



LA SOUFRIÈRE 2021 ACTIVITY

THE VOLCANIC ALERT WAS RAISED
TO RED ON 08 APRIL 2021

FOOD SECURITY

IMPACT ON FOOD SECURITY
FOR SAINT VINCENT AND THE
GRENADINES

REGIONAL IMPACT

BROADER IMPACTS OF LA SOUFRIÈRE
ERUPTION ON SVG AND THE
SUBREGION

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About us

Issued on a monthly basis, The Hummingbird offers insights into the latest projects, publications, technical assistance missions and research carried out by ECLAC Caribbean. In addition to these, sneak previews are provided of the most salient upcoming events, alongside enriching follow-ups to previously covered issues. With a view to featuring a variety of facets of Caribbean life and lifestyle, The Hummingbird also zooms in on cultural activities and landmark occurrences through an eye-opening regional round-up.

EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor: Johann Brathwaite
Copy Editor: Denise Balgobin
Publication Design: Blaine Marcano

Cover Image: Wikimedia commons

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2 April

World Autism Awareness Day

22 April

International Girls in ICT Day

22 April

International Mother Earth Day

28 April

World Day for Safety and Health at Work

Upcoming Events

21 - 23 April

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22 April

Day of celebrations: Entry into force of the Escazú Agreement

4 May

Extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, 2021





Natural disasters in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, like most of the Caribbean, has had to manage its vulnerability to the impact of both hydroclimatic and volcanic disasters through the years. Historically, SVG has experienced five explosive eruptions of La Soufrière volcano since 1718, while as early as September 1898, the town of Barouallie was devastated by hurricane during a six-hour onslaught. More recently, the islands have been affected by other extreme weather events, notably in 1980 and 1987 when hurricanes destroyed banana and coconut plantations, and in 1998 and 1999, when Hurricanes Georges and Lenny respectively also caused extensive damage to the country.

However, it is to La Soufrière, the active stratovolcano standing 1,234 meters (4,049 ft) high on the northern end of island of Saint Vincent, that the Hummingbird turns its attention in this special issue, chronicling its most recent eruption, the multidimensional impact it has had on the country and neighbouring islands in the Southern Caribbean, and the success of the response and recovery efforts that followed.

The fortunes of the country have been varied during past volcanic events; when La Soufrière erupted in 1812 and 1902, many people were killed, much of the island destroyed and the economy devastated. In 1979, it erupted again, this time with no fatalities, but thousands had to be evacuated, and there was extensive agricultural damage. The most recent event was heralded by steadily increasing seismic activity that began in December 2020. It is through the effective monitoring of this volcanic activity, with responsible, careful preparation and planning for multidimensional response in the event of an eruption, as well as the ready support and solidarity of the countries of the Caribbean and beyond, regional and international organizations including CARICOM and the United Nations system, that ultimately assured the effective, comprehensive response that sought to abate the devastating impact and wide dislocation caused by the explosive eruptions that began in April 2021.

This issue of the Hummingbird underscores the unquestioned vulnerability of small island States of the Caribbean to such environmental shocks, epitomized in the current experience of SVG, and pays tribute to the ready response and support of the international community for its contribution towards mitigating the effects of such shocks. ■



Saint Vincent and the Grenadines a model example of successful disaster preparation, planning and response as La Soufrière set to blow

The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is to be lauded for its stewardship and proactiveness for effective disaster preparedness and response in the management of the catastrophic eruptions of the La Soufrière volcano. This plan was set in motion in December 2020.

As La Soufrière began an effusive eruption on 29 December 2020, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG), Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, held a media briefing to update the Vincentian population that the alert level was elevated to orange. He also outlined the national actions to be undertaken for the planning of possible eruption.

Thereafter, daily briefings provided

updates to the population, right up to the afternoon of 8 April 2021, just before the first explosive eruption, when the alert level was raised to red, signaling imminent explosive eruption. Data and information were science-driven by the University of the West Indies Seismic Research Centre (UWI-SRC) in coordination with the SVG National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO), generating scientific data on the seismic activities and applying this for decision making. The early warning triggers were based on the dome-building effusive eruption and visual observations, confirming that high temperatures detected by satellites (used normally to track fires) signaled that magma had reached the surface of the volcano.

In the period January to April 2021, the government maintained regular communications with regional governments which expressed solidarity; regional organizations including the CARICOM Secretariat and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), and agencies of the United Nations system, to ensure that they were fully prepared in the event of an explosive eruption. NEMO in partnership with CDEMA, UN agencies and other disaster relief agencies, began preparation of a national emergency plan. NEMO activated its 24/7 National Emergency Operations Centre. CDEMA activated its Regional Response Mechanism on 30 December 2020.

The UN subregional team for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean began mobilizing a multidisciplinary team to assist with immediate disaster management response in SVG. In this period also, and based on the field work of NEMO, a daily brief on the seismic activity status of the volcano was released, which included early warning procedures. Communities in affected zones received training and other information in preparedness for possible evacuation. Education and awareness-raising sessions were provided by researchers from UWI SRC and delivered to the public through radio, electronic and print media.

Guided by scientific data and with

the prediction of an imminent and violent eruption, on the afternoon of 8 April 2021, an evacuation order was issued for residents living in the red zones in the vicinity of La Soufrière. Prime Minister Gonsalves announced the evacuation order following an emergency press conference held with UWI-SRC Professor Richard Robertson, the lead scientist monitoring the volcano.

