

Being Ready

A Fisheries and Aquaculture Response to Emergency (FARE) training, along with a Training of Trainers course, was held recently in St Georges, Grenada

2017 is considered the most costly hurricane year on record. During its hurricane season, decades of development gains in some small islands in the Caribbean were eradicated. Beginning on 8 September 2017, Hurricane Irma tore through the Caribbean, bringing destruction and devastation. As communities were assessing the damage and loss and just starting the rebuilding process, Hurricane Maria made landfall as a Category 5 hurricane, bringing further destruction and devastation. Both hurricanes Irma and Maria registered as some of the most powerful hurricanes in recorded history, with maximum sustained winds of 125 mph. Amongst the most affected nations were Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, and Saint Kitts and Nevis. The fisheries sectors of these countries were severely damaged. In Dominica, Hurricane Maria affected the basic livelihoods of approximately 2,200 fishers and fishworkers, including market vendors, gutters, mechanics and boat builders.

It is against this background that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) organized, under the Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded Climate Change Adaptation of the Eastern Caribbean Fisheries Sector Project (CC4FISH), a Fisheries and Aquaculture Response to Emergency (FARE) training along with a Training of Trainers course in St Georges, Grenada during 17-22 September 2018. The first three days were designed to improve the quality of the response to emergencies in fisheries and aquaculture and were run by the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies of the University of the West Indies (CERMES) and the Grenada Red Cross Society. It was followed by three

days of sessions run by FAO consultants focusing on practical training exercises and planning for becoming a FARE Trainer who would be able to bring the training back to the countries of the participants, that is, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines.

The trainees included both fisheries officers and disaster risk management personnel. Building bridges between different government agencies will enhance the quality and accountability of preparedness and response for the fisheries sector,

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which is also the objective of the FARE training. Due to the complexity of the fisheries and aquaculture sector and the lack of baseline data, fisheries and aquaculture are often not well captured in damage and needs assessments. Unless recognition and resources are given to include the fisheries and aquaculture sectors explicitly in post-disaster assessments, and in disaster-preparedness strategies, it is unlikely that the complexity of the sector will be dealt with in relief, rehabilitation and overall resilience work. An important lesson in the Caribbean region is that (baseline) data about fisheries and aquaculture need to be collected systematically where these are lacking and that existing data should be improved.

In spite of good intentions, best practices in fisheries and aquaculture

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are often forgotten in the post-disaster rush to provide immediate relief and to replace lost physical assets. A major threat from poorly-planned emergency responses is, for example, the delivery of poorly built and unsafe boats produced in an attempt to respond rapidly to the disaster. This poses a threat to the safety of fishers as well as to the economic usefulness of the boats. Rehabilitation efforts should take a holistic and integrated approach and include activities and livelihood support along the whole value chain. What is the point of a boat without gear? What is the point of fishing with no means of conserving or transporting the fish? Fishing gear or boats or ice-makers on their own will have little overall effect on the rehabilitation and resilience of the sector. It is also necessary to look into the needs of different actors along the value chain, considering the roles of both men and women.

Although it is difficult to see any positive side of a disaster, and the challenges are considerable, an emergency situation presents an opportunity to review and improve

fishing operations and management. For example, the replacement of fishing equipment after a disaster can be used to redirect fishing effort away from destructive practices. Fishers are often aware of this possibility but do not have the means or experience to make a change without assistance. Emergencies, if responded to in an effective way, can thus provide a significant opportunity for enabling communities and countries to build back better.

In line with national and regional fisheries and aquaculture policies, the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) and related instruments, the FARE training course aims to support the safeguarding of fisheries and aquaculture livelihoods by facilitating the identification of the most appropriate emergency interventions. The training also includes discussions on good practices and related key indicators, and provides

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Participants at the training course. The FARE training promotes a disaster response that adheres to humanitarian and fisheries and aquaculture principles such as engagement with the affected population, inclusion of vulnerable groups and gender mainstreaming

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Hurricane Maria's damage in Scott's head, Dominica. In Dominica, hurricane Maria affected the basic livelihoods of approximately 2,200 fishers and fishworkers. The container is the fishing cooperative which was destroyed as a result of the hurricane

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guidance on practical difficulties or benchmarks. In addition, the FARE training promotes a disaster response that adheres to humanitarian and fisheries and aquaculture principles such as engagement with the affected population, inclusion of vulnerable groups and gender mainstreaming.

The FARE training builds on the Fisheries and Aquaculture Emergency Response Guidance and the Guidelines for the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector on Damage and Needs Assessments in Emergencies. These guidelines draw on good practices and experiences from natural and man-made fisheries and aquaculture disasters to help those responding to new emergencies to improve the quality of the design, implementation and assessment of interventions, including establishing pre-emergency baseline assessments and conducting post-emergency damage and needs assessment.

The newly trained disaster risk management (DRM) and fishery officers are now equipped to bring the three-day FARE course to their home countries. In preparation for the next hurricane season, CC4FISH will provide further assistance to collect

the baseline data, replicate the course for other Caribbean countries and tailor good practice examples for the region.

For more



<http://www.fao.org/policy-support/policy-themes/disaster-risk-reduction-agriculture/en/>

FAO work on disaster risk reduction (DRR)

<https://www.icsf.net/en/samudra/article/EN/78-4326-Mortal-Embrace.html>

Puerto Rico / Hurricane María: Mortal Embrace

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/21/caribbean-islands-hurricane-irma-maria-puerto-rico>

How the Caribbean islands are coping after hurricanes Irma and Maria