BUILDING DISASTER RESILIENCE and RECOVERY in JAMAICA’S CULTURE SECTOR

Debra Kay Palmer
Director, World Heritage and Cultural Conventions
Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Jamaica
THE PROBLEM:

Jamaica is susceptible to many disasters – natural and manmade

- Main cultural repositories are located on the water front.
- Agencies house Jamaica’s public collections – archeological, historical, ethnographic, documentary/archival
- Culture Sector is not integrated into national Disaster Risk planning
- Culture sector has some measures, but formal strategies/policies not in place addressing DRM
- Many public repositories do not have adequate resources – financial, technical and relevant equipment to address DRM
- Main public repositories have issues of collections management in relation to DRM
- Many public repositories store collections in basements which are prone to flooding
- Absence of collaboration between Culture and DRM stakeholders
THE SOLUTION:

- In 2017, Jamaica's main cultural agencies underwent a Planning Institute of Jamaica hosted course on Post-Disaster Needs Assessment which was facilitated by UNESCO.
- In 2020 – UNESCO/CDEMA workshop on Disaster Resilience in the Caribbean’s Culture Sector.
- In 2021, UNESCO through pilot initiative focused on building Resilience of Caribbean SIDS to Disasters and Climate Change through Enhancing the Culture Sector's Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response.

- The project has brought together disaster planning and culture stakeholders to discuss: significance of the sector, impacts of disasters on the sector, integration of DRM planning.
- Facilitated 5 stakeholder consultations and 1 workshop with culture sector and DRM sector.
- Facilitated vulnerability assessments on main cultural repositories - An opportunity to gather base data on the sector that before was unavailable.
- Developing a National Strategy and Action Plan for Disaster Resilience and Recovery for the Culture Sector through guidelines already prepared by UNESCO.
- Public awareness – inclusion of youth and wider Jamaican society.
THE IMPACT:

- Provision of data that was not available before – research, assessments, surveys that will provide necessary information for the National Strategy and action plan
- Greater understanding among culture and disaster planning stakeholders
- Collaboration among the DRM entity - Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management and Ministry and Agencies responsible for Culture
- Public awareness campaign to bring the issue into the public arena and further encourage protection – student animation competition
- Training to be addressed for integrating DRM in collections management in main repositories, fire prevention and gaps in fire prevention equipment to be addressed