In making the evacuation order, Dr. Gonsalves said Professor Robertson had informed him that matters had deteriorated further at La Soufrière, and that the volcano could erupt explosively in a matter of hours or days. Dr. Gonsalves signaled to the nation that disaster management decisions were taken based on the advice of the scientists monitoring the volcano.

In this regard, Prof. Robertson reported that heightened volcanic-tectonic (VT) earthquakes in late March suggested that there was movement of fresh magma beneath the surface of the earth.

He reported, however, that early on the morning of 8 April, there was another significant change in seismicity, when the station closest to the volcano began recording low-level tremors. This led to his conclusion that “the volcano has changed, it has given us a bit more signals”.

Such signals had started weeks before with effusion, then moved to volcanic-tectonic earthquakes and now there were tremors associated with steam being driven by magma. These latest signals suggested the increased possibility of an explosive eruption. It was thus on the basis of this scientific data that the evacuation order was given. The volcano made its first explosive eruption in the early hours of 9 April, mere hours following the decision to evacuate the area.

Arrangements by this time had been made for evacuation from the designated red and orange zones to government run shelters, hotels, guest houses and private homes. Persons from the red and orange zones were successfully evacuated without any

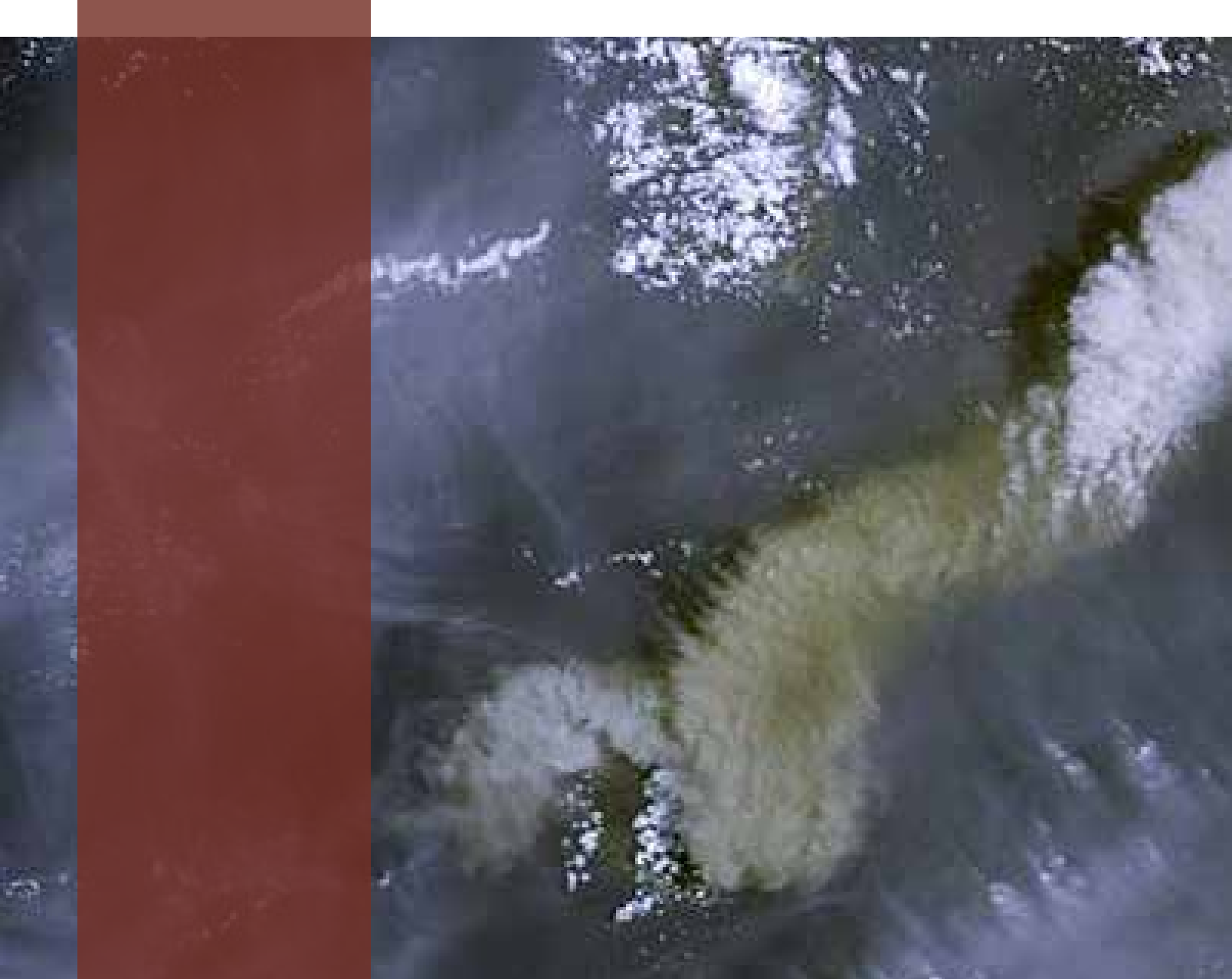
loss of life. The nation-wide disaster relief operations had to be conducted under required COVID-19 pandemic management requirements and just six weeks prior to the start of the 2021 Atlantic hurricane season.

At the height of the disaster, there were approximately 85 public shelters housing nearly 4,500 evacuees, with thousands more sheltering in private hotels, and homes of family and friends. The estimated number of persons registered as displaced was at 24, 419. Prime Minister Gonsalves joined the UN system in making urgent appeals to the Security Council and the wider international community for assistance to his beleaguered state.

