We are coming to terms with the environmental and climatic challenges we face in the Caribbean. Whether confronted by a hurricane, earthquake, volcano, industrial accident or civil unrest, every emergency situation that affects communities requires a multifaceted response. Our national authorities acknowledge the important role and function of ECD services, children and parents in the preparedness and recovery processes. But are we sufficiently equipped to fulfil our role in such situations? Do our governments budget sufficiently for disaster related rehabilitation?

Greater attention and resources are being directed at disaster preparedness, at supporting activities that aim at prevention and timeliness of response. There is greater coordination of the various agencies responsible for ensuring that activities at National and Parish levels are implemented in accordance with guidelines. Drills and simulation exercises are being encouraged. Public and private institutions, including schools provide public education and carry out drills.

Our recent natural disaster experiences serve to underscore the importance of planning, training and budgeting for the post-disaster recovery efforts. CCDC, with the support of UNESCO, hosted a UWIDEC regional teleconference in December 2005, in which colleagues discussed and exchanged coping strategies and best practices. Over 30 ECD colleagues from seven countries (Bahamas, Belize, Cayman Islands, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica and Montserrat) participated – including representatives from Ministries of Education EC and curriculum units, EC associations, teachers, private child care, public health, and parenting organizations, as well as students.

Four country cases were presented by Education Officers at the teleconference. See the cases of the Grand Bahama Island, Grand Cayman, Grenada and Montserrat, starting on Page 3.
GUIDELINES FOR CHILD-FRIENDLY DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSE – A Child Rights Based Approach

Jamaica’s Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), as part of a cooperative initiative with UNICEF-Jamaica, has developed a set of guidelines to ensure that risk management, especially disaster response in Jamaica uses a child-rights approach. The Child Development Agency, the Planning Institute of Jamaica, the Salvation Army, 3D Projects and Children First were partners that participated in this initiative.

The booklet, Guidelines for Child-Friendly Disaster Management and Response, serves as an aide-memoire for planners and implementers in times of emergency. It uses a checklist format, making it easy for any practitioner in the field to refer quickly to the appropriate sector and guidelines for assistance.

The general considerations for child-friendly disaster management and response include:

1. Vulnerability of children
2. Special problems of children in disasters
3. Child protection issues
4. Health issues
5. Water and sanitation
6. Food and nutrition
7. Shelter issues
8. Education issues

The importance of psychosocial support before, during and after emergencies is also highlighted.

Relevant excerpts from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) include Articles 6, 9, 20, 22, 24, 28, 31, 34, 39. The Convention clearly states that children have the right to be the first to receive attention in any emergency situation. We must continue to advocate for provisions for children’s basic survival needs (food, water and shelter) as well as for their psycho-affective needs during times of emotional trauma, to provide love, recreation and play opportunities while recovery efforts are underway.
The Case of Grand Bahama Island

Violet Stubbs, Education Officer, explained that the island of Grand Bahama has suffered much damage over the last two years by Hurricanes Frances, Jean and Wilma. Their authorities, including schools and communities prepared as best as possible in accordance with provided guidelines but after the first hurricane, they realized even their best attempt at preparedness was not good enough. The storm damage was much worse than expected.

Two days after the Hurricane Frances, the Ministry of Education (MOE) took a leading role in coordinating recovery efforts and rallied officials, who themselves were hit, and established the MOE Command Centre to pull the island back to some form of normalcy. Also recruited to this effort were the Ministries of Public Works, Social Services, Health, Environmental Health and The Royal Bahamas Police Force, who worked diligently as a unit to organize and rebuild the island.

The first activity undertaken was a thorough investigation and damage assessment that was conducted on a tour of the entire island. Each Ministry conducted its own investigation and assessed damage in its respective area of responsibility, itemizing what needed to be done in each and every area. The Ministry decided to first bring comfort and relief to those persons who could provide assistance in the recovery efforts and in helping those in greatest need. Teachers and principals were mobilized, including those who were adversely affected. They were provided temporary housing, up to two-months’ salary advances (18 months interest free), and government guaranteed low-interest loans to support their own recovery.

The least damaged schools were the first repaired, badly damaged facilities were closed and free bus transportation was provided for school children, some of whom travelled up to 15 miles for school.

