

# Disasters & Livelihoods

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## Inside:

- 2 Disasters and Livelihoods Protection in Jamaica
- 3 Feature: Older Person DRR Champion
- 4 Project Updates

Older Persons in Portland Receiving Farming Information from RADA



Kerryan Francis/HelpAge

## HelpAge equips communities with disaster equipment & supplies

HelpAge recently provided nine (9) communities in Portland and St. Catherine with supplies to stockpile ahead of disasters in order to reduce potential impacts on life and livelihoods. The supplies included water boots, rain coats, rain suits, tarpaulins, bull horns, shovels, chain saws with safety goggles, wheel barrows, reflective vests, flash lights, heavy duty hoses and hardhats.

The community members expressed gratitude for these items as they proved very helpful in responding to hurricane Sandy. There were a number of older persons in both parishes who received tarpaulins to assist in keeping their homes dry as a result of losing their roofs to the fury of the storm. The chainsaws also helped farmers to access their farms as they were prevented from doing so as a result of fallen trees.

The community of Bybrook in Portland was especially grateful as residents were able to access electricity from the Jamaica Public Service (JPS) as a result of the chainsaws. Community members stated that due to the large number of fallen trees the JPS was unable to access the community to restore their electricity supply. The community got together and using the chainsaws, shovels and water boots to assist them in cutting away the fallen trees. Within two days after doing this, they were able to get back their electricity. As one community member stated, "we were so happy."

In addition to these supplies key agencies including the Portland Parish Council were presented with generators in order to improve their response capabilities in disasters. Additional supplies to be procured for the communities and other organisations such as the Portland Parish Council include wheelchairs, walkers and First Aid Kits.



Kerryan Francis/HelpAge

**HelpAge  
International**

age helps



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# Disasters and livelihoods protection in Jamaica

In 2011, HelpAge International received funding from USAID/OFDA to implement the "Building the Resilience of vulnerable communities, through community based Disaster Risk Management in Jamaica" project. A significant component of this Disaster Risk Reduction Project is Livelihoods protection.; more specifically, crop and livestock farming.

The project aims to help farmers, especially older farmers, gain the relevant knowledge and skills they will need in order to make their livelihoods more resistant to disasters so as to minimize loss and ensure a quicker rebounding period should a disaster strike.

This is a very timely intervention from the perspective of farmers. This is especially relevant for the country given its vulnerability to hurricanes and flooding. Damage to the agricultural sector after the passing of hurricane Sandy on 24th October 2012 was valued at over 1 billion Jamaica dollars and affecting more 11,000 farmers islandwide.

Another challenge faced by small farmers is the relatively long time it takes to rebound from the passage of natural disasters. According to one older farmer from the Browns' Hall community, "assistance received is limited not everybody gets help." The limited assistance results in it taking as much as one year for farmers to fully get back on their feet.

The project will be providing farmers with training that will equip them to better protect their crops and animals in disaster situations.

They will also be assisted in setting up community-based disaster funds that will be funded and managed by farmers' groups in the various communities. Additionally the executives of these groups have been provided with basic training in records management and financial book keeping. HelpAge is working closely with Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) to ensure that farmers are registered so they can be accounted for in emergency situations, as well as, contribute to a better and more equitable distribution of relief for farmers.

Other trainings that will benefit farmers include crop protection procedures and animal protection procedures.



Kerryan Francis/HelpAge

Older farmer's in Swift River, Portland

## Disaster Preparedness Fair held in Bog Walk

A major Disaster Preparedness Information Fair (DIF) was recently held in Bog Walk, St. Catherine. 420 persons signed our registers. However, estimates are that the attendance for the fair could be as much as 800 persons. In addition, there was an outside Broadcast of Hot 102FM.

A significant number of the participants at the fair were persons 60 years and older. Additionally, there were children from a basic school in Princess Field, Tulloch Primary and Bog Walk High School. Attendees received branded items to aid in their disaster preparedness efforts such as water bottles; exercise books with disaster preparedness tips; pouches that can be used to protect

important documents in emergency situations and localised emergency evacuation bag checklists. The message that was printed on these items was "disaster risk reduction starts with me." The message is aimed at demonstrating individual responsibility for disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation.

When asked what she learned, one participant stated that, "Three things I learned today were 1) be prepared 2) put up documents safely; 3) have your evacuation back checklist."

Disaster preparedness information provided by the Fire Brigade, the Jamaica Red Cross, HelpAge International, the St. Catherine Parish Council. Attendees also benefitted from basic health checks provided by Value

### Did you know?

#### That...

Older persons are an important resource group in Disaster Risk Reduction?

Older people are contributing to this work across the world. More specifically in Jamaica they are involved in providing information on vulnerable areas of their communities,

identify and assisting with the relocation of other less able-bodied older persons in their communities.

Many older persons in St. Catherine opened their homes to more vulnerable older persons during the passage of Hurricane Sandy.

