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# Study on Shock-Responsive Social Protection in Latin America and the Caribbean

Dominica case study

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## Preface

This report is part of an assignment commissioned by the World Food Programme (WFP) from Oxford Policy Management (OPM, [www.opml.co.uk](http://www.opml.co.uk)). The project manager is Rodolfo Beazley. Please contact Rodolfo for comments or additional information, [Rodolfo.Beazley@opml.co.uk](mailto:Rodolfo.Beazley@opml.co.uk), or from WFP Giulia Baldi, Regional Policy and Programme Officer, [giulia.baldi@wfp.org](mailto:giulia.baldi@wfp.org) or Benjamin de Barros, Head of Programme WFP Barbados (office for Caribbean Emergency Preparedness & Response), [Benjamin.debarros@wfp.org](mailto:Benjamin.debarros@wfp.org)

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## Executive summary

### Introduction

There is increasing global recognition of the promising linkages between social protection and disaster risk management (DRM) in responding to and mitigating shocks and in contributing to strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus. In the case of the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region, relatively advanced and large-scale social protection systems seem to provide a unique opportunity to support emergency response. However, social protection systems can involve conflicting objectives, target populations, and operational processes when compared to humanitarian interventions. This can impede their ability to play a role in accommodating additional demand for assistance at the time of an emergency.

It is in this context that the World Food Programme (WFP) has joined forces with Oxford Policy Management (OPM) to conduct a **Study on Shock-Responsive Social Protection in LAC**. The objective of this study is **to generate evidence and inform practice for improved emergency preparedness and response in LAC, linked to more flexible national social protection systems**. The main research question for the study is: **‘What factors enable social protection systems to be more responsive to shocks?’** The study includes a literature review of experiences in the region (Beazley *et al.*, 2016), seven country case studies (Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Peru, Dominican Republic, and Dominica) and a synthesis report which sets out the main findings of the study and recommendations to strengthen the role of social protection in shock response in LAC<sup>1</sup>. The box below briefly summarises the theoretical framework.

The Commonwealth of Dominica is a small island country in the eastern Caribbean, with a population of around 71,000 people<sup>2</sup> according to the census 2011, although estimates following Hurricane Maria suggest out-migration has reduced this figure considerably. It is highly exposed to natural disasters, primarily tropical storms and hurricanes, but also floods, volcanoes and landslides, among other shocks (Government of Dominica, 2014 and ACAPS, 2017). This report studies the factors that can enable Dominica’s social protection system to be more responsive to future shocks and documents on-going experiences and practices in this area. In addition, this study complements the stocktaking exercise conducted after the response to Hurricane Maria by the government, WFP and UNICEF (Government of Dominica *et al.*, 2018) and the Return on Investment (ROI) study conducted by WFP (WFP, *forthcoming*)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> All these reports and other material about shock-responsive social protection in LAC are available in: <https://www.wfp.org/content/shock-responsive-social-protection-latin-america-and-caribbean> <http://es.wfp.org/Estudio-sobre-Proteccion-Social-Reactiva-ante-Emergencias-en-América-Latina-y-el-Caribe> <https://www.opml.co.uk/projects/study-shock-responsive-social-protection-latin-america-and-caribbean>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.dominica.gov.dm/cms/files/2011\\_census\\_report.pdf](http://www.dominica.gov.dm/cms/files/2011_census_report.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The concept of ROI is widely used in finance to compare the gains obtained from an investment (returns) to the costs of the same investment, over the course of its life span. In the case of the response to Hurricane

## Shock-responsive social protection: theoretical framework

Our theoretical framework guides an assessment of the **preparedness** and **responsiveness** of social protection systems to covariate shocks that represent threats to the well-being, health, food security, nutrition, and safety of the population.

### System preparedness

In this study we assess the level of preparedness of the social protection system based on three programme design and implementation aspects, which could be ‘tweaked’ in advance of a disaster to ensure timely and effective response:

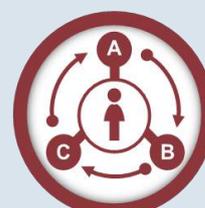
1. **targeting system and data management** – the capacity of the system to identify and select people affected by shocks;
2. **delivery mechanism** – the capacity to transfer cash or in-kind support; and
3. **coordination and financing** – the capacity to align resources and actors for an integrated response.



Targeting system and data management



Delivery mechanism



Coordination & financing

### System response

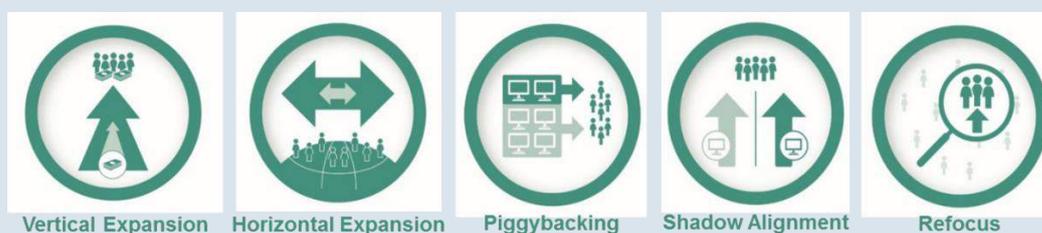
When policymakers consider the use of a social protection system to address emergency needs, there are a number of strategies that they may employ to scale up the overall level of support that the system provides to vulnerable people:

1. **vertical expansion**: increasing the benefit value or duration of an existing programme or system;
2. **horizontal expansion**: adding new beneficiaries to an existing programme or system;
3. **piggybacking**: a response in which humanitarian actors or governments use part of the administrative capacity of the national social protection system to channel their support;
4. **shadow alignment**: developing a parallel humanitarian system that is aligned as well as possible with a current or possible future social protection programme; and

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Maria, investments are inputs by donors, governments, and humanitarian actors into emergency preparedness initiatives. Returns are quantitative savings and qualitative improvements in subsequent emergency responses due to an investment in emergency preparedness.

5. **refocusing**: adjusting the social protection system to refocus assistance on those groups most vulnerable to shocks.



Sources: OPM (2015) and Beazley *et al.* (2016).

## Social protection in Dominica

Dominica has a large and increasing number of social protection programmes. According to the Government of Dominica (2017b) 'the Government of Dominica offers over thirty safety net programmes, almost doubling what was available prior to 2003. These programmes range from school feeding programme, and in-kind assistance, to fee waivers, a pilot national health insurance for poor working mothers, parametric changes to the social security, housing assistance, active labour market programs, and cash-based transfers.' The following are the main programmes covered in this study:

- The Public Assistance Programme (PAP) is the main income support programme in Dominica. PAP provides unconditional cash support to slightly more than 2,000 households, with transfers that go from East Caribbean dollar (EC\$) 150 to EC\$375<sup>4</sup> (World Bank, 2017).
- The universal Social Pension is a non-contributory cash transfer given to people of 70 years of age and older. The estimated number of beneficiaries in 2015/2016 was 1,560 (World Bank, 2017). The value of the transfer is EC\$300 per month (approximately US\$ 110).
- The School Feeding Programme gives meals to all children attending the participating schools. The programme covers 37 primary schools (out of 47 in the country) and three secondary schools (out of eight), and gives meals to 1,925 children (Government of Dominica, 2017b).
- The National Employment Programme (NEP) offers three types of support: internships, community employment, and education mentorship. According to World Bank (2017) the number of beneficiaries in 2016 was: 1,005 in the internship component, 780 in the community employment, and 80 in the education mentorship component.
- Dominica's Social Security (DSS) provides old-age pensions, and disability, survivors, health, sickness, maternity, and employment injury benefits. In 2015, 52% of the labour force contributed to the system. It has been estimated that nearly 58% of Dominica's elderly population receive a pension – 45% from DSS (World Bank, 2017). There are no unemployment benefits or child allowances within DSS.

Dominica's social assistance spending is similar to the average of OECS countries, as is the overall coverage and generosity of its benefits. However, the system is very

<sup>4</sup> From approximately US\$ 55 to US\$ 138.

fragmented, with a large number of programmes playing similar functions and under different ministries. Coordination and information sharing is limited, which is likely to lead to a duplication of efforts. Key programmes like PAP lack key management tools, including a manual of operations and a management information system. Programme rules and procedures are unclear, registries are still paper-based and information is not up to date.

## Targeting system and data management

The targeting of PAP, as well as of other social assistance programmes in the country, is based on recommendations by Members of Parliament, Village Councils, local leaders, or others, which are followed by subjective assessments carried out by the field officers of the SWD of MHSS. PAP has no documented criteria for eligibility and no clear processes for beneficiary selection. Moreover, the needs assessments conducted by SWD field officers for selecting PAP beneficiaries are subjective and not sustained by clear procedures and the number of field officers in SWD is inadequate for conducting such assessments throughout the country, in addition to other responsibilities that they have (World Bank, 2017). Furthermore, PAP also does not have protocols and criteria for programme graduation: once a beneficiary joins the programme they remain in it until another subjective welfare assessment is carried out by the SWD's field officers.

There is a high level of awareness in the country about the challenges that the lack of a data management system imposes on the social protection sector. Most government officials interviewed for this research highlighted two major obstacles to social protection and shock-responsive social protection: the lack of a data management system and the lack of a unique citizen identifier. As opposed to most LAC countries, Dominica's flagship cash transfer programme, PAP, does not have a management information system. However, there is a strong emphasis placed on the local knowledge of the Village Councils and there are solid links between local and central authorities throughout much of the country.

## Delivery mechanism

Although electronic payment systems are widely used to transfer social protection benefits in LAC and elsewhere, in Dominica the majority of social assistance cash transfers are delivered manually. The overall perception is that PAP payments are made on time.

The School Feeding Programme has procurement and delivery mechanisms that are well established (World Bank, 2017). Food is purchased, stored, and delivered to schools by the Ministry of Education at the beginning and in the middle of each term.

Social security transfers, given their contributory nature and the fact that they reach people (formerly) employed in the formal sector, and NEP benefit payments, which are linked to a job or an internship, are made mostly through bank accounts.

## Coordination and financing

The most recent DRM plan was developed in 2001 and as a result is outdated. This plan does not establish any role for social protection programmes in preparedness and response to emergencies.