Teachers were provided temporary housing, up to 2 months’ salary advances and offered low-interest loans to aid their own recovery

The public and private schools worked together to extend school hours, shorten vacation breaks and offer make-up classes

When faced with the challenge of insufficient supplies of drinking water, the MOE recruited corporate sponsors to bus sufficient amounts into schools daily. Children received the necessary school supplies with the assistance of local and international churches, NGOs and civic organizations.

Two months of schooling were lost. Teachers brainstormed on how to make up days. The public and private schools worked together to extend school hours, shorten vacation breaks and offer make-up classes. That year, Bahamian children achieved higher grades than the preceding year despite the major disruption.

With the passage of Hurricane Wilma, schools reopened two days later. Low-income families who lost their homes were relocated to a hotel that was converted to an emergency residence. Children were provided with clothes and could therefore attend school. Nurseries and preschools provided extra assistance, opened their doors and provided free services for children under the age of three years for families in need.

Their MOE has adapted its curriculum and now prepares hurricane kits for September each year.

QUESTIONS ARISING:

a. Have any other islands looked at natural disaster preparedness?
b. Do EC services have to contend with criminal behaviour in the post-disaster recovery period?
c. How is the local media used in disaster preparedness and for emergency responses?

Best practices and resource materials can be shared through the caribed website. Please submit your documents and photos via e-mail to ccdcprojects@uwimona.edu.jm
STOP

A Framework for ECD in Emergencies

This framework for working with young refugees was first devised by Swedish Save the Children (Gustaffson, 1986) and has been subsequently adapted. It sets out an easy-to-remember way of ensuring that the key principles of good early years practice to support children affected by conflict are in place, and can apply to the provision of early years services not only in an emergency situation, but also once children have sought refuge.

| S | Space and structure |
| T | Trust, time and talking |
| O | Opportunities to play |
| P | Partnership with parents |

The Case of Grand Cayman

Education Officers, Marjorie Beckles and Herbert Crawford spoke on the 2004-05 Cayman experience. Their National Hurricane Committee (NHC) ensures all tactical precautions are taken in advance to minimize injury to people and loss of property, and that each district has a shelter, emergency medical services and trained support volunteers.

Preschools have no set hurricane plans but follow NHC’s directives. Plans are now being developed for EC services to meet national standard of preparedness.

In the case of Hurricane Ivan, Cayman’s experience was similar to that of the Bahamas in terms of schools’ quick recovery. All government schools suffered the wrath of Ivan. The Ministry of Education concentrated on some key priorities to provide safe and healthy environments for young children, replacing equipment and educational materials, providing counselling support, focussing on the curriculum and developing strategies for lost time. The Ministry worked closely with Public Health and Public Works Departments in the recovery efforts.

Delays in the rate of recovery were caused by a lack of electricity and phone lines, the usage of schools as emergency shelters, and the shortage of building supplies, labour, and housing. The alternative was to prepare safe rooms in schools which they used temporarily. They set up “learning centres” in safe spaces of buildings that were not severely damaged. Structure and continuity in the children’s education was provided through a range of enrichment opportunities, offering an adapted curriculum, providing resource materials, and using a range of creative activities (such as art and music) to keep the children engaged and learning.

The Government provided support for children to attend preschools and day care centres for up to a year, free of cost. They also assisted with rebuilding the preschools and, for the children whose schools were damaged, free transportation was provided so they could temporarily attend school elsewhere.

The government provided support for children to attend pre-school and daycare centers for up to a year, free of cost
Due to the extent of the hurricane damage, many parents sent their children to relatives in Cayman Brac, Barbados, Jamaica and the US, which impacted on the school registration process. Provisions were made to offer post-storm counselling throughout the school year as many children, parents and teachers were traumatised. The Government also gave each family CI$3,000 to assist with recovery expenses.

Officials are now trying to make their post-hurricane plan as efficient and effective as the pre-hurricane plan. This includes preparing for more intense weather and strengthening institutionalized preventative measures such as the enforcement of building codes.

**The Case of Grenada**

Grenadians cannot forget Hurricane Ivan (September, 2004) as it devastated the island, causing damage estimated at ECS$800 Million – education delivery was significantly affected, all schools were damaged or demolished.

