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Barbados & the Eastern Caribbean

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United Nations Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean

# COMMON COUNTRY

# ANALYSIS

# 2020



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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>AI</b>	Artificial intelligence
<b>CARICOM</b>	Caribbean Community
<b>CCA</b>	Common Country Assessment
<b>CDB</b>	Caribbean Development Bank
<b>CDEMA</b>	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CHDR</b>	Caribbean Human Development Report
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease 2019
<b>CPA</b>	Country Poverty Assessment
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>CRPD</b>	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>CSME</b>	CARICOM Single Market and Economy
<b>CSS</b>	CARICOM Statistical System
<b>DRM/DRR</b>	Disaster risk management/reduction
<b>EbA</b>	Ecosystem-based adaptation
<b>ECCU</b>	Eastern Caribbean Currency Union
<b>ECLAC</b>	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>EEZ</b>	exclusive economic zone
<b>EWS</b>	Early warning system
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product
<b>GHG</b>	Greenhouse gas
<b>GNI</b>	Gross national income
<b>HFLE</b>	Health and Family Life Education
<b>HRW</b>	Human Rights Watch
<b>IADB/IDB</b>	Inter-American Development Bank
<b>ICT</b>	

	Information and communications technology
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IPCC</b>	Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change
<b>ITU</b>	International Telecommunications Union
<b>LAC</b>	Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>LGBTQI</b>	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex
<b>LMS</b>	Learning management system
<b>LNOB</b>	Leave no one behind
<b>MICS</b>	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
<b>MPA</b>	Marine protected area
<b>MSME</b>	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
<b>NBS</b>	Nature-based solutions
<b>NCDs</b>	Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)
<b>NEET</b>	Not in employment, education, or training
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>NHRI</b>	National Human Rights Institution
<b>NSO</b>	National Statistical Office
<b>ODA</b>	official development assistance
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>OECS</b>	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
<b>OPDs</b>	Organisations of Persons with Disabilities
<b>PAHO/WHO</b>	Pan-American Health Organization/World Health Organization
<b>PLHIV</b>	Persons living with HIV
<b>PWDs</b>	Persons with disabilities
<b>RIA</b>	Rapid Integrated Assessment
<b>RSDS</b>	Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SFDRR</b>	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030
<b>SLR</b>	Sea level rise
<b>SIDS</b>	Small Island Developing States
<b>SRH/SRHR</b>	Sexual and reproductive health/and rights

<b>UNAIDS</b>	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
<b>UNDESA</b>	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNDRR</b>	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>UNECLAC</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UN-HABITAT</b>	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UN RCO</b>	United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office
<b>UNST</b>	United Nations Sub-Regional Team
<b>UNWOMEN</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>UPR</b>	Universal Periodic Review
<b>VAWG</b>	violence against women and girls
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

## Executive Summary

The availability of timely, disaggregated data across all countries, as well as targets and indicators to inform progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remains a challenge. Nevertheless, a clear picture is emerging of the state of implementation of these Goals within the Eastern Caribbean. Although the region made progress in regard to social indicators, such as the reduction of poverty and inequality, it has slowed or stalled in the past five years. Many people face overlapping structural constraints on their ability to cope, including those who are poor and from a minority group. Rural women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, female-headed households, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex persons (LGBTQI), refugees and migrants also face intersecting forms of discrimination and/or lack of access to services and support. In some cases, laws do not provide protection, and social protection mechanisms do not adequately respond to the needs of those left furthest behind.

Violence against women and children is rife across the region, while violent crime due to the activities of criminal gangs and the influx of small arms and drugs has risen sharply. Further, the retention of the death penalty and the practice of corporal punishment are prevalent throughout the region. Problems in the administration of justice, relating to an inefficient and politicised judiciary, police misconduct, prison conditions, and juvenile justice are present in virtually all the countries. There are also concerns regarding human trafficking and freedom of the press. Gender stereotypes prevail across the Eastern Caribbean on the role and place of women in relation to men, resulting in an undervaluing of women's work and contribution to national sustainable development efforts. This is a main cause of gender and sex-based discrimination which drives gender inequalities in development policies as well as service delivery across key sector institutions.

At the national level, peace and security are undermined by several factors including high youth unemployment, poverty, educational underperformance, violence in the home and communities, and risky behaviours. These factors often converge to strengthen the allure of drugs and crime for the most vulnerable, in turn contributing to an assault on peace and security. The situation is further complicated by the geographic position of the sub-region, being vulnerable to organised crime flows that tranship guns, drugs, and cash that fuel crime and insecurity at the national level.

The region's heavy reliance on trade has historically contributed to increased employment and reduced poverty, supporting growth. Trade tendencies within the region show a dependence on critical imports such as food supplies, and input goods for agriculture, energy, industry, and the construction sectors. However, trade imbalances have worsened significantly since the 1990s, making Caribbean economies and food security extremely vulnerable. Transitioning to a sustainable economic pathway will depend on how effectively the sub-region is able to build on its comparative advantages while overcoming small size and vulnerability. This can be done by leveraging its natural capital, human endowment, and regional connectivity, and embracing innovation, agility, and new technologies for the sustainable expansion of social opportunities.

Climate change, environmental degradation and disasters pose a major threat to sustainable development. Further, environmental shocks will affect the socioeconomic resilience of the poorest and most vulnerable by compromising their access to critical livelihood assets and influencing risk behaviours as it relates to livelihood decisions, practices, and coping strategies. Fisherfolk and rain-fed farmers who incur damage and losses as a result of natural hazards or recurrent or simultaneous shocks, for example, will experience increased difficulty in accessing critical livelihood assets such as fishing gear, seeds, and fertilisers. The lack of access to proper financing or appropriate insurance and limited social protection systems further increase their sensitivity to these shocks particularly in rural areas. When pushed to the limit, these poor and highly vulnerable groups can resort to more desperate livelihood decisions and negative coping strategies such as taking on high-interest loans or

engaging in over-exploitation and/or illegal or unsustainable natural resource extractive practices. This could in turn lead to cyclical indebtedness and worsen environmental degradation.

The underrated importance of food and nutrition security and food sovereignty hides the connection between the ability to feed the nation, benefits to health and a foundation for sustained growth. High dependence of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and Barbados on food imports, surpassing US\$640 million in 2018 and estimated at over US\$5 billion for CARICOM states, could rapidly compromise gains made in the economic development of Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Increasing fiscal space for health in a sustainable manner is a major challenge for Caribbean countries and is heavily dependent on the state of the political economy for health. The health fiscal allocation in national budgets ranges from 6.89 per cent of total government budget in St. Kitts and Nevis to 18.08 per cent in Antigua and Barbuda. Out-of-pocket payments (OOP) range from 30.95 per cent of total health expenditure (THE) in Dominica to 47.77 per cent in St. Kitts and Nevis.

Wide income inequality and high unemployment rates mean that many Caribbean countries have a high proportion of the population living below the national poverty line. Women employed in retail, tourism, and services sectors, both within the formal and informal sectors, have been severely affected by the slowdown and complete grinding to a halt of these sectors as governments respond to COVID-19 with restrictive measures. Women are more likely than men to work in low-wage jobs, and without social protection, and shoulder a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work as they attempt to balance the demands of their reproductive and productive roles.

Eastern Caribbean countries have largely achieved universal access to primary and secondary education services. However, they continue to struggle to ensure equitable access to a continuum of inclusive quality learning from early childhood through primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. Most educational environments are not fully inclusive for all learners – particularly learners with disabilities (including learning challenges), migrants and other learners with special support needs. Despite the availability of secondary school places, systemic issues, social pressures, and the organisation and content of secondary education result in real and potential exclusion, especially for boys. Secondary school is generally perceived as not catering to the needs of students and the market demands to enable school graduates to play an active role in the economic, social, and political development of themselves and society. The need to adjust the current accepted definition of school completion from years of school attendance so that it is better aligned with educational achievement is indicative of some of the fundamental challenges in the education sector. Less than half of students attain education outcomes to gain entry into tertiary education.

In the region, there are different types of social protection instruments. Social insurance, for example, is present in all countries and has been providing long and short-term benefits to workers and their families in the formal sector. However, of concern is the lack of protection in the case of unemployment and the ability of social protection systems to scale up in response to a crisis or shock. Despite the proven impacts of social protection programmes and systems, coverage of children and families remains sub-optimal in the region and key challenges remain. These challenges include fragmented programmes, no clear consolidated information or data about the population effectively covered by social protection, a lack of evidence produced on the impact of these social protection programmes, and the absence of integrated information systems with wide coverage and systematic mechanisms for collecting up-to-date data.

Despite stable governance, a lack of medium to long-term development planning is a common feature across the sub-region. Public sector capacity is stymied by fragmentation and outdated legal and regulatory frameworks which undermine the performance and responsiveness of civil service administration, public financial management, governance of information and communication systems, citizen participation and the business environment. In addition, the Eastern Caribbean faces

unique challenges in providing services to children and their families, and all countries have considerable work left to do to ensure the full realisation of the rights of children.

This Common Country Analysis concludes with over 150 recommendations for action within the Eastern Caribbean towards the realisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development based on six entry points for accelerating and scaling the change needed for SDG attainment.

# 1. Introduction

## Sub-regional context

The Eastern Caribbean has attained relatively high levels of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, economic growth, financial prosperity, infrastructural development and political stability, which places the countries that comprise this sub-region<sup>1</sup> in the upper middle- and high-income categories (World Bank Country Classification). Simultaneously, there remain high levels of poverty, unemployment, under-utilisation of human capital, institutional capacity weaknesses, inadequate government accountability, and gender and social inequities. Although the data on poverty and inequality for Eastern Caribbean states are dated, existing information indicates that poverty levels remain high across the countries at an average of 24.6 per cent<sup>2</sup> of the population.

Countries in the sub-region also share the following common characteristics:

- Size and geography, the latter predisposing them to natural hazards and climate change
- Economic openness, leading to both economic growth and economic volatility
- Strong regional institutions to leverage the challenges of small size by pooling resources (examples include the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU), the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, and the Pharmaceutical Procurement Service)
- Large diasporas: The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) diaspora represents 55 per cent of the population residing in the OECS compared to the small state average of 15 per cent. This diaspora has been a steady source of remittances, although not significant enough to counter the impact of the loss of skilled citizens.<sup>3</sup>
- High dependence on imports for food and energy and high levels of external debt, which lead to lower resilience against shocks and a reduced fiscal space

Eastern Caribbean economies are driven by tourism, financial services, and, to a lesser extent, agriculture. They have limited economies of scale, tend to specialise in a few products and services, and are susceptible to shocks. Prior to the impact of COVID-19, the sub-region grappled with high unemployment and limited job opportunities. Women tend to be unemployed at higher rates and employed at lower wage rates than men. Occupational sex segregation is prevalent, with women over-represented in the clerical and services sectors, and with men working in agriculture and as machine operators.<sup>4</sup> Youth unemployment is high, with rates exceeding 40 per cent in Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.<sup>5</sup> The majority of the poor are employed in tourism and agriculture – sectors that are sensitive to world market conditions, climatic changes and natural hazards. Informal employment rates are not systematically measured across the countries, except in Barbados where the rates are 30–40 per cent. Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) make up 70–85 per cent of companies, contribute 60–70 per cent of GDP, and account for about 50 per cent of employment in the sub-region.<sup>6</sup> These enterprises tend to operate in the informal sector and their employees and their families are impacted by shocks in their evolution.

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<sup>1</sup> Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Luca and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF. 2019. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean  
[https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/1896/file/ECA\\_Sitan.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/1896/file/ECA_Sitan.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> World Bank. 2018. OECS Systematic Regional Diagnostic; 2019 IDB Financial Access and Inclusion Diagnostic: Barbados

<sup>4</sup> UNWOMEN. 2019. Status of Women and Men Report: Productive Employment and Decent Work for All  
<https://caribbean.unwomen.org/en/materials/publications/2019/10/status-of-women-and-men-report-productive-employment-and-decent-work-for-all>

<sup>5</sup> World Bank. 2018. OECS Systematic Regional Diagnostic

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved 7 September 2019 from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/caribbean/overview>

Since the 1990s, countries within the region have shown persistently weak economic growth. Annual GDP growth rates average only 0.8 per cent compared with 4.7 per cent in other small states.<sup>7</sup> The reduction in growth is directly linked to dependence on trade, services (tourism, cultural, financial) and foreign direct investments.<sup>8</sup> In 2017, the sub-region's GDP growth was at a record low of 0.6 per cent, largely due to hurricanes impacting several economies. Fiscal space for investment in social protection and other critical interventions needed for strengthened resilience to economic shocks, disasters, and climate change, is limited. Contributing to economic instability and sustained development challenges in the region have been the economic downturn in 2008, the erosion of trade preferences with Europe and the United States notably for bananas, sugar, cotton and other plantation crops, and frequent disasters, such as hurricanes Irma, Maria, Thomas and Ivan.

The Caribbean is considered one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world. Historically, the region has been confronted with frequent occurrences of mainly hydrometeorological and geological hazards, being vulnerable to a wide range of sudden onset hazards (for example, volcanic activity, tsunamis, earthquakes, flash floods) and slow onset processes (for example, hurricanes, drought). In recent years, some countries and territories have seen damage (for example, destruction of infrastructure and livelihoods) caused by natural hazards which have surpassed their annual GDP.<sup>9</sup> The 2020 hurricane season has already produced a record-breaking 28 named storms,<sup>10</sup> including five major hurricanes. According to the long-term Climate Risk Index (CRI), 3 of the 10 countries most affected by extreme weather events in the last 20 years are in the Caribbean, and their impacts have indisputably slowed progress on achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed the fragility of many Caribbean economies and their associated income and employment generation configurations. Current forecasts show projections of real GDP for 2020 for the Caribbean<sup>11</sup> and the ECCU at -5.4 per cent and -15.1 per cent respectively, recovering to 3.9 per cent and 5.8 per cent in 2021<sup>12</sup> (See Figure 1). The sharp decline of the tourism industry due to the COVID-19 pandemic is compounded by the very active hurricane season and the attendant risks that this poses to social and economic stability. Loss of jobs in economies built heavily around the services sectors such as tourism and financial sectors (directly and indirectly), which contribute between 53 per cent and 75 per cent of GDP,<sup>13</sup> will inevitably further exacerbate economic recovery and negatively affect workers. The tourism sector disproportionately employs women (Barbados: 62 per cent) but pays them significantly less than men (Barbados: 68 per cent of men's wages). The vast majority of vulnerable workers in tourism are women (Barbados: 85 per cent), and most workers below the poverty line in tourism are women (Barbados: 55 per cent). Women will be the group most impacted by the shutdown of the tourism sector in the sub-region. Children who live in poverty disproportionately live in households in which women are the primary income earners. An increase of women in poverty will therefore significantly increase the number of children living in poverty.

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<sup>7</sup>OECD, ECLAC, CAF, EU. 2019. Latin American Economic Outlook 2019: Development in Transition. <http://www.oecd.org/dev/americas/LEO-2019-Chapter-6.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> World Bank. 2015. Trade Matters: New Opportunities for the Caribbean. <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/738061467998816272/pdf/93184-v2-P146683-Box391466B-PUBLIC-trade-caribbean-web.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> ECLAC. 2018. The Caribbean Outlook. p.41

<sup>10</sup> As of 4 November 2020

<sup>11</sup> Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago

<sup>12</sup> IMF. 2020. World Economic Outlook: A long and difficult ascent. October

<sup>13</sup> [www.wttc.org/](http://www.wttc.org/)

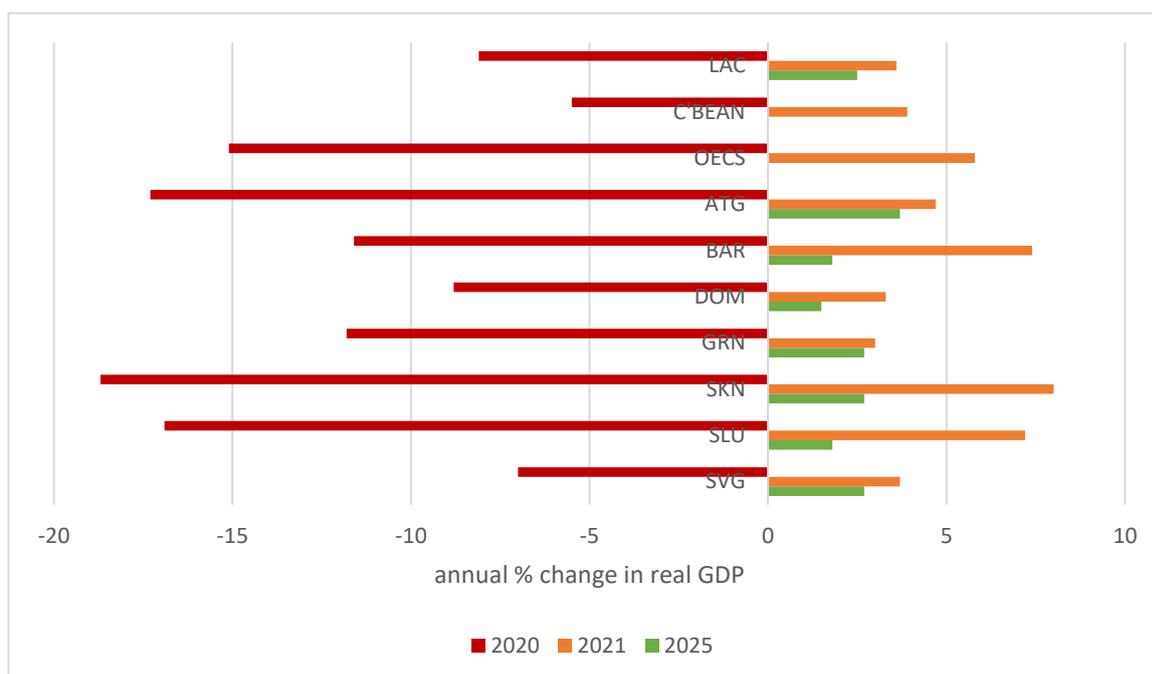


Figure 1: Real GDP projections for the Eastern Caribbean, October 2020

Source: IMF World Economic Outlook, October 2020

## The 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development marks a transition towards a more balanced model for sustainable development strongly grounded in international human rights standards. It strives to leave no one behind and puts the imperative of equality and non-discrimination at its heart. The 2030 Agenda is universal, in that all must enjoy the benefits of development and all countries have a responsibility to implement it; indivisible, in that the 17 SDGs are interdependent and integrated, balancing the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development; civilising, because it makes eradicating extreme poverty an ethical imperative and places dignity and equality at the centre; and transformative, as it requires alternatives to the “business as usual” approach in order to achieve sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda establishes as its results framework the 17 SDGs, their 169 targets and 232 indicators. With its universal applicability and its importance in shaping development priorities, the 2030 Agenda provides new avenues to integrate human rights into global and national policies in both developed and developing countries.

The 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report<sup>14</sup> identifies six entry points for accelerating and scaling the change needed for SDG attainment, which draw fundamentally on maximising the positive synergies between SDGs, requiring systems thinking approaches buttressed by scientific evidence and innovation. These are (1) Human wellbeing and capabilities, (2) Sustainable and just economies, (3) Food systems and nutrition patterns, (4) Energy decarbonisations with universal access, (5) Urban and peri-urban development, and (6) Global environmental commons.

<sup>14</sup> Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The Future is Now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development  
[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24797GSDR\\_report\\_2019.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf)

Four levers are also pinpointed which are to be applied through each entry point to catalyse change: (1) Governance, (2) Economy and finance, (3) Individual and collective action, and (4) Science and technology.

## International norms and standards

### *Commitments to the SDGs*

Through its adoption, CARICOM Member States have committed to implement the SDGs by mainstreaming them in their development plans, as well as devising strategies to achieve these goals within their national context. In 2016, the region began to integrate the 2030 Agenda into national development visions, strategies, and plans. By the end of that year, at least 16 institutional mechanisms had been established based on existing institutions that were assigned new responsibilities, or through the creation of new institutions with specific functions. In 2017, these countries moved to an implementation phase characterised by translating the Agenda into public policies, institutions and national and sub-national follow-up and review mechanisms.

