Capacity Building Initiative for Disaster Preparedness and Response

in Caribbean Red Cross-National Societies

PHASE # III

Reporting Period: 1ˢᵗ September 2019 to 30ᵗʰ June 2022

Date Submitted: 31ˢᵗ May 2022

1. Progress towards Outcomes

Outcome # 1. Enhanced NS institutional readiness to prepare for and manage emergencies.
Activity 1.1 NSs develop a systemized process to keep the DRM information dashboard updated

The TTRCS has maintained constant updates to the DRM Information Dashboard with regular updates of persons reached during the project. Our robust data collection system for recording sex-age disaggregated data on beneficiaries allowed us to seamlessly enter the required information into the dashboard form. This data collection requirement also enhanced our monitoring and evaluation aspects of the project.

Activity 1.2: Conduct and/or implement follow-up actions resulting from organizational and disaster response capacity self-assessments using the PER approach and implement its recommendation.

The TTRCS conducted the PER self-assessment in December 2020, which was facilitated by IFRC colleagues, Arlini Timal and Rhea Pierre. From January 2021 to March 2021 the TTRCS worked closely with the two facilitators to refine and craft a detailed Plan of Action and related budget toward the improvement of the TTRCS DM capacities. The report was sent to the PER focal point at the Panama Regional Office for validation and approval. Out of the many areas for improvement the TTRCS highlighted the improvement of the Disaster Management Plans and its SOPs as the highest priority items for review and secondly improving its logistics capacity as the second area. Based on the results of the PER the TTRCS would have contracted a Consultant to support with the comprehensive review of the Disaster Management and Contingency Plans and the development of the SOPs.

Video Links to PER Assessment Exercise:

PER Highlights Reel: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1anUY5eH-lnr3cIa7kjXWRjQeoRjtUBzK/view?usp=sharing

Activity # 1.3. NS implement OCAC recommendations and improve the development at branch level

Since 2010 the TTRCS has struggled to obtain audits mainly as a result of the financial limitations to pay an audit firm. Through the support of the CBI Project, the TTRCS has been able to secure financial audits up to financial year 2020. Having these audits not only ensures our compliance with statutory regulations at the national level to maintain charitable status and preserve our standing with the Ministries of Finance and Social Development, but will allow the TTRCS to be better poised to attract and secure regional and international donors.

Due to the COVID19 pandemic the TTRCS Branches were severely impacted as a result of the loss in their income generating activities such as ambulance services and first aid training. As a result, the Headquarters would have absorbed many of their costs and controlled their activities in order to ensure continuation after the pandemic. Additionally, the governance of the Branches we also affected and their participation in the organization diminished, resulting in challenges to implement Branch Level capacity building. While BOCA and Leadership training was carded to take place in 2021, it was not feasible as the Branch Executives did not have sufficient capacity or commitment to put the training into action. Around August 2021, there should have been elections for new Branch representatives, however a decision was taken at the national Council level to postpone elections until the TTRCS Constitution was reviewed which is scheduled to be completed later in 2022 therefore no Branch capacity building activities were done under the project.

Following up on development of the TTRCS Strategic Plan 2019 to 2022, the TTRCS would have engaged strongly in the development of annual operations plans (Click Here for 2022 Operational Plan). Through the CBI project the TTRCS would have taken bold steps to ensure there is effective development of our operations in alignment with our Strategic Plan, as such the TTRCS would have worked with a Consultant to develop 5-year programmes in our core humanitarian areas:

- Disaster Management
- Health
- Youth
- Environment and Climate Change

These 5-year plans will help guide the TTRCS operations as well as support with resource mobilization efforts to fund the activities over the next five years. As the TTRCS is also in a transition period while the review of the Constitution is underway, a gap analysis was done on elements of the strategic plan that were not achieved and an implementation plan was developed factoring in the pathways set in the five-year operational plans.

Activity # 1.4. Targeted National Societies develop/update Response and Contingency plans, human resource planning, succession planning and Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs).

The TTRCS Disaster Management Plan, Contingency Plans and SOPs were outdated having been created in 2012 after a major flooding event. During the last major flooding event in 2018, the TTRCS saw the need to review the plan to align it with more modern approaches and lessons learned. Through CBI the TTRCS was able to review its plans based on the PER assessment. A Consultant was recruited to craft the documents based on a collaborative approach, using the IFRC Contingency Planning Guide as a standard with the information obtained from the PER reports, and consultation with the TTRCS team as well as partner organizations such as the Disaster Management Units in the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government as well as the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management.

In order to identify the main areas that required improvement, a gap analysis was done which highlighted the areas which specifically required updates. (Click here for the gap analysis). After the gap analysis the TTRCS worked on the development of its Emergency Operations Policy which was identified in the PER assessment as needing to be updated. After the policy was created the final National Disaster Management Plan and supporting SOPs was developed, tested and finalized.

