessments and explanations of how community support will be monitored. Those reviewing project proposals should have experience in community-based development and disaster initiatives.
 - All proposals submitted should detail anticipated impact and qualitative impact indicators. All proposals should present promotional and dissemination strategies.

- Feasibility studies and the collection of base line data should better inform proposals and projects against which to measure progress and impact.
- Project proposals should articulate plans for support and maintenance after the yearlong funding cycle period.
- Revision of the project proposal format and/or proposal guidelines. The quality of projects and the likelihood of success will be assisted if proposal guidelines were issued. These should explain the purpose and amount of detail required under each section (rationale, documentation, indicators, etc). The existing project proposal format would benefit from the inclusion of a logical framework.

There are financial implications associated with many of the suggestions above (i.e. a technical review board, base-line data collection, etc). Though there is an apparent set DIPECHO budget (for both the regional office and for projects), the most cost effective approach is to ensure the quality of impact and demonstration value even if this is achieved at the expense of the number of projects supported.

2 Evaluation of projects included in the first and second Action Plans

2.1 Evaluation methodology and evaluation limitations

The evaluators were able to visit all eleven projects, or the organisations responsible for them, included in the first Action Plan (DIPECHO 1) and visit or meet with representatives of all but one of the eleven projects in the second Action Plan (DIPECHO 2). The only project partner not visited was Movimondo in the Dominican Republic (DR). In many cases the DIPECHO 2 projects are direct continuations of the DIPECHO 1 projects, involving the same partners, e.g. CARDIN, CLAMED, IFRC and CDERA, allowing an observation of the status of an on-going process. In other instances the same partner is developing a similar though different project within the same area, e.g. APS in Cuba and the ODPEM in Jamaica. PAHO are being supported again but for a different activity. Under DIPECHO 2 three projects were started with new organisations which have no direct relationship to DIPECHO 1. These are the Save the Children (SCF) school curriculum project in Cuba, the MOVIMONDO community preparedness project in the Dominican Republic (DR) and the Medicos de Mundo – Espana (MDM-E) seismic vulnerability project in Cuba.

In most instances the DIPECHO 2 projects had recently just started or were about to. It is considered to be too early to make a judgement on the impact of the DIPECHO 2 projects. Thus only limited comment is given on those DIPECHO 2 projects where activity is taking place and the opportunity for observation and discussion was afforded.

The methodology used by the two evaluators was consistent with all project partners and key informants interviewed. Guiding, semi-formal questionnaires referring to project status and performance were used for each project. Where possible project holders were asked to conduct a strengths and weakness analysis of each of their projects. Another semi-formal guiding questionnaire was designed to elicit indicative statements regarding regional and national priorities, issues and impressions of the overall DIPECHO programme.

With all projects attempts were made to follow a similar evaluation format; Examination of all project documentation (proposals, project reports, monitoring reports, budgets, etc) held in Brussels; In situ project review with the project's management team; Visits to project locations/beneficiaries; Key informant interviews and random beneficiaries; A feed back session with project holders.

In each country visited meetings were held with ECHO/EU delegations, with member state development/disaster organisations, non-project NGOs and with relevant international agencies; USAID, OFDA, UNDP, etc.

The most serious limitation was the time afforded in each country and with each project holder. A factor exacerbated by the short preparation time for the evaluation mission. In some cases project partners were not aware of the impending mission.

2.2 Projects' impacts

2.2.1 Impact summary

The aim of the first DIPECHO Action Plan (DIPECHO 1) was "To encourage the emergence of genuine regional co-operation in this field (disaster prevention and preparedness). The focus is accordingly on sharing information, on training and on more direct relations between the countries, in addition to fostering exchanges of know-how." Specifically through;

- Institutional strengthening
- Bolstering local abilities following an overall strategy (backing for community initiatives)
- Strengthening the links between local, national and regional operations.

Given the limited time allowed for project implementation, and the delays experienced in most cases regarding fund disbursement, the DIPECHO 1 Action Plan projects have had a significant impact on the region's disaster management knowledge and capabilities. All the projects evaluated have been addressed at identified needs and have improved upon pre-existing conditions or have set the conditions for future advances.

Without exception, but to differing degrees, all project holders have raised their own capacities, and those of others, to be better prepared for disasters and have contributed to the future integration of risk reduction into development strategies

within the region. New linkages, approaches and methods have been developed and applied. The understanding of the importance of disaster risk reduction has been advanced, as has the development of resources, tools and planning mechanisms to allow its implementation.

The overall impact of the programme is considered to be positive. In most instances, recognised gains and improvements on the status of disaster preparedness have already been achieved. However, the full extent of the impact of most of the projects will only be realised in the future. With many of the projects it is still too early to judge their full impact - this is particularly so with projects' longer term mitigation components and those projects where some of the activities had just been completed or were still in process due to delays (e.g. the ADMD, ODPEM and the DPC projects). Those projects which used DIPECHO 1 funding to set up structures and develop training systems still have to be put into wider operation before the general purpose of these activities will be realised.

Where institutional strengthening has taken place, or new methodologies introduced, immediate results should not be expected; building an environment for sustainable risk reduction is a long-term process. Thus most projects, within a year long project cycle, have resulted in a raised **potential** (i.e. the foundations and prospects being created) for future risk reduction. The realisation of this potential and the extent of the DIPECHO impact depends on the continued implementation, refinement and broader adoption of the outputs to date.

Although the projects are covered on an individual basis in the following sections, their initial impact has been principally achieved by following a common strategy with shared characteristics. The main contribution of the DIPECHO projects within the region has been through:

- The creation of a framework for the regional exchange of experiences, information and methodologies. One which is regionally owned and which will enable locally generated experiences to be retained and shared. All project holders have introduced methodologies and training structures which contribute to the over-all knowledge base and tools available for risk reduction.

A regional component has been included in all projects, or the foundations laid for future regional sharing and collaboration. Even with those projects not categorised in the Action plans as being of a regional nature. Project holders were adamant these linkages had strengthened their knowledge, the projects, and the resources available to them.

- The most notable achievements are related to the development of specialist training curricula, supporting materials and the training of key national representatives to apply these new or revised material within their own national operational contexts. A majority of the projects have developed and /or fostered the provision of disaster preparedness training and information services by introducing a 'cascade' training approach to spread the materials and knowledge developed during the DIPECHO 1 regional programme. For instance the projects of ODPEM, IFRCS, ADMD, CDERA, and PAHO (in Cuba and with the retrofitting project).

The quality and content of much of this material is high and locally relevant. There was efficient use, adaptation and synthesis of pre-existing materials and methods from the region. These materials, and the information networks to share them, are the most visible outputs of the action plans so far. These outputs are durable and will be even more effective if refined in the future.

The institutional strengthening and training projects have generally adopted a multi-hazard approach to disaster preparedness and mitigation according to the hazard types evident within project countries and locations. Where specific disaster types were addressed, awareness within both the disaster management institutions and local community has grown noticeably, i.e. earthquakes in Santiago de Cuba and threats of windstorm to buildings. Two projects specifically focused on hazard early warning systems. Both the ODPEM and APS have contributed to linking national warning systems to community level initiatives and introducing community based hazard-monitoring systems.

- The integration of national disaster planning systems with vulnerable communities. The IFRCS, ODPEM, CDERA, DPC, APS and ADMD projects contributed to raising local disaster awareness and response capacities whilst also striving to ensure national systems become more responsive to the situation of risk in vulnerable communities. All have followed a pattern of democratisation and decentralisation which promotes the inclusion of citizenry, civil institutions and the public and private sectors to strengthen prospects for longer term, accountable risk reduction. All partners stressed their appreciation of DIPECHO's willingness to fund community level initiatives.
- In addition to strengthening the links between regional, national and community disaster management ("vertical linkages"), the projects have demonstrated the validity of building the "horizontal" links between disaster management organisations and other sectors. They have contributed to the goal of "comprehensive disaster management". The

process whereby all sectors of government and society understand and are equipped to protect people and development from hazards. New relationships were formed, or existing ones consolidated. For example, the ODPEM worked closely with the Meteorological Office, Water Resources Authority and Parish committees; the APS with civil defence and veterinary services; ADMD with NGOs and the commercial interests, CDERA with education ministries, the media and telecommunications companies, etc. None of the projects took a single sector approach.

- Another element of particular note is the development of disaster preparedness modules, which have been incorporated within regional (CARICOM) secondary schools and discipline specific graduate modules within various faculties of the University of the West Indies. This is considered a significant achievement that will lead to a long-term enabling of regional disaster management capacity, vulnerability reduction and preparedness. This can be considered a secondary impact or one that goes beyond the planned impact of DIPECHO 1.
- Apart from the PAHO retrofitting projects, the balance of the projects' outputs has been towards improving levels of disaster preparedness. However, all projects did incorporate mitigation components. DIPECHO partners demonstrated a strong realisation of the fallacy of introducing preparedness measures without attempting to reduce vulnerability itself. The project has helped to agencies hitherto considered as relief agencies (e.g. CDERA, ODPEM, DPC) to portray themselves as being more pro-active and concerned with risk reduction.
- Though there are many worthy project outputs, for the purposes of this summary it is felt pertinent to specifically mention the impact of DIPECHO's support to the Direction Protection Civil in Haiti. Because of its developmental position and weak institutional structures Haiti is extremely vulnerable to disasters. DIPECHO have assisted the DPC to make considerable (or "extra-ordinary" as one person put it) progress towards institutionalising a national disaster system which will raise preparedness and work towards integrating risk reduction into the development process. DIPECHO has contributed towards the forming of relationships between Haiti, other funders and other countries in the region so further disaster related assistance may be applied where it is most needed.

Despite the numerous benefits accruing from the projects and their contribution to a definite strategy (see section 2), in most cases their impact could have been greater. Further consolidation of gains achieved is necessary, especially with those components aimed at longer-term mitigation or the influencing of development processes. It is also true the projects were not problem free and their implementation could have been improved in places:

- Explicit (i.e. the actual implementation of) prevention or mitigation within the DIPECHO programme has not been as extensive or as successful as might have been expected.

Community-level mitigation projects have had limited success where implemented and, if not provided with the appropriate follow-up, will fail to have the desired sustainability or 'demonstration effect'.

There were widespread difficulties with community micro-projects and initiatives supposed to generate community mitigation actions (in comparison to preparedness ones that were more successful). Successful ones were too often centred on service provision rather than participation. In other cases, poor maintenance of community level pilot projects point to a limited impact and the need to improve upon implementation methods. Follow-up of community level programmes is an element that needs to be secured within project strategies to insure the long-term impact.

It is felt that far greater attention needs to be placed on encouraging community initiated and implemented mitigation projects. This needs to be accompanied by demonstrations of mitigation methods that are hazard specific and feasible for local adoption and implementation (i.e. the types of practice that are appropriate to the economic realities of the community/s in question.)

From a site specific viewpoint (Cuba, Grenada and St Lucia), the value of value or impact of the PAHO structural and non-structural demonstration projects will have to be judged on the adoption and maintenance of the lessons learnt. The implications of cost, and indeed local perception, may work against this. An impression reinforced by CDERA's school maintenance and Public Facilities Inspectors project's success.

In the case of the non-structural vulnerability analysis in Santiago de Cuba, regarding earthquake exposure, the structure viability needed to be given greater prior attention. The questions regarding the structural integrity of the buildings adopted for the non-structural vulnerability analysis therefore appear to have compromised the impact of this exercise.

