

POLICY RESPONSES, INSTITUTIONAL NETWORKS MANAGEMENT AND POST HURRICANE IVAN RECONSTRUCTION IN JAMAICA

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Abstract: The small island developing states of the Caribbean region are, by virtue of their location, extremely vulnerable to natural disasters caused by floods, volcanoes, earthquakes and hurricanes. There is also the potential for man-made disasters such as nuclear accidents and oil spillage because the territorial waters of the region provide a passage for shipment of these materials. While there seems to be a concerted effort at the Caribbean Community level to forge a common approach to disaster emergency response, national disaster preparedness is essentially the responsibility of the administrations in each country. Accordingly, Jamaica has instituted a national disaster action plan and has established relevant management networks at both the national and local levels since 1983. In addition, there are a myriad of other organisations, governmental and non-governmental, bilateral and multilateral that play essential roles in disaster preparedness and response. The onslaught of Hurricane Ivan in early September 2004 was to put this institutional response infrastructure to the test beyond what lessons had been learnt since Hurricane Gilbert in 1988. New policy responses to Ivan were made. Some of these responses which were within the established institutional framework and others, especially the creation of the Office of National Reconstruction, were novel. This paper examines the overall public policy response to the onslaught of Ivan and interrogates the effectiveness of disaster preparedness and management. It evaluates the post hurricane institutional choices made for reconstruction including the role of the ONR. It concludes with critical comments on the need for a 'better resourced' preparedness network and the need to improve decentralised management of the system.

Keywords: Public policy, preparedness, evaluation, hurricanes

1. Introduction

The need to investigate how disaster preparedness institutions work in the Caribbean is most timely for a number of reasons. Firstly, in the literature on development, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have been described as being extremely vulnerable because they possess certain inherent and permanent economic features (Briguglio, 2004; Herrmann *et al.*, 2004; Osei, 2004). These include:

- 'a high degree of economic openness rendering these states particularly susceptible to economic conditions in the rest of the world;

- dependence on a narrow range of exports, giving rise to risks associated with lack of diversification;
- dependence on strategic imports, in particular energy and industrial supplies, exacerbated by limited import substitution possibilities; insularity, peripherality and remoteness, leading to high transport costs and marginalisation from the main commercial centres' (Osei, 2004: 256).

Secondly, recent events have further highlighted the extreme vulnerability of SIDS. Global climatic change has caused sea levels to rise and variable weather patterns culminating in a threat of subsidence of some Pacific islands. Similarly, the Indian Ocean Tsunami of December 26, 2004, which was caused by an earthquake off the west coast of Indonesia, killed over 150,000 people in twelve countries in South Asia and Africa. The recurrence of earthquake at 8.7 on the Richter scale on March 27, 2005 in the vicinity of Indonesia has left a psychological impact that islands located near those earthquake zones are unsafe. Finally, the early September 2004 Category 4 hurricane (named Ivan) which passed through the Caribbean left untold destruction in Grenada, Jamaica, Cayman and the United States. In the Caribbean, there are other hazards such as volcanoes, landslides, floods, and potential oil spills in the Caribbean Sea. The United Nations (UN) estimates that over 200 million people are affected by disasters every year. The above, therefore, underscores the need for effective policies and institutional management to mitigate some of the effects of these natural hazards. In spite of these hazards, however, there is a lack of appropriate resourcing of disaster preparedness and management institutions in many regions including the Caribbean.

The risks posed to the Caribbean has remained topical due to the fact that the 2004 Hurricane Season (June to November) was very eventful, highlighting the uncertainties that lie ahead in the future. Hurricanes Charlie, Debby, Jeanne, Ivan (in September) and tropical storms of no mean intensity brought untold destruction and hardship to the SIDS of the Caribbean in 2004. In Jamaica, the impact of Hurricane Ivan on September 10 and 11, 2004 brought the 23-year old National Disaster Plan under severe strain and interrogation. Its institutional effectiveness to deliver public safety and security was questioned by citizens. Based on the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Methodology for assessing damage, it was found that Ivan caused an estimated damage of over \$35.931b (i.e. US\$580 million) or 8% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP); and approximately 14% of the population or 369,685 persons were directly affected. The agriculture and housing sectors were the worst affected, accounting for 37% of the total indirect losses and 31% of direct losses respectively (PIOJ 2004).

