

Update #5

Volcanic Activity in St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Report from the Delegation in St. Vincent and the Grenadines

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Date: April 21, 2021

SITUATION

Volcanic Activity

On April 18, 2021 at approximately 4:49 p.m., the La Soufrière Volcano erupted, making it the most recent eruption since the start of explosive eruptions on April 09, 2021. The eruptions have thus far resulted in the release of some 21 million cubic metres of material. The hazard level remains high (Red) meaning that eruptions can occur at any time without further notice.

The University of the West Indies, Seismic Research Centre continues to monitor the activities at the volcano from their observation point at Belmont, in the Red Zone, providing daily updates on activities.

Red & Orange Zone

The situation in the Red and Orange Zones, and some parts of the Yellow Zone in the northwest, remains especially hazardous (see attached map). The continuing eruptions have affected the commencement of the comprehensive damage and loss evaluations that must be undertaken in these areas, but some preliminary work has already been undertaken. The areas are off limits to unauthorized personnel with only essential services having access to the area.

Evacuations

Prime Minister, Dr the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves ordered evacuations from Red and Orange Zone communities from Friday, April 9, 2021. Most people have relocated southwards.

As of April 19, 2021 the National Emergency Organisation (NEMO) has indicated that there are some 13,303 persons registered as having evacuated from the hazard areas. This includes 6,592 persons who are housed in 85 public shelters. There are a further 6,711 persons located in private shelters.

Damage and losses

There have been no reported loss of human life because of the disaster up to this point. There is substantial property damage, especially in the Red Zone and Orange Zones. Many roofs have collapsed under the sheer weight of the ash, exacerbated at times by rainfall, given the water holding capacity of the ash.

IMPLICATIONS FOR AGRICULTURE

The agriculture sector has been decimated by the disaster. There are 10,438 farmers entered in the Ministry of Agriculture's registry. Some 27.5% of these resided and farmed in the Red and Orange Zones and have been entirely displaced. The Yellow Zone has been partially evacuated. A total of 24.6% of farmers in the country reside and farm in this zone. In addition the farm workers associated with these farms have been displaced. The implications for agricultural production and livelihoods is therefore enormous.

The Ministry of Agriculture on April 18, 2021 established four committees as follows:

1. Physical Assets Committee;
2. Food and Nutrition Security Committee;
3. Damage and Loss Assessment Committee; and
4. Recovery Committee.

IICA has been requested to participate on the 3rd and 4th committees. In addition, IICA is chairing the Damage and Loss Committee.