- Nearly all projects require follow-up to the activities carried out in the first year. If not some activities will fall by the wayside as one-off projects. Continuity is not certain, especially with those organisations with a low funding base. Neither is it guaranteed with those organisations receiving continuation funding into a second year. The valuable start

made by the ODPEM in Jamaica should be refined and consolidated. However, the ODPEM is changing the area and focus of its project in the second year. The IFRCS will be introducing new countries into their regional programme in the second year. In both cases monitoring and further support for the first year countries will be difficult for reasons of staff and budget limitations. The ADMD project was positively evaluated, made noticeable gains, yet did not receive support into DIPECHO 2.

- The projects were all ambitious with what they aimed to achieve in the first year. Sometimes technically or in others, with the scope of activities attempted. Nearly all projects, required extensions and to a lesser extent, alterations to activities. There is a danger that the quality of outputs may have been compromised in some cases (or more inputs will be required) e.g. some training activities were curtailed and some of the methodologies and materials only finalised after training had been conducted. The pressure to achieve project goals in a very limited time span is a possible threat to the quality of the products. Several of the project partners mentioned this as an underlying concern (UWI, CDERA, CLAMED, IFRCS, and PAHO's counterpart in Cuba).
- Many of the difficulties which occurred, and the delays, could have been avoided if more extensive feasibility studies were carried out before the projects took place (i.e. PAHO, the ODPEM), or if the original project review process was more (pro-actively) thorough and technically informed.
- All DIPECHO projects should be considered to be demonstration projects. They are all trying to provide examples of the benefits of risk reduction and preparedness. Often to a sceptical audience. Few of the original proposals described how impact would be measured and by what indicators.

“Where natural disaster mitigation and preparedness measures have been undertaken, they are generally believed to have been effective. However, the lack of critical long-term impact evaluations of such programmes is a significant handicap for those who are implementing and designing new programmes. (J.Twigg, Natural disaster mitigation and preparedness: indicators of impact, BGHR, 2000).”

2.3 Synthesis impact table

The following table is based upon an evaluative score or rating given to each project evaluated within DIPECHO 1 regarding the performance against each of the terms of reference set for this section (ToRs 3.1.1 to 3.1.7, Appendix 2). The scores given are based on the subjective opinions of the evaluators. More precise assessments would have been possible if performance indicators and base line data were available. It should be noted that the original projects' statements of aims and objectives inform the estimates of projects' impact and effectiveness. Thus if only part of a projects outputs had achieved to date, the corresponding scores have been adjusted downwards. Even if other project outputs are of a high effect.

The overall impact score achieved across all the projects included in DIPECHO 1 demonstrates the evaluators' subjective opinion after having visited the project, reviewed project documents and interacted with key informants in each of the project areas. The overall mean score is 3.2, however the median score is 3.5, or between an average to strong positive impact. The basic failure of the French Red Cross Programme in Haiti to achieve its goals pulled the mean score down significantly.

Table 1 Overall scores achieved against each of the ToRs (Evaluators' subjective evaluation)

TOR Partner	Impact (3.1.1)	Objectives & relevance (3.1.2)		Management (3.1.3)	Consistency & Co-ordination (3.1.4)	Partner choice (3.1.5)	Sustainability (3.1.6)	Relief development to Continuum (3.1.7)
ODPEM	3	3	4	3.5	4	4.5	4	3
DPC	4	3	5	3	5	5	4	3
PAHO	3.5	4	4	4.5	5	5	2.5	5
IFRCS (01023)	4	3.5	5	3	5	5	3.5	3
FRC	1	2	4	2	3	3	1	1
ADMD	3.5	3	5	2	4	2	3	4
UWI CARDIN	3.5	3	4	4	5	5	4	5
CDERA	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	5
CLAMED	2	4	4	3	4	4	3	4
PAHO Cuba	3.5	4	4	3	5	4	3.5	3
APS	3	4	4	4	5	5	3	4
Median Score	3.5	3.5	4	3	5	5	3.5	4
Mean Score	3.2	3.4	4.4	3.4	4.5	4.3	3.2	3.6

Note: Score is based on a five point scale in which 1 = very weak and 5 = very strong.

2.4 Individual project impact summaries

Further detail of the impact of each of the projects is now given in turn. Although they are presented according to DIPECHO project type definition (i.e. Regional, National or Community), all contain components to build vertical linkages and responsiveness to the needs at each level, particularly for at risk communities. A full evaluation report of each project is contained in the report annexes.

2.4.1 Regional level projects

The projects of partners such as CDERA, IFRCS and PAHO have led to the strengthening of the capacity of these institutions to support their national affiliates' disaster preparedness initiatives at both national and community levels.

2.4.1.1 Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA)

CDERA is seen within the region to have become a more proactive disaster management organisation. CDERA has developed a series of specialised training curricula, supporting materials and policy aids aimed at enabling the institutional role of specific sectors within the CARICOM community. These include the Ministries of Education and school managers, broadcasters, National Disaster Offices, telecommunication engineers and local NGOs involved in community-level preparedness education. Although it is too soon to note the impact of these strategies through out the different sectors targeted, evidence exists of improved disaster management after training and the spontaneous repetition of the training received at the national level. Materials prepared and/or tested during the project have been incorporated into ongoing professional training programmes, and disaster preparedness modules incorporated into the school curricula.

2.4.1.2 The International Federation of Red Cross Societies (IFRCS)

The IFRCS has utilised the programme to enhance the organisational capacity of their affiliated national federations in the development and management of community based disaster preparedness and mitigation programmes. The main benefit of the project can be considered to be the introduction of a properly structured regional training strategy. The cadre of instructors and the materials produced have provided the infrastructure upon which the National Societies' capacities can continue to be strengthened in the future. An infrastructure that will assist the Red Cross to be more effective at the community level. The National Societies now place a greater emphasis on community level disaster preparedness and have improved the means to support and implement local level interventions. As a consequence they will add to the effectiveness of regional and national disaster management systems, whilst ensuring they are informed by, and are more responsive to, community needs and situations of vulnerability.

2.4.1.3 Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), Hospital retro-fitting project

PAHO have contributed to the process of mitigating the vulnerability of medical institutions within the region via conducting two partial hospital retrofitting demonstrations and linking these with a regional workshop for health administrators, national disaster co-ordinators and development advisors. Although the project has only just finished, it has served to raise the awareness of those responsible for medical facilities in hazard prone areas to the possibilities of mitigating current states of non-structural and functional vulnerability, placing a particular emphasis on the role of maintenance. The project outputs are of a high quality and possess all the components required of demonstration projects; good practice examples which are supported by technical materials, training, a dissemination strategy and good possibilities for their continued application within the region and beyond. The PAHO project outputs extend beyond the Caribbean; the retrofitting methodology and materials will be used to guide PAHO hospital and health clinic rehabilitation in Nicaragua. Statements of interest have also been received from the Middle East.

Whilst the awareness raising materials, training curriculum and dissemination components are of a noteworthy standard, some doubts exist over the effectiveness of the actual retrofitting conducted in the two locations. The scope of retrofitting in both hospitals was not as extensive as presented in the proposal (neither were critical facilities strengthened) and the high costs of the retrofitting place the supposed cost benefits into question.

2.4.1.4 The University of the West Indies

The other regionally focused project supported under both DIPECHO 1 and 2 is the development of the Caribbean Disaster Information System, CARDIN, servicing the various language groups represented in the Caribbean, implemented by the UWI. The concept of CARDIN has gained a growing acceptance with the different disaster management entities in the region, although it is still not operational. The establishment of the basis of a regionally specific database and the promotion of the concept and methodology within the regional disaster management community, has achieved the collaboration of various Latin American and Caribbean organisations with existing disaster specific data bases, covering different language areas. Although some training was undertaken with information managers in Jamaica, which helped develop a training curriculum for Disaster Information Units, little other training took place during the first year. Therefore, it is felt that the project has had little impact on the status of disaster preparedness in the region as yet, although it promises to in the future.

2.4.2 National level projects

Four of the projects funded by DIPECHO 1 are considered to have a national focus. These are the projects implemented by DPC in Haiti, ADMD in the Dominican Republic, CLAMED in Cuba and the FRC in Haiti. Two of these projects have not been included within the DIPECHO 2 action plan, ADMD and the FRC project in Haiti.

2.4.2.1 Asociacion Dominicana de Mitigacion de Desastres (ADMD), Dominican Republic.

The ADMD is considered to have followed one of the most cost-effective strategies of enabling community-level disaster preparedness and self-initiated vulnerability reduction projects. The approach adopted is in part a refinement of the IFRCS's community focused cascade training. ADMD have successfully mobilised local NGOs working with vulnerable communities across the DR and enabled them to organise community disaster management committees and encourage these to plan and implement mitigation projects. This approach has also been successfully carried out within the commercial sector, e.g. hotel industry, and with schools. The programme has also had a significant impact on various national mass-media houses resulting in the regular donation of air and print space dedicated to disaster awareness and preparedness education. The approach of mobilising, organising and stimulating community-based initiatives produced results, which can be observed and copied by other similar communities. A follow-up process needs to take place to insure

the sustainability of this initial impact and the assimilation of the new structures and behaviours. However, the full potential of the ADMD project has been limited due to funding delays and cash-flow problems.

2.4.2.2 Croix Rouge Francais (CRF)

The CRF DIPECHO project was part of the third phase of a longer programme started in 1996 to raise the operational capacities of the Haitian Red Cross (CRH). As part of this programme DIPECHO funded those activities designed to integrate disaster preparedness into the training programmes and implementation activities of the CRH. To implement these activities DIPECHO only funded the following; A CRF preparedness delegate, the salaries of four local staff (the training centre director, the secretary, a trainer and a logistician) and ECHO visibility.

The assessment of the impact of the French Cross project must be considered in two ways. Firstly, its contribution to raising the organisational capacities of the Haitian Red Cross to deliver training to its branch members and volunteers in all aspects of Red Cross activities, but predominantly with first aid and ambulance services. Secondly, its contribution to increasing levels of disaster preparedness within the national society, branches and red cross committees at the local level. The project has significantly helped with the former; The salaries of the Haitian Red Cross training centre staff has contributed to strengthening the training centre, training of trainers has taken place, volunteers have been trained in first aid and ambulance work, a data base introduced to monitor those trained started and supporting training materials (guides and posters) produced.

However, if the project is evaluated on the basis of its contribution to disaster preparedness, the assessment is negative. Although some foundations (i.e. one short training course and the design of a disaster manual) have been laid for future application, only limited progress was made with meeting its objectives or including preparedness into the larger programme activities within the 12 month project period.

The over-all assessment of the CRF project depends on the interpretation of the original proposal and the emphasis placed upon preparedness activities. The proposal contains little precise detail of the extent to which disaster preparedness was to be integrated with the broader training activities. There is a strong impression that DIPECHO funded a project that was not explicit enough in articulating its contribution to disaster preparedness.

2.4.2.3 Direction Protection Civil (DPC), Haiti.

The objective of this project was to reduce the impact of disasters in Haiti by equipping communities with mechanisms to allow them to respond efficiently during crises. To achieve this Departmental disaster committees were to be re-activated, or created, and the technical ability of the Direction Protection Civil (DPC) further raised to facilitate them to support these committees with training and the provision of materials. Further project activities were aimed at assisting the DPC, only formed in April 1998, to fulfil its role of revising and co-ordinating the national disaster management system within Haiti.