As an immediate support effort on 19 April 2021, UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, in expressing his deep solidarity with the people and Government of SVG, announced the release of US \$1m from the Central Emergency Response Fund to assist the emergency response.

Decisions taken by the government and the response teams regarding return to the danger zone was based primarily on the advice of the scientists; in this respect Prime Minister Gonsalves vested the authority for providing such advice to the government in the scientific team from the UWI-SRC. This minimized the risk of ‘fake news’ and assured the authority and legitimacy of information on which critical decisions were being made by the government.

This account gives a brief snapshot to how plan for and respond to a national disaster. The government of SVG, CARICOM, UN partners, private sectors, other friendly Nations and developmental partners took the necessary precautions; this ensured that there was no loss of life, and facilitated the most orderly and effective mobilization of assistance to manage the disaster response that devastated this small vulnerable island in the Caribbean. This is how it’s done well. The task now is to support SVG in the rebuilding process and at the same time, monitor the ongoing status of La Soufrière, which continues to be at the orange alert level. ■



LA SOUFRIÈRE 2021 ACTIVITY

By Esther Chong Ling



Photo of smoke over La Soufrière Volcano courtesy Wikimedia Commons

Increased volcanic activity at La Soufrière was observed in December 2020, when an effusive eruption formed a new lava dome inside the summit crater on 27 December. Two types of eruptions are possible: effusive and explosive. An explosive eruption is the rapid expansion of magma or pressurized gases trapped in rocks that cause the rocks to split violently. Explosive eruptions tend to spew plumes of ash high into the atmosphere and catapult larger rock fragments several kilometers from the vent. In contrast, an effusive eruption allows magma to gradually surface out of the vent to form lava domes and lava flows.

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La Soufrière 2021 activity

By Esther Chong Ling

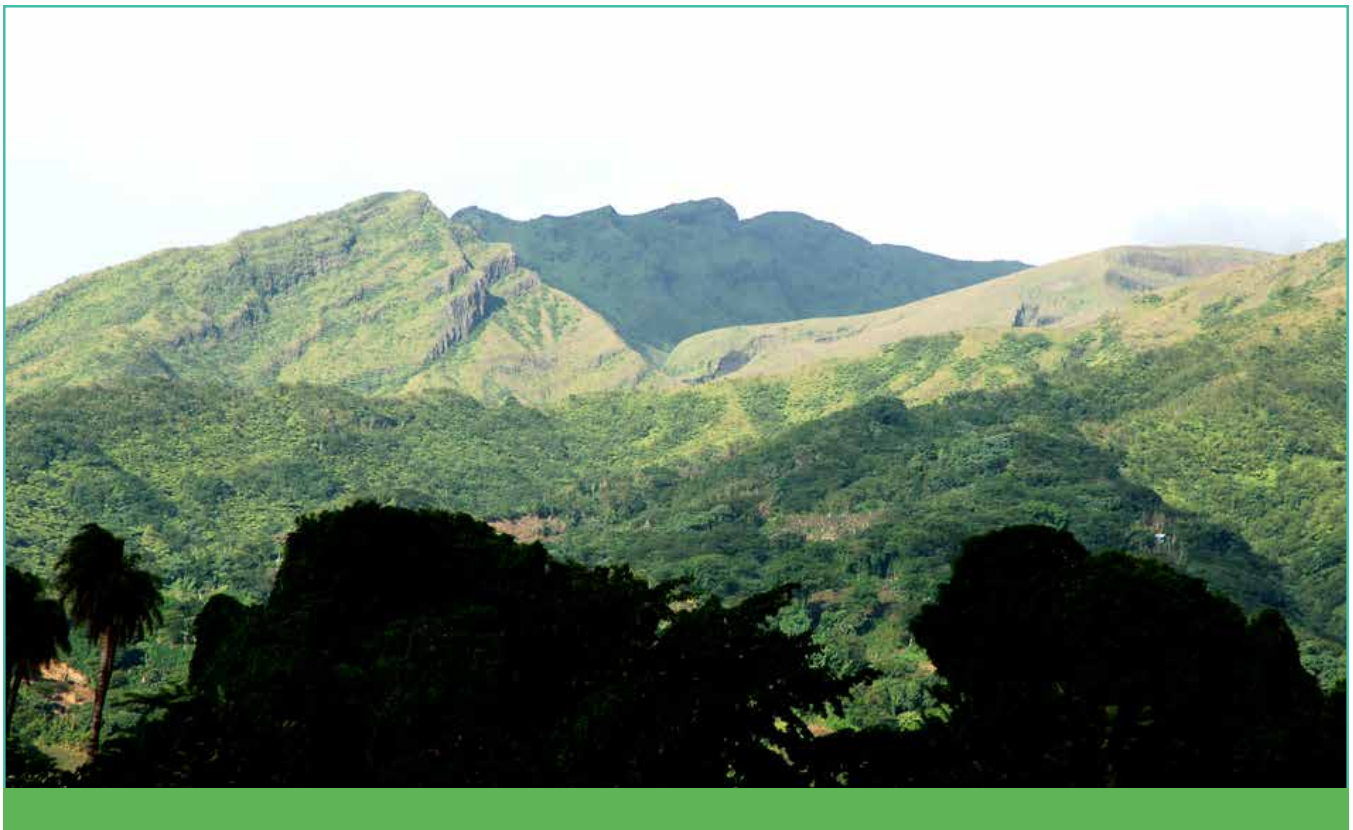
Government officials began outreach efforts to residents in the area throughout December 2020 and January 2021, in order to review evacuation plans, in case volcanic activity escalated. The effusive eruption continued into January, during which time the lava dome had grown between 100m and 200m (330ft and 660 ft) wide and 900m (3,000 ft) long, a growth which continued in February, as the lava dome was also releasing gas and steam plumes.