OTHER ISSUES

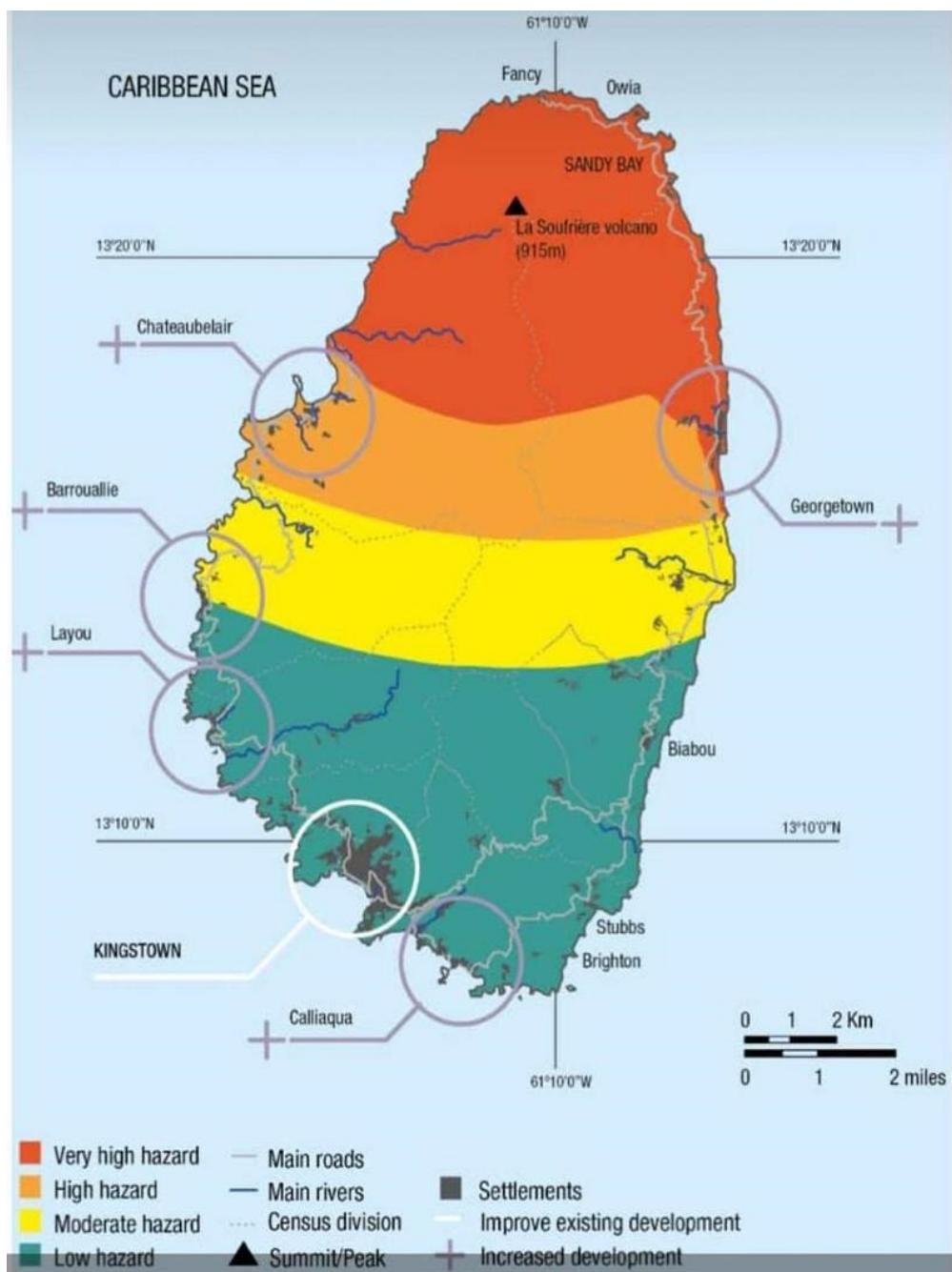
The wider implications of the disaster, mentioned in the previous updates remain relevant and become more evident by the day. They include:

- Economic implications encompassing not only agriculture but also other forms of livelihood including fisheries, which is an important occupation of communities in this zone.
- The ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic with low levels of vaccination in the population to this point. This will have implications for the persons in the shelters, the communities in which the shelters are located and the nation as a whole.
- Ongoing security concerns occasioned especially by persons breaking houses and removing property. Praedial larceny is also a continuing concern as many animals are left unattended and unsecured.
- There is an animal welfare issue where some animals in the hazard zones appear to be starving. Dogs in some instances are beginning to destroy stock.

ACTIONS BY THE IICA

IICA continues to provide close support to the Ministry of Agriculture and is actively participating on the two committees mentioned above.

IICA is also looking actively towards the initiation of actions to provide support to farmers and farmers organizations. In this regard, IICA has engaged with the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) to develop a project to support farmers.



LA SOUFRIERE VOLCANO HAZARD ALERT LEVEL

Alert Level	Symptoms	Action Scientist	Action: Civil Authorities
Green	Volcano is quiescent (quiet); seismic and fumarolic (steam vent) activities are at or below the historical level at this volcano. No other unusual activity has been observed.	Normal monitoring	Undertake ongoing public awareness campaign and work on volcanic emergency plans.
Yellow	Volcano is restless; seismic or fumarolic activity or both are above the historical level at this volcano or other unusual activity has been observed (this activity will be specified at the same time that the alert level is raised).	Monitoring system will be brought up to full capability. Civil authorities alerted.	Undertake ongoing public awareness campaigns and work on volcanic emergency plans. Advise vulnerable communities of evacuation procedures in the event of an emergency.
Orange	Highly elevated level of seismicity or fumarolic activity or both or other highly unusual symptoms. Eruptions may occur with less than 24 hours notice.	Monitoring system continuously manned. Regular visual inspection of potential vent areas. Continuous ground deformation and hydrothermal monitoring. Daily assessment reports to civil authorities.	Coordinate evacuation (if necessary) based on hazard zones. Entry to the restricted access zone by scientist will be permitted after evacuation on a case-by-case basis. Organize regular radio and television announcements.
Red	Eruption is in progress or may occur without further warning	Measurements as permitted by safety condition. Civil authorities advised continuously.	Coordinate continued evaluation as necessary. Organize regular radio and television announcements.