In 2018, the member countries of the Statistical Coordination Group (SCG) for the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) reviewed the global SDG indicator framework in order to agree upon a core set of prioritised indicators for monitoring the 2030 Agenda from a regional perspective. Emerging from this process were a prioritised set of 154 indicators: 120 indicators from the global framework, 30 complementary indicators and 4 proxy indicators originally proposed by the technical secretariat of the SCG. Of the 120 indicators, 69 are classified as tier I, 43 as tier II, 5 as tier III and 3 as multi-tier based on the availability of methodologies, international standards, and comparable data.

### *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 was the first major agreement of the post-2015 development agenda and focuses on the adoption of measures which address the three dimensions of disaster risk (exposure to hazards, vulnerability and capacity, and hazard characteristics) in order to prevent the creation of new risk, reduce existing risk, increase resilience and protect development gains. It recognises that the state has the primary role to reduce disaster risk, but that responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local government and the private sector. Endorsed by the UN General Assembly, this Framework outlines 7 global targets and 38 global indicators to guide and assess progress. These will contribute to the global analysis of the country-level information submitted by countries and documented in the biennial Global Assessment Reports. In addition, there are custom targets and indicators which are nationally defined instruments to measure progress against the four priorities of the Sendai Framework.

### *Paris Agreement on Climate Change*

Under the 2015 Paris Agreement, all countries became bound to contribute to mitigating climate change, though recognising common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. All countries are required to submit Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) which articulate their “highest possible ambition” to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, with more ambitious updates every 5 years. In addition to specifically articulating the pledge of “holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels” (Article 2(a)), it implicitly links this to sustainable development and poverty eradication. It affirms the special vulnerabilities of SIDS and establishes an adaptation goal relating to improving adaptive capacity, resilience and reducing vulnerability. All independent countries of the sub-region have ratified the Paris Agreement, and are at various stages in the process of preparing their second NDCs.

### *Commitments deriving from international human rights instruments and mechanisms*

Eastern Caribbean governments have generally embraced recommendations from international human rights mechanisms regarding the promotion of economic and social rights, as well as the rights of women, children, and persons with disabilities. Further, all countries have made some progress in aligning their national legislation with the obligations under international human rights treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). However, countries have been hesitant to implement recommendations regarding ratifying additional human rights agreements, establishing human rights mechanisms, criminal justice reform, and sexual and reproductive rights. Governments have indicated that the main reason for the lack of implementation of recommendations regarding strengthening the human rights infrastructure is the lack of human and financial capacity to establish the necessary institutions and to make the reforms required. In their statements to and appearances before international human rights mechanisms, Eastern Caribbean governments have taken the position that they do not have a public mandate to take legislative and policy action on more socially controversial issues and recommendations relating to sexual and reproductive rights (for example, abortion, access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services for adolescents, comprehensive sexuality education, and the decriminalisation of same-sex relations), the abolition of corporal punishment of children in all settings and criminal justice (for example, the death penalty).

## **The Common Country Assessment (CCA)**

A new Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (SDCF) will be prepared to guide UN system support to the Caribbean for the period 2022–2026. It will be aligned to key national and regional development planning cycles and priorities and will articulate how the UN System will provide relevant and strategic support to Caribbean countries in achieving the SDGs. This CCA for the Eastern Caribbean examines trends in environmental, social and economic indicators across the 10 countries as they relate to SDG progress and their integrated relationships, discusses root causes of inequality, vulnerability and exclusion, and considers the institutions and capacities required for achieving the 2030 Agenda. It also projects possibilities for 2030 given the current and historical context, and suggests solutions and enablers for facilitating SDG achievement, using the six entry points for SDG acceleration.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24797GSDR\\_report\\_2019.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf)

## 2. Progress towards the 2030 Agenda

### SDG implementation trends

Amidst challenges to the availability of timely, disaggregated data across all countries, targets and indicators to inform progress on the SDGs, it is evident that the Eastern Caribbean made progress in regard to social indicators, such as the reduction of poverty and inequality. Significant inequalities however persist when figures are disaggregated by income quintile, sex, age, or race. Therefore, the commitment to leave no one behind is particularly challenging for the region.

The dashboards in Table and Table provide a snapshot of SDG progress across the independent Eastern Caribbean countries. The assessment is based on key development data available for the period 2015–2019. It provides a snapshot of pre-COVID-19 implementation or challenges being experienced across the region and highlights trends in the SDG indicators over time.

Table 1: SDG progress dashboard for Eastern Caribbean countries

COUNTRY	ANB	BAR	DOM	GRN	SKN	SLU	SVG	5Ps
Goal 1	grey	yellow	grey	grey	grey	yellow	grey	people
Goal 2	orange	orange	orange	grey	orange	orange	orange	people
Goal 3	orange	orange	red	orange	grey	orange	orange	people
Goal 4	orange	yellow	yellow	yellow	grey	yellow	yellow	people
Goal 5	orange	orange	grey	yellow	grey	orange	orange	people
Goal 6	yellow	red	orange	orange	yellow	yellow	yellow	people
Goal 7	yellow	green	green	yellow	green	yellow	green	prosperity
Goal 8	grey	orange	grey	grey	grey	grey	grey	prosperity
Goal 9	orange	prosperity						
Goal 10	grey	prosperity						
Goal 11	grey	grey	grey	grey	grey	yellow	grey	prosperity
Goal 12	red	red	yellow	orange	red	orange	orange	planet
Goal 13	red	red	orange	yellow	yellow	orange	orange	planet
Goal 14	orange	red	red	yellow	red	orange	orange	planet
Goal 15	orange	orange	orange	orange	grey	yellow	orange	planet
Goal 16	grey	red	grey	grey	grey	red	grey	peace
Goal 17	yellow	yellow	yellow	yellow	yellow	orange	yellow	partnership

Source: Sachs, J., Schmidt-Traub, G., Kroll, C., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G. (2019): Sustainable Development Report 2019. New York: Bertelsmann Stiftung and Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)

#### Key

green	Goal achieved
yellow	Challenges remain
orange	Significant challenges
red	Major challenges
grey	Missing data

Table 2: SDG trends in Eastern Caribbean countries

COUNTRY	ANB	BAR	DOM	GRN	SKN	SLU	SVG	5Ps
Goal 1	.	→	.	.	.	↑	.	people
Goal 2	→	↗	↗	.	.	↗	↗	people
Goal 3	.	↗	.	↗	.	↗	↗	people
Goal 4	.	.	.	.	.	.	↗	people
Goal 5	.	↗	.	.	.	↗	↗	people
Goal 6	→	↑	→	↓	.	↑	↗	people
Goal 7	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	prosperity
Goal 8	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	prosperity
Goal 9	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	prosperity
Goal 10	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	prosperity
Goal 11	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	prosperity
Goal 12	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	planet
Goal 13	→	↗	↑	→	→	→	↓	planet
Goal 14	↗	→	→	.	.	.	.	planet
Goal 15	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	planet
Goal 16	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	peace
Goal 17	.	.	.	.	.	↗	.	partnership

Source: Sachs, J., Schmidt-Traub, G., Kroll, C., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G. (2019) Sustainable Development Report 2019

### Key

↑	On track or maintaining achievement
↗	Moderately Increasing
→	Stagnating
↓	Decreasing

The Eastern Caribbean has shown mixed progress on the SDGs. SDG 7 (Clean and accessible energy) is one of the standout areas with countries within the region showing goal achievement or few challenges remaining. The region continues to be challenged by a lack of innovation, income inequalities and insecurity. These are reflected in red and orange on the dashboard and are specifically related to SDG 9 (Industry, innovation, and infrastructure) and SDG 16 (Peace, justice, and strong institutions). A significant proportion of the countries face major or important challenges on issues related to relatively low public expenditure on research and development, and high-income inequalities and homicide rates, matched with a widespread perception of insecurity and increasing corruption.

There remain significant gaps in data availability as highlighted in grey for Goals 1, 8, 10, 11 and 16. These patterns and trends clearly highlight how far behind countries are in the promotion and monitoring of the sustainable development agenda.

### *Impact of COVID-19 on SDG progress*

2020 marks the start of the Decade of Action to deliver on the SDGs by 2030. It is a critical period to advance a shared vision and accelerate responses to the world's gravest challenges – from eliminating poverty and hunger to reversing climate change. However, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a global health crisis has evolved quickly to become a global social and economic crisis. Given the structure of regional economies, countries will likely underperform on SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 2 (No hunger) and SDG 1 (No poverty) from 2020. The overall trends in the results suggest that major investments and critical policy discussions will be needed in order to fulfil the goals set for 2030.

### **Socioeconomic Impact**

The social and economic fallout of the pandemic has been devastating. COVID-19 has had multi-sectoral impact on the sub-region, amplified by high vulnerabilities in view of, inter alia, high debt and limited fiscal space; dependence on China, the European Union and the United States; trade barriers; increased risk-averse tendencies in global financial markets; migration; and climate change. Several countries are spending between 1 and 4 per cent of their GDP to tackle the COVID-19 crisis.

The socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have been characterized by high unemployment and/or reductions in working hours in different sectors coupled with a shrinking business sector as a result of declining economic activity. This has led to increasing social inequality and a corresponding increase in many social problems such as families' inability to provide for their basic needs, the inability of children to attend school due to limited access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), learners who were already at a disadvantage being left further behind, a lack of food security, rising incidences of domestic violence, and limited access to health-care services.<sup>16</sup> According to a recent Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) survey, 34.3 per cent of respondents from households earning less than the minimum wage declared that they had gone hungry in the previous week.<sup>17</sup> Civil society organizations that work with vulnerable communities report that COVID-19 has amplified the need for services such as financial assistance, food, and health care.<sup>18</sup> The pandemic has affected all economic sectors and the informal economy has not been an option to sustain livelihoods as it has been in previous crises. World merchandise trade is set to plummet by between 13 per cent and 32 per cent in 2020. The value of the region's exports will fall by 23 per cent and lower commodity prices will have a negative effect on the terms of trade (OECS). Services trade may be most directly affected by COVID-19 through transport and travel restrictions.

### **Environmental Impact**

The onset of the pandemic initially meant lower greenhouse gas emissions from transportation and industry, and shifts in electricity demand to the domestic sector, with populations confined to their homes, business closures and limited movement. There has also been a reduced visitor footprint within terrestrial and marine protected areas and similar zones that have traditionally attracted significant visits. It may be expected that this has provided some degree of respite for ecosystems that could have been nearing visitor carrying capacity. The drop in tourist arrivals will have resulted in less waste flows from the accommodation sector that would otherwise have been diverted to landfills and natural environments. However, it is also expected that increases in COVID-19 will result in spikes in medical and hazardous waste, as well as the use of disposable and other face masks/shields, sanitiser,

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<sup>16</sup> Caribbean NGO Trends: COVID 19 Impact Summary Report 2020, Caribbean (NGO) Policy Development Centre

<sup>17</sup> IDB, online COVID-19 survey (<https://www.iadb.org/en/research-and-data/idb-coronavirus-survey>)

<sup>18</sup> Caribbean NGO Trends: COVID 19 Impact Summary Report 2020, Caribbean (NGO) Policy Development Centre

soap and detergent, all of which could impact the environment negatively. With loss or suspension of employment increasing food insecurity, there is concern that there could be increased pressure on biodiversity through, for example, illegal hunting, overfishing and accelerated deforestation, with consequent ecological imbalances and land degradation for crop cultivation.

## Food and nutrition Security

COVID-19 has severely impacted food and nutrition security in the region. A recent CARICOM survey<sup>19</sup> found that the number of food insecure people in the Caribbean increased from 1.2 million in April to 2.9 million in July. Job loss and reduced income were reported by 70 per cent of respondents, with respondents under age 40 experiencing more job loss or salary reduction than those aged 41 to 60 for both men and women. Singles were less impacted than any other type of household. The main worry of respondents is unemployment, followed by fear of illness, and meeting food and other essential needs. According to FAO, in the longer term, the combined effects of COVID-19 itself, as well as corresponding mitigation measures and the emerging global recession could, without large-scale coordinated action, disrupt the functioning of food systems. Such disruption can result in consequences for health and nutrition of a severity and scale unseen for more than half a century.

## Crime, Justice and Human Rights

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on the administration of justice in the sub-region. The consequences of COVID-19 highlight specific justice concerns, such as institutionalising reforms to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of the justice chain in a radically shifted social context. This needs assessment report makes recommendations which include an emphasis on citizens' rights to justice and a people-centred approach so that no one is left behind in the recovery process.

## Opportunities

COVID-19 has enabled significant coordination on common regional health protocols for implementing COVID-19 testing and for regional procurement particularly for personal protective equipment (PPE) and other health-related needs. It has also provided an opportunity to incorporate environmental considerations, such as the handling of medical waste,<sup>20</sup> into immediate response protocols, as well as into longer-term green recovery initiatives that strengthen the region's resilience. For example, governments can invest in sustainable agricultural systems for improved food and nutrition security, electric mobility and renewable energy for cleaner air, and nature-based social protections for the most marginalised.<sup>21 22</sup> They could also phase out grey industries and dirty subsidies.

From the socioeconomic side, there has been the scale-up of social protection systems to protect people affected. The impact of COVID-19 has also reignited discussions on enhancing regional public goods among critical developmental areas, and it has led regional governments to learn from each

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<sup>19</sup> CARICOM, CDEMA, WFP and FAO. 2020. Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security and Livelihoods Impact Survey: Round 2 – July 2020. [https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000118438/download/?\\_ga=2.24134905.2124056111.1606360979-626858339.1606360979](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000118438/download/?_ga=2.24134905.2124056111.1606360979-626858339.1606360979)

<sup>20</sup> UNEP Policy Brief: Environment in COVID-19 humanitarian response in Latin America and the Caribbean: <https://www.eecentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20-06-04-Environment-in-the-COVID-19-humanitarian-response-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> UNEP Policy Brief: How to articulate integrated responses to the health, economic and climate crises in Latin America & the Caribbean.

[https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/32673/COVID19\\_CLIMATE\\_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/32673/COVID19_CLIMATE_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>22</sup> UNEP Policy Brief: Opportunities to respond and build back better while leaving no one behind in Latin America and the Caribbean. [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/32433/COVID\\_LAC.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/32433/COVID_LAC.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

other and adopt successful practices. Further, the digital transformation triggered by the pandemic has enabled education systems to fast track to the 21st century, and there are opportunities to reduce existing inequalities by focusing on connectivity and access to devices for marginalised learners.

In the justice sector, successful innovative strategies adopted during the crisis should be continued and built upon to overcome some of the systemic barriers which citizens encounter in accessing justice and to reduce the backlog. Such initiatives include the use of remote technology for legal proceedings, prison decongestion strategies, measures reducing usage of pre-trial detention, online dispute resolution, and virtual access to legal aid providers. Engaging informal justice mechanisms, and other traditional dispute resolution mechanisms that may predominantly deal with family matters may be further explored to ensure compliance with international human rights standards.

It is of paramount importance that transitory support measures are assessed and, when relevant, institutionalised as part of the protection mechanisms that governments have for shock response.

## SDG integration

The Eastern Caribbean has made important and sustained advances regarding strengthening institutional frameworks and instruments for implementing the 2030 Agenda. There are SDG coordinating mechanisms in six of the ten countries across the region. The large scope of the SDGs however requires, more than ever, institutional collaboration, innovation and incentive systems that facilitate cross-sectoral action and accountability. The main challenges with SDG implementation, or operationalising the Agenda are the lack of well-defined (horizontal) linkages between the overall national framework and numerous sectoral strategies, and their connection with implementation and monitoring mechanisms. In some cases, there are also sub-national strategies with weak or non-existent (vertical) links to national strategies. Moreover, some of these strategies overlap, and in some cases contradict each other. The lack of reporting linkages is mirrored by the lack of linked monitoring and budgetary planning and monitoring processes. Linking national development frameworks to budget planning and monitoring requires a transition to performance-based budgeting and financing, which are also gender-responsive and informed by climate and disaster risk. Attached to the recognised need for a horizontal integration of the SDGs as well as climate and disaster risk-informed development to accelerate SDG progress is the need to pursue key actions. These include building a coherent risk governance system that takes an all-hazards approach; understanding how climate change, natural, biological, and technological hazards affect SDG progress; developing financing strategies for investing in SDG achievement that are climate and disaster risk-informed; prioritising support to co-efficient disaster and health risk management and adaptation measures; and coordinating data collection, assessment, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

The Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) maps SDG targets and objectives against national/sub-national priorities to determine how SDGs are reflected in national objectives and targets and identify entry points to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. Within the Eastern Caribbean, RIAs have been conducted in St. Lucia (2018) and St. Vincent and Grenadines (2020).

## SDG data and monitoring

### *Regional strategies for monitoring SDGs*

The CARICOM Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS) seeks to mainstream the 2030 Agenda framework across the CARICOM Statistical System (CSS) to make data available on indicators to monitor all 17 Goals and 169 targets, and the SAMOA Pathway. The CARICOM core indicators include a total of 125 unique SDG core indicators. Specific attention is given to addressing systemic gaps relating to monitoring environmental issues (such as losses of ecosystem services). Gaps

also relate to statistics to inform crime prevention strategies and citizen security across the CSS inclusive of human and drug trafficking, gender-based violence and gang-related violence.

### *Challenges with SDG data and monitoring*

One of the major structural issues impeding implementation of the 2030 Agenda regionally is the lack of reliable statistical data necessary to report on selected indicators and targets. The region has faced significant challenges on measuring the official set of SDG indicators endorsed by the UN Statistical Division and CARICOM. Efforts have mainly focused on self-reporting exercises like the submission of Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) at the United Nations High-level Political Forum. St. Lucia presented its VNR in 2019 and St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Barbados presented theirs in 2020. Although it denotes governments' commitment to Agenda 2030, there is need for a sustained and coordinated approach for improving current systems for collecting and producing timely comparable statistics to appraise progress and recognise priorities for future action.

The following are frequently mentioned challenges among countries across the region.

- The need to address data gaps: See the grey areas highlighted on the SDG dashboard (Table 1). The regularity of collection and the quality of the data collected are also problems that need to be addressed. Some of the gaps can be filled by data collection methodologies such as Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS). There are no systematic surveys of ecosystem health or other environmental and risk data aside from post-disaster impact assessments.
- Gaps in data disaggregation: None of the key disaggregation criteria recommended for the SDGs (gender, age, place of residence, disability status, socioeconomic status, and optionally ethnicity and migrant status) is routinely collected or calculated.
- The need for more digitization of data collection, and the desirability of exploring new tools (for example, e-platforms) to fill gaps; The need to invest in new approaches: for example, SDG 4 requires the adoption of lifelong learning approaches to education and training policies.
- The need to improve coordination between data producers, including through clear institutional responsibility/coordination on the calculation/data collection for each indicator
- There are calls for the development of a data ecosystem, and a statistical master plan.
- The need to foster a clear political commitment to data-driven decision-making: In some countries, incentives exist for data producers to give positive rather than accurate results.
- As highlighted by users of databases relevant for disaster preparedness, data should be accessible and should be provided in a form that is useful for, and usable by the end users.

### 3. Leaving no one behind

#### *Key challenges, their drivers and root causes*

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is undergirded by the ‘leaving no one behind’ principle, which aims to make visible those population groups that are being left behind based on discrimination, geography, vulnerability to shocks, governance, and socioeconomic status. Addressing and closing these gaps are essential to ensuring that there is an end to poverty in all its forms and that there is the elimination of all types of discrimination, inequalities, and exclusion. An analysis of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations and treaty body concluding observations for countries from the Eastern Caribbean indicates the following groups as being left behind and at risk in Eastern Caribbean states. This assessment was done by analysing a combination of country progress towards fulfilling relevant human rights obligations, UN reports, and development data highlighting challenges that could potentially derail the achievement of national and sub-regional development and the SDGs.