By 22 March 2021, the lava dome was 105m (344 ft) tall, 243m (797

ft) wide and 921m (3,022 ft) long. Sulfur dioxide emissions were being generated from the top of the dome. The volcanic alert level was raised from yellow to orange when the effusive eruption commenced. This meant that there was increased seismic and fumarolic activity and an explosive eruption could occur with less than a 24-hour notice. The volcanic alert was raised to red on 8 April 2021, after a sustained increase of volcanic and seismic activity over the preceding days, and an evacuation order issued, as an explosive phase of the eruption was deemed imminent.

The first explosive eruption occurred at 8:41 AM local time on 9 April, with an ash plume reaching approximately 8,000m (26,000 ft) and drifting eastward towards the Atlantic Ocean. By that time, approximately 16,000 people had evacuated the area surrounding the volcano.

Subsequent explosive eruptions, creating multiple pulses of ash, were reported in the afternoon and evening the same day, by the University of the West Indies Seismic Research Centre (UWI SRC).





The UWI SRC has been recording the seismic activity on Saint Vincent for the past 60 years. Commencing on 1 November 2020, a total of 121 seismic events was recorded at La Soufrière prior to the beginning of the effusive eruption at the end of December 2020.



Explosions continued over the following days, with plumes reaching nearby Barbados and covering the island with ash. Residents were also faced with power outages and no water supply, while the airspace over the island was closed due to the presence of smoke and thick plumes of volcanic ash. There were also reports of continued explosive activity and pyroclastic flows.

La Soufrière is actively monitored by the UWI SRC and the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) for SVG. The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) also activated the Regional Response Mechanism comprising a group of regional experts to coordinate a response on the ongoing eruption. The UWI SRC has been recording the seismic activity in Saint Vincent for the past 60 years. Since 1 November 2020, 121 seismic events were recorded at La Soufrière prior to the beginning of the effusive eruption at the end of December 2020.

This prompted a team of scientists to be deployed to the island to install additional instrumentation, which strengthened the existing monitoring system to gather more data on the seismic and fumarolic activities at La Soufrière. The scientific monitoring team consisted of senior technicians and scientists from the UWI SRC and the Montserrat Volcano Observatory (MVO), who were stationed at the

Belmont Observatory located approximately 9km away from the volcano. The lead scientist from the UWI SRC is Vincentian geologist, Professor Richard Robertson, who also lived through the 1979 eruption.

Several techniques were used to record the volcanic earthquakes, gas emissions and changes to the shape and size of the volcano as time progressed. Cameras were also installed at the Belmont Observatory and the crater rim, to allow continuous visual monitoring of the volcano.

National Aeronautics and Space Agency (NASA) Fire Information for Resource Management System (FIRMS) satellite imagery was used to register hotspot anomalies in the crater in the earlier phases of observation. Field observations and aerial surveys were also used to create a detailed model that mapped the dome. The chemical composition of the gases emitted were also sampled and analyzed to determine the concentration of magmatic gases such as Hydrogen Chloride (HCL), Hydrogen Fluoride (HF), Hydrogen Sulfide (H2S) and Sulphur Dioxide (SO2). This was done to determine the depth from within the earth that the gasses were being emitted, thus allowing the scientific team to better understand how the eruption would unfold.

The team also received equipment from United States Geological Survey (USGS) and its Volcano Disaster Assistance

Programme (VDAP) in February 2021 which aided in establishing a denser seismic network to monitor the crater.

The scientific team at the UWI SRC indicated that given the volatility of La Soufrière, it was difficult to predict when the ongoing eruptions would cease. Significant amounts of volcanic ash have continuously emitted from the crater, affecting SVG and neighboring islands, including Barbados. Satellite imagery has also detected that the Sulphur Dioxide (SO2) and ash emitted, are being picked up by the earth's planetary winds and are being dispersed across the globe.

The scientific monitoring effort of the UWI SRC is ongoing and was instrumental in predicting the occurrence of the explosive eruption this year, thus dramatically reducing the risk of casualties. The well-known explosive eruption in 1902 caused the loss of some two thousand lives. Therefore, it is highly important that science be kept at the forefront to monitor the going effects at Saint Vincent's La Soufrière. ■



Impact on food security for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Information facilitated by Gregg C. E Rawlins - IICA Representative in the Eastern Caribbean States (ECS)

The eruptions in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) have prompted the Government to institute emergency measures in the north of the country with mass evacuations of communities in the north east and north west of mainland Saint Vincent.

These areas are the rural heartland of the country, home to the farming communities and the source of much of the agricultural production vital to the food and nutrition security of the population. This region is also the site for commercial activities associated with regional and international trade in fresh produce and livestock.

This has meant that farmers living in the hazard zones have had to relocate southwards, in effect abandoning their livelihoods. Losses will accumulate to those enterprises

so abandoned and will also impact businesses further afield in some of the safer areas.

For livestock farmers the welfare of their animals is another issue, most animals, of necessity, having been left behind, unattended and endangered. For those whose animals were evacuated to safety, the logistical challenges of organizing and managing communal housing will no doubt pose severe challenges, and will, at least in the short term, curtail possibilities for expansion in the industry.