It took a near total disaster for citizens and the Government of Jamaica to reawaken to the call for a managed and co-ordinated disaster plan. This paper examines the policy responses which were made in the onslaught of Ivan, especially the way the National Disaster Plan was articulated and put into action. It also assesses the institutional basis and contribution made by the Office of National Reconstruction (ONR) which was established in the aftermath of Ivan to co-ordinate the relief and reconstruction effort. The paper investigates why the ONR was established in spite of the existence of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM). Similarly, it examines the contentious issues of politics and operational efficacy and tackles the questions regarding

institutional memory and succession. This is because the ONR is a transient or an ad hoc agency established with a limited life span of six months.

2. Existing Institutional Networks for Disaster Preparedness

Disasters have become commonplace in the Caribbean in the last two decades. Disaster preparedness is concerned with an activity undertaken in anticipation of disaster, hazard or other emergency situation in order to reduce any negative impact and emergency management. This has come to the fore in the prioritisation of international public policy. In Jamaica, the institutional framework for disaster preparedness and emergency response consists of ODPEM as the pivotal agency, which works in conjunction with the National Disaster Committee (NDC). It works through a committee system including public education, health, finance, and disaster relief (see Figure 1). ODPEM is an agency of the Ministry of Land and Environment (MLE). It is a body corporate established under Section 3 of the Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management Act 15 of 1993.