#### *People living in informal settlements*

While all Eastern Caribbean countries are highly urbanised, a proportion of urban development takes place in areas classified as informal (see Table 3), that is, not in conformity with tenure, physical planning and/or health laws and regulations. Such areas reflect a great form of spatial inequality. They are disproportionately occupied by the urban poor/lower income households who have not benefitted from urban planning and whose vulnerability is further exacerbated by climate change.<sup>23</sup> Urban informal settlement occurs across the region and its form and characteristics are diverse. They are characterised by a significant proportion of high-density populations concentrated in coastal and hillside areas located within rapidly growing urban regions.

*Table 3: Estimates of urbanisation and informal settlement across the Eastern Caribbean*

Country	Urban population (% of total population)		Total Population		Population living in slums (% of urban population)
	2000	2018	2000	2018	
Antigua and Barbuda	32.1	24.6	76,016	96,286	4.8% (2005)
Barbados	33.8	31.1	271,515	286,641	N/A
Dominica	65.3	70.5	69,650	71,625	12.0% (2015)
Grenada	35.7	36.3	102,833	111,454	6.0% (2005)
St. Kitts and Nevis	32.8	30.8	44,074	52,441	N/A
St. Lucia	27.8	18.7	156,729	181,889	11.9% (2005)
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	45.2	52.2	107,784	110,210	N/A

Source: UN-Habitat. 2020. Caribbean Strategy for Informal Settlements Upgrading

<sup>23</sup> [https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/05/caribbean\\_strategy\\_2020-92.pdf](https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/05/caribbean_strategy_2020-92.pdf)

While the data available are inconsistent and not disaggregated by age, sex, or other key variables, estimates suggest that around 4,500 persons live in informal settlements in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In Barbados, tenantry lands are the primary form of informal settlements, home to approximately 80,000 persons, where rights of occupancy remain informal and basic services and infrastructure remain undeveloped. Urban informality diminishes the success rate in meeting target 1 of SDG 11 and undermines the capacity to address disaster risk reduction and resilience-building.

*Box 1: Tackling informal settlements in Saint Lucia*

**PROUD Saint Lucia**

A 2007 survey conducted by the Government of Saint Lucia identified 6,000 households (10% of all households) in 33 informal settlements on state lands. Saint Lucia's response to informal settlement takes the form of PROUD: Programme for the Regularisation of Unplanned Developments. Established in 1999, PROUD is implemented through Saint Lucia's Department of Housing, Urban Renewal and Telecommunications. Title regularisation and physical upgrading work occur exclusively on state lands. PROUD has relied on government support and continuous financing from the Caribbean Development Bank since 2000. This includes PROUD Phase I Shelter Development Project (2000–2010) and PROUD Phase II Settlement Upgrading Project (since 2011). PROUD III was launched in 2013 as a revolving fund of EC\$10 million+ collected from the sale of titled plots. To date, PROUD has helped 1,890 households with improved access to services and basic infrastructure. An additional 1,543 households are expected to benefit by the end of 2020.

*Persons with disabilities*

Consistent, quality data on PWDs in the Eastern Caribbean are lacking. However, there are more than a million people in the Caribbean living with some form of disability and an estimated 250,000 who experience significant disabilities. Of the Eastern Caribbean countries that conducted a census between 2010/2011, only Barbados and Grenada have comprehensive, disaggregated data on persons with disabilities (PWDs). In both countries, the prevalence of disabilities is higher in the 45+ age categories, with more females having disabilities than males. While females have more disabilities than males across all age categories in Grenada, Barbados has more males with disabilities in the 0–44 age categories and more females in the 45+ age groups.

All Eastern Caribbean countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). However, only Antigua and Barbuda have adopted implementing legislation to give domestic effect to the CRPD's rights and obligations. Much of the physical environment in the Eastern Caribbean is inaccessible to PWDs and this, combined with negative societal attitudes and mindsets, serves as an obstacle that often prevents persons with disabilities from enjoying their full rights to justice, health, employment, education, liberty of movement, and an adequate standard of living. Across the Caribbean, most schools, workplaces, public spaces, buildings, transport systems and cultural services are not designed to be accessible to PWDs. As a result, persons living with disabilities in the Caribbean experience worse outcomes in education, employment, health, and housing, among other areas. Based on studies conducted by ECLAC on PWDs in the Caribbean in 2009<sup>24</sup> and 2018,<sup>25</sup> challenges in fostering an inclusive environment for PWDS include the following: fiscal barriers which inhibit government capacities to implement the actions outlined in policies, especially regarding the creation of enabling environments; limited availability of statistics on PWDs, differing measures of disability and different data collection techniques; feelings of inadequacy by teachers at teaching in an inclusive

<sup>24</sup> ECLAC. 2009. A further study on disability in the Caribbean: Rights, commitment, statistical analysis and monitoring [https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/27727/S2009003\\_en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/27727/S2009003_en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>25</sup> Jones, F. and Serieux-Lubin, L. 2018. Disability, human rights, and public policy in the Caribbean: A situation analysis. ECLAC.

school environment because they felt that they lacked the training, knowledge, and skills needed to be effective; the unwillingness of some teachers to have students with disabilities in their classes; negative attitudes towards inclusive schools by parents of students without disabilities; and factors affecting employment prospects for PWDs such as a lack of education and training and the opportunity to learn new skills, discrimination by employers, workplace inaccessibility, low self-expectations, inadequate work incentives, and insufficient access to finances.

Given the widespread belief that persons with disabilities lack the autonomy to make decisions regarding their sexuality, it is common for them to be denied access to relevant health services and information. Inadequate delivery of comprehensive sexuality education through the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) curriculum has also had an impact on the ability of adolescent girls and young people with disabilities to access the basic information about their sexual and reproductive health and rights. This has exacerbated their vulnerabilities and exposure to sexual and reproductive ill health and sexual violence. An IDB study<sup>26</sup> found that women with disabilities are at higher risk of experiencing violence than men with disabilities as well as women without disabilities. Further, there are significant gaps in response and prevention services for violence against women and girls (VAWG), especially for women and girls with disabilities. Discrimination against PWDs may notably intersect with other biases based on sex, gender, race, and class.

### *LGBTQI persons*

LGBTQI persons, especially those affected by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination (including based on age, gender, ethnicity, disability and social and economic status), suffer from the lack of access to their economic, social, and cultural rights, including the rights to health care, housing, employment, education and safety. Such infringements, coupled with an overall culture of social exclusion, result in LGBTQI persons effectively being left behind.

The Shared Incidence Database (SID) of the Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition, a regional umbrella civil society organisation that works with a wide cross section of vulnerable populations, recorded some 2,599 incidents of human rights violation in 2019 since the launch of the SID in 2017.<sup>27</sup> The homophobic climate in the Caribbean is such that people are willing to openly and publicly acknowledge their homophobia as justification for refusing services or employment to LGBTQI people. All Eastern Caribbean countries criminalise sexual contact between same sex, consenting adults with penalties ranging from 10–50 years depending on each country's laws. Although these laws are rarely enforced, anti-homosexual legislation legitimises a homophobic social environment sustained by religious leaders, politicians and popular culture.<sup>28</sup> Human Rights Watch (HRW) carried out a survey of the situation of LGBTQI persons in 7 Eastern Caribbean countries in 2017<sup>29</sup> and documented the legal, social and economic barriers that LGBTQI persons face that serve to marginalise the community. Accounts were also made of human rights offenses against the LGBTQI community that include violence and abuse from private citizens and government officials.

### *Persons living with HIV/AIDS*

Worldwide, the Caribbean is the second most-affected region by HIV/AIDS. An estimated 16,000 (11,000–24,000) people acquired HIV in the Caribbean in 2018, 16 per cent fewer than in 2010. While progress has been made in reducing new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths (new HIV infections decreased by 29 per cent and AIDS-related deaths decreased by 37 per cent), efforts to expand

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<sup>26</sup> Marques Garcia Ozemela, L. et al. 2019. Violence against women and girls with disabilities. Policy Brief no. IDB-PB-302. IDB <https://publications.iadb.org/en/violence-against-women-and-girls-disabilities-latin-america-and-caribbean>

<sup>27</sup><https://www.facebook.com/caribbeanvulnerablecommunities/photos/cvcs-shared-incident-database-sid-has-been-tracking-incidents-of-human-rights-vi/2337357393213065/>

<sup>28</sup> Pop culture, including music, such as the "murder music" that is popular within the region, encourages violence against LGBT youth. Over the past 15 years, homophobia and transphobia have been replete in Jamaica's popular dancehall music among other music genres that are channelled across the region.

<sup>29</sup> Human Rights Watch. 2018. I Have to Leave to be Me: Discriminatory laws against LGBT people in the Eastern Caribbean. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/03/21/i-have-leave-be-me/discriminatory-laws-against-lgbt-people-eastern-caribbean>

treatment coverage have stalled. Many persons living with HIV (PLHIV) are diagnosed several years after they acquire the virus decreasing the likelihood of favourable treatment outcomes.<sup>30</sup>

In 2019, key populations and their partners (including sex workers, gay men and other men who have sex with men, and transgender people) accounted for 60 per cent of HIV infections in the region and only half of PLHIV in the region are virally suppressed.<sup>31</sup> Young people engaged in high-risk sexual behaviours remain vulnerable to HIV exposure and poor treatment adherence, particularly those among key populations.<sup>32</sup> Males and females aged 15–24 years accounted for one-third of new HIV infections in the Caribbean in 2016 and new HIV infections were higher in young women and young men. According to 2018 data from the Pan-Caribbean Partnership Against HIV/AIDS (PANCAP), almost half of Caribbean young people ages 15–24 do not have adequate HIV knowledge and 2 in 5 did not use condoms the last time they had sex. Discriminatory attitudes of workers in healthcare and other sectors result in poor health-seeking behaviours of persons living with HIV, which in turn drives the increase in the HIV infection rate, including among the youth population.

### *Youth (aged 15–24)*

Youth represent between 14 per cent and 19 per cent of the total population across Barbados and the OECS. Youth unemployment is an acute problem in the sub-region (see Figure 2). Before the pandemic, the youth rate was at 26 per cent, almost 3 times higher than the adult rate of 9 per cent, and more than twice the overall unemployment rate of 12 per cent.<sup>33</sup> Adolescents (15–19 years old) have much higher unemployment rates than young adults (20–24 years old). For countries where information is available, the majority of unemployed youth had been unemployed for 6 months or more. A longer unemployment increases the risk that the well-being of young people can be adversely affected: a deterioration of mental health, low self-esteem, financial pressures, substance abuse, delinquency, and anti-social behaviour. It could also affect the ability of youth to achieve their full economic potential and result in the loss of productive potential for the country. Joblessness among female youth notably reached nearly 30 per cent compared to 24 per cent for males.<sup>34</sup>

School enrolment rates are lower for boys than for girls. According to the Caribbean Human Development Report (CHDR) 2016,<sup>35</sup> gross enrolment rates decreased between 2004 and 2013 for Dominica and Grenada and remain mostly constant in Barbados. An unfruitful transition from the school system to the job market could yield youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET). On average, the NEET rate is 22 per cent for youngsters, and also varies widely among countries: the British Virgin Islands has the lowest NEET rate (11 per cent) while Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines exhibit a NEET rate of 30 per cent and above. Close to 20 per cent of those Not in Employment, Education or Training are neither working nor looking for a job.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> UNAIDS. 2019. Global AIDS Update 2019: Communities at the Centre.

<https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2019/2019-global-AIDS-update>

<sup>31</sup> UNAIDS. 2020. Global AIDS Monitoring 2020 <https://www.unaids.org/en/global-aids-monitoring>

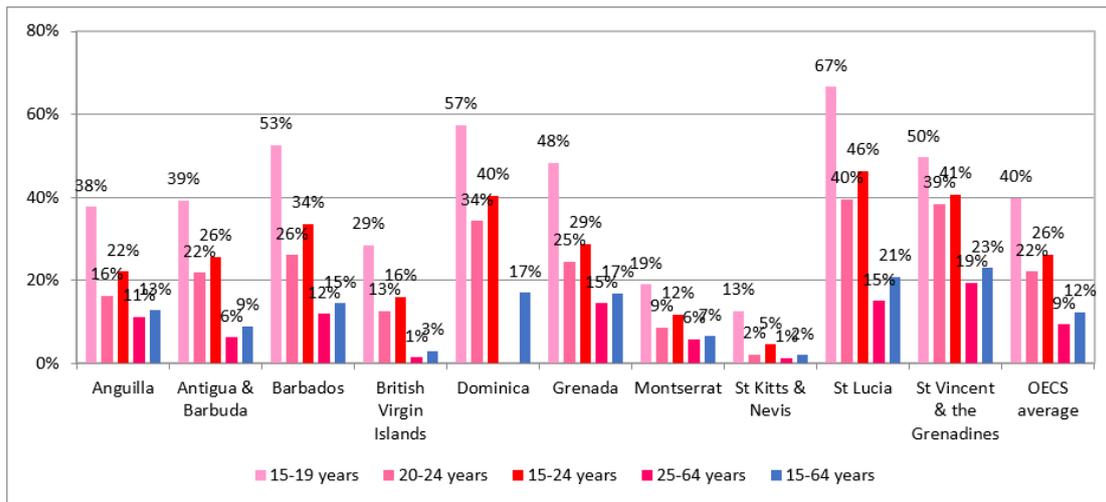
<sup>32</sup> UNAIDS Spectrum Estimates, 2017

<sup>33</sup> UNICEF, OECS Commission, and ILO. 2020. Youth Unemployment in Barbados and the OECS Area. A Statistical Compendium.

<sup>34</sup> UNICEF, OECS Commission, and ILO. 2020.

<sup>35</sup> UNDP. 2016. Caribbean Human Development Report. Multidimensional Progress: human resilience beyond income [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/undp\\_bb\\_chdr\\_2016.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/undp_bb_chdr_2016.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> UNICEF, OECS Commission, and ILO, *Youth Unemployment in Barbados and the OECS Area. A Statistical Compendium*, Saint Lucia, 2020.



NB. Data for the 25 to 64 age group is not available for Dominica.

Sources: Anguilla: 2011 Census; Antigua and Barbuda: LFS 2018; Barbados: SLC 2016, LFS 2016; British Virgin Islands: 2011 Census, LFS 2015; Dominica: LFS 2013; Grenada: SLC 2018/19; Montserrat: ICC-LFS 2018; Saint Kitts and Nevis: LFS 2016; Saint Lucia: SLC 2016, LFS 2017; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines: LFS 2017.

Figure 2: Unemployment rates by age group for the Eastern Caribbean

Low educational achievement, together with high unemployment rates become risk factors for teenage pregnancy, drug/alcohol abuse, and exposure to juvenile crime. According to the CHDR 2012,<sup>37</sup> juvenile delinquency involved 44 per cent of children and youth under 18 in Barbados, 53 per cent in Dominica and 54 per cent in St. Lucia, where the male proportion was more than twice that of females. “The major offences were, in sequence, stealing, drug-related offences and assault with violence, followed by sexual offences, deviant behaviour, gang-related activities, and wandering.” The rates of teenage pregnancy in the Eastern Caribbean are below the Caribbean average of 60.2 births per 1,000 women aged 15–19 and the Latin America and Caribbean regional average of 66.5.<sup>38</sup> Contributing factors are poverty, legislative barriers that impede adolescent access to sexual and reproductive health services, the dissonance between the age of consent to sex and the age of access to health services, early sexual debut, low use of contraception, the conservative stance of the region on comprehensive sexuality education, and sexual violence. Many girls who become pregnant are obliged to abandon school because of their pregnancy, which has a major long-term impact on their educational and employment opportunities, financial security, and ability to participate in public and political life. As a result, adolescent mothers are more vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. Adolescent pregnancy affects girls’ health trajectories, hindering their psychosocial development and contributing to poor health outcomes and elevated risks of maternal mortality and morbidity. Children born to adolescent mothers also face an elevated risk of poverty and poor health outcomes, including early pregnancy, which contributes to the maintenance of intergenerational cycles of poverty.

<sup>37</sup> UNDP. 2012. Caribbean Human Development Report 2012: Human Development and the Shift to Better Citizen Security

<sup>38</sup> PAHO/WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF. 2017. Accelerating progress toward the reduction of adolescent pregnancy in Latin America and the Caribbean.

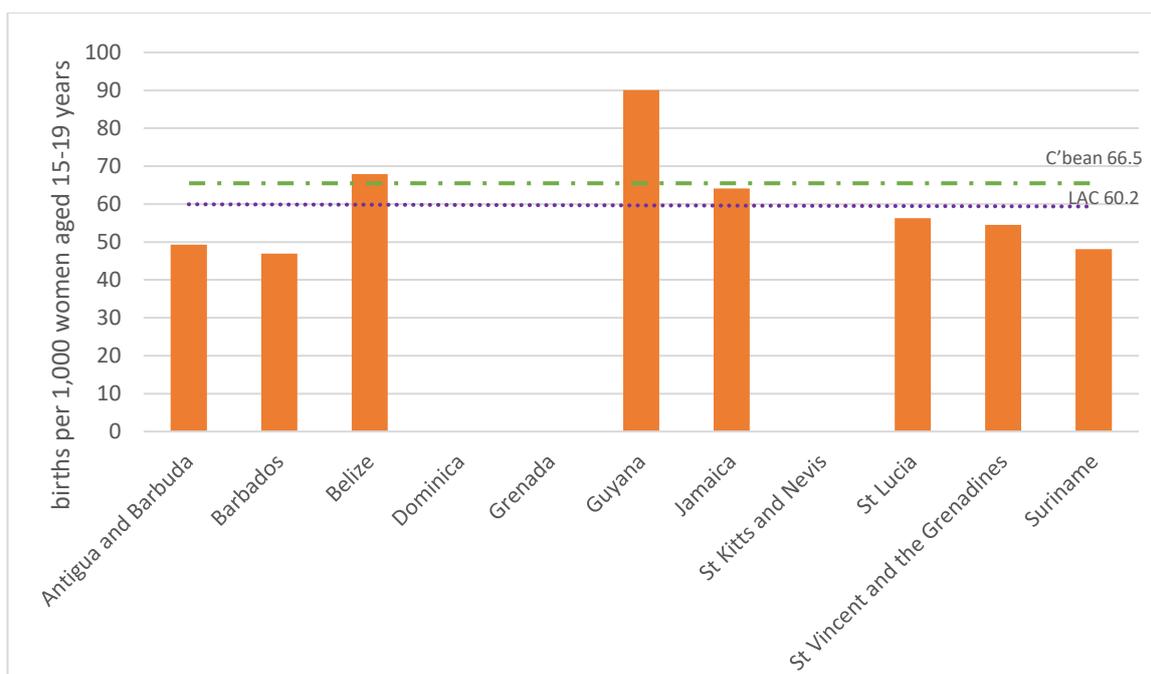


Figure 3: Rates of teenage pregnancy in Caribbean countries and averages for LAC (purple) and the Caribbean (green)

Source: PAHO/WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF, 2017

In 2017, Antigua and Barbuda developed a National Action Plan to address adolescent pregnancy. St. Kitts and Nevis has put measures in place through the Project Viola Programme that allows adolescent mothers to be reintegrated into the education system. The HFLE curriculum has also been restructured in schools to improve student access to sex education programmes.

