

CRF | Canada Caribbean Resilience Facility

CRF Support to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

At 8:41 a.m. on April 9, 2021, the La Soufriere volcano located on mainland Saint Vincent erupted explosively, propelling ash and gas high into the air over Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and neighboring islands such as Barbados, Grenada, and Saint Lucia. The explosive eruption has required the evacuation of 20,000 people from the high-risk zones around the volcano, both to other parts of Saint Vincent and surrounding countries. Explosions are continuing, and the falling ash is causing air quality concerns and interruptions in electricity and water supply.

This disaster has struck at a time when the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines had been trying to navigate the effects of drought, the COVID-19 pandemic and an outbreak of dengue fever. The situation is compounded by the danger of the upcoming hurricane season which starts in June.

Ash plume from the second explosive eruption of La Soufrière volcano on St Vincent, April 9, 2021, seen at sunset from nearby Bequia island. Photo: Ailsa Burn-Murdoch / Alamy Stock Photo.



Left: The village of Chateaubelair, St. Vincent and the Grenadines with La Soufriere volcano in background, Photo: Michael DeFreitas Caribbean / Alamy Stock Photo. Right: April 9, 2021 eruption. Photo: Dmitri V Tonkopi / Shutterstock.com.

CRF Response Objective

To support the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' response to the crisis, the Canada Caribbean Resilience Facility (CRF)¹ has rapidly mobilized technical assistance to prepare for a potential evacuation due to the eruption of La Soufriere. In addition to this, the CRF support is aimed at handling future crises and has been focused on improving emergency communications and shelter management.

CRF Activities

The CRF is providing technical support, strategic guidance and direct assistance to the National Emergency Management Organisation (NEMO) of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines through select activities: strengthening communications on the La Soufriere volcano emergency; enhancing the emergency/crisis communication strategy; updating the shelter management policy, guidelines and plans to include gender and disability considerations and COVID-19 protocols; and building national capacity in shelter management and emergency communications.

Progress

Immediate response by CRF consisted of contracting two specialists to assist NEMO with immediate needs related to communications and shelter management. This is also expected to help build

national capacity in these fields for future emergencies.

The communication and knowledge management expert contracted by CRF initiated the development of a communication strategy for all hazards, as well as the development of a communication strategy specific to the La Soufriere volcano eruption. In addition to this, activities are focusing on the production and dissemination of communication products such as press releases, videos², and social media content³ for this emergency, elaborating communication training modules to build national capacity on crises communications, all while ensuring these are inclusive, relevant and applicable to vulnerable communities. A graphic designer and video production firm have also been engaged to support the production of the communication materials.

The shelter management specialist is supporting the update of the national shelter management policy, strategy, and implementation. The steps taken include the review of existing shelter management policy, plans, strategy, and guidelines to identify opportunities for the integration of gender, disability, COVID-19 considerations, and related monitoring metrics. To further build national capacity for shelter management during emergencies in SVG, the specialist started working on a shelter management training program and manual.

As the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines grapples with these challenges, the Canada-Caribbean Resilience Facility is supporting their efforts at response and recovery and stands ready to provide further support.

¹ The Canada Caribbean Resilience Facility was established to achieve more effective and coordinated gender-informed climate-resilient preparedness, recovery, and public financial management practices in nine Caribbean countries. The Facility supports countries by deploying technical experts in the region to provide close partnership, collaboration, and just-in-time support to accelerate the implementation of recovery projects and overall resilience-building efforts across the Caribbean. The CRF works in Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname.

² A [video PSA with local calypsonian](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZ0U0/), Skinny Fabulous. (shared by NEMO on twitter here: <https://twitter.com/NEMOSVG/status/1392201180638597123?s=20> and FB here: <https://fb.watch/5t6wmZ0U0/>).

³ New social media cards on [food](#), [water](#) and [driver](#) safety

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