

# Enhanced support to Small Island Developing States

## The UN Resident Coordinator system in support of Saint Vincent & the Grenadines

For Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the confluence of small size, remote locations, exposure to climate-related hazards and external shocks, undiversified economies and high debt burdens leads to extreme levels of vulnerability and the need for concerted and joint efforts to sustain development gains.

The strengthened support provided to the 10 countries covered by the Multi-country Office (MCO) for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean helps advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reduce risks and increase resilience, while helping leverage financing for development. In addition, the increased attention from an independent UN Resident Coordinator (RC) and new dedicated coordination capacities in each country proved instrumental in ensuring a swift UN response in the aftermath of the volcanic eruption in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

UN 21

Number of entities in the UN country team

US\$ 97M

UN country team's support through the Cooperation Framework (2022)

### 1. The UN Resident Coordinator anchors an effective emergency and recovery response

On 8 April 2021, La Soufrière volcano in St. Vincent and the Grenadines erupted, displacing over 22,400 people and causing damages estimated at US\$234 million. The ashfall travelling across many islands also significantly impacted Barbados and resulted in closures of schools and businesses, while halting international travel to the island.

Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean countries, not being among the 30 countries that have a designated Humanitarian Coordinator, relied on the reinvigorated role of the independent UN Resident Coordinator. Under his leadership, a multi-disciplinary team was mobilized within less than 24 hours to support the immediate humanitarian response, including the Barbados-based heads of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) and disaster management experts.

Undertaking the initial needs assessment through the Detail Damage Sector Analysis (DDSA) and devising the support to St. Vincent and the Grenadines in its response and recovery efforts were made possible through a strengthened

regional coordination mechanism involving the RC and the Executive Director of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), who facilitated the co-convening of all development partners together with the Government.

Responding to a direct request from the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the RC immediately launched a UN Global Funding Appeal to meet the primary needs of the country's estimated 110,940 people. The appeal mobilized \$11.6 million to cover humanitarian needs, as well as medium and longer-term recovery. \$8.6 million were delivered to respond to humanitarian needs and \$3 million for the longer-term recovery. This laid the foundation for faster recovery and resilience with a focus on removing ashfall, rehabilitating impacted community socio-economic infrastructure and supporting enhanced livelihoods.



© UN Barbados and Eastern Caribbean/Bajanpro

Ash-blanketed homes in the Red Zone after the La Soufriere volcanic eruption, causing displacement to thousands of residents.

## 2. Leveraging UN capacities strengthened through the development system reforms

Through the Multi-country Office (MCO) review undertaken as part of the reform, six joint satellite offices were set up, with six Country Coordination Officers posted in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Saint Kitts and Nevis. The process of formulating the new [UN Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework \(2022-2026\)](#) enabled the 21 members of the UN country team to provide support and identify priorities to enhance resilience and protect the most vulnerable through more integrated programming and increased advocacy for SIDS issues. Related Country Implementation Plans (CIPs) enabled greater attention to each country covered by the Cooperation Framework. Collectively, this resulted in more capacities from non-resident and new entities, including the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UN Global Compact and UN Habitat in supporting the needs of the individual countries and their implementation of the SDGs.

The roll-out of the CIPs enabled UN agencies to increase their footprint (e.g. in St. Vincent and the Grenadines by 250% and in Barbados by 60% between 2019 and 2022), and strengthen the programming pipeline to address priorities such as livelihood and food security, women's economic empowerment as well as resilience building. In September 2022, the UN Common Premises were

inaugurated in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, strengthening coordination within the UN country team and supporting efficiencies. In addition, the full-time resident UN Country Coordination Officer ensured a more coherent and tailored support to national authorities.

The St. Vincent and the Grenadines CIP, accompanying the Cooperation Framework with a clear focus on sustainable recovery and response, further enabled an agile UN response to the eruption of the La Soufrière volcano. The CIP's ability to enable convergence between humanitarian and development work helped connect the emergency response with tailored long-term recovery and resilience objectives, while reducing the coordination burden for SIDS and maximizing linkages and financing opportunities.

Similarly, the RC – supported by the technical stewardship of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) – led the UNCT in undertaking a Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) together with the World Bank, the European Union and the sub-regional Headquarters of the Regional Economic Commission (ECLAC), thereby ensuring coherent UN support to long-term recovery. This has since been integrated into the CIP which, in connection with the Cooperation Framework, serves as the key planning tool for the UN system at the country level.

## 3. Critical programmatic support by the UN development system driving results

The results are already evident in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In 2022, the RC's leadership of the UN sub-regional team for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean provided critical and consistent programmatic support, aligned with national priorities, including:

- Expansion of social protection joint programming as part of the CIP, bringing together the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Labor Organization (ILO), and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). The UN supported the Ministry of National Mobilization of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in providing Family Support Grants to 946 households affected by the La Soufrière volcanic eruption in 2021. It also mobilized development partners to provide food vouchers to over 3,200 beneficiaries and interim cash assistance to 3,700 beneficiaries.
- Support to review the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and rising food insecurity across the Eastern Caribbean, through the RC convening the President of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the UN, development partners, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and Governments. As a result, a coalition of UN-IFI-Development Partners was formed and led by the RC to boost the support to countries on renewable energy transition.

- Enhanced resilience of farmers, fishers and vulnerable households in St. Vincent and the Grenadines through the Resilient Livelihoods and Food Security Joint Programme, under the oversight of the RC and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and WFP. A key element was linking social protection to agriculture, using data and information systems and more inclusive risk management practices.
- Mainstreaming digitization as a tool for resilience building through the championing of the RC. For example, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) provided support for digitization of National Archive Records, especially in the aftermath of the volcanic eruption.

In the case of Barbados, in April 2021, the RC ensured the UN system's provision of technical support to the Government with an immediate economic analysis of the disaster loss and damage impact of the ashfall of the neighboring La Soufrière volcanic eruption.



UN Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean/ Bajanpro  
With the support of UN and partners, communities are rebounding with resilience after the devastating volcanic eruption in April 2021.