### Children

Whereas nearly all (up to 95 per cent) primary-school-aged children in the Eastern Caribbean are in school, about 20 per cent of early-childhood-aged children are not enrolled and 12 per cent are not enrolled in secondary school. Only 1 out of 3 secondary school students (31 per cent boys, 37 per cent girls) meet the passing academic qualifications. Virtually all education indicators show girls with a lead, starting with primary-level examination performance and carrying through to Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) sitting rates and tertiary enrolments. These are long-standing (20+ year) trends.<sup>39</sup> There is a need for students to achieve the required level of learning, improvements in Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) and CSEC pass rates, and a convergence between educational qualifications and job market needs. Education systems mirror and reproduce the inequalities embedded in social organisation, and learners with disabilities, ethnic minorities, migrant populations, and those from marginalised households continue to be left behind. The rapid shift to online teaching and learning due to COVID-19 further exacerbates the inequalities in access to connectivity and devices, and many learners in remote areas without access to connectivity are being left behind due to protracted school closures or distance teaching and learning approaches. Non-availability of curriculum based digital content with Ministries of Education are impediments to the delivery of distant and online education for all school children - early childhood to secondary level. At the same time teacher's and caregivers' capacity to use digital platforms for delivery of education requires immediate support.

The increasing participation of children (under 15 years) in economic activities is a concern for the Eastern Caribbean. Available data indicate that the child labour rate is 2.3 per cent in Barbados and

<sup>39</sup> UNICEF, Gender and Children in the Eastern Caribbean Area. Advocacy Factsheet, 2020.

7.5 per cent in St. Lucia, below the 11 per cent observed for LAC. For these countries, child labour is more prevalent among poorer households and younger children (5–11 years old), and higher for boys than for girls.<sup>40</sup> Factors that could determine whether or not a child becomes a victim of child labour include the presence or absence of multidimensional and income poverty, parents' level of education and involvement in children's education, the cultural environment, and whether or not financial constraints exist.<sup>41</sup>

Around 33 per cent of Eastern Caribbean children live in poverty, and 4 per cent in extreme poverty. A significant proportion of this vulnerable child population resides in female-headed households, large households, and households with migrants. In Grenada, nearly half of children were poor, followed by Montserrat and Dominica (46.9 per cent and 38 per cent, respectively). Only Anguilla revealed a fairly low poverty rate for children of 7.2 per cent.<sup>42</sup>

Physical and psychological violence levels are high in households, schools and communities and affect both boys and girls. Corporal punishment is still legal in the region and social norms justify and condone its use as discipline. There is no legislation currently against corporal punishment in the home setting for example, and very few countries have banned it in schools and other settings.

Obesity and mental health have become more visible societal problems in recent years. One in five young adolescents (13–15 years old) considered attempting suicide during the past year, 24 per cent of girls and 14 per cent of boys.<sup>43</sup> Further, 30 per cent of young adolescents are overweight.<sup>44</sup>

#### *Elderly and other vulnerable groups*

While in 1980, 5.9 percent of the population in the sub-region was 65 years and older, in 2019 the proportion had almost doubled to 10.9 per cent. Among the countries, Barbados has the highest proportion of elderly people (16.2 per cent) and the highest old age dependency rate of 24.3 per cent.<sup>45</sup> Disaggregated data from the 2010/2011 census for Barbados and Grenada indicate that persons 65 years and older accounted for most of the population with a disability. The ageing of the population requires that increased consideration be given to pension systems, effective health coverage, and the provision of long-term care. The absence or precariousness of pension systems implies that the elderly, especially the poor, cannot stop working at retirement age. Furthermore, if their labour income comes from informal sectors, the elderly will have problems financing health care and living in general. Data show that in LAC countries 56 per cent of persons above statutory pensionable age are receiving an old-age pension.<sup>46</sup> In St. Vincent and the Grenadines nearly 78 per cent of the population at the pensionable age is receiving pension, followed by Antigua and Barbuda with a coverage rate of 69.7 per cent. St. Lucia has the lowest proportion covered. Several countries (Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, and Montserrat) have put in place social protection policies and legislation to address the rights and needs of the elderly.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Government of Barbados, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 2012; and Government of Saint Lucia, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Barrientos, A. 2004. Social Protection and Poverty Reduction in the Caribbean. A Draft Regional Report. Cited in CDB 2016. [https://www.caribank.org/sites/default/files/publication-resources/Study\\_The-Changing-Nature-of-Poverty-and-Inequality-in-the-Caribbean-New-Issues\\_-New-Solutions.pdf](https://www.caribank.org/sites/default/files/publication-resources/Study_The-Changing-Nature-of-Poverty-and-Inequality-in-the-Caribbean-New-Issues_-New-Solutions.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> OECS Commission and UNICEF. 2017. Child Poverty in the Eastern Caribbean Area. Final Report. December 2017. <http://www.unicef.org/2Feasterncaribbean%2Fmedia%2F1176%2Ffile%2Fchild-poverty-in-the-eastern-caribbean-area-2017.pdf> Data from Country Poverty Assessments from 2007-2016.

<sup>43</sup> Global school-based Student Health Survey (GSHS), conducted in selected Eastern Caribbean countries during 2008-2018.

<sup>44</sup> Global school-based Student Health Survey (GSHS), conducted in selected Eastern Caribbean countries during 2008-2018.

<sup>45</sup> World Bank, World Development Indicators.

<sup>46</sup> World Bank, Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Systematic Regional Diagnostic, June 2018. Latest available year between 2008 and 2015

<sup>47</sup> CECLAC. 2017. Caribbean Synthesis Report on the Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the San José Charter on the Rights of Older Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean

Regarding other vulnerable groups, an OECS Commission (2016)<sup>48</sup> study shows that indigenous peoples in Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines are more likely to be poor. However, this should be treated carefully as it does not investigate how other intersecting aspects such as ethnic or racial discrimination, or cultural behaviours and perceptions, influence this outcome.

Geography and location help to define vulnerability, and there is evidence that urban areas are more developed and better equipped than rural areas, which positively affects private consumption and facilitates access to social services and infrastructure.

Minority religious groups are subject to religious intolerance, discrimination and persecution in numerous Caribbean countries which are characterised by a conservative, Christian culture.<sup>49</sup> In most Caribbean countries for example, Rastafarians are marginalised via social discrimination, especially in hiring and in schools.<sup>50</sup> In Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Rastafarian community has reported that they are unfairly targeted by law enforcement officials resulting in unnecessary arrests, excessive force and, allegedly, unlawful killings.<sup>51</sup>

### *Migrants and refugees*

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has noted that migrants in the Eastern Caribbean are oftentimes subject to discrimination in workplaces, especially during periods of high unemployment or economic recession. Government officials in various countries indicate that many migrants do not report grievances in fear of adverse immigration consequences, especially if they have an irregular status. This leaves them at risk of falling victim to continued discrimination and exploitation in the workplace. No Eastern Caribbean country has anti-discrimination legislation regarding migrant populations. This has the potential to increase incidences of exploitation.

In Eastern Caribbean countries, access to social security benefits (such as sickness benefits, maternity benefits, or pensions) is usually only available when a migrant is working legally within the country and contributing to the social security scheme.

As parties to the CRC, states are required to make primary education compulsory and available free to all. In practice, most Eastern Caribbean countries abide by this agreement, however not all legislation reflects the right for non-nationals to access primary education through public systems without payment. The Education Acts of some countries specifically mention the prohibition of discrimination due to “place of origin”, yet also state that fees may be incurred for non-nationals from states outside of CARICOM accessing the education system. These challenges often see migrants and refugees being coerced into various forms of exploitation, including human trafficking.

## Human rights

Similar patterns of human rights abuses are found across the Eastern Caribbean. Violence against women and children is rife, while violent crime due to the activities of criminal gangs and the influx of small arms and drugs has risen sharply. The retention of the death penalty and the practice of corporal punishment are prevalent throughout the region. Problems in the administration of justice relating to an inefficient and politicised judiciary, police misconduct, prison conditions, and management of

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<sup>48</sup> Caribbean Development Bank. The changing nature of poverty and inequality in the Caribbean: New issues, new solutions. May 2016. [https://www.caribank.org/sites/default/files/publication-resources/Study\\_The-Changing-Nature-of-Poverty-and-Inequality-in-the-Caribbean-New-Issues\\_-New-Solutions.pdf](https://www.caribank.org/sites/default/files/publication-resources/Study_The-Changing-Nature-of-Poverty-and-Inequality-in-the-Caribbean-New-Issues_-New-Solutions.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> U.S. Department of State. 2012 International Religious Freedom Reports for Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados and St. Kitts and Nevis

<sup>50</sup> Discrimination may be purely linked to the enforcement of laws against marijuana, which the Rastafarians use in their religious practice and medicinally.

<sup>51</sup> Jamaica Observer “J’ca accused of discrimination against Rastafarians” 28 May 2013  
Barbados: “What happened to l’Akobi Tacuma Maloney?” 30 July 2008.

children in conflict with the law are present in virtually all the countries. Discrimination also exists on a broad scale against different groups of marginalised persons. There are also concerns regarding human trafficking and freedom of the press. Within this framework, there is a lack of engagement with international human rights protection systems, while national protection systems are insufficient or inadequate.

### *Administration of justice*

All Caribbean countries experience court backlogs, resulting in criminal matters taking years to adjudicate. In Barbados, cases can routinely take from five to ten years to come to trial.<sup>52</sup> The reasons for these delays are systemic and procedural which undermines judicial due process. Local legal professionals attribute the delays particularly to inadequate prosecutorial and police staffing as well as a lack of resources for investigations, antiquated rules of evidence, and poor case and court management. Most countries have one prison which houses a large number of detainees (including indigent people accused of minor offenses, or those accused of serious crimes) being held on remand for years before going to trial, resulting in severe overcrowding.<sup>53</sup> Most Caribbean prisons and detention centres fall well below international standards. Prison conditions in OECS countries have been described as “antiquated”, “unsanitary”, “unacceptable”, “appalling” and “inhumane”.

Across the Caribbean region there have been media reports of excessive use of force by the police during arrests and interrogation, extrajudicial executions, and torture. There are frequent complaints from low-income citizens and Rastafarians against the police alleging unprofessional conduct, intimidation, beatings, and assault. Police occasionally were accused of beating and torturing suspects to obtain confessions, which suspects often recanted at trial. In many cases the only evidence against the accused was a confession. Alternative sentencing mechanisms for young offenders and juvenile detention facilities are weak or lacking in the region. In all countries there is a need for a specialised remand centre to detain serious offenders between the ages of 16 and 18 years old. In Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, offenders over the age of 16 are held with the adult population. In almost all Caribbean countries, children who are wards of the state (that is, runaways, children taken out of abusive homes) are placed in juvenile correctional facilities along with offenders.

### *Progress on international human rights obligations*

The governments of the Eastern Caribbean are politically stable and supportive of the protection and promotion of human rights. Due to their legal systems, human rights treaties are considered non-self-executed and must be introduced through national legislation. Most countries have not sufficiently reformed their legislation to meet human rights standards. As of June 2020, all Eastern Caribbean countries have ratified CEDAW, the CRC and the CRPD. However, crucial agreements such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) have not yet been ratified by St. Kitts and Nevis or St. Lucia. Core international human rights treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers (CMW) and the Convention against Torture (CAT) also have a lower acceptance rate.

Following the second cycle of the UPR, all Eastern Caribbean countries are currently participating in the third cycle. Countries have received UPR recommendations that include combating violence against women and children, improving law enforcement and the administration of justice, addressing discrimination against marginalised groups, sexual and reproductive rights, establishing national human rights institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles, abolishing the death penalty or establishing a moratorium, human rights education, and promoting the right to education and the right to health. Eastern Caribbean countries are making an effort to implement UPR recommendations

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<sup>52</sup> U.S. State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for [2019]

<sup>53</sup> For example, in Antigua and Barbuda the prison populations are held in facilities that were built to hold half the number of prisoners. Grenada’s only prison holds 441 prisoners in a facility designed for 98. U.S. State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for [2019]

in ‘good faith’. Most have established permanent interagency mechanisms to coordinate follow-up and reporting on the recommendations received from mechanisms. Some of them have or are in the process of developing implementation plans for a human rights agenda for the years ahead.

### *Challenges to the human rights architecture*

Although the Eastern Caribbean has a relatively strong record on civil and political rights, “implementing measures are often incomplete, adopted with lengthy delays, incoherent at times and without making a direct nexus with the relevant international human rights instruments.”<sup>54</sup> Moreover, there is an inadequacy of available legal remedies and mechanisms to demand the protection and fulfilment of rights. No country in the Eastern Caribbean has a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) that meets the Paris Principles. Most people cannot afford a lawyer to go to court and civil society organisations have a very limited capacity to provide legal aid. For those who can afford legal representation, court backlogs result in litigation matters taking many years to come to resolution. Existing social and political structures still sustain patterns of discrimination and human rights violations. Discrimination based on class and colour of skin affects populations living in poor districts. This kind of discrimination is structural, for example, deeply rooted in history, society, and political structures. It hampers the efforts of countries to progress, overcome poverty and deep social inequalities, and translate economic potential into economic development. One of the main challenges in the region is to combat and reformulate a conservative narrative towards human rights which identifies them as measures applied to criminals to avoid justice or as values and norms imposed by foreign cultures. Human rights have not been embraced by the general population in the Caribbean partially due to the lack of formal and informal human rights education.

## **Gender equality and women’s empowerment**

Gender inequality remains a challenge in the region. Gender stereotypes prevail across the Eastern Caribbean on the role and place of women in relation to men, resulting in an undervaluing of women’s work and contribution to national sustainable development efforts. This is a main cause of gender and sex-based discrimination which drives gender inequalities in development policies as well as service delivery across key sector institutions, reinforcing such biased ideologies.

Women are clustered in lower-waged occupations and are over-represented in unpaid labour and informal jobs which makes them vulnerable to falling or remaining in poverty, as well as being agents of intergenerational poverty and inequality. Countries still have not progressed in measuring unpaid work which is a requirement of the SDGs. Based on 2012–2016 data, the ratio of female to male unemployment rate for OECS countries was 1.26 females for every male, and there is evidence of gender pay gaps, which are particularly high – around 30 per cent for Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (2013–2016).<sup>55</sup> There is a high proportion of female-headed, single-parent households (between 37–49 per cent of homes) due to high migration by men and a matrifocal family structure.<sup>56</sup> In contrast to labour market gender gaps, women have higher secondary school enrolment, tertiary enrolment is almost twice the male enrolment rate, and they have better performance in CSEC subjects. Nevertheless, female unemployment rates are higher. Women are over-represented in

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<sup>54</sup> Hans Geiser, “Sustainable Development from a Human Rights Perspective and the Challenges it Represents for the Caribbean SIDS (a discussion paper)”, ECLAC Sustainable Development Unit, 2010.

<sup>55</sup> World Bank. 2018. Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Systematic Regional Diagnostic. <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/300861530819875538/pdf/OECS-Systematic-Regional-Diagnostic-P165001-1.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> Sam, K. 2016. Women’s leadership in local government in the Caribbean. *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance* 2015:18

tourism, service, and care industries (areas highly susceptible to economic shocks) which are driven by negative gender stereotypes on the role and place of women, including in the labour market.

Women also continue to be significantly under-represented in public and political leadership spaces, particularly in the legislatures of the Eastern Caribbean where they make up an average of 15 per cent of the region's legislators, well below the average of 29 per cent in Latin America. Further, female ministers are more likely to head ministries traditionally associated with women such as education, youth, housing, and culture.

Additionally, gender inequality and social marginalisation increase the vulnerability of women to disasters, heightening their exposure to risk and restraining their capacity, often resulting in a gendered post-disaster downward spiral of poverty. A recent United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) assessment of the impact of disasters which “reinforce, perpetuate, and increase gender inequalities” and widen the gap between men and women, characterises Latin America and the Caribbean as “the world's most unequal region”.<sup>57</sup>

### *Sexual and gender-based violence*

Sexual and gender-based violence (GBV) are endemic in the region with women and girls predominantly affected and is a key indicator of gender inequality in the Caribbean. This is manifested in several forms and harmful practices including intimate partner and domestic violence, family violence, sexual violence, trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation, survival sex, economic dependence, child sexual abuse (including incest), forced pregnancy, child marriage and early unions. Data from ECLAC<sup>58</sup> show that 20–35 per cent of Caribbean women are victims of different types of violence (physical and/or psychological and/or sexual). Among the risk factors associated with violence against women are economic dependence and age at first union or marriage. Public policy and legislation against violence against women are mainly focused on protecting and providing care services to victims and implementing educational programmes to mitigate domestic violence.

The lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence in Grenada (that is, the percentage of ever-partnered women who have ever experienced at least one form of physical, sexual, emotional and economic abuse in their lifetime) is 39 per cent.<sup>59</sup> The average lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence across the other 5 countries that have conducted this same survey in CARICOM (Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago) is around 46 per cent.<sup>60</sup> Research further indicates that women are more likely to be abused, killed or injured within a family setting. In Barbados, 30 per cent of women reported having been physically abused and 21 per cent of the murders between 2000 and 2009 were women who died as a result of domestic violence. Over the last decade, more women have been murdered in St. Vincent and the Grenadines than any other country in the OECS. Sexual violence against women and girls is also a serious and pervasive problem. According to 2017 data from the UNODC's Crime Trends Survey (CTS),<sup>61</sup> statistics on Caribbean states show that each country experiences a higher rape rate than the average of 102 countries in the world, and two of the top ten recorded rape rates in the world occur in the Eastern Caribbean.

According to a 2012 UNICEF study, “child sexual abuse occurs in all Eastern Caribbean countries, and across all racial, ethnic, religious and socioeconomic groups. It is far more common than previously thought and affects children of all ages, including infants.”<sup>62</sup> Around 2,300 cases of child abuse are reported to the authorities annually in Eastern Caribbean countries, of which 35 per cent are sexual abuse cases. Violence-associated risks vary considerably by gender. The great majority of child sexual

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<sup>57</sup>UNISDR. Post-2015 Gender Equality in the Future We Want: Disaster risk reduction and gender. [http://www.americalatinagenera.org/es/documentos/post2015\\_fichas/DRR.pdf](http://www.americalatinagenera.org/es/documentos/post2015_fichas/DRR.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> ECLAC. 2014. Confronting Violence Against Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Annual report 2013-2014. [https://www.cepal.org/mujer/noticias/paginas/9/53409/Annual\\_Report\\_2013\\_2014.\\_C1420458\\_Web.pdf](https://www.cepal.org/mujer/noticias/paginas/9/53409/Annual_Report_2013_2014._C1420458_Web.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> Grenada Women's Health and Life Experiences Survey 2018

<sup>60</sup> <https://caribbeanwomenscount.unwomen.org/index.html#>

<sup>61</sup> <https://dataunodc.un.org/data/crime/sexual-violence>

<sup>62</sup> UNICEF. 2010. Child Sexual Abuse in the Eastern Caribbean

abuse and domestic violence victims are females while most perpetrators are male. In contrast, young males are disproportionately both victims and perpetrators of delinquent and criminal behaviours (fighting, substance use, assaults, and murders).<sup>63</sup>

A World Health Organization study in 2000 indicated that nearly half of the population of girls (47.6 per cent) and a third of boys in the Caribbean (31.9 per cent) reported that their first intercourse was forced or coerced. The vast majority of abusers are male, and the vast majority of victims are female. Furthermore, UNICEF reports that frequently "women sometimes turn a blind eye when their partners have sex with children in their families".<sup>64</sup> This behaviour is attributed to poverty, patriarchal attitudes, gender socialisation and norms, and cyclical abuse. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased these vulnerabilities, signalling the need for increased urgency of actions to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

## Path to 2030

In a bid to 'leave no one behind' and ensure that vulnerable groups are included in the development gains envisioned by the Sustainable Development Goals, key recommendations have been provided. These recommendations range from the need for sustained funding for integrated risk assessment and disaggregated data collection, to those which relate to groups identified as vulnerable. Such recommendations include, but are not limited to, a focus on informal settlement upgrading (people in informal settlements), attitudinal and legal barriers (PWDs), anti-discrimination legislation (LGBTQI persons), client-centred and community-based/led HIV interventions (PLHIV), the strategic engagement of youth as both beneficiaries and change-makers (youth and children), expansion of the coverage and level of social protection (the elderly and other vulnerable groups), and mass migratory flows into the state for refugee-like reasons (migrants and refugees). Further recommendations also relate to human rights (such as the need to establish National Human Rights Institutions consistent with the Paris Principles) and gender equality and women's empowerment (such as the need to implement gender-responsive national budgets and development plans).