This will be a severe blow for a country that prides itself as the largest exporter of live animals among the OECS countries. The forecast for SVG in the near-term will therefore see diminished production and trade, a fall in

agriculture contribution to GDP and economic challenges for the farmers, especially those displaced by the disaster.

Agriculture in the red zone, the immediate environs of the volcano, has been decimated. As a result, a significant fall in agricultural output and increased scarcity of some commodities is anticipated in the short term. Indeed, initial, qualitative assessments indicate widespread loss of crops. The several inches of ash-fall in many instances entirely, or partially covered entire fields of the low-lying annual crops, resulting also in severe injury to many perennials and tree crops. These losses and damage to perennials and tree crops will inevitably impact the livelihoods of thousands in the rural communities.



The area most affected in the red zone was noted for its tree crop cultivation; it had extensive acreages of coconut trees as well as banana, plantain and arrowroot cultivation.

There was also extensive production of vegetable crops, especially in the north-west. Information on the pre-eruption levels of cultivation is being collected with a view to facilitating more accurate assessment of the extent of the losses that will likely accrue to these industries. Further south, significant ash fall has also inundated crops. High losses are therefore anticipated in this area as well, based on early observation and recall of the experiences during the 1979 eruption.

In the wake of the destruction of the country's agricultural industries, the food security of SVG remains of critical concern in the short-term. ■



Flooding and mudslides add to Saint Vincent's volcano woes

To add insult to injury, on 29 April, heavy rains poured down on the island of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, causing flooding and mudslides that damaged some homes and further battered areas already burdened by heavy ashfall from eruptions of La Soufrière volcano.

Authorities said there were no reports of deaths or injuries as the storm deluged the Caribbean nation for hours, with some areas receiving from 3 inches (7.5 cm) to 5 inches (12.5 cm) of rain.

There were reports of caved-in roofs and some structures wrecked by landslides and flooding in rural areas, and authorities said bridges also sustained damage. Problems in Kingstown, the capital, were confined to high water.

"I drove my vehicle into Kingstown this morning. However, if the flood doesn't clear, I may have to leave it in the city," recounted Darren Williams, a salesman.

These troubles follow the series of eruptions at La Soufrière that began on 9 April and blanketed parts of Saint Vincent island with heavy ash that damaged buildings and ruined farm fields. Over 20,000 people had to leave their homes and the water supply and electricity were disrupted.

Roderick Stewart, a volcano seismologist at UWI SRC, said on the state radio station that monitoring equipment had registered indications of lahars, dangerous slides of fast-moving volcanic ash turned into slurry by the rainstorm.

"Our seismometers have been picking up signals from lahars in several locations, so we suspect there are lahars in all the major drainages and it may have caused quite a lot of damage as it passed down from the volcano into the sea," Stewart said. He said the volcano itself had been relatively quiet recently. "It does seem to be going back—I won't say to sleep, cause that's a bit hopeful—but it does seem to be quieting down." ■



Broader impacts of La Soufrière eruption on Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the subregion

by Lika Doehl Diouf

The seismic activity of La Soufrière has remained low since 22 April, and as a result the alert level has been reduced from red to orange. Nevertheless, the UWI Seismic Research Centre has cautioned that explosions with accompanying ashfall could restart in the future, with little or no warning.

In a press conference held on 14 April, Didier Trebucq, UN Resident Coordinator for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, detailed the possible broader impacts of the continued eruptions on Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the neighbouring islands in the subregion.

Impacts were felt in Barbados, Grenada and Saint Lucia, in the form of ashfall. Further subregional impacts, including on Antigua and Barbuda, Guadeloupe, Martinique and

Saint Kitts and Nevis may be expected, depending on the length and intensity of future eruptions and the direction of prevailing winds. It has also to be noted that most of the ashfall occurred into the marine environment.

The humanitarian crisis resulting from the eruption is expected to last at least six months and depending on the levels of seismic activities. The crisis response, in particular the movement of evacuees, has been complicated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Water, shelter and hygiene supplies, including masks and personal protective equipment were listed as priorities in the short term for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG). Clean-up of ashes and environment health management was further noted as a priority for all countries, with the aim of returning to normal as soon as

possible and mitigating potential negative socioeconomic impacts, including on human health, water supply, agriculture, fisheries, coastal ecosystem productivities, air travel and tourism. It was also noted that digital solutions were being considered to aid in the crisis response, such as digital registration of evacuees, and solutions for transfer of cash vouchers to evacuees in shelters across the affected islands.

Experts in environmental and human-health toxicology and other relevant fields were being deployed to assist with the clean-up of the ashes, including to ensure that ashes are collected, stored and disposed of safely. Volcanic ash is composed of tiny pieces of rock and volcanic glass. Falling and deposited ash, in addition to being a health hazard, can have serious adverse effects on environmental health, agriculture, marine life and



infrastructure.

Already, contamination of the water supply and significant losses of crops and livestock have been reported in Saint Vincent. In the first weeks, fishers in Saint Lucia also noted that the ashfall from La Soufrière has had a negative impact on their catches as well as on maritime safety, as the ash reduced visibility at sea. In Barbados, a partial lockdown was initiated during the first days of heavy ashfall, and the government recommended that people with chronic respiratory conditions stay indoors and take precautionary measures.

Further, volcanic ash is both abrasive and corrosive. Possible impacts in the longer term include the loss of or damage to impacted vessels, vehicles and public and private infrastructure, in particular those made of metal or steel. The ashfall also

poses a serious threat to aviation safety, which resulted in the grounding of several flights in the subregion and the closure of the international airports in SVG and Barbados. The closure of these airports complicated and delayed the initial crisis response, as relief supplies had to be delivered via seaports.