The results are encouraging despite delays and some alterations to the scope of project activities. By the end of the project nine departments will have been trained and their emergency plans updated. Training materials are technically proficient and the DPC resource base has been strengthened. There are strong indicators that the project will result in more effective departmental responses and to risk reduction being integrated with local development initiatives. However, communities have themselves not directly received any training from the project (as stated in the original project proposal). Further support and refinement are required before the Department committees will be effective and able to assist vulnerable communities. The project has helped the DPC to demonstrate the validity of its strategy and to strengthen their operational capacities. Links have been formed with other funder organisations and the Government of Haiti is favourable to the draft national disaster plan submitted in June 2000.

DIPECHO was one of the first international agencies to fund the DPC. To good result- the project has assisted the DPC to make considerable (or "extra-ordinary" as one person put it) progress towards institutionalising a national disaster system which will raise preparedness and work towards integrating risk reduction into the development process. A system which will co-ordinate government and private disaster management at a national and local level.

2.4.2.4 CLAMED, Cuba

The Cuban centre for disaster medicine CLAMED has created the base and structure for a national disaster information centre through the support of MPDL (Movimento por la Paz el Desarme y la Libertad). Over the project period CLAMED has become known within the region as one of the principal sources of Cuban disaster information. This, to a large extent, has been due to the support and exposure provided by the DIPECHO regional office and CARDIN. The concept and future utility of the CLAMED disaster information system is also gaining credence within the national context. Once again, it is too early to judge the impact of the project. This is reliant on the future ability of CLAMED to provide a central access to both national and regional disaster information in a form that meets the intended clients' needs and circumstances. At the time of the evaluation visit (July 2000) CLAMED had achieved the development of a structure and system capable of

holding a database that could interface electronically with other international and regional information networks. CLAMED is now a well structured shell without as yet much substance. They are in a very similar state of development to their partner institution CARDIN. Care has to be taken not to sell the service before the product is available.

2.4.3 Community level projects

Those projects which are considered under this section of the report are those that have targeted specific districts or municipalities within a country. These include the projects implemented by ODPEM in Jamaica, PAHO (Cuba) and APS, MDM-E and SCF in Cuba. Of these, PAHO Cuba is the only partner not included within the DIPECHO 11 Action Plan.

2.4.3.1 Office for Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), Jamaica

The purpose of the ODPEM community based project was to reduce the vulnerability of the citizens living in the Rio Grande Valley watershed to the impact of natural hazards. Considerable outputs have been achieved within the yearlong time frame and a limited budget. A functioning community based flood warning system has been introduced to the Rio Grande Watershed. Allied with training and response planning, community awareness and preparedness capacities have been raised. Flood and landslide hazard maps are being finalised. Co-ordination has been strengthened between the ODPEM, communities and government agencies. The ODPEM should be congratulated for bringing so many parties together to such positive effect.

However, it is also true that warning system itself has some limitations. Whilst the capacity of the committees to evacuate (training and drills) and disseminate warnings (a structure and communication network) has been raised, it must be considered whether the current community monitoring system is effective enough. It does not have the ability to predict and accurately warn of flash floods. The ability of the CB communications system to function under disaster conditions is also questionable. Until the flood hazard map is completed and disseminated, the contribution to an "increase in contingency planning, warning and alert, mitigation and loss reduction through the development of proper hazard and mitigation maps" will obviously be partial.

If, as is most likely, (but cannot be totally assumed), the necessary further work is carried out, and the lessons learnt stimulate and are applied to future initiatives, the project will make an important contribution to promoting disaster mitigation and preparedness within the agenda for sustainable development in Jamaica and further afield.

2.4.3.2 Associazione per la Partecipazione allo Sviluppo (APS), Cuba.

The APS have also implemented a flood warning and management system within the Province of Sancti Spiritus and the Municipality of La Seirpa in Cuba. The project has led to a more efficient early warning system complementing the already very effective Civil Defence led disaster preparedness action plans within the province. The project has encouraged the integration of the different provincial bodies in disaster mitigation and preparedness activities strengthening the local capability.

The production and application of the manual of veterinary disaster management has already been applied within the post-graduate curriculum and the linkage of the SCMVD to the wider international community by the Internet will lead to a sharing of experience and approaches regarding this important but specialist area.

The mapping of flood effected areas within the municipality of La Seirpa and the installation of 4 drainage systems has protected the corresponding communities (2360 people) from flooding. However, the communities' appreciation of these systems is difficult to determine. There was little evidence of any maintenance of the drainage system observed although the households were previous regularly flooded. The effectiveness of this system will deteriorate very rapidly if not maintained.

ASP is financing the fuel for another drainage system to control the flooding in the neighbouring Municipality of Yaguanjay within the same province under the DIPECHO 11 Action plan. At the time of the visit earthwork had started and a significant local contribution to the project has been made in the provision of engineering support and earthmoving equipment. The municipal authorities were managing this project and are confident that the canal when completed will protect a large section of the municipal centre.

2.4.3.3 PAHO (Cuba)

The PAHO led earthquake preparedness and vulnerability reduction programme in Santiago de Cuba has raised the awareness of the community to the nature of the hazard faced (earthquake) and left in place a strengthen health service response capability. Significant positive steps have been taken to strengthen the health sectors ability to respond, particularly through the education of health brigades in dealing with the specific problems present by earthquakes, the

development of specialist training aids and the establishment of a central information centre. An understanding of the 'none structural' vulnerability of the main hospital has been attained, however, few measures have been taken as yet to mitigate the problems identified. The cost of addressing many of the issues identified will be significant and it will take political will and a confidence in the structural integrity of the building in question to withstand the seismic shock addressed/implied in the non-structural vulnerability study.

The project has had a wider impact than Santiago de Cuba. Some of the secondary benefits are:

- New opportunities for inter-institutional co-operation have occurred through the implementation of this project. Other possible specialist training courses are also now being considered linking the different university faculties and other institutions such as CENAIS.
- The project has also stimulated the interest of other provinces that are now considering conducting a similar exercise.
- As part of the Medical Brigade training process they are now conducting a detailed vulnerability mapping exercise, each Brigade studying their particular sector. It is the stated intent of the Brigades' co-ordinator to conduct 5 simulation exercises over the next year focusing on the issue of earthquake response.

2.4.3.4 Medicos de Mundo, Espana (MdM-E), Cuba.

MdM-E are carrying out a new programme under the DIPECHO 2 Action Plan focusing on community Vulnerability and Preparedness in the Municipality of Guama, also within the province of Santiago de Cuba. The project has been able to build on the awareness raised by the PAHO project and is working closely with CENAIS. Although a vulnerability study covering various aspects of structural vulnerability has been conducted it is too early to judge the impact of this project.

2.4.3.5 Save the Children Fund (SCF),

Within DIPECHO 2, the SCF are waiting government clearance before beginning a disaster preparedness education programme focused on schools. This project may be facing certain deliberate political obstacles given their intention to develop/revise disaster preparedness modules already used within the school curriculum. The commitment and managerial competencies of the SCF project co-ordinator, and the project plans, were all considered to be of a high quality.

2.5 Realisation of project objectives and continuing relevance

In general the objectives set within each project have been met. However, given the tendency to present over ambitious initial proposals, several have had to reduce the training activities planned. Those that have had to do this are: DPC, IFRCS, FRC, ADMD, UWI and CDERA. Although this downward adjustment of the planned training activities is considered to be a positive step (demonstrating realistic and flexible management), in terms of ensuring project outputs, it does indicate a weakness in the initial project planning and review process. Almost all the partners have had to extend the contract period in order to achieve the planned or adjusted objectives.

Although all the project objectives address the issue of reducing vulnerability and increasing the status of disaster preparedness they have addressed different aspects of the need within the Caribbean regional context. The projects have addressed different categories of need such as specific disaster types, e.g. floods (APS, ODPEM), earthquakes (PAHO/Cuba and MdM-E), hurricanes (PAHO), landslides (ODPEM) and multi-hazard focused projects (IFRCS, CDERA, DPC, ADMD, SCF and FRC, ODPEM).

All the projects realised objectives and activities, which addressed the issues of human resource development and institutional strengthening. However, only a few of these projects directly addressed the issue of community level 'mitigation' through the promotion of community initiated micro (pilot) projects, i.e. ODPEM, ADMD, IFRCS and MdM-E. The DPC project is not considered to be at a level of development to address this objective category as yet although it is their future intention.

2.5.1 Human resource development

The DIPECHO programme has made its most significant contribution through human resource development initiatives. These have involved the development of specialist training curricula and the training of trainers to conduct this training within their own national and institutional contexts. Further follow-up workshops in many instances have been held to encourage the spread these specialist skills. The prime project examples of this activity are the regional programmes of

CDERA, PAHO and the IFRCS and programmes aimed at increasing awareness and preparedness skills within the schools and institutions of higher education, e.g. The CDERA school curriculum development initiative and the SCF's intended initiative within Cuban schools.

- CDERA have developed a series of training programmes aimed at different skill needs, i.e. school maintenance and structural integrity, emergency broadcasters, telecommunication personnel, relief supply managers and community level facilitators. CDERA have also promoted the inclusion of disaster management preparedness modules within the school curriculum. CDERA had to reduce the number of broadcasters originally targeted from 40 to 17.
- PAHO have developed hospital retrofitting demonstration projects and used these as the base for a workshop to train hospital managers and other professions involved in the construction and maintenance of hospitals within the region. Within Cuba PAHO undertook a two prong training programme addressing the threat posed by earthquakes to both the medical infrastructure and the community at large. This involved training health service personnel in non-structural vulnerability analysis techniques of medical structures within Santiago de Cuba and the training of the medical services at various levels in the skills needed to respond to an earthquake. Five planned training sessions in trauma management were still to be conducted, as the necessary equipment had not arrived.
- IFRCS have continued to train community facilitators in the skills of community mobilisation and organisation and vulnerability assessment. In Cuba this training also involved training CRC teams in rescue and relief management skills. The IFRCS had to significantly reduce the number of countries it had originally targeted from 16 to 10.

2.5.2 Institution building and strengthening

It is recognised that there is considerable cross over between human resource development and institutional strengthening. Many of the training activities mentioned above have contributed directly to the ability of various national and regional institutions to respond to disasters and develop the level of preparedness within their operational contexts. For example, the DPC, CDERA, IFRCS, PAHO/Cuba training programmes.

The other projects that are considered to have deliberately addressed the issue of institutional building/strengthen are DPC, APS, UWI's CARDIN initiative and MPDL's support of the CLAMED information centre.

- The DPC Haiti project has objective has only been partially met; communities have not yet been trained by the project. However, the delivery of training to the Departmental Disaster Committees will assist this objective being met in the future. Notwithstanding this shortfall, the project has clearly assisted the DPC to consolidate its position as the national disaster co-ordination body. In terms of technical ability, credibility and influence with government. This is a considerable achievement in light of the institutional weakness of the organisation before the project commenced.
- The APS has addressed the main objective of strengthening the early warning and flood response and control capabilities of the authorities of Sancti Spiritus province, Cuba. These objectives have been achieved. However, the continued maintenance of the constructed drainage systems poses problems for the long-term sustainability of this objective at the community level.
- Both the development of CARDIN and the CLAMED information centres are considered to be projects that have built the institutional capacities of the UWI and CLAMED. However, they are also distinct in that they are also projects whose objective is to provide an information service to the regional and national disaster management communities. UWI have achieved the objective of setting up a regionally specific disaster information network, CARDIN, with the protocols and systems established to facilitate the development of a multi-lingual database and have started to concentrate regional materials within this. However, the ability to provide a service to the disaster community has still to be fully realised. The continuation of the project and achievement of the overall objective are the purpose of the continued support from the DIPECHO 2 Action Plan.

