



**DISASTER PREPAREDNESS**



15th Anniversary Special

# Building a more resilient Barbados

IN 2003, the St James Central constituency was established and with this came the establishment of the St James Central District Emergency Organisation (DEO) with just four members. Over the past 15 years, this volunteer arm of the Department of Emergency Management has seen several members pass through the organisation, but currently has 55 active members.

Chairman of the DEO, Selwyn Brooks, said: "A voluntary organisation such as this one is a transient service and we are fortunate to always have a cadre of persons that would form our base, from which, if something happens, we can respond."

He credits the quality of members, and by extension the executive, for transforming the standard of service they offer. Brooks noted that the core tenants of the organisation not only shaped its vision, but also formed the basis for key stakeholder partnerships with the Royal Barbados Police Force, Barbados Fire Service, Coastal Zone Management Unit

and the Drainage Unit.

Ultimately, the role of the St James Central DEO is to respond to several hazards that might be impacting the community. Brooks said: "We serve the community in the event of any emergency or disaster, and that is a wide range of hazards, not just hurricanes."

Fire, storm surge, vehicular accidents, flooding are just a few of the hazards this organisation responds to, vice chair of the organisation Cheryl Griffith added. "When there were fires both at the landfill and at B's Wholesale, we provided assistance," she said.

During these emergencies, the DEO evacuated vulnerable persons and those with respiratory issues to a safer, smoke-free environment. Brooks explained that this was possible as the organisation periodically conducts community profiles to acquire the information on the susceptibilities within the community. Their assessments determine who is vulnerable, what is vulnerable and



**FOCUSED ON PREPAREDNESS: Members of the St James District Emergency Organisation. (GP)**



**(FROM LEFT) Vice Chair of the St James District Emergency Organisation Cheryl Griffith, Chairman Selwyn Brooks (second right) and Andre Jordan conducting a community profiling exercise with a resident of St James Central. (GP)**

the environment in which residents in the constituency and the wider Barbados see disaster preparedness as a way of life. We as a citizenry must understand that disaster preparedness starts in the community."

He added: "Our vision going forward is to continue our thrust to make St James Central a more resilient community and by extension helping to build that resilience that the country so desperately needs."

Retired Chief Fire Officer Wilfred Marshall endorsed the organisation's work stating, "I do believe that as a result of their organisational skills, commitment and dedication to their cause ... residents and business owners, with whom they come into contact, are more knowledgeable and much better prepared in mitigation and resilience techniques."

Executive Director of Regional Security Services, Captain E. R. Shurland also shared praises for the DEO. "The sustained commitment of the St James DEO to training and development of volunteers in their community in the areas of basic disaster management, augurs well for the building of resilience and the development of a culture of safety," he said.

what is needed to correct that vulnerability.

Training is an essential component of this DEO's annual schedule and is provided in the areas of: first aid, damage assessment, fire, radio communications, chainsaw, medical response, community profiling and in former years, care of the elderly.

Focusing on the future of the organisation, Brooks said: "The vision is for us to create



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**Celebrating 15 years of Emergency Response to our Communities**

*We take this opportunity to thank all partners and stakeholders who have supported us over the past 15 years.*

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