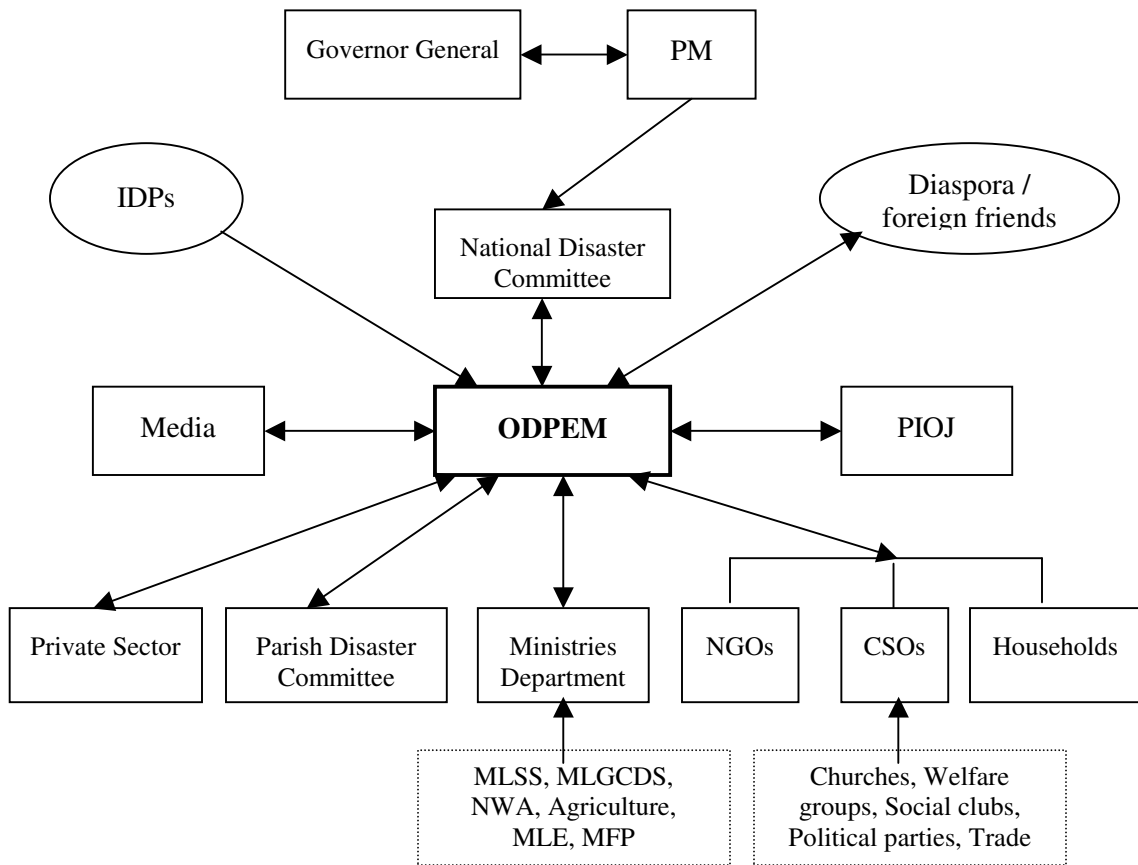


Figure 1. The institutional framework for disaster preparedness and emergency response

ODPEM’s main head office is based in the capital Kingston, but it is deconcentrated to the parish level in the form of Parish Disaster Committees (PDCs)

which are supported by Parish Disaster Co-ordinators. The PDCs are located in, and are part of the Parish Council governance set-up. The PDCs are grouped into four regions namely Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western, and each region has a Regional Co-ordinator. The role of the regional co-ordinator is to act as parish liaison officer for ODPEM.

The main objects underpinning the establishment of ODPEM are to “advance disaster preparedness and emergency management measures in Jamaica by facilitating and co-ordinating the development and implementation of integrated disaster management systems” (ODPEM, 1993, Section 4). Other functions of ODPEM include:

- Developing and implementing policies and programmes to achieve and maintain an appropriate state of national and sectoral preparedness for coping with all emergency situations which may affect Jamaica;
- Encouraging and supporting disaster preparedness and mitigation in all the parishes in collaboration with the local government authorities, community based organisations and the private and voluntary agencies, respectively;
- Providing appropriate training programmes and consulting services related to all aspects of disaster preparedness, disaster mitigation, loss reduction, and disaster management;
- Planning and implementing programmes to enhance public awareness and understanding of disaster related issues;
- Identifying and analysing hazards or emergency situations and conducting related operational research into their effects;
- Establishing, maintaining and managing mutual assistance and co-operation agreements.

In addition to this, the ODPEM has an advisory role, specifically to:

- Advise the Minister on major issues related to disaster mitigation, preparedness, warning systems and emergency response.
- Prepare guidelines for disaster relief and response;
- Initiate, co-ordinate, inspect, evaluate and support the development of a National Disaster Plan; the development and testing of emergency response plans by appropriate agencies including the emergency services, the security forces, the private sector, and voluntary agencies (ODPEM, 1993, Section 5 (2)).

Besides, there is the Meteorological Services Division under the MLE, with the mandate to issue warnings and watches for meteorological hazards during the preparedness stage of a disaster. Academic support is obtained from the Unit for Disaster Studies (UDS) at the Department of Geography and Geology, the University of the West Indies, which studies geo-hazards in the Caribbean. The UDS aims, among other things, to demonstrate how geological knowledge can help forecast, avoid and mitigate natural disaster

3. Policy Responses to Hurricane Ivan

In the onslaught of Ivan on Jamaica, the Governor General evoked the Emergency Powers Act of 1938, which is reserved for periods of public emergency in which public safety is perceived to be endangered. Unless extended, the emergency period lasts for one month. Under the truncated Westminster democracy practised in Jamaica, the invocation

of emergency powers was meant to give increased flexibility to the executive branch of government to facilitate speedier decision-making. The Emergency Powers Act 1938, Section 3 (1) gave the Cabinet and the National Disaster Committee adequate discretion to take actions that were deemed “necessary or expedient for the preservation of the peace, for securing and regulating the supply and distribution of food, water, fuel, light and other necessities, for maintaining the means of transit or locomotion and for any other purposes essential to the public safety and the life of the community.”