The status of the CLAMED project is similar to that of CARDIN, a centre has been established, equipped and the building of a database, which will allow the collection of Cuban materials, and the sharing of these both within the national and regional disaster communities initiated. However, the task, as in the case of CARDIN, is larger than at first envisaged and the project still has to provide general electronic access to its developing database. The continued development of the CLAMED disaster information centre is supported under the DIPECHO 11 Action Plan. Both these projects need to define more clearly their roles regarding the promotion of more effective disaster management within the region. This is discussed further below.

2.5.3 Community-level disaster mitigation through self-initiated micro projects

As already mentioned few of the projects have actually promoted community initiated mitigation projects. The three principal partners addressing this issue are ADMD, ODPEM and the IFRCS. These partners' project strategies specifically aim at promoting the establishment of cost-effective community micro-projects. Whilst the ODPEM did not promote a "micro-projects" in name, it aimed to develop flood-warning systems managed and maintained by the 'at risk' communities. MDM-E is in the process of initiating a programme, which will promote community level mitigation, through vulnerability mapping and awareness raising in the south of Cuba.

- ADMD trained a greater number than anticipated of disaster preparedness facilitators from local NGOs. However, only half of the intended number of community-level workshops in disaster preparedness was achieved during the extended timeframe. Their problems with funding also meant that only 4 of the intended 7 pilot community mitigation projects were completed. Other awareness raising initiatives through mass media programmes, presentations and tailored training seminars aimed at the private sector and schools have been achieved successfully. ADMD also achieved significant in-kind support from the media and the commercial sector.
- ODPEM has achieved its objective of creating a community-based early warning system within the Rio Grande Valley, Portland, Jamaica. The training in disaster preparedness, which accompanied the introduction of this system, has reduced the vulnerability of the community to floods.

2.5.4 Projects relevance

The evaluation mission, informed by the views of project holders, other disaster management practitioners and regional documentation, found all projects to be extremely relevant. Whether in information sharing, strengthening community level capacities, institutional strengthening, etc. The emphasis of all projects on building linkages and adopting a multi-sectoral approach to risk reduction is increasingly valid. The disaster organisations (government and NGOs) and individuals responsible for the projects are keenly aware of regional and national risk profiles, their implications for future disasters and development, and of priority areas for intervention. There is collective support for risk reduction (preparedness and mitigation) with all agreeing that risk reduction has to be integrated into development planning, government systems and societal functioning. All project holders have used the process and outputs to interact with other agencies, to raise awareness and to demonstrate the benefits that will accrue from comprehensive disaster management.

The overall mean score for continued relevance is 4.4, i.e. between strongly and very strongly relevant. This represents the highest mean score recorded against the eight indicators (Table 1, page 13). The evaluators feel that the objectives addressed by the different projects continue to be of great relevance to the development of disaster management capacity within the region.

2.5.5 If need would have been met without DIPECHO support

This is a difficult issue; there are a lot of different disaster management initiatives taking place within the region, supported by many different funding institutions. In most cases DIPECHO has supported the activities of partners that are key actors in both national and regional level disaster management. It is therefore difficult to assume that the needs of the current partners would not have been met at some point in time. However, DIPECHO's encouragement of greater regional integration in the response to common hazards is distinctive. Also distinctive, but to a lesser degree, is DIPECHO's keenness for community level initiatives. The CARDIN project may have been one of the initiatives, which could have encountered more difficulty raising the funds from other sources given the existence of several other similar information systems within the Latin American and Caribbean context. CARDIN may have had to demonstrate a greater added value for the region than it presents at the moment, to attract alternative investment.

2.6 Partner's management capacity

In general the management capacity of the partner institutions is considered to be adequate. A mean score of 3.4 (Median 3), between adequate and strong, was achieved when all the partners management readings were taken together.

The projects undertaken by the different partners were within their management capacities. However, in some instances the initial objectives were too ambitious, e.g. IFRCS, and UWI. Partners were able to adjust these so as to insure the projects'

effectiveness. This management capacity was tested by DIPECHO general tendency to delay the payment of the initial quota to the different project partners, particularly regarding the first DIPECHO action plan.

The agencies that presented strong overall management capacity were CDERA, PAHO (Barbados) and APS. These projects have managed complex programmes successfully within their budgets and involved and integrated the appropriate authorities and local actors. CDERA's management of the most complex of the projects is worthy of particular note, given the smallness of their organisation and the complexity and reach of their programme.

The two agencies, which were considered to have demonstrated a weak management capacity, are the FRC and ADMD. These are for differing reasons. The FRC programme failed to resolve problems encountered with the intended local counterpart to an extent that it did not permit the achievement of the project's intended objectives.

ADMD on the other hand is considered to have run one of the most successful and efficient community level projects. The methodology adopted by ADMD involved the successful mobilisation of a number of local NGOs and through them the participation of vulnerable communities. However, the management capacity of ADMD was brought into question by problems with fund reporting and cash flow management. ADMD is a small national organisation without reserves of its own to carry a large proportion of the programme's costs until completion. This inability placed stress on the ADMD DIPECHO relationship and jeopardised the project's objectives. The management capacity of ADMD was therefore given a score of 2, although the ADMD's actual management of the programme's process and successful involvement of various national and community institutions is commendable.

One fairly generalised management weakness of most of the projects is the apparent absence of baseline studies and established impact indicators. The majority of indicators applied are quantitative measures of activities undertaken. Needs assessments of the intended beneficiaries are also missing in some of the projects. The UWI project has planned to undertake a needs assessment as part of their DIPECHO 1 project. This took most of the first year and was basically invalidated before completion. Therefore the programme is still establishing what are the needs of the prospective clients and how to meet these in an appropriate fashion. This knowledge is basic to the successful management and impact of the project.

Although, DIPECHO state that part of their project selection criteria is evidence of an appropriate needs assessment this seem to have been ignored to some degree. This may indicate the need for greater technical expertise to be applied to the project selection process.

2.6.1 Budget management

All partners appear to have, or will, complete the DIPECHO's first Action Plan projects within budget although nearly all required some budgetary allocations. Many of the partners' local counterpart institutions have or are contributing a large proportion of the resources needed to achieve the projects' goals, i.e. ASP's projects in Sancti Spiritus province, Cuba.

As indicated above, some of the project partners experienced difficulties regarding the management of their budgets and maintaining an adequate cash flow. This only negatively effected the performance of ADMD. However, several of the partners mentioned that they had experienced difficulties keeping to budget due to the inflation of the Euro over the project period, e.g. UWI, CDERA, ADMD, IFRCS and PAHO. Apart from IFRCS and PAHO the others are regional organisations. The main effect of the inflation factor has been on project staffing. Staff has been cut back in some cases. The budgeted reserve usually did not compensate for the reduced value of the Euro.

2.6.2 Involvement of beneficiaries

The majority of the first DIPECHO Action Plan projects involved training. The use of workshops to help develop training materials and then train key national and disaster managers as trainers and facilitators, also within an interactive/participative workshop environment, has encouraged the involvement of the beneficiaries at this level.

However, one of the concerns noted with the APS flood control project and the one IFRCS micro-project visited (in Jamaica) was the lack of involvement of the actual beneficiaries, i.e. those households whose properties had been protected by the local drainage systems. Though locally trained facilitators were managing the IFRCS project, there was little evidence of wider community mobilisation. In both cases this resulted in a failure to maintain these simple structures. These projects contrast with the level of community participation achieved by ODPEM in the Rio Grande Valley.

2.6.3 Mobilisation of grassroots organisations

This issue has been addressed under the previous sections related to project impact and the realisation of objectives. The partners whose programmes directly address the issue of mobilising grassroots (taken to be community organisations) are ADMD's, IFRCS's and ODPEM's projects. One of the considered weaknesses of the project selection process is the low number of projects that seek, or are able, to mobilise community organised and implemented mitigation projects. This may be due to DIPECHO's current difficulty of working with the smaller local NGOs that are capable of this participative community mobilisation, e.g. ADMD.

Despite this weakness in implementation, the DIPECHO strategy and projects (with the exception of the PAHO projects which are predominantly of a sectoral and technical nature) is deliberately and effectively targeted at ensuring disaster management structures become more responsive and inclusive of communities' needs and their positions of risk.

2.6.4 Participation of local Authorities

This has been excellent across most of the projects. In many cases (and as a result of supporting non- ECHO framework signatories) the partner is the appropriate local authority (i.e. DPC, CDERA, ODPEM), or has an agreed role or link with local authorities (i.e. IFRCS, PAHO). Even where a formal link does not exist (APS, CARDIN, ADMD) all projects have inter-acted with government agencies and local authorities.

2.6.5 Co-ordination with others

The co-ordination with other projects and disaster management initiatives has been strong. Many of the partners, e.g. CDERA, PAHO and IFRCS, co-ordinate closely with other regional initiatives. At the national level this has been a positive aspect of the DIPECHO partners operational approach, e.g. ADMD, APS, ODPEM and MdM-E.

2.6.6 General Efficiency

It is considered that a high level of efficiency has been achieved, given the very short timeframe allowed for the DIPECHO funded projects and the ambitious objectives undertaken by most partners. Most of the training, institutional strengthening and community mobilisation projects undertaken should ideally have longer time frames in which to achieve their objectives. As mentioned elsewhere in the report, concern was voiced regarding the pressure to perform within the tight time limits, which could threaten the quality of certain project outputs, e.g. training material and support service development. It was noted that some of the training materials were only becoming available toward the end of the projects.

Several of the partners without previous experience of working with ECHO requested additional support in interpreting the requirements implicit in the DIPECHO contract and reporting standards. It was requested that DIPECHO provide more support in this area.

2.7 Consistency, impact and co-ordination of project within other disaster preparedness activities

The consistency, impact and co-ordination of the regional disaster management community and its activities are considered very strong. The mean score achieved on this indicator is 4.5 (Median 5).

The majority of DIPECHO partners are entities whose responsibilities link them into the broader disaster management scene at either the regional or national levels. Even those working at the sub-regional level are usually supporting the activities of local government authorities responsible for the co-ordination of disaster preparedness and response at the provincial level. The only partner that does not fit into one of these categories is the ADMD. The roles of the partners within the regional and national levels has therefore insured that the DIPECHO project portfolio is consistent with and compliments other disaster management strategies and programmes in force within their areas of responsibility.

This consistency and co-ordination has been further facilitated by the deliberate promotion of interaction and interchange between the partners by the DIPECHO regional office. This has helped draw together institutions that are usually operating in separate spheres of influence within the Caribbean Region, e.g. Cuba and the representatives from the different language areas.

However, it is interesting to note that Member State representatives in general had little awareness of the DIPECHO programme or of project detail. To an extent this was also the case with the commission offices. Although most had met the regional representative and received copies of the diagnostic, their understanding of the programme was limited. It is a concern that the bridge between the regional development initiatives sponsored by the European Union and the DIPECHO programme had not been developed to date. Given the nature of disaster preparedness, and especially mitigation, the future interdependence with regional development initiatives is essential. This issue is covered in more detail in the report section reviewing the DIPECHO strategy, method and approach.

2.8 Choice of partner

The appropriate choice of partners is considered to be a strength of the DIPECHO programme. A mean score of 4.3 (median 5) was registered under this indicator.