At the request of SVG Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, the United Nations launched a funding appeal to support the crisis response and early recovery in the subregion. Trebucq noted that the response so far has been effective, with regional mechanisms working efficiently alongside other UN agencies and humanitarian partners. He further commended the solidarity that had been shown throughout the Caribbean and the strong response capacity that had been demonstrated.

On 28 April, the General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution of solidarity with and support for the Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as well as neighbouring countries affected by the impact of the eruptions of La Soufrière volcano (A/75/L.80). In that resolution, the General Assembly invited the international community to increase support and encouraged further contributions to the emergency response and rehabilitation process. On 13 April, the United Nations launched a USD29.2 million global funding appeal to aid SVG, both in supporting immediate humanitarian assistance and to support a sustainable recovery. This UN Global Funding Appeal for the volcanic eruption has raised US \$6.9M to date. ■



Prime Minister Dr. Ralph E Gonsalves addresses UN Security Council

Following is the statement delivered by the PM of SVG, Dr. the Hon Ralph Gonsalves during a session of the Security Council held on 19 April:

"Saint Vincent and the Grenadines commends Vietnam for its leadership in initiating this debate on the enhancing of cooperation between the United Nations and regional/sub-regional organizations.

This subject is of immediate relevance to my country in the context of a massive natural disaster against the backdrop of the many-sided challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the predicted active Atlantic hurricane season that begins in six weeks' time. Please permit me a little latitude for a minute or two.

Mr. President, for 11 days now, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been in the throes of a series of explosive volcanic eruptions on the island of Saint Vincent. As a consequence, nearly one-fifth of

the island's population has had to be evacuated to safer areas.

A monumental challenge of humanitarian relief, inclusive of security considerations, recovery and reconstruction face us. Without effective cooperation between our country, the United Nations, and our regional/sub-regional organizations, our life and living would be wholly unbearable. Without an enhancement of this cooperation, the relief effort would be stymied and the prospects for our recovery and reconstruction would be dismal.

The United Nations and its agencies have been actively at work; and the personal leadership of my friend, Secretary-General, António Guterres, has been outstanding. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the Regional Security System (RSS), the ALBA, the Association of Caribbean States, and their

allied regional agencies have been at the forefront with their magnificent efforts. Still, much more is required to be done. Across our land the faces of men and women are strained and anxious; they are hurting badly.

The global community is being summoned to action to our aid in the name of humanity and in accordance with the UN Charter; and it cannot allow itself to make haste slowly. Tomorrow, (20 April 2021) under the auspices of the UN, a Global Appeal Fund for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will be launched.

Turning now, more specifically to conflict-affected settings, it has become a ringing truth that regional institutions in concert with the United Nations, are often best-suited to facilitate the pacific settlement of disputes through mediation, confidence-building, observation and verification missions, and other measures that promote stability, build trust, and create an environment conducive



to development.

Indeed, any dispute that is likely to endanger international peace and security should first be addressed through these peaceful means, with the assistance and participation of relevant regional arrangements, as enshrined in the UN Charter.

Security is, at its very core, a collective endeavour that can only be achieved as parties build trust and stable relationships. In this regard, lasting peace can never be imposed. It must emerge organically from among all relevant stakeholders.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines believes that regional arrangements, such as ASEAN, the African Union (AU), and our very own Caribbean Community (CARICOM) are often better placed to support peace processes than those entities that are far removed from the unique and specific histories, cultures, politics and material

circumstances of development.

The Security Council is required always to lend its full support and encouragement to all regional mechanisms and refrain from any actions that may circumvent or undermine the legitimate role of regional bodies. We welcome the ongoing efforts of the Secretary General, and his Special Envoys and Special Representatives, to enhance the cooperation between the United Nations and various regional and subregional organizations.

The convening platform of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) also proves useful in providing a coherent, multi-stakeholder strategy to assist conflict-affected countries to overcome their challenges. Greater efforts must be made to enhance further this comprehensive "whole-of-system" approach; and regional arrangements must be included at every step of the process.

Conflict prevention and resolution

activities are most effective when they are complemented by targeted peacebuilding and development initiatives that address the root causes of insecurity, improve lives and livelihoods, and bolster national ownership over peace processes. The norms and principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, and political independence must always serve as a guidepost for conflict prevention and resolution.

In all situations, the mandates of regional organizations ought never to be subverted by hegemonic self-interests or eroded through unilateral action; but ought always to serve as platforms to enhance sovereignty and promote solidarity and cooperation. Still, none of these vital precepts ought ever to blind us to egregious abuse or violation of elemental human rights and the consequential need for appropriate collective action through the Security Council." ■



Humanitarian support and relief efforts

The countries of the wider Caribbean and members of the diaspora have rallied in solidarity and support of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) during this period of emergency, offering assistance in a range of ways. Regional organizations also stepped up. Below are a few examples of this:

- Saint Lucia, Grenada, Antigua and Barbados all agreed to take in evacuees. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' Prime Minister, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, encouraged people evacuating to shelters elsewhere on the island to take the COVID-19 vaccine.
- CCRIF SPC provided US \$2.2 million (EC \$6 million) for relief and recovery efforts. CCRIF SPC operates as a developmental insurance company, whereby members may receive support in times of crises. CCRIF SPC believes that this support will provide much needed liquidity to respond to the ongoing relief and recovery efforts in SVG. Although CCRIF SPC does not currently offer cover for volcanic eruptions, it advanced the view that as the dedicated disaster risk financing

facility in the region, it has a moral obligation to respond as best as possible to the needs of its members when confronted with such dire circumstances.

