Title: Are mental health and psychosocial dimensions considered in disaster and climate change-related interventions in St. Lucia?

Climate change has increased both the intensity and occurrence of natural disasters in Caribbean islands. Although disaster prevention and recovery projects originally focused on physical dimensions such as infrastructure, agriculture, energy and land management, recent academic studies have suggested that the inclusion of mental health and psychosocial dimensions are equally essential for developing a resilient society. However, it is unclear whether mental health and psychosocial dimensions are included in actual interventions. Therefore, this study elucidates whether these dimensions have already been included in disaster and climate change interventions in St. Lucia, a Caribbean country which is highly vulnerable to climate change.

As interventions are first planned at the national and sectoral levels and then implemented, our analysis focused on three layers, i.e. the national policy, sectoral goal, and implementation layers. We attempted to identify relevant documents for each layer and examined whether or not mental health and psychosocial dimensions were considered. This document analysis was complemented by semi-structured interviews and questionnaires to key stakeholders.

We analyzed six (6) national policies. Four (4) of these policies were relevant to addressing climate-change. There were few instances where mental health and psychosocial dimensions were included, however greatly marginalized. On the other hand, in the remaining two (2) policies, i.e. the Emergency Well-Being Support Plan (2007) and the Stress Management Response Team Plan (2002) which focused solely on disasters, mental health and psychosocial dimensions are significantly mainstreamed. Despite this, these two (2) policies are outdated and have not being revised to include climate change. With regards to the implementation layer; three (3) documents which outlined climate-change projects implemented in St. Lucia between 2001 to 2017, were analyzed. Of 183 projects implemented, only (3) were related to Health and neither considered mental health and psychosocial dimensions.
Moreover, this research is targeted towards policy makers, Health officials and funders of climate change to assist in making proactive decisions towards the inclusivity of mental health and psychosocial dimensions. Lastly, this research is unique because it entails comprehensive analyses of key documents, some of which were inaccessible on the internet and is further supported by interviews which solidify these analyses.

Keywords: mental health and psychosocial, disaster, climate change, interventions