Did this mean the temporary suspension of democracy? The answer to this question is, ‘not really’. The invocation of the Emergency Powers Act did not affect policy making in any fundamental way. Under normal circumstances, most executive decisions and policies are presented to Parliament for the information of MPs, at times with very marginal influence being exerted by the Opposition on the content or direction of policy. This forms part of the political culture of Westminster systems which Ryan (1999) referred to as “winner takes all”. My interpretation is that the period of public emergency under Ivan was very near to the norm, it did not cause any important noticeable effect on the way citizens lived, except that temporary curfews were imposed on certain communities to preventing looting.

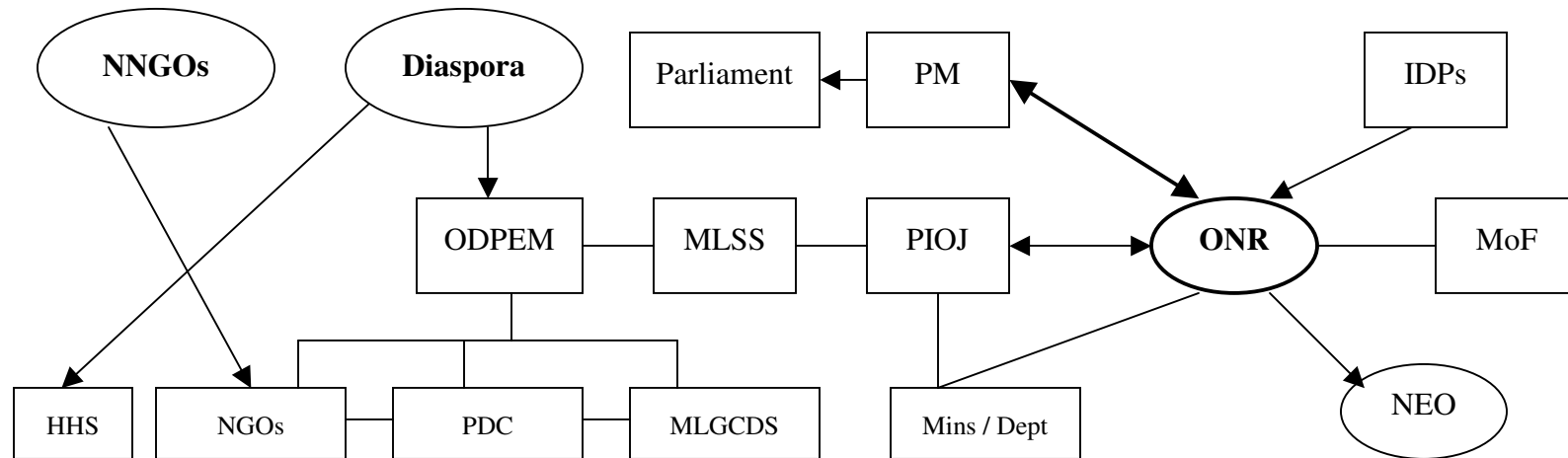
Prime ministerial leadership was important before and after the event. Prime Minister Percival James Patterson led the National Disaster Committee to make certain key decisions. Firstly, he instructed that the delivery of relief supplies to designated warehouses and distribution agencies be placed in the hands of the Jamaica Defence Force. The rationale behind this decision was to ensure full protection for the items. The Prime Minister also established a new institution called the Office of National Reconstruction and declared Mr Danville Walker, Director of the Electoral Office of Jamaica (EOJ) as its Chief Executive Officer. He was also made chair of the advisory board of the ONR which was made up of representatives from state agencies, civil society, the private sector and a representative each from the government and opposition parties. Members of the advisory committee were also made to serve as trustees of the Jamaica Hurricane Relief Fund into which all private donations were lodged. These decisions were announced to Parliament on September 22, 2004.