The support of national institutions that are not ECHO framework partnerships proved to be an extremely valuable departure from normal practice. Most notably with the DPC and ODPEM. These organisations are responsible for national disaster policy and implementation in Jamaica and Haiti. They are therefore well placed to promote and institutionalise disaster preparedness and mitigation.

The choice of ADMD as an appropriate partner for DIPECHO is questioned. ADMD's programme could be considered to fit the DIPECHO strategic objectives for the region, particularly regarding the support of disaster preparedness initiatives that link national and community level programmes. However, ADMD are a relatively small organisation without institutional reserves. This issue should have been considered more carefully at the time of partner selection. Given the subsequent experience regarding funding and reporting, it may have been more appropriate to find an intermediary institution such as PAHO, IFRC or their original parent organisation, OAS to provide the interface between ADMD and DIPECHO.

2.9 Promotion and sustainability of project impact

The sustainability of the DIPECHO projects is dependent on a variety of factors, which need to be included within the partner's operational strategy. A distinction can also be made over what project outputs will be more sustainable than others. On the one-hand methodologies and training materials will all continue to be used and will inform future adaptation and refinement. Whether by the project holders themselves or by other organisations. They have added to the resource base for disaster reduction available in the region. On the other hand, some community initiatives, the training carried out so far, and various project implementation components need to be continued and follow-up activities conducted if the progress made under the first year are to be continued. The dualistic nature of project sustainability is best epitomised by the PAHO retrofitting project. The materials produced and the training curriculum designed will be applied elsewhere. However, the demonstration projects themselves are of an uncertain benefit (i.e. in relation to cost effectiveness, prospects for maintenance and their ability to change local perceptions).

Common attributes were noticed among those projects deemed to have the most durable outputs.

- Having an established mandate, a defined role and funding base (as with the ODPEM, PAHO, the IFRC and to a different degree the DPC). CDERA's position as part of the national/regional governmental disaster response structure provides the institution with a continuing role and support into the foreseeable future. There is a strong likelihood of future application of experiences and increased capacities.
- Nearly all project partners used the project to build on the basis of previous programmes, already recognised materials and already demonstrated expertise. A process that will be helped in DIPECHO 2 by increased collaboration and information sharing between project holders.
- The DIPECHO projects have made full use of knowledge and experience from within the region. The appropriateness of projects is therefore high and will contribute towards sustainability. Furthermore this knowledge will be retained within the region (by individuals, organisations and the documentation centres).
- Prospects for sustaining an interest in preparedness and mitigation are good within the region. Hurricane Mitch has led to an increased emphasis being placed on pre-disaster risk reduction by a variety of governments and funders (IADB, WB, CDB, DFID, USAID, etc).

Nearly all the organisations supported are heavily dependent on project funding for mitigation and preparedness. Thus there are precious few guarantees that funds will be available for the direct follow-up to many of the project activities. The continuation of funding for many of the initiatives under DIPECHO 2 is considered necessary to consolidate the start made.

The synthesis impact table points to the overall the sustainability of the DIPECHO programme to date, within the Caribbean Region is considered to be medium to strong, i.e. a mean score of 3.2 (median 3.5). The very weak reading attributed to the FRC project pulls down this mean score.

2.10 Contribution to the continuum between emergency aid, rehabilitation and development

The focus on human resource and institutional strengthening regarding disaster preparedness and vulnerability reduction has had a direct contribution to the continuum between emergency response, rehabilitation and development. The preparedness programmes will lead to the reduction of loss and limit the negative impact of hazards such as cyclones on the development process. The programme therefore should also reduce the cost of rehabilitation.

All project partners have included project components aimed at influencing development programmes either by demonstration (i.e. school building retro-fitting, hospital retro-fitting, the creation of hazard maps to inform development programmes) or by creating/supporting horizontal links with other sectors (i.e. between national disaster offices and other government agencies, community development committees with local government and NGOs etc). Though it is difficult at this stage to assess the long-term effects of these linkages (which will be strengthened if there is more rigorous documentation, demonstration and follow-up), they will all make a contribution to the over-all goal.

However, as indicated above the linkage of the programme with long-term development initiatives has still to be strengthened. One of the means of achieving this is through the promotion of community-based mitigation programmes and projects, which are linked to wider regional development programmes. Although some of the DIPECHO programmes address the issue of mobilising community mitigation initiatives it is felt that a greater emphasis should be placed on this type of activity in future.

ECHO themselves can take steps to promote the linkages between risk reduction, disasters and development. It is noticeable that there is little inter-action with the European Commissions own development activities. The opportunity of protecting these development initiatives, or informing them of means to do so, can be considered a missed opportunity (one which is dealt with in greater detail in the section on the DIPECHO strategy and approach).

There is little evidence of co-ordination between DIPECHO and ECHO's emergency response and rehabilitation programmes. The eight ECHO funded programmes decided upon in 1998 after Hurricane Georges are all of a medical nature. Opportunities to incorporate mitigation and preparedness into rehabilitation activities, and to form links with the activities supported by the DIPECHO programme should be investigated. In effect, the DIPECHO strategy should not be seen as separate to ECHO activities.

3 Evaluation of the DIPECHO approach and method

ECHO's commitment, catered for in Article 1 of Council Regulation No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996, Article I, is to "increase its involvement in disaster prevention and preparedness and better targets its actions to achieve greater over-all coherence." On July 16, 1996 the DIPECHO programme was agreed by the Humanitarian Aid Committee. The new programme has a clear aim; "the primary objective of ECHO disaster prevention and preparedness policy is to help reduce vulnerability to risk." To achieve this a regional approach was decided upon; "the regional level of operation must also be considered, as it is the arena for most of the major risks such as earthquakes, hurricanes and floods." The strategy is under-pinned by three guidelines:

1. Support for initiatives with a regional impact
2. Stepping up action at the local level, using a more global view
3. Strengthening the connections between local, national and regional level

3.1 The regional framework

In its broadest definition the Caribbean comprises of 37 countries; 15 independent ACP countries, two Dutch territories and five UK territories, three overseas French departments, two US territories, Cuba and nine independent Spanish speaking countries on the Central and South American coast. Because the Caribbean is so heterogeneous (politically, linguistically, economically, culturally and geographically), it has to be questioned whether a regional approach to disaster reduction is effective or appropriate. The region's disaster risks, the disaster management capacities to deal with them and a strengthening regional identity, all positively indicate DIPECHO's approach to be valid and appreciated.

Recent events, notably Hurricanes Mitch, Georges, and Lenny, re-emphasised the negative impact disasters have on economies, ecological systems, populations and the prospects for sustainable development in the region. The differing sizes of many of the territories in the region, varying resources and levels of vulnerability mean they cannot deal with the consequences of these cross-regional phenomena in their own. On a national level, but to differing degrees, responses to disasters have historically been post-facto, preparedness is poor (but there are significant recent improvements) and there is a general absence of risk reduction activities being integrated into development processes. Factors which also limit the countries' capacities to deal with their own localised, but more frequent hazard events (such as flooding, storms and landslides). The DIPECHO framework correctly recognises country specificity; "National characteristics promoting ECHO's disaster prevention and preparedness policy, methods and means of implementation have to be tailored to the very different characteristics of the region". A realistic emphasis is placed on strengthening the collective ability to reduce the impact of disasters whilst strengthening systems at all levels; from the national down to community. The rationale behind the approach is plausible and consistent with regional dynamics:

- The use of existing capacities in the region will result in more cost effective, timely and acceptable responses to disasters and more effective risk reduction strategies. The hitherto reliance on external support, pre and post disaster, subverts existing capacities and does little for national or regional esteem.
- A wealth of knowledge, skills and experiences already exists within the region. If these are co-ordinated, strengthened and applied throughout the region, levels of preparedness and risk reduction will be improved.
- There is an increasing acknowledgement within the Caribbean itself of the need to deal with the vulnerability of the region in a collective and individual basis. A sentiment sustained by a clearly apparent Caribbean identity and the dynamic of greater Caribbean integration. The creation of the Organisation of East Caribbean States (1981), CARICOM (1973), CARIFORUM (1991) and the Association of Caribbean States (1995), are all initiatives to preserve national sovereignty and the region's identity. Although there is a tendency towards enlargement, rather than a deepening of integration, DIPECHO can assist the process of an open, needs based form of integration.
- The DIPECHO approach is consistent with the objectives of ACP-EU co-operation in the Caribbean (mainly applied through the signatories of CARI-Forum); "achieving sustainable development, in particular: development of human resources and involvement of civil society and the private sector into the development process: conservation of natural resources and the environment and disaster prevention."

A strong appreciation of the DIPECHO policy was articulated during the evaluation mission. Project partners and key-informants, when asked to consider the difference to other funder agencies, consistently stressed the positive aspects of the regional framework. DIPECHO were seen to be more genuinely interested in regional perspectives, allowed close

Caribbean management of the projects and exhibited a desire to ensure regionally generated knowledge was retained and built upon. This is in contrast to other funders who are often deemed as being not consultative enough or follow their own agendas within their country spheres of influence. They were unanimous in their belief that Caribbean countries have to assist each other in times of disaster, that risk reduction will benefit from shared abilities and that disparities between countries should be reduced. Repeated emphasis was placed on “we must do something for Haiti.”

3.2 The regional strategy defined

Rather than simply request proposals for risk reduction activities within the region, the DIPECHO approach is designed to be more coherent. Realising the enormity of the task involved (regarding preparedness and mitigation), and a limited budget, existing gaps and areas would be identified where the DIPECHO strategy would be most effective. As with the other regions supported by DIPECHO (Central America and South East Asia), a diagnostic study took place to examine “in each region, the hazards, response structures and policies already in place at community, national and regional levels.” The outputs of which were used to inform the detailed regional strategy; where DIPECHO could best be focused, what sort of initiatives should be supported and which partners would be the most appropriate.

Following the completion of the diagnostic its conclusions were presented in the region and a call for projects issued. The projects were synthesised into the first DIPECHO Caribbean Action plan as the expression of how the strategy was to be applied.

The first Action plan presented was a global one covering all three DIPECHO regions. Common areas of attention were presented for all three. These were:

- Training and the re-enforcement of institutional and organisational structures to improve preparedness to potential disasters.
- Micro-projects with demonstration value which can be taken over and used on a larger scale in connection with aid and development policy to prevent and mitigate disasters.
- Consultations, information and exchanges of ideas as much within the regions concerned as between external participants in order to achieve better co-ordination, complementarity and possible synergy, particularly for outside aid.

The specific Caribbean Action plan was then presented. Its content closely mirrored the general thrust to be adopted in all three: “The aim of this first (Caribbean) action plan is to encourage the emergence of genuine regional co-operation in this field. The focus is accordingly on sharing information, on training and on more direct relations between the countries, in addition to fostering exchanges of know-how.” Specifically through;

- Institutional strengthening
- Bolstering local abilities following an overall strategy (backing for community initiatives)
- Strengthening the links between local, national and regional operations.

The second action plan, presented in 1999 continues along these same axes though with a greater emphasis on reinforcing the complementarity and interaction of each. “In effect the community are not able to realise their efforts without the support of government and vice-versa, the government are not able to be efficient without a de-centralisation towards the community.”

