

## **The Dilemmas of Risk-Sensitive Development on a Small Volcanic Island**

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Key words: Disaster risk management; physical planning; small island developing states

In the Small Islands Developing State (SIDS) of St Vincent and the Grenadines in the Caribbean, the most destructive disasters in terms of human casualties have been the multiple eruptions of La Soufrière volcano situated in the north of St Vincent. Despite this major threat, people continue to live close to the volcano and national development plans do not include risk reduction measures for volcanic hazards. This paper examines the development options in volcanic SIDS and presents a number of conundrums for disaster risk management on the island of St Vincent. Improvements in monitoring of volcanic hazards and ongoing programmes to enhance communications systems and encourage community preparedness planning have increased awareness of the risks associated with volcanic hazards, yet this has not translated into more risk-informed development planning decisions. The current physical development plan in fact promotes investment in infrastructure in settlements located within the zone designated very high-hazard. However, this is not an anomaly or an irrational decision: severe space constraints in SIDS, as well as other historical social and economic factors, limit growth and options for low-risk development. Greater attention needs to be placed on developing measures to reduce risk, particularly from low-intensity hazards like ash, limiting where possible exposure to volcanic hazards and building the resilience of communities living in high-risk areas. This requires planning for both short- and longer-term impacts from renewed activity. Volcanic SIDS face multiple hazards because of their geography and topography, so development plans should identify these interconnected risks and options for their reduction, alongside measures aimed at improving personal preparedness plans so communities can learn to live with risk.