A comprehensive list of these recommendations (that is, those which relate to 'leaving no one behind' within the context of achieving the SDGs) has been provided in Annex 1. These recommendations are also featured in the Conclusion and serve as a component of 150 recommendations that have been integrated into the 6 entry points needed for accelerating and scaling the change needed for SDG attainment, as well as the 4 levers required to catalyse change through each entry point. Such recommendations are labelled so that details are provided on specific groups of persons (for example, *LNOB - PWDs*) or issues (for example, *LNOB - Gender equality and women's empowerment*) that are being addressed.

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<sup>63</sup> UNICEF. Gender and Children in the Eastern Caribbean Area. Advocacy Factsheet, 2020.

<sup>64</sup> UNICEF. Gender and Children in the Eastern Caribbean Area. Advocacy Factsheet, 2020.

## 4. Multi-dimensional vulnerability risk analysis

### *Risks to peace and security*

Crime and insecurity significantly undermine the fabric of society and increase the region's social and economic costs, causing unfavourable conditions for sustainable development, the success and longevity of which relies heavily on peaceful and stable societies.

### *Key challenges, their drivers and root causes*

At the national level, peace and security are undermined by several factors including high youth unemployment, poverty, educational underperformance, violence in the home and communities, risky behaviours, and the geographic position of the sub-region which is vulnerable to organised crime flows that tranship guns, drugs and cash.

### *Effectiveness of the judicial system, public participation, and accountability*

A 2016 Americas Barometer Report<sup>65</sup> found that a majority of respondents (56 per cent) said that they have “some” or “a lot” of faith that the judicial system would punish the guilty. Roughly, a third of respondents (29 per cent) across the six countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines) said they have “little” faith, while 14 per cent said they have “none”. Research by UNDP (2020)<sup>66</sup> noted that there are significant areas within the administration of justice that may lead to negative public perception. Backlogs and delays in getting to trial engenders the following: witness tampering; the frustration of victims who may then give up on the process; and, in conjunction with the ease of getting bail (in some cases), a feeling of impunity among offenders. Uneven and inconsistent sentencing among magistrates and, in the case of “either-way” matters, between magistrates and Supreme Courts can also negatively affect the public's perception of the fairness and impartiality of the judicial system.

Stakeholders across the Eastern Caribbean expressed support for the expanded use of non-custodial measures to reduce the number of people on remand for extended periods. This is of particular concern in countries such as Barbados which has the highest proportion of pre-trial detainees: Those on remand represent around 56 per cent of the total prison population and remain there, on average, for several years. At all levels in the Judiciary, the views were that many of those on remand for non-violent crimes could be diverted using systems such as curfews, electronic monitoring, detention centres, and weekly reporting to officers. In contrast, a 2015 survey of public perceptions in the Eastern Caribbean revealed that respondents, on average, maintained highly punitive perspectives towards crime. Respondents in Antigua and Barbuda and Barbados were, on average, in support of more harsh punishments, including the death penalty.

Access to justice is at risk when there is a lack of legal aid and a failure to protect both witnesses and victims. Grenada is a strong example of the supportive role that civil society can play in providing legal aid services. The Legal Aid and Counselling Clinic has provided legal aid, mediation and counselling services to the Grenadian public since 1987.<sup>67</sup> The sub-region would have difficulty maintaining a witness protection programme in cases of serious crimes given the small societies and land masses of the islands. However, witnesses in need of protection via relocation and anonymity represent only a small percentage of the serious cases being dealt with by the justice systems. UNDP (2020)<sup>68</sup> found that the support and protection of both witnesses and victims in less extreme circumstances was raised by all stakeholders. For example, preliminary inquiries are often delayed because of the difficulty of producing witnesses because of a reluctance to testify, the challenge of locating witnesses, or

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<sup>65</sup> Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP). 2016. The Americas Barometer Report on Citizen Security in the OECS, [www.LapopSurveys.org](http://www.LapopSurveys.org)

<sup>66</sup> UNDP. 2020. Needs Assessment of the Administration of Justice in 9 Caribbean Countries

<sup>67</sup> UNDP. 2020. Needs Assessment of the Administration of Justice in 9 Caribbean Countries

<sup>68</sup> UNDP. 2020. Needs Assessment of the Administration of Justice in 9 Caribbean Countries

a lack of incentive to appear in court if they have to travel long distances.

### *Climate and disaster risk to security*

The digitisation of case management is a key element of building national resilience in climate and disaster risk countries. The destruction of courts and other state administration offices in Dominica following Hurricane Maria was accompanied by the loss of many paper-based court records, leading to major challenges with pursuing the related cases. The full transition to electronic records with redundant storage will improve efficiency and build resilience in the Judiciary and reduce the extent to which access to justice is compromised in post-disaster conditions.

In several Eastern Caribbean jurisdictions, the physical infrastructure for justice administration is limited, often inadequate, and may be vulnerable to climate or disaster risk. Legal infrastructural vulnerability was highlighted in Dominica after Hurricane Maria destroyed the court offices, and important judicial processes and decisions had to be suspended. There is therefore a strong need for an inventory of the current stock of justice administration infrastructure, and the design and construction of dedicated, purpose-built judicial centres that are resilient to climate-related and other hazards. The use of resilient building techniques and the deployment of resilient technologies, such as renewable energy with battery storage, will not only enhance the efficiency of the day-to-day administration of justice; it will also support access even in post-disaster situations. Given the limited fiscal space available, non-debt financing alternatives for these infrastructural interventions, such as public-private partnerships and energy performance contracting, are strongly needed.

### *Impact of COVID-19*

The high job losses on young persons, particularly women, due to COVID-19 could increase frustration, aggression, and violence. Persons who have recorded loss of livelihoods “could become more vulnerable to being recruited into organised criminal gangs while categories such as aged persons, the sick, users of ICT services, and others may become easy targets for mushrooming criminals.”<sup>69</sup>

Access to legal services and legal information is critical, as prevalent inequalities have and will continue to be highlighted by the pandemic. The slowdown of judicial services in the face of public health precautions will increase the already acute problem of case backlogs and may significantly delay access to justice and access to crucial rights such as child support payments and support in situations of domestic violence. The UN Secretary-General’s Policy Brief on the Impact of COVID-19 on Women<sup>70</sup> shows a dramatic increase in domestic violence and child abuse and a lack of protection for women and children due to measures requiring people to remain confined in their homes.

### *Democratic space*

The constitutions of all the countries in Barbados and the OECS guarantee the rights of association, assembly and expression which contributes to a democratic space that is largely respected. However, the constitutions also provide that these rights can be limited when it is reasonably required for defence, public safety, public order, public morality or public health or the protection of the rights of others. The COVID-19 crisis resulted in Eastern Caribbean countries introducing emergency legislation that significantly limited freedom of movement and assembly although governments made the case that the emergency measures were proportionate to the public health threat.

Citizens are generally free to express their opinions, assemble in public and form groups to pursue collective interests. Protests by civil society and human rights defenders generally occur without incident, although there have been cases of police using force against protesters. There are several media platforms where citizens are free to voice their opinions about government. Less than 50 per

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<sup>69</sup> UN. 2020. Rapid risks and impact assessment of COVID-19 on citizens’ security and social cohesion in the Caribbean. June 2020

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/report/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en-1.pdf>

cent of households in the Caribbean have access to the internet,<sup>71</sup> but it is free from government restrictions even though most countries do not have access to information laws. Although most independent media outlets and journalists operate in a relatively free, safe environment (there have been no reported killings or detentions of journalists) there are occasional allegations of state harassment and intimidation of journalists and public personalities. Journalists report that the fear of litigation and other informal forms of reprisal foster an environment of self-censorship. Although rarely enforced, defamation and sedition remain criminalised in most Eastern Caribbean countries<sup>72</sup> and can be punishable by imprisonment.

### *Justice and the rule of law*

Social cohesion and peaceful coexistence are necessary prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development in general and SDG 16 in particular. They are also pre-conditions for the smooth functioning of a community and for the benefit of the individuals within it.

The 2020 Needs Assessment<sup>73</sup> examined both access to justice and the quality of justice dispensed by the judicial systems under review. The overwhelming conclusion of the Needs Assessment is that the backlog of cases – particularly in the criminal division – is the most challenging issue. The reasons for the backlogs are multifaceted and include the slow pace of investigations by police, inordinate delays in the production of depositions, the lack of human resources, and the lack of fully integrated ICT systems. The latter manifests in persistent reliance on paper documents throughout the system, from the police and the Directors of Public Prosecution to Judges and Magistrates, which creates challenges related to tracking cases, and completing transcripts, depositions, and other documents in a timely manner. These challenges, identified by both the Barbados and Eastern Caribbean Supreme Courts and Magistrates' Courts, indicate the need for in-court technology for Judges and Magistrates to access and manage case data electronically. In promoting equal justice for all, justice for women is one of the main accelerators for achieving the 2030 Agenda. Investing in justice for women creates a foundation for long-term growth and peaceful and inclusive societies.

### **Child Justice and the Rule of Law Assessment**

Governments across the Caribbean have stepped up efforts to improve State responses to child protection, both for children who are at risk of harm, as well as for those who have come into conflict with the law. Nevertheless, regional research has identified several gaps in the systemic responses to children who have experienced violence and other forms of abuse, as well as those who have committed offences and interfaced with the juvenile justice system.<sup>74</sup> Among these gaps are the low ages of criminal responsibility, the paucity of formal diversion provisions, the limited and inappropriate sentencing options, the treatment of 16 and 17-year olds as adult offenders, the use of flogging or whipping, and the retention of status offences. Regional model legislation which remedies these gaps, was developed since 2003, but uptake and implementation remain slow due to low prioritisation by successive governments. Globally, there has been a recognised need to progress towards implementing a more integrated and systems-based approach to preventing and protecting children from maltreatment. Emphasis is shifting towards a more holistic approach where greater attention is paid to legal and policy reforms, the enhancement of information systems, institutional capacity development, planning, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation. Similarly, special care for child victims and witnesses in judicial decisions including custody and adoption, require more child-friendly approaches.

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<sup>71</sup> Bleeker, A. 2020. Strengthening ICT and knowledge management capacity in support of the sustainable development.

<sup>72</sup> Antigua no longer has a defamation law and Barbados no longer has a sedition law.

<sup>73</sup> UNDP. 2020. Needs Assessment of the Administration of Justice in 9 Caribbean Countries

<sup>74</sup> Situation Analysis of Juvenile Justice in the OECS December 2015; Situation Analysis of Juvenile Justice in Barbados 2014; Violence against Children in the Caribbean UNICEF 2006; The Status of Child Protection in St. Kitts & Nevis UNICEF 2007

## Internal security

High rates of crime and violence in the Eastern Caribbean is a complex problem, with the potential to undermine social and economic development. High levels of serious assault are demonstrated in several countries where data have become available in recent years.<sup>75</sup> Rates of reporting are linked to the level of trust in the police and the level of willingness to report domestic violence. In keeping with the Caribbean's generally high rate of homicide, the Eastern Caribbean follows this trend, exhibiting rates in some cases above the Caribbean average.<sup>76</sup> These levels of crime and violence, which also include property crimes and theft, can have a major impact on economic development. Data from victimisation surveys is lacking. Nevertheless, the National St. Lucia Crime Victimization Survey 2020 demonstrates that crime and violence cost the country over EC\$64 million (approximately US\$23.7 million) between September 2018 and August 2019.<sup>77</sup>

In the Caribbean, young adult males (ages 18–30) are most vulnerable to drug abuse and crime, and are over-represented as victims and perpetrators, driven by poverty, educational underperformance, violent families and communities and risky behaviours.<sup>78 79</sup> Women and girls are more likely to be victimised than to commit crime. The few laws that exist to protect victims are rarely enforced. The prevalence of violence against women and children is difficult to assess not only because of under-reporting due to fear of retribution, social silence and social stigma, but also because of the absence of systems for reporting or for processing “special victims” within security and justice institutions.

Geographic location places the small islands in the path of organised crime groups that seek to traffic weapons and illicit substances between producing countries in the south and consumer markets in North America and Europe. They are, therefore, forced to monitor and control not only air borders, but also vast maritime spaces, with relatively significant constraints on law enforcement capacities to do so. Illicit flows of guns, cash and drugs have fuelled criminality at the national level and have contributed to a proliferation of gang activity and a relative availability of illegal arms and weapons. Continuing from the increased use and availability of small arms and light weapons across the Eastern Caribbean in 2002,<sup>80</sup> prices of illicit handguns were lower than licit prices in 2020, indicating an ample availability of handguns on the illicit market in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>81</sup> The capacity for states to respond effectively to these elements of organised crime remains limited with often “under resourced, under trained and sometimes corrupt individuals in police and security forces”.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Data are collected from National Authorities through United Nations Crime Trend Surveys (UN-CTS). 2016 Serious assault at country level, number of police-recorded offences, counts and rates per 100,000 population, Rates per country: Antigua and Barbuda – 5.29; Barbados – 1,559; Dominica – 123.64; Grenada – 396; St. Vincent and the Grenadines;

<sup>76</sup> Estimate based on UNODC Homicide Statistics 2020; Victims of intentional homicide, counts and rates per 100,000: Antigua and Barbuda (lacking data post 2012), Barbados (9.8 - 2018), the Commonwealth of Dominica (26.6 - 2017), Grenada (10.8 – 2017), Saint Lucia (21.4 – 2018), Saint Kitts and Nevis (lacking data post 2012), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (lacking data post 2012), Caribbean Rate – (12.1 2018), <https://dataunodc.un.org/content/data/homicide/homicide-rate>

<sup>77</sup> 2020 National St. Lucia Crime Victimization Survey, <https://www.stats.gov.lc/crime-victimization-survey/>

<sup>78</sup> UNDP. 2016. Caribbean Human Development Report [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/undp\\_bb\\_chdr\\_2016.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/undp_bb_chdr_2016.pdf)

<sup>79</sup> <https://blogs.iadb.org/caribbean-dev-trends/en/what-can-we-do-about-adolescents-violence/>

<sup>80</sup> Crime, Violence, and Development: Trends, Costs, and Policy Options in the Caribbean, [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/Cr\\_and\\_Vio\\_Car\\_E.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/Cr_and_Vio_Car_E.pdf)

<sup>81</sup> UNODC. 2020. Global Study on Firearms Trafficking 2020 [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Firearms/2020\\_REPORT\\_Global\\_Study\\_on\\_Firearms\\_Trafficking\\_2020\\_web.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Firearms/2020_REPORT_Global_Study_on_Firearms_Trafficking_2020_web.pdf)

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.caribbean-council.org/crime-damaging-caribbean-development/#:~:text=Why%20levels%20of%20crime%20should,deprivation%20and%20middle%20class%20greed>

#### **Dodds Prison, Barbados**

The Barbados prison system has implemented a targeted intervention programme designed to improve rehabilitation outcomes. The segregation of the prison population facilitates more tailored psycho-social programmes that better reflect the needs of different groups. In addition to supporting livelihood skills, the initiative includes a six-month transition programme for inmates pending release, intended to equip them with basic skills for successful reintegration.

#### **The Positive Deviance (Upfull Hustlers) Pilot Project, Trinidad and Tobago**

Conceptualised by UNDP Trinidad and Tobago, this project aimed to establish a cadre of youth mentors and peace ambassadors in at-risk communities to serve as role models and catalysts for change. Funding was made available by UNDP's Global Innovation Facility through generous support from the Government of Denmark. Mon Repos, Morvant was selected based on the prevalence of various social problems that existed in the area including high youth unemployment, crime, poverty, social and location stigma, and drug use. The area was also chosen due to a lull in gang violence, which made it a relatively stable community in which to work. The project addressed the sociocultural factors that encourage young people to be attracted to gangs and criminal activity. It started with a baseline mapping exercise, which identified values and assets in the community, and mapped the crime situation in the area in order to build a picture of the characteristics and values of youth aged 15–25 and the various social problems they face. The project produced significant results. Whereas the youth started the programme semi-engaged and unable to speak positively about the future, by the end they were enthusiastically participating in workshops and openly sharing their perspectives. Most have signed up for trade and academic courses run by government entities, mainly through the Civilian Conservation Corps, and MIC Institute of Technology. Two are scheduled to start their degrees at the University of Trinidad and Tobago later this year. One participant is now employed at UNDP as a Temporary Programme Assistant.

#### *Path to 2030*

In response to the detailed risks to peace and security and the challenges to access to justice for all in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, recommendations have been provided to respond to such issues and in an effort to effectively pursue and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. These recommendations highlight targeted, research-oriented, technical, integrated, systems-based, collaborative, and people-centred solutions. They range from the need to strengthen evidence-based decision-making to reduce crime and violence, to the need to provide secure, electronic case registry and case management systems to support the effective performance of the judicial system.

A comprehensive list of these recommendations (that is, those pertaining to peace, security, and justice) have been provided in Annex 2. These recommendations are also featured in the Conclusion and serve as a component of 150 recommendations that have been integrated into the 6 entry points needed for accelerating and scaling the change needed for SDG attainment, as well as the 4 levers required to catalyse change through each entry point. Such recommendations are labelled so that details are provided on specific groups of persons or issues (for example, *peace and security - children*) that are being addressed.

## Risks to sustainable economic growth

### *Trade volatility, economic growth, and stability*

The region depends on critical imports such as food supplies, and input goods for agriculture, energy, industry, and the construction sectors. Trade imbalances plus high indebtedness wavering around 80–100 per cent of GDP make Caribbean economies extremely vulnerable. On average Barbados and the OECS carry a trade imbalance with the rest of the world, and typically imports account for 52 per cent of economic activity with exports at just 48 per cent (CIA World Factbook). As very small net importers, countries in the sub-region are price takers and therefore susceptible to shocks in the landed price, shipping costs, and most drastically global energy costs. Tourism normally drives 64–75 per cent of these economies. Across the OECS, approximately 50 per cent of GDP and employment are based directly on the tourism sector.<sup>83</sup> Data indicate that over 20,000 tourism workers from Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, and Saint Lucia were laid off due to Covid-19-related hotel closures in those countries, directly resulting in the rapid contraction in tax revenues, which has further stressed the already precarious fiscal positions of OECS Member States.<sup>84</sup> Specific to investment, it is anticipated that there will be steep declines in foreign direct investment (FDI), delays in approved development projects, and an increasingly high risk of financial sector contagion due to the decreased ability of businesses and individuals to meet their financial obligations.

### *Climate change and environmental shocks*

Climate change, natural hazards and environmental degradation will continue to challenge the resilience of ecosystems and the livelihoods that depend on these. Agricultural productivity and hence food and nutrition security will be significantly impacted by climate change as critical components of the agro-ecosystem are being affected (for example, water, soil, and pests). Climate change impacts threaten the production of food from land and sea for local consumption and threaten revenue generation from export crops. Vulnerable groups such as fisherfolk and rain-fed farmers who incur damage and losses as a result of natural hazards and recurrent or simultaneous shocks, for example, will experience increased difficulty in accessing critical livelihoods assets such as fishing gear, seeds, and fertilisers. The lack of access to proper financing or appropriate insurance and weak social protection systems that are not shock-responsive further increase their sensitivity to these shocks, particularly for rural areas.<sup>85</sup> When pushed to the limit, poor and highly vulnerable groups can resort to desperate livelihoods decisions and negative coping strategies such as taking on high-interest loans or engaging in illegal or unsustainable natural resource extractive practices, which could then lead to cyclical indebtedness and worsen environmental degradation.

Exogenous environmental shocks can affect institutions with complex decision-making structures, rigid programme rules, and low field service delivery capacities by compromising their ability to provide appropriate and timely assistance before, during and after a shock.