Although the plan establishes that the Office of Disaster Management (ODM) is in charge of the coordination of DRM activities, its capacity is very limited: there are only two officers and one consultant.

In relation to financing, there are no mechanisms in place to fund responses through social protection. Beyond social protection, the main mechanisms in place for disaster risk financing are:

- **budgetary instruments:** ex-ante allocations for DRM and ex-post budget reallocations for relief and recovery; and
- **insurance:** Dominica is a member of the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF), which uses parametric insurance to provide quick-disbursing and short-term liquidity for financing responses and recovery to 16 countries in the Caribbean and Central America exposed to major earthquakes, heavy rainfall, and hurricanes. For example, in 2017 Dominica received approximately US\$19 million following Hurricane Maria and in 2015 US\$ 2.4 million following the Tropical Storm Erika<sup>5</sup>.

## The social protection response to Hurricane Maria

Hurricane Maria made landfall in Dominica on 18 September 2017, with catastrophic effects. Hurricane Maria was one of the most rapidly intensifying storms in recent history, intensifying to a Category 5 hurricane roughly 24 hours after being upgraded from a tropical storm (Government of Dominica, 2017a). Maria left 31 people dead, 37 missing, 65,000 people, around 80% of the population, directly affected and more than 90% of roofs damaged or destroyed, while power and water supplies were disrupted and entire crops destroyed (ACAPS, 2018).

The first relief activities carried out by government and the international community included the provision of in-kind support (food, water, and non-food supplies). From mid-October, while the markets were showing a gradual revival, the Government of Dominica— with support from WFP and UNICEF - started planning the transition to a cash-based approach.

In relation to the social protection response, the government of Dominica, WFP, and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) supported the government to launch the emergency cash transfer (ECT) programme, providing unconditional cash transfers to almost 25,000 people (including 6,000 children). The ECT relied on PAP’s mechanisms to deliver the cash-based transfers. It was the first time that a social protection

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<sup>5</sup> [www.ccrif.org/news/ccrif-make-payout-dominica-us19-million-following-passage-hurricane-maria](http://www.ccrif.org/news/ccrif-make-payout-dominica-us19-million-following-passage-hurricane-maria)  
[www.ccrif.org/news/ccrif-pays-government-dominica-ec65-million-under-its-excess-rainfall-programme-following](http://www.ccrif.org/news/ccrif-pays-government-dominica-ec65-million-under-its-excess-rainfall-programme-following)

programme was expanded in response to a disaster in Dominica. This experience has been widely assessed as being successful. The ECT response implied the following:

- The temporary **vertical expansion** of PAP, meaning that all the households enrolled in PAP automatically qualified for the ECT. This meant that those persons already enrolled in PAP received an additional sum from the ECT.
- The temporary **horizontal expansion** of PAP to target those households who were not enrolled in the programme but who were severely affected by the disaster. Targeting criteria were established through a consultative process involving Government entities (local governments, social welfare officers, and emergency committees), WFP and UNICEF. The targeting criteria comprised demographic indicators generally associated with vulnerability, together with disaster-related indicators.

The transfer value of the ECT was of US\$90 per household per month, with a top-up of US\$50 per child up to three children, in addition to PAP benefits for those in the programme. ECT beneficiaries were meant to receive three monthly payments. ECT transfers were entirely funded by WFP and UNICEF. Meanwhile, the Government of Dominica continued to provide PAP beneficiaries with their regular entitlements. ECT grants were distributed to the beneficiaries using the existing PAP delivery mechanisms, largely based on manual payments through Village Councils.

PAP beneficiaries received the first ECT payment in December. Due to the timely process required to identify and then approve non-PAP beneficiaries, the payments to non-PAP recipients had to be split into two groups, one receiving the first transfer in January and transfers 2 and 3 in March, while the other received the three transfers at the same time in March.

The delays in the provision of ECT grants to non-PAP beneficiaries were compounded by a lack of ex-ante preparedness. The use of PAP to channel the support was envisaged only after the shock, and therefore a methodology for identifying the affected households had to be designed during the aftermath and coordination between actors needed to be established.

## **Toward a more shock-responsive social protection system**

In relation to the opportunities for making the social protection system more responsive, two different realities coincide in Dominica. On the one hand, the social protection system is still in a process of development. Although there is a wide range of programmes and services in the country, there are three main challenges: the high level of fragmentation within the social protection sector, the limited capacity of ministries and programmes, and the absence of key operational instruments like manuals of operations and management information systems. This is in addition to the lack of a unique citizen identifier, which is a challenge that exceeds the social protection sector. On the other hand, the experience of the ECT shows that despite the weaknesses and limitations, Dominica's social protection capacity, and in particular PAP's, can be used to provide effective large-scale cash assistance after a shock.

In this context, we propose the following overarching recommendations, as well as the more operational ones, presented in the table below:

1. **Strengthening the social protection system.** A number of recent studies have provided concrete recommendations for improving the social protection

system, for example World Bank (2017), and therefore this is not something that we cover here in detail. However, there are two crucial aspects worth highlighting: the revision of programme objectives, rules and procedures leading to the development of **manuals of operations**, and the creation of **management information systems**. The Government of Dominica is already embarking on these two initiatives for PAP, with the support of UNICEF and WFP.

2. **Developing a new DRM plan and establishing the role of social protection in emergency preparedness and response.** The national DRM has not been updated since 2001. It is important to revise the plan in light of the current institutional arrangements and the national and global thinking on DRM. This would be the appropriate platform for defining the role that social protection should play in emergency preparedness and response, if any.

**Based on the revised DRM plan, ministries and programmes in the social protection sector would need to develop protocols and capacity to perform the DRM activities entrusted to them.** The ongoing work on the development of PAP's manual of operations and management information systems offers an opportunity to embed DRM in the programme's processes.

Process	Recommendations
<b>Targeting system and data management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop protocols for vertical and horizontal expansions or a piggybacking response – for PAP and potentially for the Social Pension programme as well</li> <li>• Develop a management information system for PAP and other programmes</li> <li>• Develop data-sharing and data security agreements and protocols</li> <li>• Train the personnel, at the central and local level, who will be involved in the response</li> <li>• Define protocols and mechanisms for post-disaster data collection and provide adequate training and resources</li> <li>• Establish communication strategies for the targeting process in the case of an emergency</li> </ul>
<b>Delivery mechanism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include protocols and accountability mechanisms in PAP’s manual of operations to transfer emergency payments</li> <li>• Provide adequate training to Village Councils</li> </ul>
<b>Coordination and financing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider pre-defining the use of part of CCRIF payments for social protection responses</li> <li>• Consider exploring alternative financing mechanisms like contingency credits and agreements with international organisations</li> <li>• Strengthen the capacity of ODM and its coordination with other responders</li> <li>• Strengthen the coordination with international agencies like Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and the UN, based on more long-term relationships (exceeding the lifespan of a crisis)</li> <li>• Establish adequate coordination bodies in the new DRM plan</li> </ul>

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## List of abbreviations

BSCs	Beneficiary Selection Committees
CCRIF	Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility
CDM	comprehensive disaster management
DRM	Disaster risk management
DSS	Dominica's Social Security
EC\$	East Caribbean dollar
ECLAC	UN Economic Commission for LAC
ECT	emergency cash transfer
GDP	Gross domestic product
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MBIS	Master Beneficiary Information System
MHSS	Ministry of Health and Social Services
MSSFGA	Ministry of Social Services, Family and Gender Affairs
NEP	National Employment Programme
NEPO	National Emergency Planning Organisation
ODM	Office of Disaster Management
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
PMT	Proxy means test
ROI	Return on investment
SWD	Social Welfare Department
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WFP	World Food Programme

# 1 Introduction

There is increasing global recognition of the promising linkages between social protection and DRM in responding to and mitigating shocks and in contributing to strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus. This recognition has been clearly expressed, for example, in the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit by SPIAC-B's<sup>6</sup> commitment to 'support the further expansion and strengthening of social protection systems to continue to address chronic vulnerabilities and to scale up the utilisation of social protection as a means of responding to shocks and protracted crises.' Along the same lines, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, approved by the UN in September 2015, clearly points toward the creation of social protection systems that allow all people to enjoy a basic standard of living.

In a region in which the frequency of disasters has increased by 3.6 times in half a century (UN Economic Commission for LAC (ECLAC), 2015), reasonably advanced social protection systems and large-scale safety nets would seem to provide a unique opportunity to support shock response. However, social protection systems can involve conflicting objectives, target populations and operational processes when compared with humanitarian interventions. This can impede their ability to play a role in accommodating additional demand for assistance at the time of an emergency.

It is in this context that WFP has joined forces with OPM to conduct a **Study on Shock-Responsive Social Protection in LAC**. The objective of this study is to **generate evidence and inform practice for improved emergency preparedness and response in LAC, linked to more flexible national social protection systems**. The main research question for the study is: **'What factors enable social protection systems to be more responsive to shocks?'** The study includes a literature review of experiences in the region (Beazley *et al.*, 2016), seven country case studies (Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Peru, Dominican Republic, and Dominica) and a synthesis report with the main findings of the study and recommendations to strengthen the role of social protection in shock response in LAC.

The **Commonwealth of Dominica** is a small island country in the eastern Caribbean, with a population of around 71,000 people<sup>7</sup> according to the census 2011. It is highly exposed to natural disasters, primarily tropical storms and hurricanes, but also floods, volcanoes and landslides, among other shocks (Government of Dominica, 2014, and ACAPS, 2017). This report studies the factors that can enable Dominica's social protection system to be more responsive to future shocks and documents on-going experiences and practices in this area. In addition, this study complements the

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<sup>6</sup> The Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) is an inter-agency coordination mechanism to enhance global coordination and advocacy on social protection issues and to coordinate international cooperation in country demand-driven actions. SPIAC's board is chaired by the World Bank and the International Labour Organization and includes representatives of the Asian Development Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Monetary Fund, International Social Security Association, UN Food and Agriculture Organization, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UN Human Settlements Programme, UNICEF, UN Women, World Health Organization, WFP, and others.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.dominica.gov.dm/cms/files/2011\\_census\\_report.pdf](http://www.dominica.gov.dm/cms/files/2011_census_report.pdf)

stocktaking exercise conducted after the response to Hurricane Maria by the government, WFP and UNICEF (Government of Dominica *et al.*, 2018) and the Return on Investment (ROI) study conducted by WFP (WFP, *forthcoming*)<sup>8</sup>.