- Venezuelan Foreign Minister, Jorge Arreaza, announced via Twitter that his country would be sending humanitarian supplies and risk experts.
- Assistance and emergency financial support was being provided by several nearby islands, the United Kingdom and agencies such as the United Nations. The first significant offer of long-term funding, of US \$20 million, was announced on 13 April 2021 by the World Bank.
- More than JA \$20 million worth of supplies was sent, as part of Jamaica's disaster relief aid. Jamaica's Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Desmond McKenzie, said the coordinated effort is a "demonstration of Caribbean unity."
- The Trinidad and Tobago Galleons Passage carried medical personnel and TT soldiers to SVG, for an

initial stay of two weeks, to provide assistance. The vessel also took medical supplies and food. National Security Minister Stuart Young, who toured the boat, said, "We are trying to arrange marine vessels to take water. We have several water trucks on Galleons Passage, mattresses, foodstuff. We will be sending another vessel up with more relief items."

- The TT Supermarket Association also offered assistance to SVG as people there were evacuated in the wake of the eruption of the La Soufrière volcano. SATT president, Rajiv Diptee, said the group was ready to assist with humanitarian efforts where supplies and food are concerned, as well as raising funds for immediate disaster relief efforts.
- SVG nationals residing in the United States took an "all hands on deck" approach to rush urgent relief aid to their homeland. The Brooklyn-based Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Relief, Inc. arranged a collection centre for emergency relief supplies, and prepared a list of the most-needed items to be shipped to the island.

- Humanitarian efforts currently taking place in volcano-hit SVG were set to benefit from just under US \$900,000 from the European Union (EU). The emergency funding will be managed by the EU humanitarian aid department and implemented by humanitarian partners already active in Kingstown. It will prioritize interventions to guarantee immediate access to water, sanitation, hygiene, healthcare and distributions of non-food items, in addition to the protection of the most vulnerable.

- CIBC FirstCaribbean, a financial services company based in Barbados and the Caribbean subsidiary of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC), has sent a shipment of much needed supplies to the island. The shipment aboard the Admiral Bay, was coordinated by the Barbados Coast Guard and delivered to the National Emergency Management Organisation (NEMO) in SVG. The relief supplies included over 40 pallets of food, water, cleaning supplies and sanitary items, which were purchased by funds donated by the bank's charitable arm, the FirstCaribbean International ComTrust Foundation.

- The CARICOM Private Sector Organisation (CPSO), together with the Caribbean Manufacturers' Association (CMA), held a joint emergency meeting on 10 April to co-ordinate a response. Coming out of this meeting, a master list was developed, to track how each member State was responding to relief efforts. The CPSO is also collaborating with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA).

- USAID committed to donate US \$100,000. This assistance follows the support already provided to NEMO for evacuation efforts as well as humanitarian needs through the Red Cross. The USAID-USGS Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP) has also been supporting the UWI Seismic Research Centre in monitoring the volcano. ■

UN launches US \$29m appeal for Saint Vincent

The United Nations has launched a US \$29.2 million global funding appeal to help people affected by the eruptions of the La Soufrière volcano in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and other impacted countries.

"The eruptions of the La Soufrière volcano are expected to displace close to 20,000 persons with over 12,700 evacuees now registered in public shelters and in private homes," the UN said in a statement.

"Entire villages have been covered in ashes, buildings damaged, schools and businesses closed, crops and livestock destroyed, and residents left with limited access to clean drinking water. Further eruptions are expected in the coming weeks."

The UN said funding raised will provide immediate lifesaving humanitarian aid including cash assistance and clean water, and support a sustainable recovery, including through repairs to homes and support for livelihoods.

The UN said it and its partners will also assess the economic, social and environmental impact on countries affected by the volcano, supporting with ash removal and improving environmental health conditions.

It said another priority was to continue preventing the spread of COVID-19.

The appeal was launched on 20 April 2021 by the UN Resident Coordinator, Didier Trebucq, alongside SVG Prime Minister Ralph

Gonsalves and Regis Chapman, Head of Caribbean Subregional Office for the World Food Program (WFP) and Aloys Kamuragiye, Representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Barbados and Eastern Caribbean.

The appeal will be supported by other UN agencies participating from a distance – UN Women, UNFPA, PAHO, IOM, UNESCO, UNDP, FAO, UNOPS, UNEP and OCHR. ECLAC Caribbean, while not a relief agency, remains ready to conduct a damage and loss assessment (DaLA). Several of these have been conducted following natural disasters in the Caribbean, especially over the very active hurricane seasons of the last few years.

The UN said the Director General of the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Dr. Didacus Jules, as well as Executive Director of Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), Elizabeth Riley, also supports the appeal.

"This crisis comes at the most difficult time, as the world is grappling with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and ahead of the hurricane season", said UN Secretary-General António Guterres in a statement issued by his spokesperson prior to the launch.

"The Secretary-General commends the local response efforts underway and reiterates the full support of the United Nations," said Stéphane Dujarric. ■



A brief account of the history of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was originally settled around 5,000 BC by the Ciboney people, then by the Arawaks and subsequently by the Caribs. When Christopher Columbus passed near Saint Vincent on his third voyage in 1498, the Caribs were the principal inhabitants on the island.