The TTRCS was also closely involved in the national DANA continuum process which was led by the ODPM between 2020 and 2021, with an effort to create one national DANA assessment process. The results of the DANA review process can be accessed here. As a result, a comprehensive DANA form has been created and using the best practices of the Red Cross globally, that of mobile data collection. The state disaster management entities have been able to create a web-based GIS enabled DANA process to effectively streamline the collection of damage assessments.

Activity 1.5 NS develop a strengthened auxiliary role in preparedness and emergency response.

The TTRCS has boosted its logistics capabilities by implementing an asset and inventory management and tracking system from the firm Alymta Business Solutions. The software was designed for the manufacturing sector but met the needs of the TTRCS as we often consolidate items into kits which is a feature the software supports. The software has been implemented across the TTRCS and the requisite training for staff was completed as well as the development of a logistics and warehouse SOP. The TTRCS Logistics System was enhanced with an intern who supported the implementation of the new system for two months. With the current system, there is tracking of the stock in real-time.

Activity 1.7. NS Volunteers are trained, motivated, recognized protected and equipped to support Disaster Preparedness and Response

Volunteer management has been a key priority of the TTRCS as part of its modernization and goal to improve internal communications. An online volunteer management system was procured to improve all aspects of the volunteer management cycle from registration to appraisal. The system from Better Impact allows a web-interface for volunteers to register online from our website as well as social media platforms and from there, they are able to keep track of their own volunteer path which includes being oriented virtually by the Volunteer Director and then volunteer opportunities are sent via email or they can choose to download the volunteer app which allows for regular communication with them. Volunteers can update their profile and log volunteer hours after every shift. Volunteer managers can also give volunteers feedback and conduct appraisals via the database. While there is an annual subscription cost, the time, effort and manpower saved greatly outweighs the annual cost.

Figure 1: TTRCS Better Impact Volunteer Portal graphic

The TTRCS conducted an introductory course in disaster management with the volunteers of the Tobago Branch on December 3rd 2020 which covered basic disaster preparedness and an introduction to the TTRCS Branch Disaster Response Team training programme – Branch Intervention Team (BITS). 8 persons participated in the training.

OUTCOME 2 -Improved capacity for Disaster Preparedness and Response at the community, national and regional levels

ACTIVITY 2.1 NS engage (1) community in the Application of the Road Map to Resilience.

Implementation of the Roadmap to Resilience was very difficult due to the COVID19 pandemic as well as the many government restrictions which made working in-person with communities challenging. In October 2021, as the pandemic restrictions began to ease, we capitalized on the opportunity to ensure some community activities would take place. Our initial community selected for R2R implementation was Edinburgh 500, a suburban community that was developing rapidly in the central part of Trinidad. However, in October, we did not have sufficient buy in from the community since many groups we generally worked with could not commit time for the process. We decided to conduct VCAs with three communities in the southern part of the island based on their social and economic challenges, vulnerability to hazards and willingness of community groups to work with us. The three communities were Pleasantville, Tortuga and Harmony Hall.
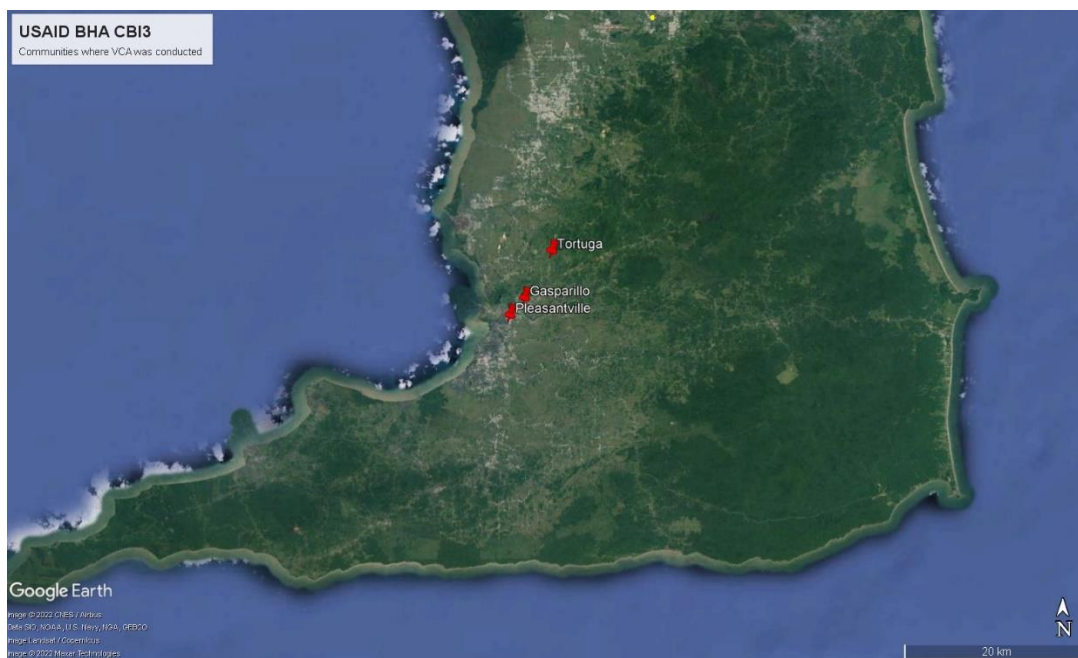