Following this short introduction, the next section in this case study briefly frames the context in terms of poverty and vulnerability in Dominica. Section 3 presents the theoretical framework employed and the methodology used, while Section 4 studies the social protection system, with a focus on the non-contributory programmes. Section 5 briefly describes the emergency caused by Hurricane Maria in 2017, and Section 6 includes recommendations for a social protection system that is more responsive to emergencies. Finally, Section 7 presents the conclusions of the case study.

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<sup>8</sup> The concept of ROI is widely used in finance to compare the gains obtained from an investment (returns) to the costs of the same investment, over the course of its life span. In the case of the response to Hurricane Maria, investments are inputs by donors, governments, and humanitarian actors into emergency preparedness initiatives. Returns are quantitative savings and qualitative improvements in subsequent emergency responses due to an investment in emergency preparedness.

## 2 Poverty and vulnerability in Dominica

Dominica is a mountainous island that is highly exposed to natural shocks, ranging from tropical storms and hurricanes to volcanoes and landslides, among other disasters (Government of Dominica, 2014, and ACAPS, 2017). Dominica is considered the most geologically active island in the Caribbean (World Bank, ND); it has eight active volcanoes. Due to the severe topography of the island and the heavy rainfall, landslides and floods are fairly recurrent. Steep cliffs present a constant threat to roads and villages from rock falls and debris slides.

Of these different disasters, hurricanes and storms have had the largest severe effects in recent years. Most of Dominica's population and infrastructure is located on the coast, making them particularly vulnerable to strong winds and high seas (ACAPS, 2017). Although hurricanes and tropical storms affect Dominica almost every year, the following are the most recent catastrophic shocks.

- On 18 September 2017, **Hurricane Maria** made landfall on the southwest coast of Dominica, with catastrophic effects. Hurricane Maria was one of the most rapidly intensifying storms in recent history, intensifying to a Category 5 hurricane roughly 24 hours after being upgraded from a tropical storm (Government of Dominica, 2017a). As the hurricane passed over the centre of the island, Dominica was exposed to extraordinary winds, together with intense rainfall, which provoked flash floods and landslides. Maria left 31 people dead, 37 missing, 65,000 people, around 80% of the population, directly affected and more than 90% of roofs damaged or destroyed, while power and water supplies were disrupted and entire crops destroyed (ACAPS, 2018). The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) concluded that Hurricane Maria resulted in total damages of EC\$2.51 billion (US\$931 million) and losses of EC\$1.03 billion (US\$382 million), which amounts to 226% of the country's 2016 gross domestic product (GDP) (Government of Dominica, 2017a).
- In August 2015, Dominica experienced heavy rainfall caused by **Tropical Storm Erika**. 'The mountainous terrain and excessive moisture led to rainfall accumulation of up to 850mm in less than twelve hours. Grounds were saturated from previous rains, causing river basins to overflow and triggering floods that killed up to 30 people. Accompanying mudslides dammed rivers and destroyed homes, leaving thousands displaced. The island suffered severe infrastructural damage, primarily transportation, housing and agriculture related, with the worst damage in the south and southeast parts of Dominica' (ACAPS, 2017). Damage and losses were estimated at US\$483 million, equivalent to 90% of Dominica's GDP.

There is a lack of up-to-date data about the level of poverty in Dominica. According to the World Bank (2017), the most recent figures indicate that 28.8% and 3.1% of the population were in poverty and extreme poverty, respectively, in 2008/09. The World Bank reported that the extreme poverty rate was the second highest in the OECS<sup>9</sup>,

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<sup>9</sup> The OECS is a 10-member grouping of islands spread across the eastern Caribbean. Together, they form a near-continuous archipelago across the eastern reaches of the Caribbean Sea. They comprise the Leeward Islands: Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis, Montserrat, Anguilla, and the British Virgin Islands; and the Windward Islands: Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Grenada and Martinique. [www.oecs.org/](http://www.oecs.org/)

after Antigua and Barbuda, and that the poverty level was in the middle range of these countries.

However, recent shocks like Hurricane Maria and storm Erika are likely to have led to increasing levels of poverty and extreme poverty in the country. For example, it has been calculated that among the non-salaried economically active population 3.1 million work days were lost due to Hurricane Maria (Government of Dominica, 2017a). 'The respective loss in work days and income resulting from the Hurricane, is likely to result in a 25 percent decline in consumption, which could translate into an increased poverty rate of 36.2 percent (from 28.8% as reported in 2008/09)' (Government of Dominica, 2017a).

The sectors that provide most of the jobs in the country, agriculture and tourism, are highly vulnerable to natural disasters. 'Tourism alone represents 60% of total exports of goods and services. [...] Moreover, as a small economy, Dominica is highly dependent on imports particularly fuel and food imports, which represented 11% and 15% of total imports of goods and services in 2015, respectively' (World Bank, 2017).

Climate change could lead to higher risk of natural disasters in the future (ACAPS, 2017). 'Changes in sea surface temperature as a result of climate variability could increase the intensity of cyclones and heighten storm surges, which in turn will cause more damaging flood conditions in coastal zones and low-lying areas' (World Bank, ND).

Finally, Dominica is also vulnerable to global economic shocks. The reduction in the influx of tourists and the change in world prices of imported goods, in particular food and fuel, can strongly affect the local economy and the poor. Moreover, it is estimated that the size of the Dominican diaspora is more than double the country's existing population. The diaspora has contributed significantly to poverty alleviation and to growth through remittances, by providing food and other essentials to relatives, and through investments in real estate (World Bank, 2017). Global economic shocks or crises in countries with Dominican migrants can reduce the inflow of remittances and investments.

## 3 Research methodology

In this section, we present a framework that helps us to understand the two key dimensions of a shock-responsive social protection scheme: system preparedness and responsiveness. We also present the overarching research questions and briefly describe the tools and fieldwork.

### 3.1 Theoretical framework

#### 3.1.1 System preparedness

In this study, we analyse the level of preparedness of the social protection system based on three aspects that are essential for a prompt and effective response: **targeting system and data management**, **delivery mechanism**, and **coordination and financing**. Below we describe each of these in turn. Although these are not the only three processes involved in effective preparedness, both international experience and the relevant literature highlight how crucial they are (Bastagli, 2004; OPM, 2016).

**Figure 1: Typology of system preparedness for shock-responsive social protection**



Source: Beazley *et al.* (2016).

#### Targeting system and data management

Social protection programmes tend to rely on a variety of targeting mechanisms, including demographic, geographic, and poverty targeting. Many of these mechanisms are designed to detect well-established conditions – for example, chronic poverty or belonging to a certain age group – and rely on the use of administrative registries and household surveys. Consequently, they are not conceived as tools that can be used to detect sudden changes to well-being and livelihoods.

#### Delivery mechanism

Rapid delivery of either cash or in-kind benefits is crucial for ensuring the provision of effective support. During emergencies, the capacity to deliver this assistance faces challenges due to the urgency of the situation, the constraints imposed by the particular shock (such as infrastructure collapse), and the coordination of the different actors (Bastagli, 2014).

Delivery mechanisms implemented by social protection schemes typically include manual transfers, delivery through a banking system, mobile money, and other types of e-payments. Some of these mechanisms – e-payments, for example – have the potential to be rapidly scaled up during emergencies.

### Coordination and financing

Preparedness should also include a significant level of planning and coordination among the actors involved in emergency response. This includes not only actors in the social protection field but also, and mainly, those working in DRM and humanitarian aid. This involves international, national, and subnational levels, and government and non-government organisations.

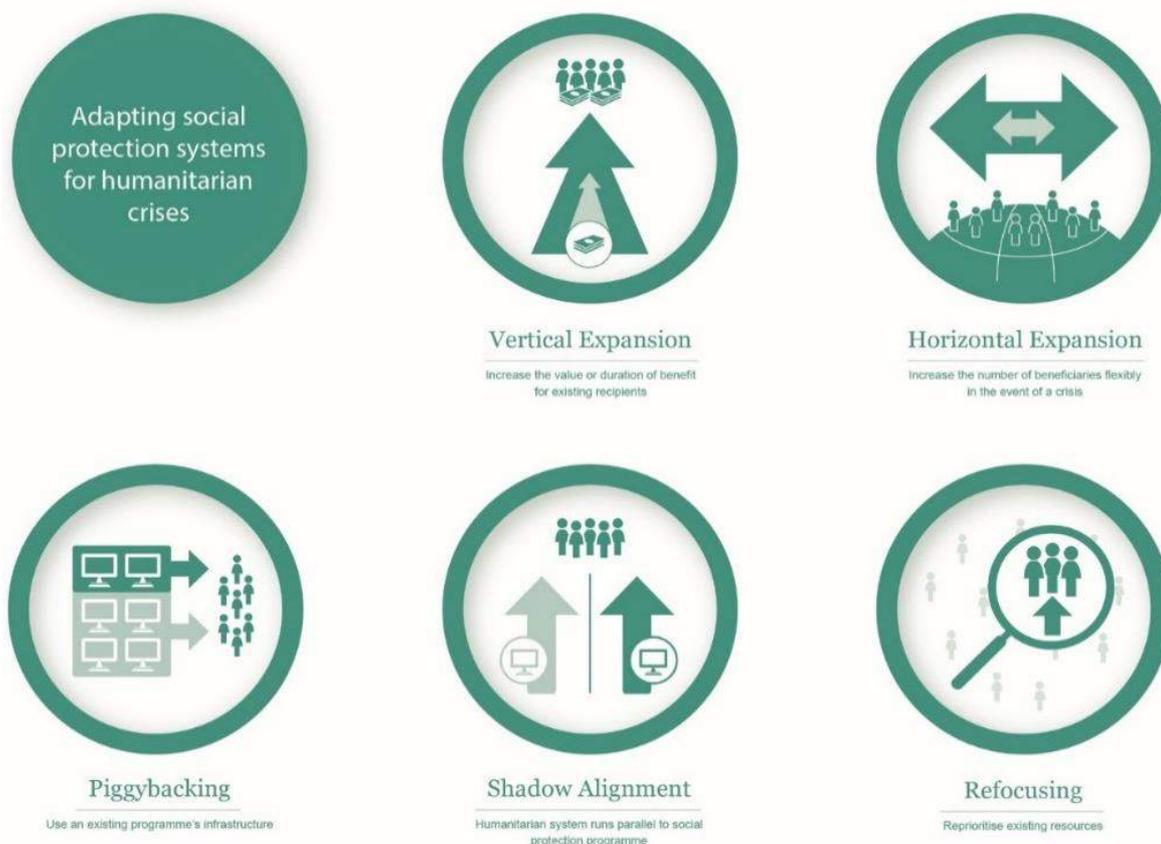
However, the challenge of achieving coordination among these different actors should not be underestimated. The social protection and DRM sectors not only have different objectives and target populations (with some areas of intersection, though not all areas intersect) and different methodologies and traditions, but, most importantly, they also involve different actors and institutional interests.