The descendants of runaway African slaves and Caribs became known as "Black Caribs", or Garifuna. The Black Caribs aggressively resisted frequent British, French, and Dutch attempts to settle in Saint Vincent, but they eventually allowed limited French settlement of the island's west coast in the early 18th century. In 1763, with the Treaty of Paris, Britain was granted control of Saint Vincent and settlement proceeded, although the Black Caribs refused to accept British sovereignty.

The Black Caribs' ongoing resistance to British occupation led to two wars (1769–73 and 1795–97); the Caribs were exiled following the second. Most were deported to an island off the coast of Honduras, and later migrated to Belize and other areas along the Atlantic coast of Central America. Those remaining sought refuge in the interior of the island, until an act of the colonial legislature in 1805 pardoned them for their rebellion.

Following the quelling of Carib revolts, the British government took full control. By the Treaty of Paris of 1763, Saint Vincent became part of an administrative union known as the Federal Colony of Windward Islands, established in 1871, comprising the islands of Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG), and British Tobago. This administration remained in place until the Federation of the West Indies was inaugurated in 1958.

SVG was predominantly a plantation economy, producing such crops as sugar, cotton, coffee, and cocoa with slave labour. The abolition of slavery in 1834 increased the bargaining power of the former slaves, reducing the planters' absolute control over the supply of labour on the plantations. Portuguese and South Asian labourers were thus introduced later in the century to substitute those former slaves who no longer wished to work on the plantations and to increase competition and weaken the position of those emancipated workers who sought to remain in the plantation labour market.

In the latter half of the 19th century, sugar prices fell, plunging the island into a depression that lasted through the end of the century. The hurricane of 1898 and the eruption of La Soufrière volcano in 1902 were especially damaging to agriculture, hindering economic



Photo of Saint Vincent courtesy hectorlo CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

recovery, and undermining the continued viability of the sugar industry. Sugar was replaced as the major crop by arrowroot and sea island cotton, which remained the dominant export crops until replaced by bananas in the 1950s. With the loss of preferential arrangements provided by the UK and Europe under the ACP agreements, the economy of SVG has become increasingly dependent on tourism. The economy is also buoyed by remittances from the Vincentian diaspora.

The early 20th century in SVG, as in most of the countries of the Caribbean, saw protracted struggle to replace the crown colony system of government with a representative system. A legislative council was established in 1925, but the franchise was limited and the majority of descendants of slaves were kept out of the process. Efforts to extend the franchise and to get further constitutional reform

culminated in an established federation of the islands. Riots in the mid-1930s, sparked by fallout from the Great Depression, paved the way for further constitutional reform that reached a climax in 1951, when universal adult suffrage was introduced. Saint Vincent also joined the West Indies Federation, which existed from 1958 to 1962. A new constitution was adopted in 1960. Internal self-government was granted in 1969 and SVG became the last of the Windward Islands to gain its independence within the British Commonwealth on 27 October 1979.

Since its independence, SVG has been under the political leadership of the centre-left Saint Vincent Labour Party under PM Milton Cato in 1979; the centre-right New Democratic Party (NDP) in 1984 under PM James Mitchell (succeeded by his Finance Minister, Arnhim Eustace on his resignation in 2000); and the

social-democratic Unity Labour Party (ULP) under Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves in 2001. The ULP under the leadership of PM Gonsalves was returned to power for an unprecedented fifth consecutive term during general elections held in October 2020. SVG joined the Caribbean Free Trade Area on 01 July 1968 and became a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) in 1974 and 1981 respectively. ■

Caribbean Cow Heel Soup

Cow heel soup is one of the most loved dishes in the Caribbean. Hearty and always filling, it is cooked with yellow split peas, vegetables and dumplings.

Cow heels are sold in almost all markets and grocery stores in the Caribbean. A pressure cooker is the best pot to use to make this soup as the cow heel takes a long time to cook. If using a pot, increase the cooking time and water. The aim is to cook the cow heel until it is 'fall-off-the-bone' tender.

What you will need:

- 2 teaspoons oil
- 1 cup onions (diced)
- 6 sprigs thyme (divided)
- 2 pounds cow heel (chopped)
- Salt to taste
- Black pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup yellow split peas
- 6 to 8 okra
- 2 carrots (cut into 1-inch rounds)
- 12 flour dumplings

How to Make it:

Step 1. Gather the ingredients.

Step 2. Heat oil in pressure cooker.

Step 3. Add onions and half of the thyme and sauté until the onions are translucent, 2 to 3 minutes.

Step 4. Add cow heel along with salt and pepper to taste and sauté for 3 minutes.

Step 5. Add 5 cups of water, stir, cover the pressure cooker and let cook for 30 minutes. Start timing after the first whistle.

Step 6. Release the valve of the pressure cooker to let out the steam. Open the pressure cooker and add the peas and more water. There should be enough water to cook the peas and make a soup.

Step 7. Add more thyme and let the peas and cow heel cook on high heat until the peas soften.

Step 8. Add okra and dumplings to pot, cover and let cook for 6 to 8 minutes or until the dumplings are cooked through. Taste soup for seasoning and adjust salt and pepper accordingly.



CONTACT US

ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean,
1 Chancery Lane, P.O. Box 1113,
Port of Spain,
Trinidad and Tobago.

MEDIA CONTACT

Tel.: 1 868 224 8075

E-mail: eclac-media-pos@eclac.org

SOCIAL MEDIA



<https://www.cepal.org/en/headquarters-and-offices/eclac-caribbean>