3.3 The application of the strategy

It is apparent that a definite strategy is being followed by the two DIPECHO action plans. The first which is nearing completion and the second which is just starting. There is little doubt that the projects supported are making a difference and will contribute to both risk reduction and greater regional co-ordination. They are meeting many of the objectives outlined in the Action plan. An impact which will increase if there is on-going consolidation of the progress made to date. However, these successes, and their contributions have to be qualified. In some cases progress and outputs have not been as anticipated. The extent of their current effectiveness and sustainability can be questioned. Nevertheless there are signs these difficulties will be over-come in the future (though this should not be assumed). In future, many of these can be avoided if constructive changes are made to the DIPECHO operational mechanisms underpinning the projects.

The scope of the projects and the types of initiatives undertaken are all needed within the region. However, their impact could have been amplified. In future the DIPECHO approach should place a greater emphasis on initiatives for risk and vulnerability reduction which are integrated into inter-sectoral development activities. Substantial progress and change has occurred in the disaster management environment in the region since 1997. Post hurricane Mitch and Georges has seen a renewed interest from many funders in rehabilitation and development programmes containing components of both mitigation and preparedness, as well as an acknowledgement of the importance of community based initiatives. DIPECHO's impact will be significantly more effective its role and functioning was more clearly defined. Especially in relation to ECHO, the European Commission and member states regional development collaboration.

3.4 The strengths of the strategy and its implementation

The positive consequences of the first action plan, and the continuity into the second, extend beyond the individual project outputs. They also include the collaborative links formed between project partners, a raised DIPECHO profile, an appreciation of the DIPECHO approach, and the effect the programme has had on other disaster initiatives in the region:

3.4.1 Collaboration between Project partners

The similarities and characteristics between projects stem from the deliberate promotion of collaboration and experience sharing between project partners. Partner, project and activity selection has been strongly influenced by a desire to build and foster linkages. The DIPECHO regional office in Santa Domingo has contributed by holding three co-ordination meetings so the different organisations could learn of each other's activities. Although information sharing started off slowly, and was not as extensive as desired, firm commitments and agreements were made during the third co-ordination meeting.

Collaboration between project partners is being increased in the second action plan. Although being supported on similar themes, the interaction between projects and project partners was limited in the first year (working together, sharing materials and information – at the third co-ordination meeting agreement was reached to increase such exchanges). In the second there is a stronger shift towards the strategic integration of projects and partners. For example; the CARDIN project is being expanded to train and share information with Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

This level of interaction between partners and countries is greatly appreciated by the project partners. They see themselves as being actively involved in regional activities and are now taking a more strategic view of disaster management in the region. The involvement of Cuba and Haiti is greatly appreciated by the project partners. For reasons of regional integration and well as for reasons of extreme vulnerability (in the case of Haiti).

The project partners will increasingly benefit from the exchange of information and methodologies between them. The intra-relationships go deeper than the distinct information projects of the programme. The sharing of training methodologies, especially those for the community level will have a broad impact. Whilst a wide variety of such material exists in the region, there is frequent re-inventing of the wheel and a lack of refinement. The utilisation of what already exists and the inclusion of project experiences can only assist the process of systematisation and improvement.

The evaluation team was present during the second day of the third regional meeting. It was encouraging to see the participants use the workshop as a learning exercise. And to see an open and honest interchange of ideas and the problems faced. For example, the challenges identified by the different agencies included; a limited capacity at the national level to implement projects (at the community level) and a requirement for permanent, rather than one-off training. That the participants noted difficulties and were discussing how performance could be improved only bodes well for the future. DIPECHO can be pleased to have assisted the creation of such a forum.

3.4.2 A distinctive approach

The regional strategy is marked by an appreciation of the different style being applied by DIPECHO. There is a strong perception of local ownership and the utilisation of local capacities and experiences. There are few expatriates involved with the projects who are not from the region. Views which are considerably strengthened by the presence of Mr. Clodion as DIPECHO representative (who is from the Caribbean). His regional and local insights are particularly valued. The close dialogue initiated with project partners demonstrates willingness by DIPECHO to listen to and respond to regional perspectives. This is in contrast to perceptions held on other actors, notably the World Bank and USAID. Their programmes are seen to be externally decided upon with work plans and materials being applied which may not be locally

appropriate. Though DFID adopts a more suitable approach, there is a more fluctuating involvement lacking an apparent structure to what they fund, why or when. A clear characteristic of the DIPECHO programme is its willingness to work throughout the Caribbean rather than follow a sphere of influence approach. Because DIPECHO is driven by Caribbean inter-action, relationships have been formed with French departments and Dutch territories. The purpose is to share capacities where they exist.

DIPECHO's support to community based initiatives was also singled out as being distinctive by numerous project partners. The IFRC, for example, believe few other funders would have supported their community-based initiative; the first time the IFRC had attempted this on a regional basis. PAHO welcomed the opportunity to undertake a hospital retrofitting demonstration programme. Their previous retrofitting initiatives usually address post-disaster reconstruction needs. Thus lessening opportunities to demonstrate the cost benefits associated with mitigation.

3.4.3 A different DIPECHO action plan for the Caribbean

Another main strength of the Caribbean action plans is the strengthening of inter-relationship formed between national and community initiatives. Vertical linkages that will assist national disaster planning systems to be more accountable, take note of communities' situation of vulnerability and are more appropriate.

Support to national disaster offices (or indigenous organisations) is usually not considered by DIPECHO. The diagnostic states (page 125) that "apart from exceptional cases, national institutions cannot, for the time being, be more than indirect partners to ECHO." A position that is maintained by the framework mechanism used by ECHO to fund partners. It normally only allows partners who are internationally recognised (IFRC, UN agencies and the like) or are registered in one of the member states. Exceptions have been made in the Caribbean notably with the DPC in Haiti and the ODPEM in Jamaica. DIPECHO have to be commended for their flexibility; the projects are showing signs of building more inclusive disaster management systems. The role of these organisations, being responsible for policy and implementation, suggest an opportunity to further promote preparedness and mitigation would be missed if allowances were not made for their inclusion.

3.4.4 A long term Caribbean strategy

Another difference to other DIPECHO action plans (and particularly in SE Asia) is the predominance of timely continuation funding for most of the projects funded. This has allowed activities and progress to be maintained for projects (such as those of CARDIN and the IFRC) which will clearly take more than a year to be successfully accomplished.

The collaborative links being forged, and the expansion to more regional collaboration between the project partners being funded in the second action plan, are indicative of a much longer term approach than is usual with DIPECHO. Whilst there are dangers (to be covered in the next section) with adopting long term programmes within the existing DIPECHO operational framework, the reasoning is rational. Institutional strengthening, capacity raising and the building of new regional relationships are all long-term processes.

It is believed that the impetus for the departures from normal DIPECHO behaviour comes from the impetus provided by the Santa Domingo DIPECHO office.

3.4.5 DIPECHO's profile

The Santa Domingo office and the regional representative have contributed to a raised profile for DIPECHO. Nearly all of the people interviewed during the mission (from EU delegations, other member states co-operation programmes, UN agencies and national disaster planners and NGO country directors) were aware of the DIPECHO programme and of Mr Clodion. A reading of other agencies documentation (i.e. their strategic plans or diagnostic studies of the region) all refer to the projects and presence of DIPECHO in the region. In one instance it was mentioned that the high profile of DIPECHO was a contributory factor to DFID's two recent fact finding missions to the region to investigate their approach and to identify disaster reduction programmes in the region. Apparently DIPECHO activities have stimulated DFID to further increase their disaster mitigation and preparedness involvement in the region. A reading of the draft document² examining possible support for the Independent Commonwealth Caribbean Countries, refers to DIPECHO on numerous occasions. It

² "The Capacity and Arrangements for Disaster Preparedness, Mitigation and Post-Impact Recovery in the Independent Commonwealth Caribbean" and the scope For Dfid Intervention", DFID 2000. Draft provided by UNDP Barbados.

also suggests offering support to various DIPECHO partners. Both on the basis of what they have achieved with the DIPECHO projects (especially as concerns community based initiatives) and elsewhere.

The long-term approach adopted by the regional action plans is rationalised by a need to build political support for mitigation and preparedness. A long-term approach is being followed with as its cornerstone the sharing and retention of knowledge to eventually influence the political milieu. Although seen as a process that will take at least ten years (a figure given by the regional representative – “elephants take a long time to reach gestation”), ECHO will receive considerable recognition if successful.

3.5 The weaknesses of the strategy and its application

The previous section highlights the gains which are a result of the DIPECHO strategy, its articulation in the first action plan and the performance of the project partners. Though these are considerable, there are also limitations to what has been achieved. These weaknesses do not diminish the considerable efforts expended by project partners. Instead they suggest opportunities and requirements to consolidate the gains made. The main areas requiring review are the DIPECHO operational mechanisms supporting the project and how the strategy is applied.

3.5.1 DIPECHO support and the operational mechanisms

The issues mentioned above highlight various failings with the project support structure and the mechanisms within which project partners have to operate. These are:

- Project selection, whilst excellent in strategic terms, would have benefited from a two-way dialogue with DIPECHO informed by technical knowledge. The over-optimism of project activities and absence of base line data could all have been identified at the proposal stage and assistance given to remedy them. DIPECHO could also have insisted on follow-up activities being conducted to ensure first year outputs before funding other activities. Despite the admirable work conducted by the regional office, and regular monitoring missions, the impression gained was of project performance not receiving the attention it deserved in comparison to more strategic concerns.
- A variety of complaints were targeted at project funding arrangements. These include the slow release of funds from DIPECHO or from the EU delegation holding the local grant agreement (though the delegations also have their views on the quality of financial information received). This created some difficulties with even PAHO, a large organisation. In the case of ADMD it resulted in them halving the number of training workshops and reducing the number of pilot projects from seven to four. Because some organisations do not have the wherewithal to expend monies up front, DIPECHO may be limited in their selection of organisations they can work with in future.

There is also evidence of confusion with what DIPECHO will fund and what it will not. For example, local travel expenses. Some felt those who were grant holders held an unfair advantage over framework signatories. The latter are able to claim for travel expenses and put down the real costs of local personnel. The lump sum arrangement is seen to be unworkable in the Caribbean. Especially as the ECHO lists do not categorise many of the states. The personnel amounts are considered too low in comparison to wage rates in various countries. A situation compounded by the decline of the EURO over the year.

The budgets agreed at project inception did not contain any provision for the co-ordinations meetings. The benefits of which are not in question. However, the practice of many was to re-allocate funds within their budgets to attend the meetings. With obvious consequences on, and at the expense of, project activities.

- Even without the over-ambitious nature of some of the project formulation, a one-year funding cycle is inadequate for what is being attempted. One year takes little heed of the difficulties that can be encountered in the region. Of more concern is a year's relevance to introducing sustainable preparedness or risk reduction measures. Although continuation has been achieved in most cases, there is uncertainty and pressure to carry out all activities as planned. This places a bias on activities rather than the process and the quality of outputs. An approach long discredited in development circles. It has to be noted that nearly all other funders in the region adopt the longer approach (with requisite performance safeguards) of two to three year cycles for mitigation and preparedness when not funding one off activities; USAID, DFID, CIDA, etc.

3.5.2 The strategy being followed in the region

The definite strategy being pursued within the region is not without its problems or threats to its continuation. There is a danger it is moving too fast and is not sufficiently understood in Brussels or even in the Caribbean.