### 3.1.2 System response

When policymakers consider the use of a social protection system to address emergency needs, there are a number of strategies that they may employ to scale up the overall level of support that the system provides to vulnerable people. Based on OPM (2015) we tentatively consider five main types of scale-up (which can be used in combination):

1. **Vertical expansion:** increasing the benefit value or duration of an existing programme or system:
  - i. adjustment of transfer amounts/values; and
  - ii. introduction of extraordinary payments or transfers.
2. **Horizontal expansion:** adding new recipients to an existing programme or system:
  - i. extension of the geographical coverage of an existing programme or system;
  - ii. extraordinary enrolment campaign;
  - iii. modifications of eligibility criteria; and
  - iv. relaxation of requirements/conditionalities to facilitate greater participation.
3. **Piggybacking:** a response in which humanitarian actors use part of the administrative framework of the national social protection system to channel their assistance.
4. **Shadow alignment:** developing a parallel humanitarian system that is aligned as well as possible with the current or possible future national social protection programme.
5. **Refocusing:** adjusting the social protection system to refocus assistance on the groups that are most vulnerable to the shock.

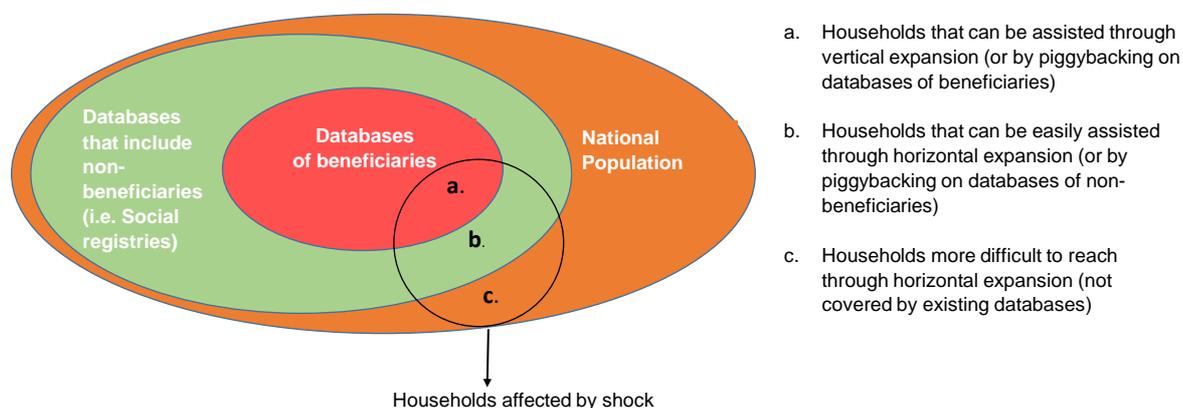
**Figure 2: Typology of shock-responsive social protection**



Source: OPM (2015).

The figure below shows the targeting challenge that systems face when they are expanded vertically or horizontally, or when they allow responses to ‘piggyback’ on them. First, **the basis of the targeting challenge is the fact that the households affected by the shocks are not necessarily beneficiaries of existing social protection programmes, or included in the social registry or other registries.** Consequently, despite having strong targeting programmes and systems, horizontal expansion would be necessary in any case. However, the greater the coverage of programmes and registries, and the better the quality of the data they contain, the easier it will be to respond. In principle, if beneficiaries of social protection programmes could be easily reached with vertical expansion, and non-beneficiaries whose information is in the registries could be easily reached with horizontal expansion, then the challenge would be reaching those affected households that do not belong to either of these two categories.

**Figure 3: Targeting challenge in the expansion of a responsive social protection**



Source: Adapted from OPM (2015) and Barca (2017).

### 3.2 Overarching research questions

The main research question for the study is: **what factors enable social protection systems to be more responsive to shocks?** With this in mind, we have developed a number of overarching questions to guide the analysis:

- What relevant national and local laws, regulations, and policies exist in relation to shock-responsive social protection?
- What priorities does the national social protection strategy signal – for example, in addressing poverty, vulnerability, resilience, etc.? Does it offer a role for shock response?
- What targeting mechanisms are used by the largest social protection programmes? How are recipients identified? How frequently? Does a national database exist? Is it integrated with other databases?
- How are the benefits of the main social protection programmes delivered (both cash and in-kind)?
- What design and implementation features of the social protection system have elements of flexibility and adaptability to facilitate rapid and adequate shock response?
- What is the evidence of the effectiveness – in terms of the promptness and adequacy (for example, coverage and transfer levels) – of social protection support in the event of each of the major shocks identified?
- Has there been any recent experience of coordination between, or integration of, social protection and DRM policies?

- Is there space for dialogue and collaboration between these two sectors? How could this dialogue be promoted?

### 3.3 Research tools and fieldwork

The research consisted of three phases: a literature review, fieldwork, and analysis. In relation to the first phase, we conducted a thorough review of legislation, policy plans and strategies, and programme reviews, assessments and evaluations available. Our theoretical framework and the research questions presented above guided the review.

Fieldwork was conducted from 27 May to 1 June 2018. The research was conducted by Rodolfo Beazley (OPM) – research lead – and Benjamin de Barros (WFP). The research was conducted in Roseau, Canefield, and Soufriere. The research tools used were as follows:

- **Key informant interviews:** We interviewed key informants from the MHSS; Ministry of Ecclesiastical, Family and Gender Affairs; Eastern Caribbean Central Bank; Ministry of Planning and Economic Development; Minister of Information, Science, Telecommunications and Technology (MISTT); School Feeding Programme of the Ministry of Education; ODM; Ministry of Agriculture; NEP; local government; SWD; and cooperation organisations such as UNDP, International Organization for Migration, International Federation of Red Cross, UNICEF, CDEMA, and the World Bank. These interviews serve to triangulate the findings from other data sources. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, supplemented by selected tools.
- **Canefield and Soufriere case studies:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Canefield and Soufriere with households affected by Hurricane Maria and with beneficiaries of social protection programmes. Members of the Village Councils were also interviewed.

The list of key informants who were interviewed can be found in Annex A.

The third phase of the research consisted of analysing the data collected and the findings of the literature review and answering the research questions. Preliminary results were shared with WFP. This report, which has been peer reviewed, is the output of this research.

## 4 Social protection in Dominica

Dominica has a large and increasing number of social protection programmes. According to the Government of Dominica (2017b) ‘the Government of Dominica offers over thirty safety net programmes, almost doubling what was available prior to 2003. These programmes range from school feeding programme, and in-kind assistance, to fee waivers, a pilot national health insurance for poor working mothers, parametric changes to the social security, housing assistance, active labour market programs, and cash-based transfers.’

In the sections below, we describe the main social protection programmes and their performance. We focus on social assistance schemes (although we briefly cover social security as well), and on the programmes with the highest coverage.

### 4.1 Main social protection programmes

In this study we focus on the programmes summarised in Table 1, which are the ones with characteristics that could be and have been leveraged in emergency responses. A comprehensive assessment of Dominica’s social protection system can be found in World Bank 2017.

**Table 1: Main non-contributory transfer programmes**

Programme	Implementing agency	Type of scheme	Target population	Targeting
<b>PAP</b>	SWD–MHSS	Unconditional cash transfer	Extreme poor	Needs assessment
<b>Social Pension</b>	Ministry of Finance	Unconditional cash transfer	People aged 70+	Universal
<b>School Feeding</b>	Ministry of Education	In-kind transfer	Children in selected public schools	Selected schools
<b>NEP</b>	Ministry of Trade, Energy and Employment	Employment programme	People between 18 and 35 years of age	Self-targeting
<b>DSS</b>	DSS	Social insurance	Contributory	Contributory

The PAP is the main income support programme in Dominica. It is implemented by the SWD, formerly within the Ministry of Social Services, Family and Gender Affairs, and since April 2018 within MoHSS. PAP provides unconditional cash support to slightly more than 2,000 households, with transfers that range from EC\$150 to EC\$375<sup>10</sup> (World Bank, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> From approximately US\$ 55 to US\$ 138.

The universal Social Pension is a non-contributory cash transfer given to people of 70 years of age and older. The programme is implemented by the Ministry of Finance and the estimated number of beneficiaries in 2015/2016 was 1,560 (World Bank, 2017). The value of the transfer is EC\$300 per month (approximately US\$ 110).

The School Feeding Programme, implemented by the Ministry of Education, gives meals to all children attending the participating schools. The programme covers 37 primary schools (out of 47 in the country) and three secondary schools (out of eight). Participating schools are selected based on assessments done by the programme. Children must pay a contribution of EC\$3 per meal (US\$ 1), although this contribution can be waived by the school. Supplies and food items are purchased and stored in Roseau and then dispatched to each school. Volunteers, mostly relatives of the children, are in charge of cooking and delivering the meals. The programme gives meals to 1,925 children (Government of Dominica, 2017b).

The NEP seeks to increase employment opportunities, enhance employability, and contribute to community development (World Bank, 2017). The programme is under the Ministry of Trade, Energy and Employment and offers three types of support: internships, community employment, and education mentorship. Internships are targeted mostly to college and university graduates and there are both government and private internships. In the community employment component, people work three days a week in the beautification of communities and as caregivers in the programme *Yes We Care*, while others work in tourism or in road maintenance (under the Ministry of Public Works). According to World Bank (2017) the number of beneficiaries in 2016 was: 1,005 in the internship component, 780 in the community employment, and 80 in the education mentorship component.

