

# Multi-stakeholder engagement to foster urban resilience and reduce risks in Roseau, Dominica

Urban resilience case study: Roseau, Dominica

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**The Risk and Development Context:** In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in 2017, the Government of Dominica, working on its intent to become the first climate resilient country, the Government enacted the Climate Resilience Act, 2018, established the Climate Resilience Execution Agency for Dominica (CREAD), developed the National Resilient Development Strategy (NDRS) and formulated the Climate Resilience and Recovery Plan integrated SDGs and a focus on building the resilience of urban and semi-urban centers. This entailed developing a framework for local authorities to integrate resilience considerations in their planning and implementation including for the City of Roseau.

Impelled by disaster risks, climate impacts and a combination of socio-economic factors, Dominica has seen increasing rural-urban migration over the past decades which is further accelerated by declining fortunes of the banana industry, stressed rural economy, lack of opportunities for educated youth and other factors. In fact, the city of Roseau recorded a 46 percent increase in population between 2001 and 2011. This trend continues today as the restructuring of the national economy moves closer to a service-based economy with better employment opportunities in tourism, wholesale and retail and government services. Increasing urbanization is necessitating investments in housing and construction sectors in urban and semi-urban areas and in improvement of urban services and living conditions. This encompasses the City of Roseau which is experiencing major upliftment with the implementation of the Roseau Enhancement Project (ERP).

**Investments in urban resilience: the Roseau Enhancement Project:** Following the devastation of Hurricane Maria in 2017, there has been a concerted effort to transform the City of Roseau into a more resilient and greener city and one of the priority interventions has been identified to be the Roseau Revitalization/Enhancement Project which is intended to revitalize the city and bring meaningful changes to the marginalized segments of the society. Some of the key components of the Roseau Enhancement Project related to improvement of roads, drains and sidewalks; green spaces to promote physical activities, social interaction, recreation and incorporate resilience mechanism; maintain historic architecture of the city; urban climate risk management and public convenience building to address multiple dimensions of resilience building; resilient infrastructure to include underground exposure for utilities; improvement to resilient housing stock particularly for vulnerable families and other actions.

**Challenges and limitations:** Despite the ambitious strategy and concerted approach, there are quite a few constraints and limitations which require attention to move towards securing a resilient future for Roseau. The absence of a shared city resilience framework or plan and the lack of a structured platform to bring different sectors and stakeholders together to deliberate upon and prioritize resilience building action was among one of the first notable gaps. Reflecting citizens' needs and concerns and taking a holistic approach further impeded the efforts. Although the key agencies and stakeholders for city resilience and risk management were identified, the capacity gaps at institutional and stakeholder level remain critical for meaningful resilience building interventions. Building the capacity of the Roseau City Council on matters relating to governance, resilience, environmental practices, resource mobilization and community engagement and empowerment.

**The approach:** The rapid pace of urbanization and socio-economic development is not devoid of attendant risks due to high exposure and vulnerability to natural hazards and climate impacts. The City of Roseau is located in a valley, a flood plain surrounded by mountains and hills while also being susceptible to other typologies of risks like earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions and more frequent fire hazard. With the Roseau River flowing through the city, Roseau has seen many floods over the years with the worst one occurring during Hurricane Maria when the city was flooded with up to six feet of water from the Roseau River and the Caribbean Sea leading to loss of lives, property damage and destruction and other socio-economic losses. It necessitated a build back better drive to build resilience in the city as well as nationally. However, the incidents of fire have increased manifold over the years with city expansion and its emergence as a center of financial and commercial activity.

Given this high vulnerability, the Roseau City Council began prioritizing urban risk management and resilience and identified a set of activities to advance the same viz. formulation of a City Resilience Plan, constitution of a City Resilience Platform to ensure extensive stakeholder engagement and participation, prepare a comprehensive fire hazard mapping and risk reduction program and the need to strengthen systems and protocols for Early Warning-Early Action for effective emergency management.

Led by the Roseau City Council, the engagement of diverse set of sectors and stakeholders was facilitated through the City Resilience Platform which ensured wide-ranging consultations through a cross-sectoral working group to help develop the City Resilience Plan in a participatory manner. This was complemented with public announcements and outreach through the media.

With a view to strengthen the emergency and risk management capacity of the Roseau city, the Fire Hazard Mapping was undertaken including identifying the key triggers for the fire incidents. This culminated in the development of the Fire Risk Management Plan and conduct of a simulation drill with participation of citizens and private sector entities. The rising incidence of fire incidents and extensive loss of property and economic assets thereby, the efforts to widen the risk horizon as part of comprehensive risk and emergency management efforts of the city have helped imbue an all-hazard and resilience building orientation in the city stakeholders and functionaries. Raising awareness among common people through production and dissemination of fire hazard maps identifying vulnerable areas as well as prevention, preparedness and immediate response actions.

Similarly, strengthening early warning-early action related systems and protocols, the city flood hazard mapping has been done on the GIS platform complemented by development of SOPs to advance an all-hazard emergency management approach in the City EOC.

The City of Roseau has embarked on a journey towards resilience building through mutually complementary action across DRR, climate adaptation, solid waste management, greening city spaces while also ensuring high quality of life for the citizens while creating avenues for all sectors and stakeholders to contribute to the resilience building journey.