Contrary to popular belief, despite the fact that many older persons are vulnerable to the impacts of natural disasters, within this group exist a wealth of information and skills that can assist the local community in preparing

and planning for disasters.

For more information on this please read:

Older people's associations in community disaster risk reduction, HelpAge International (2007).

# First ever EMMA training held in Jamaica

HelpAge International hosted an Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis training in Jamaica. The training which ran from August 20-24 was held at the Brack Village resort and in Trelawny and was being conducted for the first time in Jamaica. The lead facilitator was International training consultant, Anthony Dines assisted by Adam Clark.

The participants came from key governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in disaster management in Jamaica. They included Forestry Department, National Irrigation Commission, Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management, Portland Parish Council, Portmore Municipal Council, St. Catherine Community Development Agency (SACDA), HelpAge International, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, and the National Council for Senior Citizens.

Why EMMA in Jamaica?

Research carried out with older persons revealed that the response to disaster from key agencies often miss the most vulnerable and sometimes the relief received is not what is needed. Hence the inclusion of this training to build the capacity of key agencies, including the government. EMMA provides practitioners better understanding of the key market-systems in any given

situation which could enable humanitarian agencies to consider a broader range of responses. This could lead to more efficient use of humanitarian resources, as well as encourage recovery and reduce dependency on outside assistance. The proponents of the EMMA methodology believe that better designed responses will reduce negative impacts on local market systems.

The EMMA (Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis) tool was developed for Oxfam Great Britain and International Rescue Committee UK (IRC) by Practical Action Consulting. Four 'strands' run throughout EMMA:

1. **Gap Analysis:** to understand the needs, livelihood strategies, emergency situation and preferences of the target population.

2. **Baseline Mapping:** to develop a profile of the 'normal' pre-crisis market-system. Seasonal analysis is included.

3. **Emergency Mapping:** to understand the crisis situation, the impacts on market system, its constraints and capabilities to play a role in humanitarian response.

4. **Response Analysis:** to explore different opportunities for humanitarian assistance: their respective feasibility, likely outcomes, benefits and risks.

Participants feel that this training is critical to the Jamaican context as it "could result in a more systematic approach to emergency management."

**It "could result in a more systematic approach to emergency management."**

*Training participant*



Participants at the EMMA training

## Feature: Older person DRR champion

Mrs. Matilda Blake is a senior citizen in her 80s and actively working in her community to effect development and change.

Mrs. Blake is currently the president of the Senior Citizens Club in Swift River Portland as well as the President of the Jamaica Agricultural Society (JAS) in her community. She is actively involved in protecting her environment by collecting plastic bottles for recycling.

For a number of years Ms. Blake has been involved in advocating for the reinstatement

of the clinic in her community to ensure that older persons and the community at large have access to basic health care services. She has sent letters to the Minister of Health and other players in the health sector and made representation and various forums.

After many years Mrs. Blake is seeing results as the Ministry of Health has agreed to reopen the Health centre and provide the requisite staff to allow access of community members to basic healthcare services.

Ms. Blake is a living example of the contributions older persons are making in their communities and the society at large.



Mrs. Matilda Blake



## Project photos



Wheelbarrows distributed to St. Catherine communities



Students and teacher engaged in DRR Game, St. Catherine



Disaster Preparedness Fair, Swift River



Older lady climbing over fallen tree, Portland

## Project Updates

So far 5,149 persons have been reached by the intervention

1,347 households in 9 communities now have family disaster plans.

50 Executive members of farmers groups trained in Financial Management and Records keeping

25 community DRR training sessions held across the 9 communities resulting in 1,291 persons being trained

## Key Project Partners

National Council for Senior Citizens

Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM)

Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA)

Portland Parish Disaster Committee

St. Catherine Parish Disaster Committee

Ministry of Labour and Social Security

St. Catherine Community Development Agency (SACDA)

## HelpAge Publications

Ageing in the Twenty-first Century: A Celebration and a Challenge; United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Help Age International, London, 2012; pp.85-89

A Study of Humanitarian Financing for Older People and People with Disabilities, Help Age International and Handicap International, 2010-2011

Helping vulnerable populations and communities to manage risks associated with hurricanes and floods

Older people's associations in community disaster risk reduction

*Global AgeWatch Policy Brief 1: Mainstreaming ageing into the post-2015 process*

Protecting older people in emergencies: good practice guide

Guidance on including older people in emergency shelter programmes

**All HelpAge International publications are available from:**

**[www.helpage.org/resources](http://www.helpage.org/resources)**

HelpAge International helps older people claim their rights, challenge discrimination and overcome poverty, so that they can lead dignified, secure, active and healthy lives.

The HelpAge International Caribbean Regional Development Centre (CRDC) serves 10 countries across the Caribbean: Jamaica, Belize, Guyana, St. Lucia, Dominica, Suriname, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Antigua.

You can obtain more information on the project and other work being done by HelpAge Caribbean Development Centre by contacting the office

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