### *Food security, agriculture, and land*

The underrated importance of food and nutrition security and food sovereignty hides the connection between the ability to feed the nation, significant benefits to health and a foundation for sustained growth. High dependence of the OECS and Barbados on food imports, surpassing US\$640 million in 2018<sup>86</sup> and estimated at over US\$5 billion for CARICOM states, could rapidly compromise gains made in the economic development of Caribbean SIDS. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the ability to meet critical needs has already resulted in the number of food insecure people in the region

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<sup>83</sup> OECS Commission. 2020. COVID-19 and Beyond: Impact Assessments and Responses <https://unctad.org/system/files/non-official-document/ditc-ted-04062020-OceansWebinar-OECS.pdf>

<sup>84</sup> OECS Commission. 2020. COVID-19 and Beyond: Impact Assessments and Responses

<sup>85</sup> UNEP, 2020. Measuring Progress: The environmental dimension of SDGs – Latin America and the Caribbean

<sup>86</sup> FAOSTAT

increasing by 241 per cent or 1.7 million people by April, 2020.<sup>87</sup> With no guarantees of accessing social safety nets and with increasing levels of unemployment, vulnerable groups will favour inferior products (processed canned meats and fried foods), contributing to the higher levels of obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) observed in the region, as well as a weak workforce.

An economic shift away from the agriculture sector to the promotion of the services sector (financial and tourism) has constrained the access of fisherfolk and agricultural entrepreneurs to funding facilities, critical inputs of production, cold storage, climate smart technology and technical expertise, hampering the development of sustainable, productive and resilient food systems. Another threat to sustainable food production is the decreasing acreage of lands allocated for food production, with some Caribbean SIDS reporting levels as high as 15 per cent. This is especially concerning as over 70 per cent of their overall food needs are being imported. Further, the lack of market intelligence and digital technologies have limited productivity and contributed to food losses that surpass pre-Covid-19 lockdown levels which were as high as 30 per cent. Current challenges to food security also highlight the importance of strategic intra-regional trade and the need for the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) to support the elimination of tariff barriers on imports and exports within the region.

### *Economic diversification*

#### *Potential of the blue and green economy*

A green economy is considered to be one which "results in improved human wellbeing and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities...is low carbon, resource efficient, and socially inclusive".<sup>88</sup> Green and circular economic strategies can be used as tools for building resilience, increasing localisation of production and commerce, leveraging resource efficiency and innovation, and reducing emissions and waste. The green and blue sectors of agriculture, forestry and fisheries currently contribute very little – 1 per cent to 11 per cent of GDP for Barbados and the OECS.

A transition to inclusive, resilient, and environmentally sustainable blue and green economies has been proposed as key to achieving growth and prosperity. As a society-wide transition, this shift in economic model cannot be pigeon-holed in a single Ministry but demands a radical adjustment in systems thinking and planning to align all systems of governance, budgeting and financial decisions in the public and private sectors with principles of sustainability. Inadequate safeguards, lack of strict policies and regulations and well-defined management plans to protect natural resources can lead to further deterioration of already fragile ecosystems and impact the ability of both green and blue economies to thrive. In agriculture and fisheries, an ageing farmer population, low youth involvement and lack of attention towards tertiary-level education and technical training in agricultural and marine sciences hinder the adoption of innovative climate smart technologies and digital tools and all contribute to the green and blue economic transition standstill. Despite signs of improvement, countries are still far behind in the implementation and promotion of climate-resilient and technology-based tools in food systems.

#### *Importance of retooling*

Rapid advances in and use of ICT have created both opportunities and challenges for the design and delivery of education and training which would ultimately support economic development in Barbados and the OECS. The COVID-19 pandemic brings into focus the low resilience of the education and training systems to maintain continuity of programme design, delivery, student/trainee assessment and certification, and instructor professional development. More than 50 per cent of education and training institutions were not engaged in any form of online teaching and learning, while 47 per cent did engage in limited forms of online learning.

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<sup>87</sup> CARICOM, CDEMA, WFP and FAO. 2020. Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security and Livelihoods Impact Survey: Regional Summary Report April 2020

<sup>88</sup> UNEP. 2011. Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication - A Synthesis for Policy Makers

The continuous functioning of education and training systems is a critical factor for the effective delivery of programmes and the development of necessary skills in the workplace, in emerging occupations (green and inclusive jobs), and in building human capacity to limit the risks to sustainable economic growth.<sup>89</sup> Inhibiting the use of ICT for design and delivery of instruction at a distance during the pandemic was the minimal or lack of knowledge and use of a learning management system (LMS) and online resources by instructors and trainers. Access to uninterrupted internet service and the cost of internet connectivity could also affect delivery of, and access to instruction. As regards facilitating the creation of a more prepared, versatile and resilient labour market, actions could include providing adequate support to vulnerable groups (especially youth), allowing employers to co-determine skilling and employability needs, and moving skilling/reskilling programmes to online modalities as Barbados has done through its partnership with the Commonwealth of Learning and Coursera.

### *Path to 2030*

The post-COVID-19 future involves taking full advantage of the opportunity to formulate an alternative development paradigm. A blueprint for economic resilience in the region is dependent on institutional and regulatory transformation and stimulation of a culture of innovation and entrepreneurial risk that is willing to embrace new business models. To be durable and resilient, economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis must avoid a return to business as usual and environmentally destructive investment patterns. Continued pursuit of fiscal reform and debt reduction with fiscal prudence is essential.

Towards the end of transitioning to economic resilience and sustainability, recommended actions range from the need to develop and strengthen intraregional trade facilitation and integration, to the need for continuous professional development for instructors on the use of learning management systems, and instructional design for e-learning. A comprehensive list of recommendations (that is, those which relate to sustainable economic growth) has been provided in Annex 3. These recommendations are also featured in the Conclusion and serve as a component of 150 recommendations that have been integrated into the 6 entry points needed for accelerating and scaling the change needed for SDG attainment, as well as the 4 levers required to catalyse change through each entry point. Such recommendations are labelled so that details are provided on specific groups of persons or issues (for example, *sustainable economic growth*) that are being addressed.

## **Risks to social progress and social cohesion**

### *Key challenges, their drivers and root causes*

#### *Public health*

Health system financing with increased fiscal space and new health investments is necessary for advancing the sustainable health agenda and providing financial risk protection for households and individuals. Catastrophic health expenditure and impoverishment are reduced in countries where out-of-pocket payments (OOP) are less than 20 per cent of the total health expenditure (THE), government spending on health is 6 per cent of the GDP, and the health budget represents at least 12 per cent of the total government budget. The health fiscal allocation in national budgets ranges from 6.89 per cent of the total government budget in St. Kitts and Nevis to 18.08 per cent in Antigua and Barbuda, many falling short of the 12 per cent benchmark. Out-of-pocket payments range from 30.95 per cent of THE in Dominica to 47.77 per cent in St. Kitts and Nevis.

Most states are experiencing challenges in recruiting, training, and retaining health-care professionals. The density of nurses per 10,000 persons ranges from 30.6 in Barbados to 70.15 in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, below the average of 83.4 for the Americas. Inadequate investment in health particularly

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<sup>89</sup> ILO. 2015.

at the first level of care and failure to implement financial protection mechanisms present a major risk to the attainment of SDG 3. This situation is exacerbated by COVID-19-related economic challenges. Digital health (the use of digital technologies for health) has become a salient field of practice for employing routine and innovative forms of ICT to address health needs in today's context of demographic change, health-care costs, and limited availability of health professionals.

#### *Maternal and infant mortality*

Antenatal coverage is above 95 per cent in the Eastern Caribbean with most women receiving at least 4 visits before delivery and 97.5 per cent having hospital deliveries. Prenatal care is available free of charge. The mortality rate among children less than five years old remains higher than desirable. The non-Latin Caribbean had under-five mortality rates of 19.1 per 1,000 live births in 2018, and 18.5 in 2019. Approximately 60–80 per cent of the infant mortality rate is attributed to neonatal deaths, especially early deaths within the first seven days of life.<sup>90</sup> According to the United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME), under-5, infant and neonatal mortality rates in Dominica between 1990 and 2018 have more than doubled. The 2019 report<sup>91</sup> estimates an under-5 mortality rate for 2018 of 36 deaths per 1,000 live births, the highest in the Eastern Caribbean, compared to Antigua and Barbuda with the lowest rate at 6.

The implementation of Baby Friendly Hospital Initiatives in maternity facilities is being reviewed and revitalised as one of the interventions to reduce overweight babies and improve overall maternal and child health by increasing breastfeeding initiation and duration. Countries like Antigua and Barbuda and St Kitts and Nevis are well-advanced in implementing the 10 steps of successful breastfeeding.

#### *Communicable diseases*

In the past decade, the epidemiological profile of the sub-region has been characterised by a gradual transition from communicable to non-communicable diseases. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, past gains in the control of communicable diseases are at risk due to the inability of patients to keep appointments for follow-up medical checks and drug refills, reductions in outreach programme activities, and delays in the supply of diagnostic, preventive and treatment commodities.<sup>92</sup>

Due to strong immunisation programmes, childhood diseases such as poliomyelitis, measles, rubella, and congenital rubella have been eliminated from the Eastern Caribbean, and all countries continue to use PAHO/WHO Regional Procurement facilities to access vaccines at competitive prices. In addition, all countries use WHO/UNICEF joint tools to monitor immunisation coverage. In 2018 and 2019, Antigua and Barbuda and Barbados reported several imported cases of measles among travellers from Europe, but the cases were detected early by the countries' surveillance systems and the risk of outbreaks was quickly managed.<sup>93 94</sup>

#### *Non-communicable diseases*

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) continue to be one of the major public health challenges facing these countries, with 81–83 per cent of deaths<sup>95</sup> occurring from NCDs in the Eastern Caribbean. Overnutrition of unhealthy diets high in sodium, salt, sugar, and unhealthy lifestyles are among the leading causes. The 2020 Progress Monitor provides data on the inadequate implementation of the Best Buys in achieving SDG 3. Only Barbados (9) and St. Lucia (8) reported less than 50 per cent of the 19 indicators not being achieved, with some countries reported as not having achieved as many as 14

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<sup>90</sup> PAHO/WHO Core Indicators Report 2019

<sup>91</sup> UN IGME. 2019. Levels and Trends in Child Mortality Report 2019.

<sup>92</sup> <https://www.paho.org/en/news/11-8-2020-covid-19-threatens-plans-eliminate-and-control-infectious-diseases-paho-director>

<sup>93</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/venezuela-bolivarian-republic/epidemiological-update-measles-9-march-2018>

<sup>94</sup> Memo, Ministry of Health and Wellness, Barbados. 3 January, 2019 Barbados suspected measles case\_2018\_11.pdf

<sup>95</sup> WHO Non-Communicable Disease Country Profiles 2018 e.g. [https://www.who.int/nmh/countries/brb\\_en.pdf](https://www.who.int/nmh/countries/brb_en.pdf);  
[https://www.who.int/nmh/countries/vct\\_en.pdf](https://www.who.int/nmh/countries/vct_en.pdf)

indicators (St Kitts and Nevis). The COVID-19 pandemic brought mental health and wellness to the forefront and the neglect that has occurred in the mental health programme. Countries are focused on rebuilding it to build individual and community resilience to ensure the mental health and wellness of the population.

### *Substance abuse*

With the exception of St Lucia and Dominica, males consumed alcohol more than females. Further, some of the countries in the sub-region have moved towards decriminalising cannabis. St Vincent and the Grenadines became the first in the OECS to pass legislation in December 2018, decriminalising the use of marijuana for medicinal and scientific purposes. St Kitts and Nevis introduced the Drugs (Prevention and Abatement of the Misuse and Abuse of Drugs) (Amendment) Bill 2019 to pave the way for the regulated and controlled use of cannabis for medicinal, scientific, religious, and recreational purposes. Barbados passed its Medicinal Cannabis Industry Act in November 2019.

### *Sexual and reproductive health*

The contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) with modern contraceptive methods is 56 per cent in Barbados and 54 per cent in Saint Lucia, while the demand for family planning satisfied (DFPS) with modern contraceptive methods is 70.9 per cent and 72.3 per cent<sup>96</sup> respectively. The COVID-19 pandemic could undermine progress to end unmet family planning needs by 2030 as access to contraceptives in the region could deteriorate as an immediate effect of service disruption as well as due to declines in personal and household income. There are 15 per cent unmet needs for contraception in the non-Latin Caribbean, particularly among adolescents.<sup>97</sup> The Caribbean Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) situational analysis<sup>98</sup> highlights that the age-specific adolescent fertility rate (among 15-19-year olds) is 63.8 (per 1,000 adolescent women) which is higher than the global average of 55.7. To improve ASRH requires access to SRH family planning, information and education and the implementation of standards for quality health-care services.

Cervical cancer remains the second most common cancer in terms of incidence and mortality and accounts for 13 per cent of all cancer cases and 10.4 per cent of all cancer deaths.<sup>99</sup> Although all countries have established cervical cancer screening, the uptake is low. There is a need to advance interventions geared towards men based on the principles of non-violence and gender equality.

### *Chemicals and pollution*

Approximately 13 per cent of all premature deaths in the Americas are attributed to known avoidable environmental risks, amounting to about 847,000 deaths each year.<sup>100</sup> Evidence on certain environmental risks to health is limited, therefore the efficient implementation of strategies is hampered. Hazardous chemical risks, such as exposure to toxic pesticides, lead, and mercury tend to disproportionately impact children, and contribute to NCDs and chronic health conditions.

### *Tobacco*

Some countries have used legislation to establish “smoke-free environments”. Barbados was among the first to develop and approve smoke-free legislation and regulations in 2010. In Antigua and Barbuda, the Tobacco Control Act 2018 enabling smoke-free environments was passed, closely followed by St. Lucia which recently amended its Public Health Act to facilitate smoke-free environments. Excluding Dominica, all the other countries have draft legislation and some countries have informally designated their health and other public facilities as no smoking spaces.

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<sup>96</sup> The Lancet, article/PIIS2214-109X(18)30534-5

<sup>97</sup> PAHO/WHO Core Indicators Report 2019

<sup>98</sup> PAHO, 2013. Situational Analysis of Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV in the Caribbean <https://www.paho.org/hq/dmdocuments/2013/PAHO-ASRH-Executive-Summary2013.pdf>

<sup>99</sup> PAHO. 2013. Situational Analysis of Cervical Cancer in the Caribbean

<sup>100</sup> <https://www.paho.org/en/topics/environmental-determinants-health>

### *Vaccination and medication*

The coverage of the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) is very good but strides must be made to increase and maintain high immunisation coverage for all antigens to >95 per cent. Most countries in the Eastern Caribbean have experienced decrease in their immunisation coverage due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### *Early warning and risk reduction*

The Eastern Caribbean is vulnerable to hazards (such as hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and tsunamis) and emergencies that can result in severe damage to infrastructure, equipment, and medical supplies, causing disruptions to the provision of health services. The damage and loss to the health sector in Dominica due to Hurricane Maria in 2017 was estimated at US\$18 million.<sup>101</sup> The current pandemic has been burdensome to health systems, sometimes hampering the delivery of essential health services.<sup>102</sup> Key early warning system elements are insufficiently prioritised at national and regional levels, and support for multi-hazard early warning systems (MHEWS) in national economic and social development strategies is often missing. This leads to chronic underfunding of preparedness, network maintenance, and capacity-building. There are, nevertheless, existing capacities and capabilities already built in the region for hydro-meteorological, geological, and biological hazards where synergies can be found. New technological advancements in volcano and earthquake EWS, could be explored for a better integration in a MHEWS approach. Ultimately, the aim is to take advantage of some existing capacities and open the strategy to the inclusion of other hazard EWS developments.

Outbreaks of vector-borne diseases pose a significant threat to public health due to their increased frequency in the past 10 years and the severity of their complications.<sup>103</sup> This increase is due to the following factors: climatic factors such as increased temperature and precipitation which contribute to high populations of mosquito vectors; urbanisation and the consequent inadequate provision of services such as potable water supply; and garbage collection. Inter-country travel can also contribute to the transmission of infectious diseases including vector, water, and airborne diseases, necessitating continuous capacity-building in public health emergency preparedness and response.

### *Social cohesion, equality, and non-discrimination*

Wide income inequality and high unemployment rates mean that many Caribbean countries have a high proportion of the population living below the national poverty line. Women employed in retail, tourism, and services sectors, both within the formal and informal sectors, have been severely affected as governments respond to COVID-19 with restrictive measures.

Data, where available, confirm that men continue to earn more than women, particularly when controlling for education. Further, a troubling pattern of underemployment among women may be emerging, as well as limited opportunities for women in the labour market. 50.3 per cent of women in the tourism sector are working in low wage and low-status jobs despite the majority (66.2 per cent) having completed tertiary-level education.<sup>104</sup> In all cases, the rate of employment increases with increasing education. The employment rate is lower for women than men at each of the three levels of education, but the difference tends to be smaller for those with tertiary education than for those with only primary education.<sup>105</sup> Women in CARICOM are “more likely than men to work in low-wage

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<sup>101</sup> Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica. 2017. Post-Disaster Needs Assessment: Hurricane Maria September 18, 2017 <https://resilientcaribbean.caricom.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/DOMINICA-EXECUTIVE-SUMMARY.pdf>

<sup>102</sup> WHO. 2020. Pulse survey on continuity of essential health services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interim report 27 August 2020. WHO reference number: WHO/2019-nCoV/EHS\_continuity/survey/2020.1

<sup>103</sup> American Journal of Public Health. 2019 March; 109(3): 387–392. Emerging and re-emerging Aedes-transmitted arbovirus infections in the Region of the Americas: Implications for Health Policy <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6366516/>

<sup>104</sup> ECLAC and IOM. 2017. Women’s Empowerment and Migration in the Caribbean.

<sup>105</sup> UNWOMEN. 2019. Status of Women and Men Report: Productive Employment and Decent Work for All <https://caribbean.unwomen.org/en/materials/publications/2019/10/status-of-women-and-men-report-productive-employment-and-decent-work-for-all>

jobs, and without social protection, despite shouldering a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work as they attempt to balance the demands of their reproductive and productive roles.”<sup>106</sup> Men are more likely to work in the industrial and agriculture sectors. In the Caribbean, the trend of non-standard employment (such as contract labour) – associated with greater insecurity – is found particularly in the hotel and food industries, which employ significant numbers of women. Further, women are underrepresented in the most senior positions in the private sector.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) remains a prevalent issue across many CARICOM countries. Many countries (Barbados and the OECS) have enacted legislation or established structures to prevent and respond to VAWG. Data from Grenada<sup>107</sup> show that 39 per cent of women have experienced lifetime intimate partner violence of some kind. The Spotlight Initiative, a multi-year partnership between the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, has selected Grenada as one of the Caribbean countries for its programmatic focus.

### *Displacement and migration*

Experiences during the 2017 hurricane season have shown the extent to which the safety and the livelihoods of these countries are threatened by hazards associated with climate change. Damage and losses from Hurricane Maria were estimated at 224 per cent of Dominica’s GDP.<sup>108</sup> The three major hurricanes of the 2017 hurricane season displaced over 3 million people across the Caribbean in a one-month period. Human mobility associated with these drivers has been recorded in the region and creates challenges for migrants, displaced populations and local communities which receive and host migrants and refugees. Climate change and hazards disproportionately affect the poorest, who have less resilience to cope with these processes. Gender issues, the specific situations of children, and the characteristics of indigenous populations also need to be considered.

In many instances, national and regional policies, frameworks, and laws are not adequate to address human mobility in the context of disasters and climate change, leading to unpredictable and unplanned ad hoc responses. Because migration cuts across multiple social, economic, demographic, and political areas, addressing the issues around the adequate management and governance of human mobility requires a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach. Caribbean states are increasingly realising the importance with which well-managed migration policies play in promoting development in their countries and it is becoming a priority issue to address. Multilateral, cross-border efforts are also being promoted across the Caribbean as exemplified by the efforts of states to work on the development of Caribbean Migration Consultations (CMC) and their signing on to the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration.