- The keen focus on regional co-ordination, and creating linkages between countries of differing capacities, is of some concern. It may be asked whether the pace of change, notably between the first year to the second, is too fast. In some cases it may be better to consolidate the progress already made before embarking upon new intra-regional initiatives. The IFRC has stated a desire for future stages of their programme to narrow down project activities to a few selected countries, to focus more attention and to consolidate outputs before applying them to other countries. The ODPEM raised concerns about their role as co-ordinators for the community flood management project at both the regional co-ordination meeting and during the visit to their offices. There are worries their project management capabilities will be assessed upon performance and outputs outside of their control. A situation which will be compounded by evident language difficulties.
- The strategy is a long term one. It will require further support to come to fruition. To a large extent the laudable vision and motivation of Mr Clodion have determined its shape and support. However, it is not certain whether his replacement (and there definitely should be one) will share the same vision. It is also not certain whether the strategy, and its long term perspective, is understood in Brussels. A problem which may become more relevant in light of the recent re-organisation of ECHO's preparedness and mitigation strategy. During the pre evaluation mission meeting in Brussels some of the ECHO staff spoken to do not seem to comprehend what is being attempted. They voiced doubts over the purpose and effects of the number of workshops and trainings being held.
- The strategy is understood and appreciated by the project partners. However, few others outside of the project holders were aware of what was being attempted. This was true of a variety of funders and also national disaster co-ordinators. Whilst they knew of DIPECHO, and many of them had met Mr Clodion, many did not really seem to know what the purpose of DIPECHO was, nor did they have much detail of project activities.
- Various organisations not funded by DIPECHO were uncertain of DIPECHO criteria and why some projects had been funded and others not. In some cases the reasons for not receiving funding (OAS, CDRC Jamaica) had not been transmitted to those who had submitted proposals. DIPECHO were requested to clearly state their strategy and their criteria for regional collaboration. This lack of clarity poses the danger of the DIPECHO Caribbean initiative being seen to be a small club for preferred partners.

3.5.3 The role of DIPECHO vis-à-vis the EU delegation. An opportunity lost

The 1997 diagnostic correctly surmised that most risk reduction initiatives in the Caribbean were focused on disaster preparedness and emergency response rather than reducing vulnerability itself. Thus the main thrust of the DIPECHO strategy would be to place sector based approaches into a more global disaster reduction process. One where disaster risk is integrated into development projects (page 99). "DIPECHO cannot cover everything and should not be satisfied with an increase in the number of sector-based programmes and/or programmes which are too localised to respond to the needs expressed." However, the diagnostic recognised the absence of the conditions required for the global framework. It therefore made recommendations meant to realise the environment where risk reduction and development could be integrated:

- a) Strengthening of local and regional structures in order to develop in particular the potential of national structures and increase the involvement of the political milieu.
- b) Heightening awareness informing. Persuading and developing tools to assist decision-making.
- c) Taking advantage of the existence of sustainable development programmes to integrate risk prevention

The actions plans and the projects being supported by DIPECHO are making (and will) a noticeable contribution to the second. Their impact on the first and third is more variable. Valuable opportunities have been missed in reaching the long-term goals articulated by the diagnostic and which are still needed. Evidence of vulnerability reduction is still the exception in the region.

Further opportunities exist to strengthen DIPECHO's effect on longer risk reduction in the region.

- Those EU delegations met with were all aware of DIPECHO though few examples were found of the integration of risk reduction into EU development co-operation initiatives. DIPECHO co-ordination with member states was limited to an awareness of DIPECHO's existence but nothing more specific.
- Some observers in the region commented on the difficulties DIPECHO's partners themselves have in influencing policy makers and decision-makers in the region. This assessment is too harsh; the national partners and international agencies (including CDERA) all have established roles and experience in influencing policies. Whilst it is true there are numerous barriers to linking disasters and development, if capacities can be further increased, and informed by project outputs, positive benefits can only accrue. However, it must be considered whether DIPECHO should place a greater emphasis in the future on closer interaction with insurance agencies, development agencies, environmental agencies and the like.

The main limitation to the impact of the regional strategy is that its role is not being maximised. Not because of projects or partner performances, but because the opportunity afforded by the position of the delegations is not being used to support the DIPECHO strategy or its objectives. The delegations have the political power and the financial weight to influence governments and policy.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 A strategic re-orientation

The evaluation mission indicated the purpose and objectives of the regional DIPECHO initiative to still be relevant. An impression backed up by numerous well-informed opinions and the findings of other agencies active in the region. A new UNDP initiative for risk management in the Caribbean deduced that “many countries have made considerable progress in developing disaster response and preparedness capacities at the national level. At the same time, considerable scientific and technical knowledge now exists on hazards in the region.”

The UNDP proposal continues to conclude that disaster management in the region remains focused on response with scant application of the tools and knowledge for risk reduction which exist locally; “risk considerations are not being factored into development and investment on a consistent basis..... research and application has yet to address the social economic, political and cultural barriers and challenges of embedding and institutionalising disaster reduction in the region.” These issues were recognised in the 1997 diagnostic and the two Action plans are aimed at addressing this situation.

In addition to the advances made in preparedness within the region, mitigation and longer-term risk reduction initiatives are increasingly apparent. Whilst the overall purpose of the DIPECHO strategy is still valid, the changing disaster management environment suggests a re-orientation of the strategy being applied. Central to a revision is the need for DIPECHO to re-emphasise and consolidate the role of the Commission vis-à-vis disaster reduction.

The following recommendations are contingent on DIPECHO (ECHO) wishing to maintain a regional presence and a distinctive profile.

4.1.1 Preparedness

Preparedness capacities at the national and inter-regional level have made considerable advances in recent years. There is still room for improvement but the structures are now in place for relatively systematic regional and international responses throughout the Caribbean. Both USAID and the Eastern Caribbean Donor Group (co-ordinated by the UNDP in Barbados) have a capacity to dispatch rapid assessment teams, communications systems are in place as are funding arrangements (i.e. from UNDP, DFID, PAHO, CDB) for immediate responses. The US military have a growing presence, interest and considerable capacities for preparedness and response (as demonstrated by hurricane Mitch when 14, 000 troops were rapidly deployed). The US Southern Army Command holds regular regional disaster scenarios (both military and civilian), maintains stockpiles on four islands (as do PAHO –medical- and the Red Cross) and has sponsored conferences in the region. CDERA, who are the body mandated to co-ordinate a regional response within the CARICOM, is considered to perform effectively in emergency situations.

The competencies of those agencies with larger resources and technical abilities than DIPECHO, suggest fewer distinct preparedness activities should be funded if DIPECHO is to continue with its policy of addressing noted gaps in preparedness and mitigation. With the following exceptions:

- Haiti. The response capacities in Haiti are severely low. There is a long way to go before acceptable standards of preparedness are achieved both nationally and locally. The DPC and departmental committees are following a pragmatic approach to disaster management; they wish to be active in disaster mitigation, preparedness and response. Their current emphasis is on strengthening the later two (i.e. achieving certain levels of safety) whilst laying the foundations for longer-term risk reduction.
- Community level preparedness. The increase of national or regional capacities is not matched at the community level. Especially as concerns awareness of hazards other than hurricanes. Communities still have to take many of their own initiatives to avoid and deal with their impacts. Particularly in remote or more inaccessible areas. The strategy applied by DIPECHO partners should be continued; promoting community disaster preparedness that is integrated into and supported by localised development activities. Global experience points to this being the only sustainable approach.
- Exceptions should always be considered by DIPECHO according to vulnerabilities and levels of preparedness not being addressed by others - either locationally or to different hazard types. This consideration should be informed by adequate risk analysis and presentation.

4.1.2 Mitigation and the definition of DIPECHO's role vis-à-vis Commission Development Co-operation

The DIPECHO strategy should retain and strengthen its emphasis on the promotion of activities which lead to the integration of risk reduction into sustainable development processes. In the words of a senior agency representative interviewed: "Awareness and Preparedness are only scratching the service of vulnerability reduction." This requirement to build the conditions to protect people and their development is as relevant now as when the diagnostic was written.

However, significant changes are underway in the region. Changes which entail a review of how DIPECHO should best be positioned for maximum effect. Since Hurricane Mitch a renewed emphasis is being placed, at a project, programme and policy level, on reducing social and ecological vulnerability within the Caribbean. Recent initiatives include;

- The IADB action plan to meet the threat of natural disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean. In the future financial instruments will be used "to incorporate risk management in the financial institutions of the Bank, applying concepts of prevention and mitigation and evaluating vulnerability and social and environmental impacts."³
- The World Bank is increasingly promoting disaster mitigation. The recently formed "Provention consortium" will act as a focal point for placing disaster mitigation concerns into Bank lending policies. The Bank is undertaking three disaster mitigation projects in Antigua, St Kitts and St Lucia. Each of which has a community risk reduction component.
- USAID have placed an emphasis on integrating mitigation and preparedness into their rehabilitation programmes following hurricane Georges. For example, Operation "Bounce-Back" in Haiti involves agricultural regeneration (provision of tools, seeds and training), environmental protection, mitigation measures to protect agriculture (soil protection and defensive structures) as well as community preparedness initiatives.
- The DFID review of vulnerability in the Eastern Caribbean States is promoting "comprehensive disaster management" - where additional attention is given to long term risk reduction initiatives.
- Disaster awareness is increasingly on the political agenda at a supra-national level. Global climate change and the increase in extreme weather events are seen by many to be caused by the more developed countries. Yet under developed states bear the brunt of the consequences. Support for disaster management is beginning to be seen as an issue of accountability.
- The already mentioned UNDP risk reduction programme "Forging and strengthening the development- environment links, risk management in the Caribbean. Proposal for implementation, RBLAC Strategy 2000-2005."

These initiatives, which mirror the findings of the diagnostic and the longer-term objectives of the action plans, demonstrate that vulnerability reduction is now on the regional agenda. The question for DIPECHO is how to assist this process.

The key findings of the evaluation, informed by a variety of disaster management specialists in the region, are for DIPECHO to continue with risk reduction via funding demonstration projects and to continue building linkages (horizontal and vertical). But to supplement these initiatives, and those of the other funders, by bringing the position of influence held by the EU into play. Until the delegations and Commission development initiatives themselves embrace the need to protect development from risk and to reduce vulnerability, the activities of DIPECHO will lack credibility or a clearly distinctive character.

4.1.3 Definition of the DIPECHO's role with the Commission

A clarification of the role of DIPECHO vis-à-vis the Delegations and the Development Divisions is required. The diagnostic, action plans and DIPECHO promotional materials all refer to DIPECHO having a role in co-ordinating risk reduction activities of the commission and the member states. However this role has never been defined. Despite promotion and information sharing (of the projects and the strategy) between the regional DIPECHO representative and the six delegations in the region, there are few examples of development assistance sufficiently incorporating risk reduction or

³ Press release, New Orleans seminar on "Confronting Natural Disasters: A matter of Development." March 2000.

promoting it at a policy level. Until definition is given integrated risk and development initiatives will remain haphazard and the influence afforded to the Commission will remain conceptual.

- The planned reforms to external assistance announced in May 2000 provide an opportunity for ECHO. Efforts should be taken to inform the soon to be transformed Common Service for External Relations (SCR) of the need for risk reduction. But also of the contribution DIPECHO or ECHO can offer (information and technical support – even if indirectly) to Commission assistance programmes of risk reduction opportunities.
- Agreeing such a role may prove a lengthy and difficult undertaking. However, it is evident the reforms to the Directorates (RELEX and DEV) will result in the devolution of managerial responsibilities to Commission delegations in beneficiary countries. “No development co-operation at arms’ length will ever be effective. The Commission is now seriously trying to get geared to put its ear to the ground and listen.” (Commissioner Nelson May 2000) Devolution which implies an increased requirement for local facilitation and briefing by DIPECHO. A position which adds to the importance of maintaining regional offices.
- Even without a formal re-definition of the respective roles, opportunities exist for DIPECHO to be more pro-active and to assume a facilitatory position to influence commission development assistance. Regular disaster related information should be fed to the delegations. Not just of the strategy and of the projects being funded but also risk management information that may assist the delegations’ activities; areas at risk, organisational capacities, where technical assistance is available etc.