DSS provides old-age pensions, and disability, survivors, health, sickness, maternity, and employment injury benefits. In 2015, 52% of the labour force contributed to the system. It has been estimated that nearly 58% of Dominica's elderly population receive a pension; 45% from DSS (World Bank, 2017). There are no unemployment benefits or child allowances in DSS.

## 4.2 System characteristics and performance

**According to the World Bank, Dominica social assistance spending is similar to the average of OECS countries.** Dominica spends 2.2% of GDP on social assistance, of which 64% is spent on cash transfers, 25% on food, in-kind and near-cash transfers, and 11% on social services. PAP is the largest programme, accounting for 18.7% of total assistance expenditures. All main social assistance schemes are nationally funded. Moreover, the national spending on social protection as a whole can rise to as much as 7% of GDP.

**The social protection system in Dominica is fragmented, with a large number of programmes playing similar functions and under different ministries.**

Coordination and information sharing is limited, which is likely to lead to a duplication of efforts, though data to assess the extent of such duplication are not available.

Despite this fragmentation, overall coverage and benefit generosity is in line with other programmes in the region. The World Bank reports that the generosity of PAP and Social Pension benefits is greater than the average in LAC, and that DSS pensions are relatively low (World Bank, 2017). In addition, 'most of the risks identified are in one

way or another covered by existing programmes and in general, for the most important programmes, the coverage is high' (World Bank, 2017).

There are two main challenges in the social protection system in Dominica. The first relates to the **limited resources available for implementing and monitoring programmes** as intended. Staffing is largely inadequate in most programmes. For example, the SWD, in charge of the implementation of PAP and other programmes, has only four field officers, who must conduct household visits across the whole island. This type of constraint can be found in most programmes. The second type of challenge is related to the **lack of key management tools**. Key programmes like PAP, the Social Pension and the School Feeding Programme do not have manuals of operation and therefore programme rules and procedures are unclear. Moreover, registries are still paper-based, except for NEP. In the section below we study three operational processes that are fundamental for enabling the use of social protection in emergency responses: targeting systems, delivery mechanism, and coordination and financing.

#### 4.2.1 Targeting system and data management

In this section we describe briefly the targeting approaches used by the programmes covered in this research, as well as the strategies and systems for data management.

##### Targeting system

PAP, the main cash transfer programme in the country, has no documented criteria for eligibility and no clear processes for beneficiary selection. There is a lack of a manual of operations and of established processes and protocols. The targeting of PAP, as well as of other social assistance programmes in the country, is based on recommendations by Members of Parliament, Village Councils, local leaders or others, which are followed by subjective assessments carried out by the field officers of SWD.

There is a lack of recent surveys or evaluations that would make it possible to assess PAP's targeting performance. The World Bank, using survey data from 2008/09, concluded that most PAP beneficiaries were poor. However, due to the lack of documented eligibility criteria it is not possible to assess the accuracy of such targeting: 'if the programme target is indigent families, then there would be large inclusion errors. If they are the poor, then the programme would be well targeted' (World Bank, 2017).

The needs assessments conducted by SWD field officers for selecting PAP beneficiaries are subjective and not sustained by clear procedures (World Bank, 2017). Moreover, PAP also does not have protocols and criteria for programme graduation: once a beneficiary joins the programme they remain in it until another subjective welfare assessment is carried out by SWD field officers. However, there are no documented protocols for such assessments and in practice they are rarely conducted<sup>11</sup>.

This lack of documented targeting protocols is not exclusive to PAP:

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<sup>11</sup> It has been reported by SWD and the Village Councils in Canefield and Soufriere that due to a lack of exiting criteria, people stay in the programme longer than needed, and therefore there is a concern about the efficacy of the programme in reaching the extreme poor.

- NEP is self-targeted, meaning that interested candidates have to submit an application form, and then the programme makes an individual assessment. Placements are done twice a year. It is not clear how these assessments are carried out and although there is a manual of operations for the programme, government officials have reported that it needs to be updated<sup>12</sup>.
- School meals are provided in selected schools only. The processes for selecting those schools is not clearly documented and responds to the assessment of teachers and programme staff. Within the selected school, children must pay a contribution of EC\$3 per meal (US\$ 1), although this contribution can be waived by the school. There are no protocols for granting such waivers – it is decided subjectively by teachers. The programme does not have a manual of operations.
- Since the Social Pension is universal, it does not face the same problems as PAP in relation to the targeting criteria and the protocols for selection and graduation.

### Box 1: Developing a manual of operations for PASP

UNICEF is currently providing support to SWD in the development of a manual of operations with standard protocols and procedures. The use of PAP in the response to Hurricane Maria has exposed the need for documenting the standard protocols. Moreover, these protocols are a requirement for the development of a management information system, which is another ongoing initiative (see Box 3).

It is likely that the development of these protocols will require revising key aspects related to PAP's targeting, such as the eligibility criteria, the application processes, the programme assessments, and the graduation rules.

## Data management

There is a strong awareness in the country about the challenges that the lack of a data management system imposes on the social protection sector. Most government officials interviewed for this research highlighted two major obstacles for social protection and shock-responsive social protection: **the lack of a data management system and the lack of a unique citizen identifier**. This awareness is reflected in the priorities for investment reached in the stocktaking exercise conducted after the response to Hurricane Maria (Government of Dominica *et al.*, 2018).

Unlike the case in most countries in the LAC, the flagship cash transfer programme in Dominica, PAP, does not have a management information system. The paper-based application forms have some information on household characteristics, but only the name of the household head and the amount of the transfer are registered in an Excel file by the accounting department. Moreover, the information in the forms is often incomplete and outdated. Knowing, for example, how many children receive PAP benefits would require going over every application form. The same applies to the School Feeding Programme: paper-based records are kept at the schools and hence the programme does not have a centralised registry. In the case of NEP, a registry of beneficiaries is kept in an Excel file (World Bank, 2017).

In addition, PAP does not have protocols for updating its registry. When interviewed for this research, the Social Welfare Office informed the writer that data had not been updated in a few years and that it was very likely that household circumstances had

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<sup>12</sup> We have not had access to this manual.

changed significantly. When the interview took place, the Social Welfare Office was in the process of updating PAP's registry.

### **Box 2: PAP's experience with a management information system**

The most relevant example of a social protection information system for Dominica is that of the Master Beneficiary Information System (MBIS). MBIS was used between 2009 and 2011 by PAP to manage beneficiary information. The application was built by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, with funding from the World Bank. The system was constructed around the proxy means test (PMT) methodology, and the indicators were designed around a preceding poverty assessment conducted in the country. A survey form which collected the necessary indicators was subsequently entered into the MBIS, which had built-in algorithms to establish whether a household should be a beneficiary or not.

The 'black-box' approach of the system and the PMT did not allow for any tampering with the selection process. For this reason, the system was terminated in 2011 when politicians disagreed with the targeting criteria and they decided to stop funding MBIS entirely. Unfortunately, the methodology was tied to the application, and thus disagreement on the targeting methodology resulted in the demise of the entire system.

Source: Gabrielle (2018)

The lack of a unique citizen identifier is an obstacle for information sharing and for policy planning, coordination and monitoring in the social protection sector and beyond. In Dominica the only unique identifiers are (a) passport owners (b) social security card holders or (c) driver's licence holders. 'These ID systems do not cover the entire population. This means that precise identification of individuals (or households) is difficult and programs must try to use names/locations to establish whether citizens are beneficiaries of multiple social assistance programs. The ICT Unit has plans to implement a multipurpose ID system (MPID), but this has yet to materialize and can take a long time to implement' (Gabrielle, 2018).

### **Box 3: Towards a new management information system**

WFP is currently supporting the Government of Dominica in the development of a management information system for PAP. The intention is that the system would serve as the main information system for PAP but that it would be flexible enough to serve other social protection programmes as well. The objective of this project is not only to design and develop the platform, but also to support government in other aspects related to the sustainability of the system, like the staffing, the capacity of relevant units, and the development of processes and protocols.

One key feature of the system, based on the previous experience described in Box 2, will be to develop a system that is owned by the government and which can be adapted as PAP and other programmes evolve. An open source application will be used.

The approach will be to build upon what already exists. For example, the ICT Unit already supports various government entities in the design and development of database applications. Since using the MBIS several years ago staff at the SWD and the Ministry of Planning have a foundational understanding of management information systems (see Box 2).

## 4.2.2 Delivery mechanism

Globally, delivery mechanisms implemented by social protection schemes often include manual payments, transfers through the banking system, mobile money, and other types of electronic payments. In terms of shock response, a timely delivery of benefits, whether in cash or in kind, is, of course, crucial for ensuring the provision of effective support (Beazley *et al.*, 2016). However, during an emergency, delivery capacity is challenged by the urgency of the situation, the constraints imposed by the particular shock (such as infrastructure collapse), and the coordination of the different actors (Bastagli, 2014). Some of the delivery mechanisms of regular social protection programmes – such as electronic payments – can be rapidly expanded during an emergency, but these systems should be developed and adapted before the crisis (Beazley *et al.*, 2016).

However, in the case of Dominica, **the majority of social assistance cash transfers are delivered manually**. The benefits of both PAP and the Social Pensions are transferred as follows: in Roseau area, some beneficiaries collect the payments at the government offices and others are deposited in bank accounts, as is also the case in the Portsmouth area. Outside these areas, all payments are made through the Village Councils<sup>13</sup>. The Village Councils collect the cheques from the Ministry in charge of the SWD, and have to go to Roseau or to the credit Union (located in the same village or another close by) to change the cheque to cash. They then disburse the payments in their respective village offices. Overall, transfers to PAP beneficiary bank accounts only represent 3.8% of the programme transactions (Government of Dominica *et al.*, 2018).

**The overall perception is that PAP payments are made on time.** The Village Councils and the beneficiaries from Canefield and Soufriere interviewed for this research, as well as the central government officials interviewed highlighted that payments are regular and without substantial delays, and that this payment mechanism is one of the strengths of the social assistance system. The other assessments of Dominica's social protection system have also not found evidence of substantial delays.