The ONR Board consisted of fifteen members including one representative each from ODPEM, Planning Institute of Jamaica, the Peoples National Party, the Jamaica Labour Party, the Confederation of Trade Unions, prominent private sector companies and civil society. The creation of ONR changed the institutional dynamics and significantly altered the original institutional framework of response. Figure 2 depicts the new organisational and institutional setup and the near overlap of ONR’s functions with the role and functions of ODPEM due to the level at which the ONR was inserted into the framework. ONR was given the responsibility to co-ordinate the national effort towards relief and rebuilding.

3.1 Institutional setup, networking and operations of the ONR

The most immediate need of the ONR was to set up an office and organise the personnel available to it in order to achieve the mandate outlined by Government. It was offered office space in the National Development Bank of Jamaica building in Kingston. Nine persons worked directly with the ONR, and these were drawn mostly from the Electoral

Figure 2. Relief and Reconstruction in the Post Ivan



Keys:

- NNGOs - Northern Non-governmental Organisations
- PM - Prime Minister
- IDPs - International Development Partners
- ODPEM - Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management
- MLSS - Ministry of Labour and Social Security
- PIOJ - Planning Institute Of Jamaica
- ONR - Office of National Reconstruction
- NEO - National Electoral Office

- HHs - Households
- PDC - Parish Disaster Committees
- MoF - Ministry of Financial
- MLGCDs - Ministry of Local Government, Community Development and Sport
- NGOs - Non-government Organisations

Source: Original conceptualisation by author

Office of Jamaica and the private sector. Among these was a newly appointed Communications officer who was given the responsibility to disseminate information to the public. The private sector pledged to contribute to the organisational development requirements in the following ways:

- Project Manager (Field Operations) - Mr Francis Kennedy was seconded from Grace, Kennedy Company for the six month period.
- Project Manager (Administration) - this was to be paid for by the private sector;
- The Jamaica Institute of Engineers and the Construction Industry Council of Jamaica pledged the services of engineers and quantity surveyors.
- The Jamaica Public Service Company (electricity company) pledged the support of two of their officers (Berle Francis and Tony Ray) to assist in the development of an effective communications programme.
- The private sector media who had been working on the Crime Stop programme also pledged production and airtime for the ONR communications programme
- The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Jamaica offered the services of accountants to assist the operations, and Mr Philmore Ogle was to provide oversight of this.

PriceWaterhouseCoopers pledged to provide the treasury services required for the ONR for the six months of operations (ONR, 2004).

The ONR acknowledged that certain government agencies were engaged in various assessment exercises which were going to yield various degrees of detail, however, in the interest of speed the ONR recruited 120 assessors to begin to assess the damage in specific areas of the country, focusing on:

1. Schools (including primary, secondary, tertiary and basic)
2. Public buildings (e.g. police stations, library, post offices etc)
3. Health facilities (e.g. clinics, hospitals) and
4. Roads, bridges, culverts, land slippage, etc.

The assessments of the other governmental agencies were expected to flow into ONR assessments. These assessments were expected to be complete by the end of October 2004. The ONR worked with a fluid organisational structure which changed form as operations progressed.

3.2 Socio-economic assessment of damage caused by Ivan

As in other major national disasters, a number of international institutions, friendly countries, citizens abroad, public and private sector entities rallied to the support of Jamaica in assessment, relief and reconstruction. The Government embarked on a comprehensive socio-economic and environmental assessment of the damage caused by Hurricane Ivan. In an interview with Ronald Jackson, Deputy Director General of ODPEM (February 21, 2005), he noted that the responsibility for organising damage assessments had been given to the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) and ODPEM, under the National Damage Assessment Plan. The PIOJ and ODPEM had acquired skills in damage assessment in April 2002 when the two agencies co-hosted with ECLAC a three-day workshop for assessing natural disasters. At this workshop, the applications of the ECLAC Methodology were inculcated (PIOJ, 2002).