### *Access to education*

Eastern Caribbean countries have largely achieved universal access to primary and secondary education services. However, they continue to struggle to ensure equitable access to a continuum of inclusive quality learning from early childhood through to primary, secondary and post-secondary levels particularly for learners with disabilities (including learning challenges), migrants and other learners with special support needs.

Past access to preschool services in Barbados was reported at 90 per cent,<sup>109</sup> while OECS Member States averaged 73 per cent of children aged 3–4 years (preschool) enrolled in early childhood services in 2016–2017.<sup>110</sup> Girls and boys were about equally enrolled in early childhood education (ECE) across

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<sup>106</sup> UNWOMEN. 2019. Status of Women and Men Report

<sup>107</sup> Grenada Women’s Health and Life Experiences Study 2018. NB: There is a survey report which is being redesigned and is not yet uploaded on the Caribbean Women Count or UN Women MCO-Caribbean website. However, this should be done by Q2 2021. There is a companion Qualitative Research Report which is currently accessible via both Caribbean Women Count and UN Women MCO websites.

<sup>108</sup> Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica. 2017. Post-Disaster Needs Assessment: Hurricane Maria September 18, 2017 <https://resilientcaribbean.caricom.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/DOMINICA-EXECUTIVE-SUMMARY.pdf>

<sup>109</sup> 2012 Barbados MICS.

<sup>110</sup> OECS Commission, Education Statistical Digest 2016-2017

relevant ages. From the 2016 Out-of-School Children (OOSC) Studies, 3.3 per cent of children aged 12–14 are out of school, with boys being disproportionately affected.<sup>111</sup> The quality and relevance of education were at the top of the reasons noted for dropouts. Less than half of students attain education outcomes to gain entry into tertiary education.

Amidst the pandemic, it is vital for learners to have access to technical and vocational education and training, skills development for entrepreneurship and employability, and jobs of the future. COVID-19 has underscored many weaknesses in the nexus of access and quality, of which access to technological infrastructure and related teacher capacity to facilitate online education is one component. SDG 4 is at risk of regressing for several reasons including (i) a loss of learning due to protracted closures; (ii) the risk of marginalised learners dropping out of school; (iii) reduced financing for education; (iv) the need for the capacity of teachers to be strengthened to continue teaching through remote, hybrid, and face-to-face modalities; and (v) a lack of access to connectivity and devices in some contexts. Governments in the region are facing challenges with limited capacity to respond.

Despite the vulnerability of the region to natural hazards, inadequate attention is given to risk reduction and resilience-building in the education sector. The need to maintain a minimum level of preparedness to ensure necessary emergency response mechanisms and support continuity of learning is integral to overall school access, especially in times of disaster. It is vital to safeguard financing for education especially as education systems need additional funds to respond to the additional expenses arising from the pandemic.

#### *Access to social protection*

Social protection is a powerful tool for alleviating poverty, reducing vulnerabilities and inequalities, and building resilience against shocks and crises over a person's lifecycle. Under SDG Target 1.3, countries have committed to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030, achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable. As many as 38 per cent of total workers in Latin America and the Caribbean, including 61 per cent of vulnerable informal workers do not have access to social protection, and among the latter very few can work remotely.<sup>112</sup>

In the region, there are different types of social protection instruments. These include non-contributory social assistance programmes (such as school feeding and unconditional cash transfer programmes targeting individuals or households living in poverty or specific vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities), as well as contributory social insurance (such as unemployment benefits, pensions and health insurance) and labour market interventions (such as wage subsidies, paid leave and reduced work hours, activation measures/training). Single mothers with children represent a significant proportion of beneficiaries of income support programmes through cash transfers to households living in poverty. However, these programmes do not actually serve the majority of persons eligible for support for various reasons, including resource (financial and human) constraints.<sup>113</sup> When implemented in an integrated fashion, social protection has the potential to tackle the multiple vulnerabilities faced by people during their lives, while also strengthening inclusive social development and economic growth.

Social protection systems are also an important tool to prevent and respond to disasters and other shocks. Countries in the Eastern Caribbean have used social protection systems to respond to the impacts of crises such as Hurricanes Maria and Irma in 2017 and COVID-19. The most frequently

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<sup>111</sup> UNICEF. 2017. Draft Lifelong Learning/Education Strategy Note.

<http://files.unicef.org/transparency/documents/Final%20ECA%20Education%20Strategy%20Note%20January%202017.pdf>

<sup>112</sup> OECD. 2020. COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean: Regional socio-economic implications and policy priorities. <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/covid-19-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-regional-socio-economic-implications-and-policy-priorities-93a64fde/>

<sup>113</sup> Xavier, J. 2015. Final Report: Gender Aware Beneficiary Analysis of Saint Lucia's Public Assistance Programme. UNWOMEN AND UNICEF. <https://caribbean.unwomen.org/en/materials/publications/2016/06/gender-aware-beneficiary-analysis-of-saint-lucias-public-assistance-programme>

adopted social protection measures are unemployment benefits, payroll subsidies and social assistance. Only a handful of national programmes have provided support to documented and undocumented migrant workers, who are typically excluded from accessing social protection instruments.

Social insurance is present in all countries and has been providing long and short-term benefits to workers and their families in the formal sector. However, of concern is the lack of protection in the case of unemployment. Only Barbados includes unemployment insurance in the protective action of the National Insurance Scheme. Anguilla has an emergency unemployment benefit that was implemented after Hurricane Irma and that has been reactivated with the outbreak of the pandemic.

Despite the proven impacts of social protection programmes and systems, coverage of children and families remains sub-optimal in the region and key challenges remain:

- The legal and policy frameworks governing social protection in the region vary in their comprehensiveness and the extent to which they are enshrined in law. Programmes are often designed based on outdated legislation, which is focused on poverty relief, rather than on a universal progressive approach to ensure social protection rights for all.
- Social assistance programmes have low transfer value and low coverage, resulting in reduced living standards of beneficiaries and the exclusion of some vulnerable groups. In some instances, they are also still perceived by many as a “handout” rather than an investment in the population.
- The self-employed and workers in the informal economy are not benefiting from existing social protection programmes.
- Programmes remain fragmented. Core tools that facilitate the business processes of social protection programmes and that are vital entry points for enhancing the integration of social protection systems with other public services (such as social registries, management information systems (MIS), and grievance and redress mechanisms) are missing, underdeveloped or contain data that are not up-to-date or comprehensive.
- Insufficient financing remains a major barrier to ensuring adequate coverage and benefits. On average, countries and territories in the region spend 1.7 per cent of their GDP on social protection.
- There is no clear consolidated information or data about the population effectively covered by social protection and there is a lack of evidence on the impact of these social protection programmes.
- Social assistance targeting mechanisms in the region have been largely designed with the objective of reaching those living in chronic poverty and therefore they have, a priori, limited capacity to capture the effects of sudden shocks and crises. The targeting systems are not designed to capture shocks, and delivery systems are manual and of small scale which prevents the system from being able to respond to larger and sudden onset shocks.
- Most social protection systems do not provide integrated information systems with wide coverage and systematic mechanisms for collecting up-to-date data, limiting the possibility of collecting household-level data that can be used to identify and quickly/adequately support households affected by or vulnerable to disaster impacts.

#### *Internet connectivity*

With the pandemic pushing so many essential services online, there is a real and present danger of those without broadband/internet access being left even further behind.

Barbados and the OECS generally have a high level of mobile connectivity. However, the average mobile-broadband penetration in the Caribbean is well below the global average and less than half the average in the Americas region as a whole. Connectivity ranges from as low as 11 per cent of the population in Haiti to almost 50 per cent in Barbados. The density of fixed broadband subscribers generally averages 10 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants. About one in four households has internet at home, which is half the household internet uptake at the global level. This poses a special challenge, in the context of the Eastern Caribbean, to multi-island countries in light of the exposure to natural hazards.<sup>114</sup> The absence of digital connectivity deprives a nation and its people of the socioeconomic opportunities afforded to others who are better connected (for example health care, education, transportation, security, and food).

### *Path to 2030*

Despite some of the positives that have been seen in areas such as health, social protection and education, gaps nevertheless remain that challenge the human, social and economic well-being of those in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean and which pose a threat to social progress, social cohesion and the achievement of development objectives. In response to such gaps and challenges, recommendations have been provided that could serve to facilitate improved quality of life and the building of more resilient societies. These recommendations range from the need for the professional development and capacity-building of teachers so that they could utilise low, medium, and high-tech solutions, to the need to invest in reliable high-speed communication infrastructure.

A comprehensive list of these recommendations has been provided in Annex 4. These recommendations are also featured in the Conclusion and serve as a component of 150 recommendations that have been integrated into the 6 entry points needed for accelerating and scaling the change needed for SDG attainment, as well as the 4 levers required to catalyse change through each entry point. Recommendations are labelled so that details are provided on specific groups of persons or issues (for example, *social progress and social cohesion – education*) that are being addressed.

## **Risks to the environment and climate resilience**

Climate change, environmental degradation and disasters caused by different hazards pose a major threat to sustainable development. They directly damage and destroy housing, public shelters, water and sanitation infrastructure, transport and communication infrastructure, energy infrastructure, livelihood assets, cultural heritage, waste management sites, and health facilities. Climate and disaster risks exacerbate other risks by damaging ecosystems and food production systems, increasing insecurity and competition for resources. They also lead to ecological imbalances that push wildlife closer to human beings, which can lead to health-related issues such as zoonoses. Risk governance capacities are weakened, and climate and disaster risk management-related services disrupted, including health response, and early warning and evacuation to safe shelter. This drives migration to, and unplanned settlement in areas that are exposed to hazards.<sup>115</sup> Such scenarios tend to surpass the capacities of many Caribbean countries for a well-coordinated, integrated response. The impact of these hazards, can therefore compromise and even reverse development gains, hindering countries' growth and their capacity to effectively implement poverty reduction strategies.

The World Economic Forum<sup>116</sup> predicts the five most likely risks over the next decade as extreme weather, climate action failure, natural hazards, biodiversity loss and anthropogenic environmental

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<sup>114</sup> Bleeker, A. 2020. Strengthening ICT and knowledge management capacity in support of the sustainable development. Studies and Perspectives Series – The Caribbean No. 81. ECLAC. <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/45064-strengthening-ict-and-knowledge-management-capacity-support-sustainable>

<sup>115</sup> UNDRR. Global Assessment Report (GAR) 2019

<sup>116</sup> World Economic Forum. 2020. Global Risks Report 2020. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-risks-report-2020>

disasters. Climate action failure, biodiversity loss, extreme weather and water crises are within the top five expected to have the greatest impact. This context is compounded by high population density, urbanisation growth, and high inequality and poverty rates in the region. Six Caribbean countries rank among the 30 countries most affected by weather-related disasters, with Dominica ranking 3rd and Antigua and Barbuda ranking 13th in 2019.<sup>117</sup> In Caribbean SIDS, more than 50 per cent of the population live within 1.5km of the shoreline<sup>118</sup> making them vulnerable to the threats of sea level rise, extreme weather events and disrupted economic activities. There is also strong evidence that under most climate change scenarios, the existing infrastructure which is concentrated in the coastal areas would be severely compromised. The 2017 and 2019 hurricanes Irma, Maria, and Dorian devastated national infrastructure across ten Caribbean islands. The economic toll has been tremendous, with some Caribbean islands still in recovery.

There are 19 live – likely to erupt again – volcanoes in the Eastern Caribbean. Volcanic disasters have historically cost more than 30,000 lives and great economic costs. The eruption of La Soufrière in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in 1979, and that of Soufriere Hills in Montserrat, in 1995, have cost approximately US\$100 million and US\$500 million, respectively (Seismic Research Centre, UWI).<sup>119</sup> One in seven tsunamis worldwide take place in the Caribbean Sea. According to the NCEI/WDS Historical Tsunami Database, 33 tsunamis in the region caused damage ranging from the loss of a few shipping crafts to the destruction of entire towns, and 18 of them resulted in over 6,400 deaths.

#### Key challenges, their drivers and root causes

Eastern Caribbean leaders, in their addresses to the recent (2020) UN General Assembly collectively identified the vulnerabilities to which Caribbean SIDS are exposed and indicated that the current paradigm does not consider SIDS on an equal basis and penalises them in many ways. For example, they are the “smallest emitters of carbon, yet the most affected by climate change” (St Lucia<sup>120</sup>), similarly restricted with no access to concessional funding, and blacklisted. These limitations have greater effects, at this moment, on the capacities of SIDS to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, in a scenario where SIDS are already affected by the loss of tourism, rise of unemployment, and any unforeseen exacerbation from the hurricane season. The leaders called for a “fair chance” (St Lucia<sup>121</sup>) that addresses the new normal under a new paradigm that is “fair, inclusive and [in which] relevant policies and solutions for all are agreed” (St Lucia). This new set of policies should consider debt suspension, forgiveness and rescheduling (Antigua and Barbuda<sup>122</sup>), greater access to concessional financing (St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados), and establishing and using a vulnerability index (St Lucia<sup>123</sup>) that strongly factors in resilience considering SIDS-specific challenges, while at the same time creating innovative economic solutions, new capital, and partnership opportunities (Barbados<sup>124</sup>). They have however been endeavouring to address these risks systematically, and with support from the UN and within the context of relevant SDGs. Several of these countries have recently noted, during their addresses to the UN General Assembly, their progress on SDG Agenda implementation, particularly in striving to become climate-resilient nations (for example, Dominica, through the development of its National Resilience Development Strategy 2030 and Climate Resilience Recovery Plan, and Barbados through its National Energy Policy (BNEP) 2019–2030, which aims to achieve 100 per cent renewable energy and be a carbon neutral island-state by 2030).

Key barriers to environmental and disaster resilience include

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<sup>117</sup> [https://germanwatch.org/sites/germanwatch.org/files/Global%20Climate%20Risk%20Index%202019\\_2.pdf](https://germanwatch.org/sites/germanwatch.org/files/Global%20Climate%20Risk%20Index%202019_2.pdf)

<sup>118</sup> [https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentations/climate\\_change\\_eclac\\_final.pdf](https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentations/climate_change_eclac_final.pdf)

<sup>119</sup> <http://uwiseismic.com/General.aspx?id=19>

<sup>120</sup> Address by Prime Minister of St Lucia, Hon. Allen Chastanet, to the 2020 UN General Assembly

<sup>121</sup> Address by Prime Minister of St Lucia, Hon. Allen Chastanet, to the 2020 UN General Assembly

<sup>122</sup> Address by Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Hon. Gaston Browne, to the 2020 UN General Assembly

<sup>123</sup> Address by Prime Minister of St Lucia, Hon. Allen Chastanet, to the 2020 UN General Assembly

<sup>124</sup> Address by Prime Minister of Barbados, Hon. Mia Mottley, to the 2020 UN General Assembly

- Reliance on natural resource-intensive activities and virgin resource extraction, which become unsustainable (for example, deforestation and overfishing) without effective governance – a problem seen in linear economies
- Lack of financial resources/investments to establish sustainable mechanisms and the implementation of resilient technologies
- Lack of technical knowledge/capacities to design and implement adaptation and mitigation strategies including disaster risk reduction and management
- Lack of diversification strategies to better absorb shocks (social, environmental, and economic)
- Risk averse business and policy climate and information asymmetries (including around environmental data, emerging solutions, and non-traditional investors); These inhibit investment in atypical and innovative approaches which have potential for failure but also potential for high reward and learning.

NBS must be a key consideration to strengthen disaster risk governance, since they can support/restore healthy ecosystems – coastal, marine, or terrestrial – which help to protect people and property hazard impacts. All efforts require data availability and the modelling of scenarios and options on which all actors can focus their efforts to reduce and prevent risk. Communication of risks and drivers must not only provide relevant information but should also lead to risk-informed decision-making (supported by the public and private sectors), mobilising the necessary resources, and taking action to reduce risk at all levels. Governance needs to be transparent, inclusive, collective, and efficient to reduce existing risks and to avoid creating new ones.

#### Economic expansion and diversification

Current regional economic models follow the predominant global pattern focused on increasing economic output and thereby growth. Perpetuation of this model is not a guarantee of well-being or equality and is incompatible with dependence on finite natural systems. Without addressing the generation of waste and pollution at all stages of the production and business cycles, including in service and digital industries, increased growth will mean increased natural resources degradation and depletion due to unsustainable practices. Greening the periphery and small segments of the economy will not achieve the transformation needed to achieve the SDGs. Therefore, there is a need for

- Circular business models with sustainable production and consumption patterns that minimise the extraction of virgin resources and the generation of waste and pollution by recovering the value of materials at every stage of the value chain and creating economic inputs from “waste” resources (for example, product remanufacture, models of ‘lease and maintain’ instead of ‘buy and discard’ for consumer goods, biotechnology applications of Sargassum reuse, and recycling including textiles, fabrics and electronics)
- Sustainable, resilient and inclusive green and blue economic diversification and expanded use of renewable energy as core elements of a strategy that traverses all sectors in charting inclusive and evidence-driven pathways to low/zero-carbon economies, and which capitalises on the efficiencies of a more digital world
- Realignment and capacity-building of the finance sector, including commercial banking and insurance, such that strategies and investment practices across their entire portfolios are in sync with the SDGs and all elements of the 2030 Agenda – the Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework and post-2020 biodiversity targets. This can be supported by initiatives such as the Principles for Responsible Banking.<sup>125</sup>
- Improved assessment, monitoring and conservation efforts

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<sup>125</sup> <https://www.unepfi.org/news/industries/banking/principles-for-responsible-banking-released/>

- Appropriate measures to guard against land-based and marine pollution threats to coastal and other natural ecosystems (NBS and inclusive monitoring with all key stakeholders)
- Regular collection of field data, standardised methodologies, and integrated databases for monitoring comparable statistics across sectors and countries; There are insufficient updated data on the state of natural resources which inhibits the ability to leverage these resources to drive sustainable economic diversification.
- Promotion and facilitation of research and entrepreneurial acceleration into, for example, plastics alternatives such as agricultural waste (banana, cassava, sugarcane), Sargassum, and new products from by-products or waste from existing industries
- Inclusion of NBS and risk mitigation as primary approaches in evidence-based, risk-informed policy development, investment choices and decision-making

The global COVID-19 pandemic, which had a zoonotic origin, exposes the complex interaction between human, economic and natural systems, and the systemic nature of risk. It also reveals existing deficiencies in risk governance including in the health, disaster management, economic and other sectors. Recovery policies must integrate a systematic approach to risk and contribute to building robust multi-sectorial risk governance frameworks.

#### Climate change impacts

Physical developments, especially coastal settlement, the provision of services, and economic activity (for example, tourism, ports, and harbours), have destroyed or degraded much of the natural environment and their ecosystem services. Furthermore, settlements and the accompanying socioeconomic conditions perpetuate and exacerbate vulnerabilities and risks. The complexity, scale and depth of the climate crisis are being better understood as they unfold, and yet can never be accurately predicted. Nevertheless, the precautionary principle demands that action be taken with the best available knowledge to minimise adverse impacts that are anticipated. The degree of disruption, speed of recovery and adaptive capacity of the population and economy are in large measure dictated by the types of investment made in advance. The precautionary principle extends to long-term adaptation. For instance, immediate rather than delayed adaptation responses could reduce the vulnerability of farmers, fisherfolk, women and other agriculture sector-dependent communities. The cost of inaction is projected to be very high for the Caribbean at US\$22 billion annually by 2050 and US\$46 billion by 2100 related to infrastructure damage, loss of tourism revenue and increased hurricane damage.<sup>126</sup>

#### Water resources

Many Caribbean islands are considered water scarce. Barbados, for example, is one of the most water scarce countries in the world and relies on groundwater for 90 per cent of its water supply. Other countries also experience seasonal water shortages. In Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, water demand exceeds supply during the dry season.<sup>127</sup> Some countries in the region, including Barbados and Antigua and Barbuda, use desalination plants to supplement water supply. St Vincent and the Grenadines also has substantial installations of hydropower. Water security is of great concern due to changing precipitation patterns in the context of climate change.