In the same line, the School Feeding Programme has procurement and delivery mechanisms that are well established (World Bank, 2017). Food is purchased, stored, and delivered to schools by the Ministry of Education at the beginning and in the middle of each term.

Social security transfers, given their contributory nature and the fact that they reach people (formerly) employed in the formal sector, and NEP benefit payments, which are linked to a job or an internship, are made mostly through bank accounts.

## 4.2.3 Coordination and financing

In this section we describe the mechanisms in place for coordinating the roles of different sectors, including social protection, in DRM as well as the main disaster risk financing instruments.

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<sup>13</sup> Village Councils have eight members: five of them are elected and the other three are appointed by the government.

The most recent DRM plan was developed in 2001. This plan describes the government strategy in terms of disaster risk mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. The main institutional arrangements established in the plan are described in Box 4.

#### Box 4: DRM institutional arrangements

Disaster preparedness and emergency response in Dominica is implemented under the authority of the Emergency Powers Act of 1951 (amended in 1973 and 1990). The most recent National Disaster Plan was developed in 2001.

While no national disaster management act has been passed in Dominica, ODM operates under the auspices of the National Emergency Planning Organisation (NEPO). NEPO is chaired by the Prime Minister and is composed of ministers, and key staff from government agencies, corporations, businesses, and non-governmental organisations. The committee functions to coordinate the development of national disaster policy and serves as the inter-agency focus during disaster events. Proclamations regarding the existence of an emergency are made by the President.

ODM is in charge of coordinating emergency preparedness and response activities. DRM activities at subnational level are implemented by the District Emergency Committees and the Community Emergency Committees.

Source: Government of Dominica (2001) and Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) (ND).

**It is important to notice that this DRM plan does not establish any role for social protection programmes in preparedness and response to emergencies.** In the interview with ODM conducted for this study, it was highlighted that the DRM plan is very outdated and that they are planning to develop a new plan and legislation. It was also mentioned that the roles of social protection, mainly but not exclusively involving PAP, will be defined and included in the new plan.

Although the plan establishes that ODM is in charge of the coordination of DRM activities before and after the shocks, its capacity is very limited: there are only two officers and one consultant.

Another important coordination body is CDEMA. CDEMA is a regional inter-governmental agency for disaster management in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Box 5 describes CDEMA's main roles.

#### Box 5: CDEMA's role in DRM coordination

CDEMA was established in 1991 as the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), with primary responsibility for the coordination of emergency response and relief efforts to Participating States that require such assistance. It transitioned to CDEMA in 2009 to fully embrace the principles and practice of comprehensive disaster management (CDM), which is an integrated and proactive approach to disaster management and seeks to reduce the risk and loss associated with natural and technological hazards and the effects of climate change to enhance regional sustainable development.

CDEMA presently comprises 18 Participating States: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Republic of Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, and the Virgin Islands.

Since 2009, CDEMA's mandate has expanded to position the regional disaster management body more strategically to fully take up its role as facilitator, driver, coordinator, and motivating force for the promotion and engineering of CDM in all Participating States.

CDEMA's functions are as follows:

1. mobilising and coordinating disaster relief;
2. mitigating or eliminating, as far as practicable, the immediate consequences of disasters in Participating States;
3. providing immediate and coordinated response by means of emergency disaster relief to any affected Participating State;
4. securing, coordinating and providing to interested inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations reliable and comprehensive information on disasters affecting any Participating State;
5. encouraging –
  - (i) the adoption of disaster loss reduction and mitigation policies and practices at the national and regional level;
  - (ii) cooperative arrangements and mechanisms to facilitate the development of a culture of disaster loss reduction; and
6. coordinating the establishment, enhancement, and maintenance of adequate emergency disaster response capabilities among the Participating States through CDEMA's Regional Response Mechanism.

Source: [www.cdema.org](http://www.cdema.org)

In relation to financing, there are no mechanisms in place to fund responses through social protection. Beyond social protection, the main mechanisms in place for disaster risk financing are:

- budgetary instruments: ex-ante allocations for DRM and ex-post budget reallocations for relief and recovery;
- insurance – Dominica is a member of CCRIF, which uses parametric insurance to provide quick-disbursing and short-term liquidity for financing responses and recovery to 16 countries in the Caribbean and Central America exposed to major earthquakes, heavy rainfall, and hurricanes. For example, in 2017 Dominica received approximately US\$19 million following Hurricane Maria and in 2015 US\$ 2.4 million following the Tropical Storm Erika<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> [www.ccrif.org/news/ccrif-make-payout-dominica-us19-million-following-passage-hurricane-maria](http://www.ccrif.org/news/ccrif-make-payout-dominica-us19-million-following-passage-hurricane-maria)  
[www.ccrif.org/news/ccrif-pays-government-dominica-ec65-million-under-its-excess-rainfall-programme-following](http://www.ccrif.org/news/ccrif-pays-government-dominica-ec65-million-under-its-excess-rainfall-programme-following)

## 5 The social protection response to Hurricane Maria

In 2017, Hurricane Maria had a devastating effect in Dominica (see Section 2). In this section we briefly describe that part of the response that relied on the government's social protection system. Other relief and response activities implemented by the government and/or humanitarian actors are not covered in this study. Moreover, it is important to mention that it is not the objective of this research to assess the effectiveness of the social protection response to Maria, but to use that experience to identify opportunities and investment areas for future responses.

Hurricane Maria made landfall in Dominica on 18 September 2017. The first relief activities carried out by government and the international community (including the UN and the national government with support from CDEMA) included the provision of in-kind support (food, water, and non-food supplies). From mid-October, while the markets were showing a gradual revival, the Government of Dominica—through the former Ministry of Social Services, Family and Gender Affairs (MSSFGA)—with support from WFP and UNICEF started planning the transition to a cash-based approach.

The joint ECT programme—launched by the MSSFGA, WFP, and UNICEF in early December 2017—provided unconditional cash transfers to almost 25,000 people (including 6,000 children) most affected by Hurricane Maria, to meet their essential needs.

The ECT relied on existing social protection mechanisms to deliver the support. 'With an administrative system already in place and well known by both the institutions and the population, the delivery of emergency cash transfers through the existing PAP platform was envisaged as the most appropriate solution to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable. The small size of the island combined with the institutional decentralization and the flexibility of the programme allowed for a temporary expansion of beneficiary groups, adjustment of transfer values and frequency of transfers' (Government of Dominica *et al*, 2018).

Based on the framework described in Section 3.1, the implementers of the ECT have described this strategy as involving the following (Government of Dominica *et al.*, 2018):

- The temporary **vertical expansion** of PAP, meaning that all the households enrolled in PAP automatically qualified for the ECT. Indeed, taking into account that 95% of the population was affected by the hurricane, it was deemed highly probable that the current beneficiaries—already expected to be indigent and most vulnerable—were affected by the hurricane and therefore eligible. This meant that those persons already enrolled in PAP received an additional sum from the ECT. This ensured the timeliness of the response, as the PAP beneficiaries received the first transfer in early December.
- The temporary **horizontal expansion** of PAP to target those households who were not enrolled in PAP but were severely affected by the disaster. Targeting criteria were established through a consultative process involving government entities (local governments, social welfare officers, and emergency committees), WFP and

UNICEF. The targeting criteria comprised demographic indicators generally associated with vulnerability, together with disaster-related indicators.

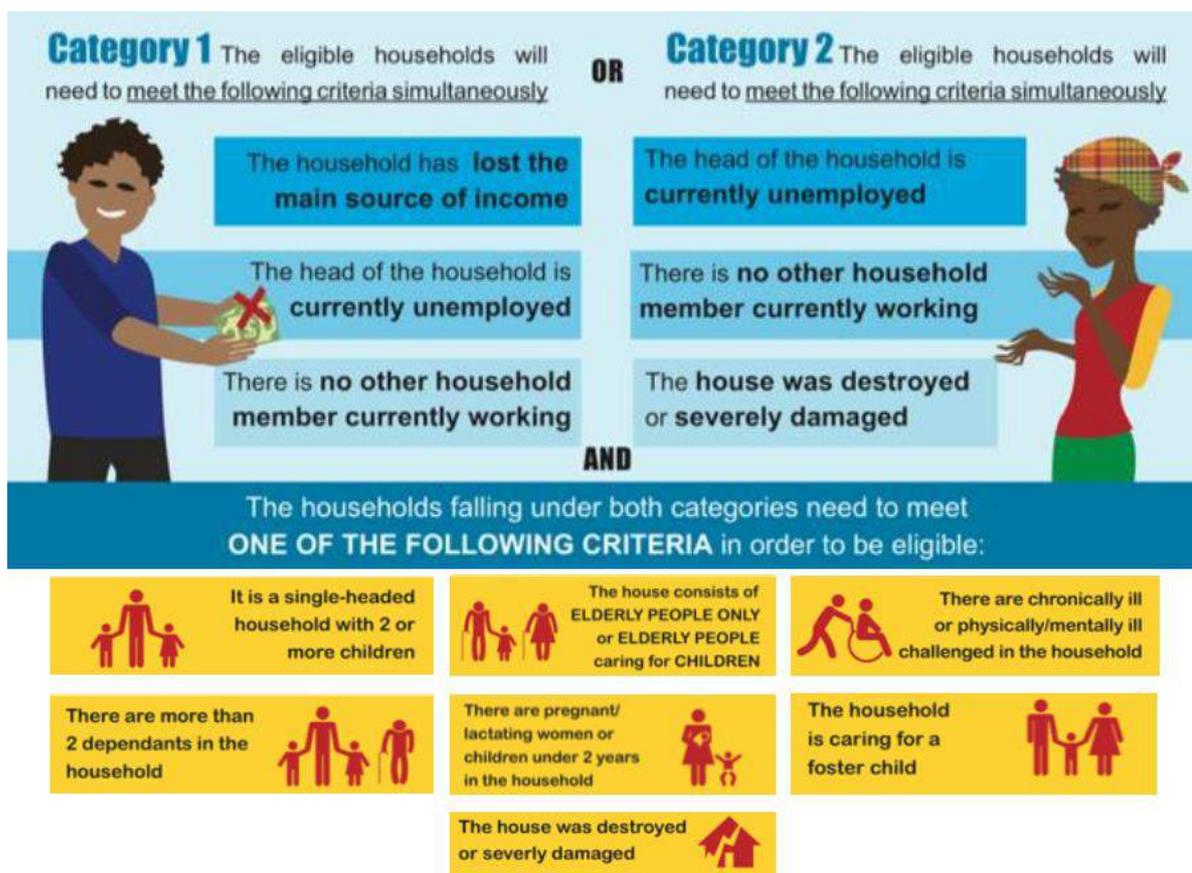
The horizontal expansion of PAP implied the need to identify those who had been most affected. At the beginning of the response, the government of Dominica and CDEMA conducted a Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis (DANA). However, for reasons unknown to this research, this database was not available in the end and another assessment had to be conducted.