In hindsight, Early Childhood Education Officer, Ivy Harris explained their hurricane preparation was not as dynamic as it should have been as no one anticipated the level of devastation experienced. Pre-Ivan in-class sessions helped the children to prepare, which in turn allowed them to help their parents through the hurricane using techniques they had learned at school. Schools tried to secure equipment and records. TV and community radio were used to educate and inform Grenadians, helping them to understand what to do and expect.

Many lessons were learned from the disaster. The teachers were exceptionally resilient and resourceful in unfavourable conditions, offering classes in tents that were beautifully decorated and provided stimulating learning environments. In situations such as these, the Ministry of Education needs well-coordinated external help in securing and distributing supplies.

There was insufficient public awareness of what to do and how to deal with the hurricane aftermath. The Hurricane experience was used as a teaching tool to help the children to settle down and accept what took place. Teacher-parents relationships were immediately strengthened in this time of adversity, and there was great openness and sharing, as ‘brothers and sisters’ became the norm.

Our Grenadian colleagues also learned that without a preparedness plan for centres and schools, they could expect chaos and confusion. They hope to develop a database and library of resource materials outlining what skills and resources can help after such disasters.

Another post hurricane challenge was the restoration of the centres and location of suitable safe buildings to house children. They were living and studying under tarpaulins, teachers had difficulty in getting them to settle down, but eventually they were successful. Greater assistance of psychologists was needed to help with counselling. The communication challenges due to loss of electricity and phone lines made everyone’s job even more challenging as offices were hot and dark. An inadequate supply of learning materials, equipment and furniture presented even more challenges. Fortunately, Grenada’s water authority quickly restored their water supply.

After Ivan, teachers (despite their own personal trials) salvaged what they could at the centres so that...
classes could resume as quickly as possible. External assistance, such as that from UNICEF, provided supplies and tents. The Ministry provided temporary wooden buildings for some of the schools. Other schools were relocated to public and private buildings, such as churches.

People were not themselves for days after hurricane. Early in the recovery period, the Ministry of Education provided materials and training in dealing with trauma, stress reduction and coping strategies for children and parents. Such training programs need to be sustained so they will be better prepared to deal with the aftermath.

The Ministry developed earthquake drills in response to 1996 tremors caused by the volcano, and issued procedures for teachers and children to follow. Procedures were also put in place to cope with ash fall during school hours. The MOE worked with the Health Department in providing all EC centres with dust masks and procedures to prevent ash from getting into the nose or mouth, as well as basic training in recognizing and responding to bronchial and asthma attacks. Now, the Fire Department helps to wash away ash (using rain and spring water) and provide training for the children on safety measures. Children share this information with parents and siblings. The media assists the MOE with getting messages to parents.

The EC centres, built to withstand Category 5 Hurricanes, are also used as hurricane and volcanic activity emergency shelters which at times are overcrowded and has negatively impacted programmes.

The Centres do not have generators and water tanks. The telephone system requires electricity so there is a risk of losing communication with parents. In the case of a water lock-off, there is the risk of inadequate water supply for sanitary purposes. The MOE office serves as a message centre in emergencies and networks with the Fire, Health, Environmental Health, and Disaster Preparedness Ministries so everyone can know what is happening in any disaster situation.

The Case of Montserrat

Zelma White, Education Officer, explained that prior to the volcanic crises that began in 1995, they had ten nursery schools on Montserrat. Now they have only three nursery schools and two day care centres.

In 1996, The Ministry of Education (MOE) developed Contingency Plans, which outline the evacuation procedures, what to do if children are not collected within the specified time and transportation arrangements. One of greatest challenges during the crises was finding suitable buildings in which to operate. EC services continued for a while in churches and under tents.
As we examine the resilience of our region’s children and caregivers, as in the case of natural disasters, it seems appropriate to share some key points made by Robin Grille.

A thought-provoking parenting paper entitled, “IQ Is Only Half The Picture: Cultivating your Child’s Emotional Intelligence”, by Robin Grille prompts enquiry into the possible causes and effects of emotional deficiencies. Perhaps emotions serve as either the glue that binds or the axe that severs our human connectedness.

Psychologists from various schools of thought have been trying to trace the way in which emotions develop in children, much the same as Piaget defined the stages of cognitive growth. A map describing precisely how emotional intelligence unfolds would be useful in helping to promote and facilitate emotional fluency in children.