ODPEM's role in damage assessment has been truncated by the agency's lack of critical resources. For example, the entire staff complement of ODPEM is just about sixty, and it has a normal subvention from the Ministry of Land and Environment to run the administration, with very little for investment in mitigation and institutional development. As noted by Jackson, the PIOJ was better placed to lead the assessment after Ivan because it has better resources. As such, information was supplied and the assessment was done through collaboration among the PIOJ, the ECLAC and the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP). The ECLAC methodology for assessing damage was used.

The report indicated that approximately 14% of the population of Jamaica or some 369,685 persons were directly affected by Hurricane Ivan. Total damage and losses were estimated to be over J\$35.931 billion (US\$580 million) or the equivalent of eight percent (8%) of the GDP of the previous year. Agriculture and the housing sectors were the most affected by Ivan. In agriculture and livestock, the direct damage was 24% of the total impact but when indirect losses were factored in, it accounted for 37% of the total losses or about J\$5.143 billion. Direct losses totalled 31% or J\$11.164 billion. The following assessments were also made: telecommunications (10%), food processing (14%) and tourism (8%). The team was unable to measure the total environmental service losses, but it estimated that damage to the environment was approximately J\$3.354 billion (PIOJ, 2004).

The Government projected that the impact of Ivan will contribute to a reduction in the annual rate of economic growth for the year ending 2004, from an earlier projection of 2.6% to about 2.0%. Inflation was also affected slightly and expected to increase by two percentage points due to declines in the supply of foodstuff. Imports were expected to increase and exports to decline in the short term, but there were no significant changes foreseen on the financial accounts of the balance of payments, and it was also expected that the increase in trade was to be more than offset by financial flows.

Comparatively, Ivan's 8% impact on GDP was considerably less than the damage inflicted by Hurricane Gilbert which was equivalent to 65% of GDP. The report gave a breakdown of the total damage sustained by the island. It noted that 62% of the damage was attributable to destruction and damage to assets; 28% was due to production losses; 10% resulted from increased operational expenses and revenue losses. The report indicated that most of the infrastructure and rebuilding costs would be borne by the private sector, where a majority of the losses was incurred in the first place, thus lessening government expenditure in order to maintain budget targets (PIOJ, 2004).

4. Interrogating the New Response Arrangement

From the interview with the Deputy Director-General of ODPEM, it was gathered that the agency is ordinarily financed like any other subvented government body. It receives budget allocations for the running of the administration from the Ministry of Land and Environment, and has very little or no capital development fund for institutional enhancement. It does not employ the parish disaster committee members and therefore has no real control over them. There is an anomaly in the DPEM Act in that it does not give real powers to ODPEM to command obedience from the stakeholder ministries and agencies with whom the former has to respond in times of emergency. Since the Act did

not facilitate a horizontal structure of governance, this mean that the ODPEM had to spend considerable amount of resources on building and co-ordinating horizontal governance of the network. Since the ODPEM did not have the budgetary resources to support any such innovation, this explains why its activities were rather circumscribed in the aftermath of Ivan.

5. Conclusion

The management of the original network of institutions and organisational relationships established under the National Disaster Action Plan has not performed as laid out in the various plans for preparedness. This was due to lack of prioritisation of the ODPEM in the national budgets over the years. The ODPEM does not have the critical resources to finance preparedness initiatives on any meaningful scale. It also does not have workers on the ground in the parishes to fall on for assessment and response when these are needed. The idea of the ONR seemed propitious in light of the timely delivery of reconstruction and the scale of the destruction caused by Ivan, but its ad hoc nature did not augur well for long-term preparedness and response. Its separate status and existence apart from the ODPEM will hinder the learning of lessons for future response. This is because the expertise assembled under ONR will not be available to ODPEM in the next hurricane season as the former will be disbanded at the end of its 6-month mandate in April 2005. The findings of this research therefore, points to the need for a better resourced, well-organised, institutionally integrated and sustainable ODPEM that is capable of evolving a horizontal governance mechanism across the entire network.

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