



**SHELTER MANAGEMENT POLICY FOR
PARTICIPATING STATES OF THE
CARIBBEAN DISASTER
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (CDEMA)**

PREAMBLE

The impact of natural disasters on the housing stock in the Caribbean countries prior to the founding of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) highlighted the need for co-ordinated shelter management programmes in the region. Since its inception in 1991, CDERA has encouraged and facilitated country reviews of disaster response activities. These reviews have provided invaluable inputs in the identification of emergency shelter issues and the requirements to address them.

The reviews undertaken after Hurricane Luis in 1995 and the ongoing volcanic emergency in Montserrat also highlighted the need for clearly articulated shelter policies to inform post shelter management planning. After Hurricane Luis, sections of the affected population were without adequate shelter facilities reinforcing the need for shelter management planning. The absence of national shelter policies also meant that there were insufficient numbers of trained personnel, insufficient quantities of temporary shelters materials and delays in the rehabilitation of persons affected by the disaster.

In an effort to ensure that policy for emergency shelter management is addressed at the national level, the CDERA Coordinating Unit has developed a model emergency shelter management policy which can be adapted by Participating States. The priority issues addressed in the model emergency shelter management policy which follows are the selection, maintenance and retrofitting of shelters, supplementing government resources with private sector resources, the groups for priority attention, the cooperation and consultation required to ensure the provision of emergency shelters and some of the key elements of the national emergency shelter programme.

MODEL SHELTER POLICY

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of the emergency shelter policy is to define the context for the establishment, maintenance and provision of emergency shelter within the national emergency management system and available resources.

2.0 GOAL OF EMERGENCY SHELTER MANAGEMENT POLICY

The goal of the shelter management policy is to mobilize national resources to provide emergency shelter and to expedite the rehabilitation of persons displaced by disaster events, in the shortest possible time.

3.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE SHELTER POLICY

The objective of the shelter policy is to provide for the implementation of an emergency shelter management programme which will ensure the achievements of national shelter policy goals.

4.0 GENERAL POLICY

It is the policy of the Government of <country> to take action to mitigate the effects of natural and other disasters within its available resources. The emergency shelter management policy is designed by government to establish a mechanism to provide emergency shelter for the public. In the implementation of the shelter management programme government will seek to supplement its resources with the resources of the private sector and non-government organizations. The necessary legislation and regulations will be enacted to support the implementation of the policy through a National Emergency Shelter Programme.

5.0 DETAILED POLICY

Government shall within its means and available resources organize and manage a national programme for emergency shelter. Persons rendered homeless by disasters will be provided with temporary shelter giving priority attention to vulnerable groups.

Government will make the necessary provisions in the annual budget estimates to provide financial resources for its input in the execution of the programme.

Government will institute a mechanism for the selection of structurally sound buildings for use during a threatened alert or emergency disaster. Emphasis will be placed on taking precautionary and mitigating measures to strengthen and retrofit building identified as emergency shelters and the provision of equipment, supplies and trained personnel.

Government will provide the support necessary to maintain the functions and services of the national emergency shelter management programme in a constant state of readiness in accordance with the national policy for disasters.

Government will encourage cooperation and consultation between the appropriate government agencies, the private sector and non- governmental organizations (NGOS) to ensure the provision of adequate emergency shelter for persons displaced as a result of a threatened alert or emergency disaster.

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

6.1 Introduction

In the Caribbean a high percentage of moderate and low-income families live in homes which are highly vulnerable to the effects of disasters. The vulnerability of these houses are often a result of the exclusion of the appropriate structural elements and mitigating measures during their construction.

As a consequence, they are severely impacted during disasters, often leading to either total or partial destruction. Until the measures to reduce loss of housing stock and other important lifeline facilities have wide spread implementation, it will continue to be necessary to maintain a national emergency shelter programme.