Grille asks, “Why do we prize brains above the heart and soul? One of the saddest and most common misconceptions of our times is that a high IQ leads to emotional balance and psychological maturity. Our intellect-driven culture stresses the need to teach children how to think, reason and perceive. We are new and unsteady beginners in our efforts to teach children how to feel, how to create, and how to navigate successfully the choppy waters of human relations.”

The recently developed “ECD Learning Outcomes Curriculum” model (see page 9) reflects the high value placed on Emotional Wellness during the early years.

As Grille explains, “Emotional Intelligence includes, among a host of other things, the ability to deeply empathize with others, to lead wisely or follow with grace, to honour our limits as well as celebrate and fulfill our talents and to give and receive love and support. More pertinently, our ability to inspire and impart emotional intelligence to our children rests on our own mastery of feelings and our willingness to learn and grow in this area.”

Grille is a firm believer that: “Our unfamiliarity with emotional intelligence means that we will continue to suffer, on a large scale, from emotional disability and injury. Poor emotional and relationship skills are directly to blame for some of the highest rates of depression, youth suicide, and problem gambling. A deficiency in emotional resources is the basis for our epidemics of eating disorders, substance addictions, and bullying in the playground or work environment. Consumer greed and gullibility to seductive advertising are driven by a massive lack of emotional fulfilment. Our fledgling

“...One of the saddest and most common misconceptions is that a high IQ leads to emotional balance and psychological maturity.”
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE Contd.

most significantly affecting our Caribbean children’s EQ."

I was impressed by Grille’s attempt to summarize for parents the psychological and emotional needs specific to each of the five stages of early childhood psycho-emotional development. By implication, each stage requires a different set of conditions, and a specific approach to caring, if the emotionality of the child is to flourish. Grille recognizes that none of us can consistently provide these conditions at any stage because we are limited as parents, humans, and as a community. A yardstick of what is ideal is not to be used for self-criticism but as a directional marker, since parenting/care-giving also entails a growth process and developmental journey for the parent/care-giver.

“Experience has taught us that a person’s emotional intelligence, unlike IQ, can be learned and expanded throughout life.”

The Bottom line: Parents and caregivers alike are cautioned to avoid over-simplification or rigid determinism in the interpretation of how early-childhood emotional injury affects personality. Although most people carry some wounds from childhood, Grille assures us many are able to compensate by creating unique and surprising traits and abilities. It is a common paradox that wonderful gifts can have their genesis in childhood injury. What can be said with certainty, however, is that significant deviations from meeting the child’s stage-specific, basic emotional needs are always hurtful and sometimes damaging to the child.

Disasters Elsewhere In The Region

Guyana’s recent flood experience was shared. Colleagues requested tips, tools and training for dealing with post-traumatic stress management in young children. UNICEF is spearheading collaboration and building partnerships for responding to emergencies. EC service providers look forward to UNICEF’s further assistance in this area.

Colleagues also spoke on the recent flooding in Belize that forced the relocation of entire communities. The Ministry of Education there worked with other Ministries in the relocation of families, prevention of outbreaks of dysentery and malaria, and provision of education services in tents.

Colleagues recommended that we collectively develop a policy document (through CARICOM) on disaster preparedness and emergency responses for the Caribbean EC services. It was suggested that the Caribbean Plan of Action for ECD include a provision for coping with environmental challenges. It is hoped that this (need for well coordinated recovery efforts to provide timely relief activities and supplies) could also be deemed a plenary topic for the next regional ECD conference.
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE Contd.

I too believe that the development of our core, characteristic emotional make-up is set down in layers over roughly the first seven years of life. Patterns established here aren't necessarily set in stone; however, emotional learning is most powerful at this time due to a child's exquisite openness and vulnerability. When a child's basic emotional needs are met at each stage, the foundation is laid for emotionally intelligent responses that will be automatic and spontaneous later in life.

THE LEARNING OUTCOMES CURRICULUM GUIDE – a tool for change

All government Ministries and representatives that participated in the development of the EC Learning Outcomes Framework (at the 2004 Barbados workshop) have received complimentary printed and CD-ROM copies of the Learning Outcomes Curriculum Guide. Copies on CD-ROM are available from CCDC for J$500 or USD10 for postal orders (via registered mail).

