

## Is Paris our last hope for survival?



Destruction in Dominica from TS Erika

Photo Credit: Jodie Dublin Dangleben

Traffic was terrible last Friday while the remnants of Tropical Storm Grace were passing through Barbados. As I was sitting for hours in the rain, I had more than enough time to think about how Dominica was decimated by a mere storm and also how the island's development was set back 20 years, according to their Prime Minister, the Honourable Roosevelt Skerritt in his address to the nation.

This is of course not the first time a storm or an even weaker system has destroyed parts of our islands. Storms and low pressure systems have been thrashing our behinds for a while now. I think back to Tropical Storm Tomas in 2010. It snuck up on Barbados in late October and wreaked a bit of havoc. It felled trees, destroyed houses, caused flooding and made roads impassable.

Furthermore, just 3 years later, an out-of-season trough affected a now recovering St. Lucia and St. Vincent on Christmas Eve. It shows that as soon as you get back on your feet, you can be knocked down again when you least expect it. I had only just left a workshop in St. Lucia a few days before the event. While on a field trip, I spoke to a farmer who said he had just recovered from Tomas and he showed me his bountiful harvest. When I contacted him after the trough, he said his field was once again wiped out and he needed

to restart for the second time. This was his livelihood and I doubt it will be the last time disaster strikes.

While inching forward every 20 minutes or so I also thought about Loss and Damage and if it was on the table for the region. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are indeed most vulnerable to climate change effects. They are also susceptible to sea level rise especially since most of the inhabitants live in low-lying coastal areas. The administrative offices in Barbados are located just a few metres from the sea and our electricity comes mainly from a coastal plant. Let us not forget the droughts that we have had and in the words of Bob Marley, 'You ain't gonna miss your water until your well runs dry'. Lastly, the insanely unusually hot weeks we have been having. These effects not only affect the economy but our health and well-being.

I am elated though about the unity and swift action this region has displayed so far with aid swarming into Dominica daily. Countries are individually raising money, collecting food stuff and sending rescue personnel to help our neighbour out.

As a young climate change advocate, I have to applaud the work of youth organisations such as the Caribbean Youth Environment Network (CYEN) which helps to raise the awareness of the region's young citizens about climate change impacts. Additionally, the Action/2015 global campaign which aims to mobilise regular citizens worldwide to address climate change, inequalities and poverty.

Conversely, commitments from larger and richer G8 countries to reduce their emissions and provide funds for adaptation and mitigation projects are necessary for our survival. It seems that climate change negotiations so far are going as slowly as this traffic. Will there be an agreement that satisfies the needs of the Caribbean SIDS? We can only hope.

In the meantime, I would suggest that community vulnerability studies be done for each country to map the most vulnerable areas to different disasters. In this way we can be better prepared for disasters like Erika.