DIPECHO should consider giving advice and suggestions to how mitigation can be built into Commission programmes. An approach used in the past by OFDA to strengthen USAID development programmes.

The possibilities also exist for DIPECHO to take a more direct and pro-active approach. Projects could be requested which introduce risk reduction components into, or along side Commission programmes.

4.1.4 Definition of the role of risk reduction within ECHO itself

The links between risk reduction, disaster response and rehabilitation would be strengthened if there was a clear instrument linking DIPECHO to ECHO. Notwithstanding the recent re-organisation within ECHO numerous benefits could accrue if there was a closer understanding of DIPECHO’s purpose and activities:

- DIPECHO should be used to inform rehabilitation activities so the basis is created to create a lessened situation of risk than that which existed before a disaster.
- Opportunities to inform ECHO of levels of preparedness and mitigation in the region and within countries could be examined. Risk assessments prepared before disaster strikes will only make ECHO disaster responses more timely, effective and better targeted.

4.2 Method of the DIPECHO programme

Even if greater co-ordination is not sought between DIPECHO and the Commission, there are still numerous aspects of the how the DIPECHO mechanism is operationalised which would bring beneficial results to future activities.

In theory at least there is nothing untoward with the practice of moving from diagnostic, to regional meeting, to Action plan formulation (and funding decision) and then implementation.

Of these steps the diagnostic exercise and its regional verification have been shown to be particularly valuable exercises upon which to build a strategy and to ensure regional applicability. That many of the diagnostics conclusions and recommendations are still relevant in 2000 (especially the main requirement to integrate disasters into development and to move away from sector based approaches) show the process is beneficial. However, there are minor areas where the diagnostic could be refined and its value as an informative tool raised. These include:

- Content: There are some omissions and frequent over generalisations. The focus of country analyses is on large-scale hazard events. Little mention is made of smaller scale, but often more frequent hazards such as landslides, localised flooding, etc. In the case of Dominica no mention is made of the nine volcanoes on the island. Nor on the devastating impact which Kicken’ Jenny might have on the region. The diagnostic does not assess the likelihood of industrial or chemical hazards (even though it is perceived these are of a comparative small concern in the region). The potential

effects of the El Nino phenomenon and drought management receive little attention. The method used to portray country vulnerability is also questionable. The categorisation of social vulnerability and the reliance on GDP figures hides inequities of distribution and the existence of “pockets of risk” which occur even in wealthier countries (The experience of the Venezuela floods being a case in point).

The diagnostic presents little analysis of the role, capacities, or activities of NGOs within the region. In light of NGO experiences in community level mobilisation, their roles post disaster (particularly with ECHO), there is scope to further examine (and welcome) the possible contribution NGOs could make to the DIPECHO programme.

In the context of the high quality global analysis presented in the diagnostic, these areas for refinement may seem relatively insignificant. However, because DIPECHO rigidly uses the diagnostic to determine strategic and funding decisions, a mechanism is required to ensure that omission in content does not exclude future areas for potential support or success. A mechanism that would also keep DIPECHO and Brussels informed of other initiatives and advances in risk reduction as they occur.

Updating the diagnostic would be a useful exercise. However, the associated costs suggest this should only be done infrequently. A more efficient method would be to conduct a situation review before new project calls are made and Action plans formulated. If done annually new dynamics would be noted and each action plan could be informed by the findings of new reports such as Oxfam’s soon to be conducted Caribbean “Risk mapping and Local Capacities Exercise” (already completed in Central America). This updating of the Action plans should be a task for the regional DIPECHO representative if the position is maintained (it should be).

- Better presentation of the diagnostic and the Action plans. The diagnostic and the Action plans also serve to inform others of what DIPECHO is trying to achieve. As it stands the diagnostic is an unwieldy and cumbersome document. If an understanding of the DIPECHO programme is to be increased then a summary of the diagnostic should be written and distributed. Although the Regional office in Santa Domingo has already written up their own summary, this was only for distribution to the project partners. Further clarification of DIPECHO’s regional programme would be achieved if future diagnostic documents were split into two separate components; a diagnostic for Central America and another for the Caribbean.

Though benefits will accrue from updating and better presentation of the diagnostic and the action plans, these aspects are minor in comparison to the need to review how the Action plans are formulated.

4.2.1 Revising Action plan formulation

The content of the first two Action has not fully reflected the diagnostic’s recommendations, especially as concerns longer-term mitigation measures. Most DIPECHO projects are sector-based initiatives managed by disaster management organisations. Often with a predominant emphasis on preparedness activities. Apart from putting added stress on the importance of linkages between all levels (community to national and regional), the thrust of the second action plan is a continuation of the first with many of the same organisations being funded.

Rather than being used to refine the diagnostic and to adapt the strategy, it is sensed the action plans are themselves a vehicle to justify the projects selected. A more transparent and accountable approach should be considered:

- It is recommended that the action plan is prepared before a call for projects is issued. This gives the opportunity to review the strategy and present it within the region and to have more and on-going consultation. Responses may offer opportunities to refine (either conceptually or with projects) the strategy being proposed. A chance to synthesise DIPECHO projects (and how they are to implemented) with other funder initiatives would be given.
- The call for proposals, along with the strategy, should define criteria for being supported. The amount of the budget allocated to continuation funding should be clarified. In this way other organisations in the region would reach a better understanding of what DIPECHO is attempting, stimulate performance, and avoid any perception of support being for a select club of organisations.

4.3 Recommendations for the DIPECHO operational mechanism

4.3.1 Maintaining the regional DIPECHO office

The regional presence of DIPECHO, through its office and regional representative, should be maintained. It has clearly contributed to building regional co-operation and co-ordination within the region. A presence much appreciated by project holders. The representative has helped raise DIPECHO profile with the delegations, international agencies, and governments.

A comparison with the first South East Asia Action plan highlights the purpose of having a regional representative. The Caribbean first plan was a more coherent instrument than the one adopted in SE Asia where there was no such representative. Not only in vision but in the suitability of projects funded. The SE Asia plan was not seen to be sufficiently informed by local expertise, project selection was based on decisions taken in Brussels and their technical merit was questionable in many cases. There was little cohesion between projects and it was difficult to identify an over-all regional strategy. Project suitability, sustainability and coherence will only benefit from a regional representative. In addition to clarifying the role of DIPECHO with the Delegations, the contribution of the representative can still be raised:

- The regional office or representative should have, or be able to access (from local institutions), a broader technical knowledge of disaster management implementation. This would assist initial project selection, subsequent planning (i.e. reducing the dangers of over-ambition) and qualitative but constructive monitoring during the project cycle.
- A closer dialogue should be built with other funding agencies in the region, and particularly those also funding organisations which are also supporting DIPECHO partners. Although all are aware of DIPECHO and have met the regional representative, closer co-ordination would allow streamlined support, added resource efficiency, and assistance with monitoring.
- More dissemination of the DIPECHO strategy to non-project holders; projects being funded, their progress and outputs.
- There is no interaction between DIPECHO's regional offices in SE Asia, Caribbean and Central America or between project holders. Dialogue and communication will help share experiences and to consolidate the DIPECHO approach. Any such dialogue should be matched with similar consultations between the ECHO desks in Brussels.

The regional representative was the motivational force behind the strategy designed and of the collaborative linkages formed. There is a real danger that co-ordination between partners will falter without the positive presence of a regional representative. The position should be filled at the earliest opportunity.

4.3.2 Reviewing the funding cycle

The one-year funding cycle has already been shown to have its limitations, especially as concerns partners trying to accomplish too much in one year.

For the establishment of programmes, which seek to develop self-sustaining disaster management capabilities and particularly to promote community-level mitigation, a longer-term approach needs to be taken. The year by year funding approach effectively means that DIPECHO either chooses to contribute to credible ongoing regional programmes as one of a number of funding partners or supports very short-term initiatives whose continuity or effectiveness will not be threaten by the withdrawal of funding after one year.

Although this situation would be partially solved if more rigorous, realistic and collaborative (with DIPECHO being able to offer advice) project selection, DIPECHO should consider two to three year funding cycles. They also need to protect, or institutionalise, the dates for project calls, decisions and the releases for funds. Past DIPECHO performance has been weak in all of these three areas. There has been uncertainty amongst partners, decisions have taken longer than anticipated and funds have been released some months after approval has been received.

4.3.3 Speeding up the approval process and transfer of funds

The approval process and transfer of funds require streamlining. Various project partners complained about the delays to receiving affirmative project decisions, the backdating of project start dates (to before the approval date) and the slow transfer of funds. Aspects which jeopardise project performance as demonstrably shown with the ADMD project.

4.3.4 Project selection

DIPECHO's project selection can be consolidated. Not only with the types of projects (more which are inter-sectoral and linked with development) but also with the quality of project selection. Though the projects funded to date are bearing results and have potential for future development, some of the difficulties encountered could have been avoided and outputs maximised;

- For the first Action plan technical assistance was given by the regional representative and by CRED in Brussels. For the second there is less clarity on how decisions were arrived at. A transparent technical appraisal of projects is required. Opportunities to invoke a regional project review board should be investigated.
- The selection of community micro-projects should be more rigorous and informed by needs assessments and explanations of how community support will be monitored. Those reviewing project proposals should have experience in community-based development and disaster initiatives.
- The process of selection should be transparent with those submitting unsuccessful proposals being informed of the reasons for failure. During the mission two organisations were met who had their proposals turned down. They felt the explanations given were weak.
- All proposals submitted should detail anticipated impact and qualitative impact indicators. All DIPECHO projects should be considered as demonstration projects; all proposals should present promotional and dissemination strategies.
- The above would be helped if all proposals and projects were better informed by feasibility studies and the collection of base line data against which to measure progress and impact. Base-line data and its quality was a notable weakness of nearly all proposals and projects.
- Follow-up to project activities has been identified as a weakness and a concern (for future sustainability). Project proposals should articulate plans for support and maintenance **after** the yearlong funding cycle period.

4.3.5 Revision of the project proposal format and/or proposal guidelines

The existing project proposal format would benefit from the inclusion of a logical framework with clear detail of needs, anticipated outputs and impact indicators. Many of the proposals received (and funded) so far have not presented sufficient detail on all of these aspects.

Whether or not a logical framework is used, the quality of projects and the likelihood of success will be assisted if proposal guidelines were issued. These should explain the purpose and amount of detail required under each section (rationale, documentation, indicators, etc). For example, when presenting the rationale for a project, many proposals present only a broad overview – e.g. Haiti is the most vulnerable country in the Caribbean and is affected by a variety of hazard types. There is no harm in presenting the broad picture. However, the rationale for specific project components should also be explained.

Revision of the budgetary format should be considered. The present budgetary annexes are heavily influenced by emergency operations. Even if the present forms continue to be used, guidelines over what DIPECHO will fund are required. Project partners are not certain what can be funded or of allowed amounts. In some cases the decisions on staff costs and transport allowances seem to be arbitrary and decided upon on a case by case basis.

All budgets should contain an allocation to attend the regional co-ordination meetings.