The Vulnerability and Needs Assessment (VNA) was launched in early November as a joint initiative implemented by line ministries, with the support of WFP, UNICEF, and other UN partners and the International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). 'The VNA questionnaire was developed by building on the DANA format to provide a snapshot of the main damages and needs of the population. The survey captured information that enabled the identification of the households in need of assistance. [...] Data collection was mainly paper-based and the questionnaires were digitalized afterwards to enable the data analysis and the beneficiary selection process' (Government of Dominica *et al.*, 2018). The VNA—conducted from November 2017 to mid-January 2018—reached 17,200 households in the country (more than 80% of the population).

Beneficiary Selection Committees (BSCs) were established in most villages and consisted of five members, which included Village Council chairpersons/clerks, community leaders, and widely respected members of the community (teachers, priests, nurses, etc.). BSCs conducted the VNA in their respective villages.

In addition to the VNA, eligibility criteria were developed, which relied on household demographical and socio-economic characteristics as well as on the extent of the damage. Figure 4 summarises the eligibility criteria. Based on the criteria, on the information of the VNA, and on their own knowledge of the living conditions of households in their villages, in most of the cases BSCs were in charge of pre-selecting beneficiaries, however this was validated with data analysis. The final lists were approved by MSSFGA following a validation with cabinet.

Figure 4: ECT’s eligibility criteria



The transfer value of the ECT was of US\$90 per household per month, with a top-up of US\$50 per child up to three children, in addition to PAP benefits for those in the programme. ECT beneficiaries were meant to receive three monthly payments. ECT transfers were entirely funded by WFP and UNICEF. Meanwhile, the Government of Dominica continued to provide PAP beneficiaries with their regular entitlements.

ECT grants were distributed to the beneficiaries using the existing PAP delivery mechanisms, largely based on manual payments through the Village Councils (see Section 4.2.2).

PAP beneficiaries received the first ECT payment in December. Due to delays with the VNA and the approval of the lists submitted by the BSCs, the payments to non-PAP recipients had to be split into two groups, one receiving the first transfer in January and transfers 2 and 3 in March, while the other received the three transfers at the same time in March.

Table 2: ECT payment cycles

	Dec 2017	Jan 2018	Feb 2018	Mar 2018
PAP beneficiaries	Monthly Transfer		Bi-monthly transfer	
"non-PAP" beneficiaries (group 1)		Monthly Transfer		Bi-monthly transfer
"non-PAP" beneficiaries (group 2)				Lump-sum

Source: Government of Dominica *et al.*, 2018

The Government of Dominica requested WFP's support for continued assistance to the most vulnerable households whose livelihoods remain seriously compromised and which therefore were going to be at risk during the hurricane season that officially started on 1 June. The Government of Dominica and WFP provided a one-off transfer of US\$135 (EC\$360) to the 25,000 people who received the ECT. The aim of the cash support is to ensure a continued assistance to better address post-hurricane needs while at the same time preventing a deterioration of the conditions of the most vulnerable in case of a sudden-onset emergency.

Beyond the ECT response, it is important to mention that NEP's budget was increased substantially during the emergency<sup>15</sup>, allowing the programme to absorb a substantial proportion of people unemployed. This appears to be a horizontal expansion of the programme. In addition, it has been reported that some of the activities conducted under the beautification component, like cleaning roads, helped communities to recover from the shock. We did not have access to more information to study this response.

## 5.1 Some reflections on the ECT experience

**The ECT response using existing government systems was innovative and has largely been assessed as being successful.** Responses to previous shocks in the country, like the tropical storm Erika in 2015, did not include the expansion of PAP, although they did entail the development of programmes to provide cash and in-kind assistance. The ECT was therefore the first time that the administrative capacity of the largest social assistance scheme, PAP, was used to provide cash to people affected by a disaster in Dominica. Moreover, the findings from the joint stocktaking exercise (Government of Dominica *et al.*, 2018) and the interviews conducted for this research show high levels of satisfaction with the ECT response. In addition, the study on the returns on investment of the ECT concluded that 'using the social protection system, even without investments in place, provides financial and qualitative benefits compared to a traditional WFP/UNICEF led cash response. (WFP, *forthcoming*)'

**The delays caused in the provision of ECT grants to non-PAP beneficiaries (the horizontal expansion) were primarily the result of a lack of ex-ante preparedness.** The use of PAP to channel the support was envisaged only after the shock, and therefore a methodology for identifying the affected households had to be designed during the aftermath. Moreover, the fact that there was a first needs assessment, the

<sup>15</sup> Programme staff informed the researcher that the budget had doubled.

DANA, which had to be replaced by the VNA later on, was one of the main reasons for the delay.

Coordination-wise, the ECT implied the coordination of three key actors: the government (including different line ministries), WFP, and UNICEF. Despite the coordination challenges that are always present in this type of crisis, the fact that these three actors managed to create a response programme in such a short timeframe, and to reach almost 25,000 people, is largely positive.

Although the stocktaking exercise presents the response as both vertical and horizontal expansions of PAP, in practice, people and beneficiaries in particular saw it as a separate humanitarian response provided by WFP and UNICEF. In this regard, it could be considered as a 'piggybacking' type of response, in which WFP and UNICEF relied on the administrative capacity of PAP to deliver support.

More important than how to categorise the response is the way it is presented to the population: is it a government programme responding with the support of the UN or is it the UN responding using government systems? The vision of WFP in the LAC region, and presumably of UNICEF as well, is not just about channelling support through government systems ('piggybacking'), but supporting government responses and hence assisting the affected population, while also strengthening government systems in the long-run. WFP's approach to shock-responsive social protection in LAC puts governments in the lead and aims to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus. This vision entails humanitarian actors and donors reducing their visibility. This is of course a long-term vision and experiences like the ECT still have humanitarians and donors at the forefront, jointly with the government.

Two additional and practical issues to reflect on and consider for future responses are as follows: 1) Should the Social Pension also be expanded vertically? Social Pension beneficiaries that needed support should have been selected through the targeting process for the horizontal expansion of PAP. However, the Social Pension could have also been expanded vertically right away, for a rapid support, depending on the resources available and other issues. 2) Is it appropriate to cap the ECT child grant at three children per household? This is fairly common practice in regular cash transfer programmes in the LAC region, and the reason is often related to avoiding creating perverse incentives that may lead to increased fertility rates. However, in the case of a humanitarian response, which has such a short lifespan, this perverse incentive does not seem to hold. The drawback of this capping is clear: the amount received per household member is lower in the case of large size households.

## 6 Toward a more shock-responsive social protection system

In relation to the opportunities for making the social protection system more shock responsive, two different realities coincide in Dominica. On the one hand, the social protection system is still in a process of development. As mentioned in Section 4, although there is a wide range of programmes and services in the country, there are three main challenges: the high level of fragmentation within the social protection sector, the limited capacity of ministries and programmes, and the absence of key operational instruments like manuals of operations and management information systems. All of this is in addition to the lack of a unique citizen identifier, which is a challenge that goes beyond the social protection sector. On the other hand, the experience of the ECT shows that despite the weaknesses and limitations, Dominica's social protection capacity, and in particular PAP's, can be used to provide effective large-scale cash assistance after a shock.

In this context, the following are some recommendations for developing a more responsive social protection system:

**Strengthening the social protection system.** Regional and global experience shows that more mature systems are often better prepared to respond (Beazley *et al.*, 2016, and OPM, 2015). Although not designed for emergency response purposes, experience shows that systems with greater coverage, resources and administrative capacity, and with a greater variety of services and level of integration, are generally better placed to respond to crises. Thus, the first step toward a responsive social protection system is to continue on the path of strengthening the system to provide the assistance for which it has been created. A number of recent studies have provided concrete recommendations for improving the social protection system – for example, World Bank (2017) – and therefore this is not something that we cover here in detail.

Regarding strengthening the social protection sector to deliver regular support (not necessarily emergency assistance) there are two crucial aspects worth highlighting: the revision of programme objectives, rules and procedures leading to the development of **manuals of operations**, and the creation of **management information systems**. The government of Dominica is already embarking on these two initiatives for PAP, with the support of UNICEF and WFP (see Boxes 1 and 3).

**Developing a new DRM plan and establishing the role of social protection in emergency preparedness and response.** The national DRM has not been updated since 2001 (see Box 4). It is important to revise the plan in light of the current institutional arrangements and the national and global thinking on DRM. This would be the appropriate platform for defining the role that social protection should play in emergency preparedness and response, if any.

PAP has clearly proven to be an effective mechanism for delivering cash support, and therefore is likely to be the main vehicle used for social protection responses. However, it is worth considering the role of other schemes:

- Social Pensions could also be expanded vertically during crises. To make this policy decision, it will be important to study the overlaps between the beneficiary populations of both PAP and Social Pensions.

- Consider strengthening NEP's DRM focus. People employed by the programme could work on activities more related to DRM before, during, and after shocks. Beyond the cleaning of roads carried out in NEP's beautification component, this employment programme can be used as a vehicle to strengthen people's knowledge and information about DRM, to prepare community and public assets for the shocks that commonly affect the country, and to provide people with training on providing rapid relief, among others.
- The School Feeding Programme seems to have little capacity for rapid scale-ups, so it may not be the best vehicle for providing large-scale support. The programme does not have a vehicle to transport supplies and has very few staff. Moreover, the programme does not cover all the schools in the country.
- In relation to DSS, it may be worth exploring the creation of an unemployment benefit, which could provide support when facing both idiosyncratic and covariate shocks.