Figure 2: Three communities selected for VCA assessments

The TTRCS would have conducted an orientation to VCA and training on how to use the VCA tools, then we allowed the community to identify vulnerabilities and capacities in each. A household level survey was also completed to identify the most vulnerable where the TTRCS could have provided support for its end-of-year support to vulnerable families. In the three communities over 200 households were assisted with food parcels through a corporate entity committing to support these communities from the data presented from the VCA assessment.

ACTIVITY 2.2 Community Early Warning Systems are developed and implemented in three (3) vulnerable communities

The TTRCS has been leading the national Early Warning System process since 2018 where the TTRCS convened the first technical committee to implement a Flood Early Warning System after the devastating floods of 2018. A working early warning system was commissioned in 2019 with flood detection systems being installed in over 14 communities through a public-private partnership. One of the gaps was the community engagement to determine the alert mechanisms which needed to rely heavily on feedback from communities. Under CBI 3, the TTRCS selected two communities which were direct beneficiaries of the TTRCS investment into the national EWS to carry out its CEWS Assessment:

1. St. Helena and Environs (Kelly Village, and Las Lomas)
2. La Horquetta

The purpose of the assessment was to determine the gaps in community early warning and what would be the appropriate alerting mechanism for the communities. The completed survey gave significant insights into the gaps which will inform the development of the Community Alert Response Plans being developed in conjunction with the Ministry of Rural Development.

Activity 2.4 CDRTs trained and equipped for emergencies in line with minimum standards

The COVID19 pandemic significantly hampered community engagement in the traditional sense where training was brought to the community. In October 2020 after consultation with CADRIM, the TTRCS decided to pioneer virtual disaster preparedness and CERT training in order to reach communities. The first training was a grand success with over 200 persons completing the training and becoming certified in Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). That success set the stage for three CERT programmes in 2021 and three in 2022.

CERT Courses:

Course	Number of participants successfully completing
October 2020	200
May 2021	388
August 2021	61 (training specifically targeting male participants)
October 2021	76 (training specifically targeting young adults)
February 2022	12 (training specifically targeting the hearing impaired)
March 2022	77
May 2022	156

With 970 new CERTs across Trinidad and Tobago the response capacity is significantly increased.

Based on the first two trainings, we realized that the majority of participants were women (over 70%) between the ages of 30 to 50. At that point we wanted to create diversity among the teams and we created courses targeted specifically for men and the other for young adults under 25 years. We also had the first ever "Only Deaf" training for hearing impaired persons.

Figure 3: Hearing Impaired participants (in green shirts) practice light Search and Rescue skills in the classroom component of the CERT training.

Deaf CERT simulation exercise:
- Bandaging and splint a victim
- Fire extinguisher use
- Lifting and carrying a victim

As part of our motivation for the community courses we distributed 30 CERT kits which included CERT bags and Uniforms for 30 of the top performing participants in 2021.

Figure 4: CERT bags with PPEs and equipment prepared for distribution to the top performing CERT of 2021

Figure 5: CERT Volunteers receiving their CERT Kits and Uniforms

Activity 2.4 Simulation exercises are held in 3 communities

Due to COVID19 restrictions the TTRCS was not able to conduct a full-scale simulation exercise where we usually invite many people to observe. However, at the end of the first CERT training we staged an exercise which was live streamed for participants.

Figure 6: Selected participants take part in the first disaster simulation exercise during the COVID19 pandemic.

Video of simulation here

Number of People Reached

Age group	Male	Female	TOTAL
0 to 5			
6 to 12			
13 to 17	11	10	21
18 to 29	103	165	268
30-39	96	211	307
40-49	83	240	323
50-59	29	61	90
60+	33	47	80

2. Financial Implementation

Original	Amount and % of funds spent
71,044	70,023.35, 98.56% (balance 1,020.65)

3. Challenges

Description	How resolved
The COVID19 Pandemic was the largest challenge faced throughout the project implementation. Government imposed restriction limited our contact with communities and when we were able to reach communities, the community members were also hesitant to participate fully for their own fears around the pandemic.	As with all COVID19 restrictions, the TTRCS followed the laws of the country in limiting the number of people that assembled, as well as maintaining physical distancing. We worked closely with communities to ensure they felt safe and promoted all the COVID19 safety precautions.
Community priorities and the balance to build capacity versus the ability to provide for their families.	The pandemic again created barriers to working with communities where they had to weigh the benefit of gaining knowledge and training over working to meet basic needs. The TTRCS tried to be as accommodating as possible to meet communities at the most convenient times like on afternoons and weekends.

4. Photographs, Links to Videos etc.
Photos and videos embedded above.