Hurricane Sandy: it hit the Caribbean too, you know

While the media were focused on New York, little attention was paid to the pounding taken by Haiti, Jamaica and Cuba

Before making landfall on the shores of South New Jersey, [Hurricane Sandy](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/hurricane-sandy) pounded Haiti, Jamaica and Cuba, leaving massive destruction in its wake. There were few boots on the ground from the western media to cover the effects on these Caribbean countries.

But when it became clear that the New York region would bear the full force of Sandy, the news media deployed their own massive force to cover every movement of the story. The networks and local television stations battled to show which reporter was bravest as they fed us live feeds of journalists standing in the middle of the hurricane.

The resilience and heroism of average people were the narrative the day after the storm. The dead were rightly given a face and their lives memorialised.

But we seldom see these kinds of reportage out of places like Haiti, a country that has seen more natural disasters than the richest countries would be able to handle adequately, let alone one of the poorest nations on Earth.

Hurricane Sandy drenched the country's south with more than 20 inches of rainfall. As the rivers receded, allowing officials to travel through the storm-drenched southern peninsula, the death toll rose to 52.

In Cuba, 200,000 homes were damaged by the hurricane.

In the Bahamas, the total cost of damage to private property and public infrastructure is expected to reach $300m, according to a report from the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility. That total would be higher than last year's [Hurricane Irene](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/aug/29/hurricane-irene-claims-lives-destruction), which caused about $250m in damage to the island chain east of Florida.

But where in all this week's media coverage are the human-interest stories out of the Caribbean? Do we hear about the resilience of the Bahamian people and how they will restore their economy? What about those dead? So far there hasn't been any and I don't expect to be reading about it from any western publication. Part of the definition of news is proximity and western media companies rarely go out of their way to bring thoughtful vivid human stories of places far away.

The last time Haiti was covered under the bright lights of the western media was the fabled [earthquake that hit the mountainous country on 12 January 2010](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/13/tsunami-alert-haiti-earthquake-disaster). It was no surprise to me that the bulk of the stories filed from parachute journalists consisted of the heroics of the aid workers and rescue and mission teams that had flown in to help the survivors and victims of this tragedy.

But in Haiti, like many other places, locals pulled together and helped each other. The first responders were indeed Haitians. It took the international cavalcade days to reach Haiti and by then most of the death and destruction had already occurred.

The world simply didn't get a complete picture of the reality on the ground then, just as we didn't get the impact of Sandy on Haiti. That hurricane flooded Les Cayes, the third largest city in Haiti. Sandy has exacerbated a Cholera epidemic that has been difficult for the Haitian government to control and has put an added burden on a country that has experienced a string of natural disasters since 2004.

"I am launching an appeal to international solidarity to come and help the population, to help support the completion of our efforts towards saving lives and property," [Haiti's prime minister, Laurent Lamothe, said on Wednesday](http://uk.weather.com/partners-hurricanes/haiti). Let's hope his pleas are heard across the world.

**Environmental Science 122**

How did Hurricane Sandy affect the Caribbean? Why do you think that the media did not give a lot of attention to the destruction in this area?

**Environmental Science 123**

Describe three ways Hurricane Sandy affected the Caribbean.