

The Caribbean is vulnerable to multiple natural hazards, including hurricanes, floods and earthquakes. The education sector is particularly vulnerable, and over the last two decades, this sector has suffered major damage and losses due to the impact of natural hazards. The frequency and intensity of these events are projected to increase as a result of climate change, thereby posing greater threats to the education sector.

The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) has developed a Model Safe School Programme (MSSP) toolkit to address some of these vulnerabilities in the education sector. It provides guidance for the development of a National Safe School Policy and tools for assessing the level of safety and greening of schools. During the period 2014-2015, the toolkit was piloted in four schools in three Caribbean countries.

On July 20, the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) approved grant funding of EUR746,000 to CDEMA to further implement the MSSP toolkit in six countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Funding is being provided under the African Caribbean Pacific-European Union-Caribbean Development Bank Natural Disaster Risk Management (ACP-EU-CDB NDRM) in CARIFORUM Countries Programme.

“The education sector in our Region has suffered from significant damages caused by natural hazards, mainly because historically, there is an absence of adequate school safety policies and hazard risk data. This means that stakeholders have not been able to develop evidence-based action plans that can reduce the risk of damage to schools. This project will demonstrate how to assess school vulnerability, plan to reduce the risk of damage to school plant from natural hazards, raise school safety awareness, and improve safety for all users. Hazard risk assessments will be conducted on 33 public schools in the selected countries, and individual action plans will be developed to address the risks identified by these assessments.” said Cheryl Dixon, Coordinator, Environmental Sustainability Unit, CDB.

The ACP-EU-CDB NDRM Programme is an initiative of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, funded by the European Union. It supports disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation activities in the CARIFORUM countries.