

Land Tenure and Post-Disaster Economic Recovery for Caribbean SIDS: The Case of Diego Martin, Trinidad

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SUMMARY

The prevailing land tenure and cadastral arrangements for most Caribbean SIDS prohibit well-organized and timely post-disaster economic recoveries. While secure land tenure is known to facilitate a range of post-disaster activities, particular focus would be placed on the facilitation of: 1. The state appropriation of recovery funding for housing and small/ micro enterprises; and 2. The inventory of state-owned real and associated immovable property – for the accurate assessment of natural disaster impact on state resources, and for accurate checks on the availability of state property for public assistance. According to the Diego Martin Regional Corporation of Trinidad, approximately 28,000 persons within 20 communities were directly affected by the flood events of August 11th, 2012 within the north-western section of the island. Official estimates reveal damages amounting to over TT\$100,000,000. The increased frequency and intensity of such hazards in Caribbean SIDS are likely to create unfavorable growth rates where economic buffers created by dominant sectors are negatively impacted by adverse exogenous/ global dynamics. Caribbean SIDS are thus constrained to facilitate well-organized and timely post-disaster economic recoveries. This study entails a review of literature on land tenure and cadastral systems, and post-disaster economic recovery for selected Caribbean SIDS; and structured interviews with officials in disaster management, land administration, and local government. These interviews are intended to determine the existing basis for the state's appropriation of resources – whether via movable or immovable property or financial support – and the existing mechanism for inventories of state property. The challenges associated with these are noted and are theoretically placed into the context of a highly developed land tenure system for Trinidad & Tobago, from which comparisons are drawn. Results are expected to show that a highly developed land tenure system in Trinidad & Tobago (and other Caribbean SIDS) provides a sound basis for a variety of state activities associated with post-disaster economic recovery.