6.2 *Elements of the National Shelter Programme*

The national emergency shelter management programme is essential for the effective implementation of the national emergency shelter policy. The most important elements are:

- A. The provision of emergency accommodation and related services for persons displaced before, during or after an emergency or disaster, or persons evacuated as a result of a threatened alert.
- B. The identification, retrofitting and maintenance of suitable buildings for use as shelters.
- C. The definition of the role of government, private sector, NGOS and other bodies.
- D. The designation of a national body for the overall management of the programme.
- E. The establishment of the minimum requirements for facilities which are potential emergency shelters.
- F. The linking of the emergency shelter management programme with other disaster activities such as evacuation, relief and rehabilitation.
- G. The establishment of a mechanism for the management, identification, maintenance and upkeep of shelters.
- H. Training and Public education.

6.3 *Key Elements of the National Shelter Programme*

Some of the key elements of a national shelter programme are elaborated below.

6.3.1 National Shelter Management Body

1. Purpose and authority

In order to ensure that detailed planning for the emergency shelter programme is carried out, a national body must be identified and put in place. This body should be a creature of the highest authority for national disaster management and mandated with the responsibility of the overall management of the sub-sector. The body should convene regularly and be mandated to meet immediately before a disaster occurs or as soon as possible after an event.

2. Composition

The national shelter body should have a cross section of representation from the community which have roles in the implementation and management of the programme. These should include Key government ministries such as Health Education, Social welfare, Public Works, Housing, The Private Sector, Non-Government Organizations and Voluntary Agencies.

3. Responsibilities

The overall responsibilities of the national body include the following:

- i. Liaising with the national disaster agency for the implementation of the programme.
- ii. Establishment of local shelter management committees.
- iii. Establishment of the criteria for identification of shelter personnel.
- iv. Establishing a mechanism for the mobilizing of resources for outfitting of shelters.
- v. The national training programme for shelter personnel.
- vi. Arrangements for shelter selection, maintenance, evaluation and inspection in accordance with the prescribed regulations and guidelines.
- vii. Development and review of shelter literature and materials including standing operating procedures.
- viii. Maintain regular contact with local shelter committees.
- ix. Public education and public awareness programmes for emergency shelters.

6.3.2 Retrofitting, Maintenance, Repair and Evaluation of Shelters

A mechanism for retrofitting, maintenance repairing and evaluating government owned buildings to meet required criteria should be put in place. Arrangements should also be made with owners of privately owned buildings to ensure they meet the required standards. The school maintenance programme should include the following:

(Such arrangements could include incentives where appropriate.)

6.3.3 Mandatory training programmes

The level of training and experience of shelter personnel will determine the efficiency and effectiveness of operations. A training programme which provides the opportunity for potential managers and supporting personnel to acquire and practice skills should be established. Given the nature of the responsibilities of operating and managing shelters the training should be mandatory for all shelter personnel. The training programme developed and implemented should provide annual training and retraining for shelter managers and the shelter management teams.

The training programme should be implemented in collaboration with the national disaster agency and should provide training for the following persons:

- Shelter managers.
- Shelter inspectors.
- Shelter management teams.

The training programme for shelter managers and shelter support team should include the following:

- A. Introduction to Disaster management
- B. Shelters and shelter selection
- C. Administration, Management and Operation of shelters.

6.3.4 Support for Rehabilitation

A rehabilitation programme for displaced persons should be integrated in the emergency shelter programme. This will allow for the return of the community to a state of normality in a timely manner and the expediting of the return of buildings such as schools to their pre - disaster status.

Long term sheltering issues resulting from prolonged displacement of populations should also be included in the rehabilitation programmes which are designed.

6.3.5 Siting and Construction of Shelter

A high percentage of the buildings which have been identified for use in national shelter programmes do not meet all the criteria. The necessary measures should be put in place to ensure that public buildings (such as schools and community centres) which are potential emergency shelters are constructed in accordance with building codes being used in the country. Consideration should also be given to siting them in areas which have low vulnerability to the effects of disasters. As far as possible, they should be equipped with the standard internal provisions recommended by the emergency shelter programme.

6.3.6 Public Education and Information

A Public education and information programme will ensure that the population at large is knowledgeable about shelter issues which affect them. Such a programme should include information on,

- I. Government's role and responsibility in shelter management
- II. The activation and closure of shelters ;
- III. Location and types of shelters;
- IV. Liability of government, private owners and shelter occupants;
- V. Shelter regulations and
- VI. The law concerning shelters and shelter management.