**Based on the revised DRM plan, ministries and programmes in the social protection sector would need to develop protocols and capacity to perform the DRM activities entrusted to them.** The ongoing work on the development of PAP's manual of operations and management information systems provides an opportunity to embed DRM in the programme's processes.

Given the nature of the shocks affecting the country (see Section 2), which are to some extent foreseeable, it may be worth exploring linking social protection responses (and other responses) to early warning systems. Triggers for rapid action can be built using the data generated by existing early warning systems and climate forecasts (O'Brien *et al.*, 2018; Bastagli and Harman, 2015). Triggers are typically designed to release funds and initiate early actions when pre-established thresholds are met. These triggers can lead to automatic responses, which implies front-loading the decision-making process and directly linking climate forecasts to their potential consequences; otherwise they can be used to inform ex-post decision making process to trigger early action (Wilkinson *et al.*, 2018).

## 6.1 Targeting system and data management

PAP's targeting criteria and mechanisms should be revised and documented. In such revision, and if the DRM plan establishes a role for PAP in emergency response, it is recommended to include protocols that make it possible to expand as envisaged. This includes revising the ECT eligibility criteria and assessing whether it should be the criteria used for future responses (including the issue of putting a cap on the number of child benefits per household, described in Section 5.1).

In the same vein, if Village Councils and other community leaders are expected to play a role in the identification of affected households, then appropriate training would need to be provided before the shock occurs.

Define protocols and mechanisms for post-disaster data collection and provide adequate training. The challenges faced by the DANA and the VNA led to delays in the support provided through the ECT. Based on this experience, it is recommended to create a mechanism for future emergencies.

In terms of data management, the country is still far from developing a social registry which could provide useful information for emergency scale-ups. Instead, and as other

studies have proposed, it is important to develop management information systems for PAP and other schemes, and to establish protocols for data-sharing and data security. This should also include data-sharing protocols and possibly agreements with international agencies.

It is important to highlight that these recommendations go in line with the findings of the study on the returns on investment of the ECT, which identifies two core areas of investment for more cost-effective responses: data management and flexible targeting mechanisms (WFP, *forthcoming*)

## 6.2 Delivery mechanisms

PAP's delivery mechanism proved to be an effective vehicle for paying ECT grants. The delivery of emergency payments should be included in the manual of operations, with the proper protocols and accountability mechanisms, and training should be provided to Village Councils. Further analysis related to security of Village Council clerks, generally tasked with transporting and handling these funds should also be taken into account, particularly when there is a significant increase from the pre-shock monetary value of the PAP.

The conditions for a transition to electronic payments do not seem to be in place yet. According to WFP (*forthcoming*), 'the investment in a more secure and financially inclusive delivery mechanism, although easing the distribution and monitoring process, presents high running costs, which makes this investment not financially attractive.'

## 6.3 Coordination and financing

If the DRM plan establishes a role for social protection in emergency response, then a disaster risk financing strategy would need to be developed. One feasible option is to pre-define the use of the payments received from CCRIF's insurance (see Section 4.2.3), including the funding of social protection responses. Another option is to explore the use of contingency credit lines, like, for example, the World Bank's CAT-DDO.

Coordination mechanisms at various levels should be strengthened. To begin with, it is recommended to strengthen the capacity of ODM, which should play a crucial role in the coordination of different government and non-government actors before and after the shocks, but currently has very limited capacity. There is also a need to strengthen the coordination with regional bodies, like CDEMA and international organisations such as the UN, among others. This should be based on a longer-term relationship between the government and the agencies, beyond the lifespan of a crisis, and based on practical and operational agreements that can allow rapid joint responses. For example, the Government of Dominican Republic and WFP have recently signed a cooperation agreement to strengthen the response capacity and establish protocols for financing social protection expansions in the response to large-scale emergencies.

Recognizing the role of CDEMA within Dominica and the Caribbean region, their capacity should also be strengthened in order to ensure they can support ODM (and disaster management authorities throughout the Caribbean) to play a strong role in ensuring social protection programmes and systems are shock responsive. While the traditional role of ODM and their disaster management counterparts around the region has focused on preparedness and more immediate response following shocks, Hurricane Maria highlighted the importance of their engagement in early recovery as

well. Given the limited human resource capacity within ODM, it is critical that CDEMA, as an extension of ODM, further define the role of disaster management entities in shock responsive social protection.

For example, in order to ensure that social protection systems can be shock responsive, it is critical that ODM plays a role in all aspects of investments in preparedness from determining targeting mechanisms and vulnerability information required to make informed decisions during the immediate aftermath of a shock to providing its expertise in understanding how delivery mechanisms could be interrupted in times of disaster to coordinating overall emergency response, including playing a role in determining funding needs before (based on contingency planning) and after (based on assessments) shocks occur.

At the same time, the shock-related expertise of ODM should be combined with the clear strengths of the MHSS in ensuring a systems-based approach in preparing social protection to be shock-responsive and in its future use for such purposes.

**Table 3: Summary of recommendations for shock-responsive social protection**

Process	Recommendations
<b>Targeting system and data management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop protocols for vertical and horizontal expansions or a piggybacking response – for PAP, and potentially the Social Pension programme as well</li> <li>• Develop a management information system for PAP and other programmes</li> <li>• Develop data-sharing and data security agreements and protocols</li> <li>• Train the personnel, at the central and local level, who will be involved in the response</li> <li>• Define protocols and mechanisms for post-disaster data collection and provide adequate training and resources</li> <li>• Establish communication strategies for the targeting process in the case of an emergency</li> </ul>
<b>Delivery mechanism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include protocols and accountability mechanisms in PAP’s manual of operations to transfer emergency payments</li> <li>• Provide adequate training to Village Councils</li> </ul>
<b>Coordination and financing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider pre-defining the use of part of CCRIF payments for social protection responses</li> <li>• Consider exploring alternative financing mechanisms like contingency credits and agreements with international organisations</li> <li>• Strengthen the capacity of ODM</li> <li>• Strengthen the coordination with international agencies like CDEMA and the UN, based on more long-term relationships (which exceed the lifespan of a crisis)</li> <li>• Establish adequate coordination bodies in the new DRM plan</li> </ul>

## 7 Summary and conclusions

Dominica is a mountainous island that is highly exposed to shocks. The country is affected by natural shocks almost every year and climate change could lead to greater risks in the future. The most recent large-scale natural shock was the Category 5 Hurricane Maria, which struck in 2017 and which had a devastating effect. Moreover, the country is also exposed to other types of shocks, like economic shocks, which could involve a reduction in the influx of tourists, a change in world prices of imported goods, and a reduction in the inflow of remittances and investments of migrants.

Dominica social assistance spending is similar to the average of OECS countries, as is the overall coverage and generosity of its benefits. However, the system is very fragmented, with a large number of programmes playing similar functions and under different ministries. Coordination and information-sharing is limited, which is likely to lead to a duplication of efforts. Key programmes like PAP lack key management tools, such as a manual of operations and a management information system. Programme rules and procedures are unclear and registries are still paper-based.

In response to Hurricane Maria, the Government of Dominica, WFP, and UNICEF launched the ECT response, providing unconditional cash transfers to almost 25,000 people (including 6,000 children). The ECT relied on PAP's mechanisms to deliver the cash support. It was the first time that a social protection programme expanded to provide support to people affected by a disaster in Dominica. This experience has been widely assessed as successful.

Although Dominica's social protection system is still in the process of development, with a number of fundamental challenges, it has been proven that it can be effectively used to delivery support during emergencies. There are a few key areas of investment for improving the provision of social protection in regular times and for making the system more flexible and responsive to large-scale shocks; these are:

- Developing a new DRM plan and establishing the role of social protection in emergency preparedness and response;
- Reviewing programme objectives, rules and procedures leading to the development of manuals of operations and management tools, including protocols that make it possible for certain programmes like PAP to expand as envisaged in the new DRM plan;
- Develop management information systems for PAP and other schemes and establish protocols for data-sharing and data security and possibly agreements with international agencies. Incorporate a vulnerability analysis into any future household surveys designed for targeting social protection programmes. Create a unique citizen identifier which can allow identifying every person in the country and can improve data sharing;
- Where gaps exist, define protocols and mechanisms for post-disaster data collection and needs assessments and provide adequate training.

The ECT response has created a momentum in Dominica in relation to making the social protection system more responsive. It is the intention of the government to work in this direction and partners like WFP and UNICEF are already providing support in line with the recommendations above. Moreover, the challenges faced by Dominica are

common to other countries in the Eastern Caribbean region, affected by recurrent disasters. In this regard, CDEMA will play an important role in supporting governments in making the necessary investments for making their social protection systems more responsive, in promoting the exchange of ideas and experiences within the region, and in integrating social protection measures within DRM national strategies and systems.

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## Annex A List of interviewees

Person	Institution
Ms. Helen Royer – Permanent Secretary	Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs, Family and Gender Affairs
Ms. Sherma John - Resident representative	Eastern Caribbean Central Bank
Mr. Sam Carrette and Dr Kyra Paul	Ministry of Planning and Economic Development
Mr. Kelder Darroux - Minister	Ministry of Information, Science, Telecommunications and Technology
Ms. Pamela Guiste - School Feeding Programme Coordinator	Ministry of Education
Mr. Fitzroy Pascal - National Disaster Coordinator	Office of Disaster Management
Mr. Reginald Thomas – Permanent Secretary	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
Mr. Jan-Willem Wegdam – Team Leader	IOM
Mr. Ian King – Head of Office	UNDP
Mr. James Jones – Operation manager	International federation of Red Cross
Ms. Janice Jean-Jacques Thomas - Director	Social Security Department
Ms. Letitia Lestrade-Wyke - Permanent Secretary	Ministry of Health and Social Services
Ms. Emily Honore	NEP
Mr. Glenroy Toussaint - Local Government Commissioner	Local government
Mr. Leroy Morvan - Chief Welfare Officer	MoHSS - SWD
Ms. Jermaine Jean-Pierre - Director for the ICT Unit	Ministry of Information, Science, Telecommunications and Technology
Mr. Christopher Turton – Social Protection Officer	UNICEF