UNESCO has also supported the conversion of the Guide into an interactive format, soon to be available on CD-ROM.

We have received favourable feedback on its usefulness and suggestions for enhancing its user-friendliness.

Please e-mail ccdcprojects@uwimona.edu.jm with your questions, comments and suggestions.

CCDC anticipates revising the Guide after the completion of the curriculum development component of the Child Focus III Project which seeks to implement the learning outcome model in Grenada and Montserrat.

I'm happy I happened across Grille's article and hope it serves to remind you too that, “By re-activating our childhood feelings and memories, children help us to highlight that which wants healing inside each of us; and thus they furnish us with countless opportunities for personal growth. Our children not only make us better parents/care givers, but also better people, and in that regard they give us as much as we give them. Without knowing it, they help to shape our emotional intelligence as we contribute to theirs.”

To find this article, visit:
http://www.naturalchild.com/robin_grille/
Robin Grille is an Australian psychologist.

CHILD FOCUS II Outputs

Outputs of Child Focus II - Strengthening Early Childhood Development Project (2001-2004) include:

1. EC Standards for Bahamas and Suriname
2. Development of a Finance Model: Guyana and Suriname Case Studies
3. Learning Outcomes Curriculum Guide
4. Development of UWI's on-line Masters in ECD Leadership
5. Parenting Education Workshop Report and “Making a Difference” brochures
6. Regional Networking resources, including development of the Caribbean EC website:
   a. EC Association workshop reports – Trinidad and Belize
   b. Dispute Resolution Workshop – Link# 12
   c. NAEYC’s report on support to CECA
   d. Veni Apwann (Trinidad and Tobago) EC Association Case Study Manual, Appendices and Final Report
   e. EC Association web pages

The Child Focus II Project was supported by the Inter-American Development Bank
The Children’s Issues Coalition launches the second volume of their annual peer-reviewed journal, *Caribbean Childhoods: From Research to Action*. This volume focuses on *Children at Risk*, and comprises papers on developmental risk, the presence of the Jamaican father, disciplinary practices among parents of 6-year olds, and HIV/AIDS affected children, among other areas. The launch will be carried out at the Caribbean Child Development Centre, UWI, Mona, on Wednesday, February 8th.

The Children’s Issues Coalition comprises academics at the University of the West Indies with an interest in children’s issues such as their health, development, behaviour and education. The group aims to encourage collaboration and coordination of research, training and outreach in these areas.

Coalition members edit *Caribbean Childhoods: From Research to Action*. The series provides an avenue for the dissemination of research and experiences in the relevant fields as well as a forum for discussion of issues related to children that are of interest to the readers and contributors. Ian Randle publishes the journal, and the Office of the Principal, Mona, supported Volume 2 through the New Initiatives Project. The first issue focused on Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, while forthcoming issues will address Children and Violence, and Screening in Early Childhood.

Copies of Volume 1 and 2 are available from the Caribbean Child Development Centre at a cost of US$15 plus shipping. To order, call 876 927-1618 or e-mail ccdc@uwimona.edu.jm

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**THE CHILD FOCUS III PROJECT**

...continues to strengthen ECD

**Child Focus III Project** (2005-2006), funded by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), recently commenced activities to support ECD capacity building in CDB member states by undertaking work in three main areas: implementation of the regional ECD learning goals and outcomes framework in the existing ECD curriculum; financing and sustainability of ECD; and implementation of policies and regulatory systems for improving the quality of ECD services. Work is proposed in two countries for each of the three areas. Grenada and Montserrat were selected for the curriculum development component, and the Project Implementation Team is in the process of selecting countries for the other two components.

**WANTED!!**

**Finance and Legal Consultants**

We are seeking eligible candidates to carry out consultancies in:

a) ECD sector financing and sustainability  
b) ECD legislation and standards

All interested candidates should contact and submit their CV to ccdoprojects@uwimon.edu.jm as soon as possible.

The Project outputs will be disseminated for advocacy, training and public education purposes related to ECD and parenting.

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With thanks

This issue of Caribbean Link was made possible with funding from UNESCO, which supports CCDC to encourage and facilitate communication and information sharing between individuals and organizations seeking to improve EC care and development in the Caribbean.