Freshwater resources in the region are being increasingly polluted. It is estimated that 25 per cent of water resources from the rivers in the Latin America and the Caribbean region have been severely contaminated with faecal coliform levels in excess of 1000cfu/100ml.<sup>128</sup> Industry, agriculture, and

<sup>126</sup> FAO. 2013. Climate change, agriculture and food security in the Caribbean <http://www.fao.org/in-action/agronoticias/detail/en/c/495191/#:~:text=Arable%20land%2C%20water%20resources%20and,%2C%20and%20sea%2Dlevel%20rise>.

<sup>127</sup> Cashman, A. 2014. Water security and services in the Caribbean. *Water* 6(5) pp.1187-1203

<sup>128</sup> UNEP. 2016. A Snapshot of the World's Water Quality: Towards a global assessment.

mining all contribute to pollution, but domestic wastewater is a major pollution source.<sup>129</sup> Climate change also affects water and wastewater management in the region. Saline intrusion of groundwater from sea level rise and increased frequency of drought events have significant implications for increasing the scarcity of water supply in Eastern Caribbean small islands. The proportion of people using an improved sanitation facility in countries of the region ranges between 76 per cent and 96 per cent.<sup>130</sup> This is even more so for the tourism sector where hotels and resort complexes are often required to have their own on-site wastewater treatment plants due to the lack of municipal services. It has been reported that only 25 per cent of these treatment plants are in good operational condition.<sup>131</sup> Sound wastewater management is a key issue for sustainable development in the region.

### Biodiversity and ecosystem services

In addition to marine and aquatic flora and fauna, the region has a rich terrestrial biodiversity. Approximately 60 per cent of the world's terrestrial life is found in Latin America and the Caribbean. Despite holding less than 1 per cent of this richness, the Caribbean is considered very rich in this regard, due to its land area proportion.<sup>132</sup> As of 2017, 18 per cent of terrestrial areas and 6 per cent of marine areas in the Caribbean were defined as protected areas by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).<sup>133</sup> While the rate of deforestation has decreased with increased efforts for conservation, the region continues to experience deforestation, altering habitats.

Since 2011, the Caribbean islands have received an unprecedented influx of Sargassum seaweed to their beaches. Some have suggested that this phenomenon may be due to increased nutrient inflow from accelerated deforestation and agricultural runoff from major rivers.<sup>134</sup> These influxes have had negative impacts on tourism as the dense mats and decomposing matter deterred visitors, and the toxicity of the emanating hydrogen sulphide creates respiratory difficulties. Attempted removal using heavy equipment on the beaches has also removed tonnes of sand causing accelerated erosion. Attempted removal in open water destroys the seaweed's function as a juvenile nursery for fish and turtles, which has also attracted fishers who unsustainably harvest juvenile species.

Deforestation affects the water cycle but also the level of nutrient runoff to the aquatic and marine environment. Mangrove forests and wetlands provide natural purification services of nutrients including nitrogen and phosphorus. Due to anthropogenic activities such as coastal development and agricultural growth, the region has been losing mangrove forests.<sup>135</sup> Wetlands are among the most degraded ecosystems in Latin America and the Caribbean,<sup>136</sup> and the Eastern Caribbean is no exception. Similarly, the Caribbean has had the world's highest losses of coral cover in recent decades, leading to the only designation by IUCN as Critically Endangered among global reef zones.<sup>137</sup> Biodiversity and healthy ecosystems are recognised as underpinning the SDGs, and providing pathways for sustainable socioeconomic recovery of the countries in the region. However, biodiversity is declining at an unprecedented rate, and the pressures driving this decline are intensifying.

The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Targets are set to expire in 2020, and the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity,

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<sup>129</sup> FAO. 2017. Reutilización de aguas para agricultura en América Latina y el Caribe Estado, principios y necesidades.

<sup>130</sup> CEPASTAT: <https://cepalstat-prod.cepal.org/cepalstat/tabulador/ConsultaIntegrada.asp?idIndicador=98&idioma=i>

<sup>131</sup> UNEP CEP. 2010. Situational Analysis: Regional sectoral overview of wastewater management in the Wider Caribbean Region. CEP Technical Report 66. Caribbean Environment Programme.

<sup>132</sup> IPBES, 2020: Regional Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for the Americas <https://ipbes.net/assessment-reports/americas>

<sup>133</sup> IPBES, 2018. Regional Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for the Americas

<sup>134</sup> Wynne, S. P. 2017. Observational Evidence of Regional Eutrophication in the Caribbean Sea and Potential Impacts on Coral Reef Ecosystems and their Management in Anguilla, BWI. Anguilla Fisheries and Marines Resources Research Bulletin No. 08 (2017) [http://www.gov.ai/documents/fisheries/AFMR%20Research%20Bulletin%2008%20\(2017\)%20-%20Observational%20Evidence%20of%20Regional%20Eutrophication.pdf](http://www.gov.ai/documents/fisheries/AFMR%20Research%20Bulletin%2008%20(2017)%20-%20Observational%20Evidence%20of%20Regional%20Eutrophication.pdf)

<sup>135</sup> Thomas, N. L. 2017. Distribution and drivers of global mangrove forest change, 1996–2010. PloS one, 12(6), e0179302

<sup>136</sup> UNEP. 2010. State of Biodiversity in Latin America and the Caribbean

<sup>137</sup> Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO): <https://www.cbd.int/gbo5>

already occurring, need the involvement of all governments in the sub-region. Ministers of the Environment across the region have invited countries to take concrete actions for the restoration of ecosystems – such as reducing threats to biodiversity through the establishment of biological corridors and protected areas and ensuring their sustainable use in order to meet people’s needs – in recognition of the 2021–2030 United Nations Decade on Ecosystems Restoration.

### Waste management

Solid waste has become a major sustainability issue, especially in space-limited islands of the region, and among coastal areas where mismanaged waste becomes marine debris. The Caribbean Sea has one of the highest plastic concentrations in the world’s oceans, estimated around 440–880 g/km<sup>2</sup>,<sup>138</sup> and this is expected to increase. Solid waste generation is expected to increase in the region as human populations continue to grow, and in the absence of more sustainable production and consumption patterns and adequate solid waste management. Plastic pollution is gaining increased attention at all levels, which is explicitly expressed in SDG target 14.1, and Contracting Parties to the Land-Based Sources Protocol<sup>139</sup> have added marine litter as a priority pollutant. The large number of national, regional, and global programmes as well as the recent single-use plastic bans demonstrate significant commitment. With limited recycling and markets for solid waste, and space constraints in small islands, countries in the region are struggling to deal with the vast quantities of waste they produce. For many islands, solid waste collection exists primarily in urban areas and in certain parts of cities and municipalities, collection is sometimes inconsistent and inadequate. A significant proportion of municipal solid waste is disposed of in open dumpsites, which has severe consequences for human health and the environment.

### E-Waste

Electronic waste (e-waste), which refers to used, broken, or obsolete electrical and electronic equipment, such as phones, laptops, sensors, and TVs, can contain hazardous substances that may pose considerable environmental and health risks, especially if treated inadequately. As technologies change at great speed, and as access to and use of electrical and electronic equipment increases, product lifecycles become shorter and many designs do not support repair or reuse. In the Caribbean region, e-waste regulations cover as much as 12 per cent of the population, the lowest figures in the Americas (75 per cent for Central America, 30 per cent for South America and 100 per cent for North America). As a result, the amount of e-waste is growing rapidly throughout the region. There is an opportunity to undertake proper assessment of the volume of e-waste and to initiate pilot projects to achieve its environmentally sound management through e-waste collection, dismantling, refurbishing, and recycling in the region. This will support the achievement of the targets of increasing the global e-waste recycling rate to 30 per cent and raising the percentage of countries with an e-waste legislation to 50 per cent by 2023.

### Energy

Electricity that is wasted due to equipment that is inefficient or improperly designed, installed, or maintained has a profound impact on the electricity grid. With high electricity prices and reliance on imported fossil fuels, residents and businesses suffer from high power bills, utilities struggle to meet peak energy demand, and pollution and greenhouse gas emissions are exacerbated. In recent years, electricity losses represented about 15 per cent of the supply of electrical energy in the sub-region.<sup>140</sup> Governments, and tourism and commercial industries have expressed the need for further transformation using renewable energy (RE) and energy efficiency (EE) solutions to fully address their sustainable development ambitions.

In a tropical climate, cooling accounts for much of the energy consumption in the commercial and tourism sectors. Many cooling technologies, such as typical air conditioners and refrigerating

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<sup>138</sup> TWAP Portal, 2019: <http://geftwap.org/data-portal>

<sup>139</sup> LBS Protocol to the Cartagena Convention, to which Eastern Caribbean countries are signatories

<sup>140</sup> CEPALSTAT

appliances, require vast amounts of electricity and refrigerant gases many of which have a high global warming potential. The Caribbean Hotel Energy Efficiency Action Programme (CHENACT) project targeted the small and medium-sized hotel segment across the Caribbean, leveraging EE and RE as mechanisms to improve their competitiveness. Energy audits revealed potential electricity cost savings of over 30 per cent through EE measures with a payback period of less than 3 years.<sup>141</sup> Energy efficiency in lighting presents an opportunity to generate savings, and reduce carbon emissions, while delivering environmental co-benefits. For example, residential lighting is the largest consuming product in Grenada, and energy efficient residential lighting offers savings of up to 90 per cent.

Solar energy is an increasingly popular choice for water heating in the region, with Barbados being a notable leader in its use since the 1970s.<sup>142</sup> Solar photovoltaics (PV) are the most rapidly expanding RE technology being deployed in the region, both on rooftops and utility scale. Since the construction of its first utility-scale solar farm in 2018, St. Lucia has made progress towards increasing renewable energy supply, which now accounts for approximately 5 per cent of its energy demand (7 million kWh per year). Partnership between VINLEC (the utility), UNDP and other actors saw a solar farm installed at the new international airport in St Vincent<sup>143</sup> and a microgrid with battery storage installed in Mayreau to supply the entire island<sup>144</sup> between 2018 and 2020. In September 2020, the Fair Trading Commission of Barbados added to its feed-in tariff (FIT) regime prices for installations of above 1MW and up to 10MW for multiple RE technologies for power purchase agreements (PPAs) for up to 20 years.<sup>145</sup> This creates a stable investment climate with guaranteed revenues to attract RE developers.

The Eastern Caribbean sub-region has potential for onshore and offshore wind energy systems. There is potential for both large-scale centralised wind parks, as well as small or micro-scale distributed installations. Some Caribbean countries have considerable transmission and distribution losses, which justify the installation of micro-grids. Many Caribbean countries depend on imported fossil fuels to supply their energy needs and to secure their water supply. This results in high costs of electricity and water, but also in high vulnerability in the event of extreme weather, such as the disruption of fossil fuel imports. There are several ongoing wind energy pilot projects in the Caribbean to provide zero-emission electricity, as well as clean water through reverse osmosis.

### Productive sectors

The ocean is an integral part of socioeconomic activities in the region. Recently, the World Bank estimated<sup>146</sup> that gross revenue generated from the ocean economy for Caribbean islands was US\$53.17 billion in 2012. Based primarily on market-based activities, the major contributors for the islands<sup>147</sup> were the tourism (US\$47.1 billion) and oil and gas industries (US\$5.6 billion). It is projected that the total contribution of maritime and coastal tourism to GDP in the region will continue growing. In 2017, tourism contributed US\$17.9 billion to the Caribbean islands and it is expected to grow 3.6 per cent per year from 2018 to 2028 (WTTC, 2018). While tourism is an important economic activity, it can also add pressure to the natural environment. In general, Caribbean countries are suffering from the effects of the global health crisis on global trade, tourism, and global transportations.

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<sup>141</sup> Tetra Tech. 2012. Energy Efficiency and Micro-Generation in Caribbean Hotels Consultancy <http://www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com/downloads/CHENACT-Final-Report.pdf>

<sup>142</sup> [http://www.oas.org/en/sedi/dsd/Energy/Doc/9a.\\_OAS\\_Financing\\_Guide\\_to\\_Sustainable\\_Energy\\_Lending.pdf](http://www.oas.org/en/sedi/dsd/Energy/Doc/9a._OAS_Financing_Guide_to_Sustainable_Energy_Lending.pdf)

<sup>143</sup> <https://news784.com/local-news/solar-facilities-at-aia-mayreau-and-union-island-to-be-expanded/>

<sup>144</sup> <https://searchlight.vc/searchlight/press-release/2020/02/07/mayreau-microgrid-solar-project-in-final-stage/>

<sup>145</sup> FTC. 2020. "Commission issues decision on feed-in tariffs for renewable energy above 1MW and up to 10MW". 30 September 2020.

[https://www.ftc.gov.bb/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=392&Itemid=1](https://www.ftc.gov.bb/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=392&Itemid=1)

<sup>146</sup> Patil, P.G., Virdin, J., Diez, S.M., Roberts, J., Singh, A. 2016. Toward A Blue Economy: A Promise for Sustainable Growth in the Caribbean; An Overview. The World Bank

<sup>147</sup> Analysis encompassed both islands and mainland countries surrounding the Caribbean Sea. Revenues for the entire basin totalled US\$407B, equivalent to 14-27% of the world's total ocean economy. Mainland revenues were mainly shipping at US\$311B and oil and gas at US\$34.25B.

In addition to the ocean-based economy, agriculture has historically been a key industry in the region. Agriculture is also a major water user in the region, although in Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, water withdrawal is mostly for municipal use (FAO, 2016). Reuse of treated and untreated wastewater for agricultural purposes in the region has not been well quantified due to the lack of data. There are, however, some studies and projects showing the practicality of wastewater reuse for agriculture purposes in the region. Agricultural productivity is affected by changing weather patterns, SLR, saltwater intrusion, and other issues. The fisheries sector is also affected by sea surface temperature rise and flash flooding (increased land-based runoff). Reduced agricultural and fisheries production impacts several SDGs directly (SDG 2, 12) and indirectly (SDG 1, 3, 8). More frequent and intense storms and hurricanes can decimate entire agriculture/fisheries sectors (crops, livestock, infrastructure, equipment), raising food insecurity risk.

#### Natural resource conflicts affecting people and livelihoods

Because the development pattern of increasing GDP is linked to resource consumption and GHG emissions, GDP per capita has expanded by an order of magnitude, and increases in technological efficiencies have not been able to keep pace to mitigate environmental impacts.<sup>148</sup> Competing demands on these resources thus necessitate daily trade-offs. Such decisions – including what is valued, how long (time) and broad (human-ecosystem interactions) is the framework for deciding considered, who is engaged, who benefits and who is disadvantaged – are some of the key determinants of whether there is effective compromise (mitigating measures for the environment and compensation for the “losing” parties), or whether it devolves into conflict.

Particularly in countries already experiencing water scarcity, there will be increasing competition for water resources for domestic, industrial, agriculture and tourism uses. As the majority of agriculture in the Caribbean is rain-fed and the average water consumption by tourists and tourism infrastructure (for example pools and golf courses) is higher than residential demand per capita,<sup>149</sup> adaptation in these key economic sectors to increase recycling, treatment (including via NBS) and reuse of wastewater, rainwater harvesting, and artificial groundwater recharge is critical.

As demand for housing and urbanisation is increasing, SIDS ultimately have to make determinations about the prioritisation of land allocations between settlements, economic activity, agriculture for food security and sovereignty, and ecosystem conservation for biodiversity, water supply, recreation, heritage, disaster resilience and other ecosystem services. Perceived or calculable monetary value is frequently a high driver in such determinations at individual and government levels. Policies with long-term visions must provide an enabling environment to guide stakeholders in more systems-based and integrated decision-making. Belize uses the natural capital approach in developing their Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Plan for spatial planning, combining ecosystem service modelling and stakeholder participation.<sup>150</sup>

#### Climate and natural hazard risk

Because Caribbean SIDS are relatively small, one hurricane has the potential to impact the entire area and population of any particular island. In addition, people living in low-elevation coastal zones are generally at extreme risk from storm surge and rising sea levels. A significant proportion of families in the region do not have the means to “hurricane-proof” their homes or invest in other preparedness

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<sup>148</sup> UNEP. 2012. One Planet, How Many People? A Review of Earth’s Carrying Capacity.

<sup>149</sup> Gössling, S., Peeters, P., Hall, C. M., Ceron, J., Dubois, G., Lehmann, L. and Scott, D. 2012. Tourism and water use: Supply, demand, and security. An international review. *Tourism Management* 33:1-15

<sup>150</sup> Verutes, G., Arkema, K., Clarke-Samuels, C., Wood, S., Rosenthal, A., Rosado, S., Canto, M., Bood, N. and Ruckelshaus, M. 2017. Integrated planning that safeguards ecosystems and balances multiple objectives in coastal Belize. *International Journal of Biodiversity Science, Ecosystem Services and Management* vol 13(3);

<https://naturalcapitalproject.stanford.edu/projects/integrated-coastal-zone-management-belize;>

<https://naturalcapitalproject.stanford.edu/news/belize-coastal-plan-model-world>

and resilience measures. Therefore, when a Category 4 or 5 hurricane makes landfall, many families are unprepared, and the government may not have the capacity to adequately respond.<sup>151</sup>

Climate change and natural hazards are among the greatest threats to livelihoods in the region. With high concentrations of populations, critical infrastructure and commerce in coastal zones, and a high dependence on a narrow range of nature-linked economic activities, the countries are highly susceptible to external shocks. Most economic activity in the Caribbean basin is concentrated in the MSME sector. With limited access to financial protection and business continuity training, and constrained opportunities to invest in disaster risk management measures, MSMEs tend to suffer disproportionately and have less capacity than larger, better-capitalised businesses to return to pre-disruption operations in a timely manner. Climate-related shocks also affect transport services, which are a critical lifeline for the competitiveness of small island states as well as a channel for food imports.

The historical and inherent drivers of risk, such as informality, inequality, poverty, and lack of political representation, result in a disproportionate impact of disaster on the most vulnerable and deepen disparities in opportunities that are transmitted over generations. Location, age, gender, income group, disability, and access to/benefit from social protection schemes and safety nets greatly affect the choices people have to anticipate, prevent and mitigate risks.<sup>152</sup> The socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 have increased vulnerabilities, which translate into higher disaster risk.



Figure 4: COVID-19 in a systemic risk scenario in the Caribbean region

Source: UNDRR and ECLAC (forthcoming)

<sup>151</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/media/62836/file/Children-uprooted-in-the-Caribbean-2019.pdf>

<sup>152</sup> For instance, in the case of catastrophic earthquakes with a 250-year return period, it is estimated that losses would be greater than 60% of their annual capital formation (GAR 2013).

### Disaster risk management governance and capacity limitations

Disaster risk management has been seen in the region as the preparedness for disaster response, rather than the management of development processes themselves that require investments for mitigation and prevention in line with climate change adaptation, resilience-building and human development. While many Caribbean countries have relatively sophisticated disaster risk management (DRM) legislative and institutional structures, a common challenge is inadequate resources for implementation, which creates governance and coordination challenges. Hence, their ability to mainstream DRM, raise awareness, and build capacity is often severely constrained. In several countries where legislature or policies mandate the establishment of contingency or emergency funds to provide relief during disasters, these funds are under-resourced and hence unable to adequately finance disaster response and recovery. While a usual recourse is borrowing after a shock has occurred, this usually comes at a high cost, further exacerbating indebtedness.<sup>153</sup>

In practice there are overlaps between national DRM coordinating mechanisms and those of sectoral agencies and departments. The absence of a unifying national framework can result in inconsistency in the application of DRM practices and a duplication of efforts. Governance gaps further include the lack of policy mechanisms that address DRM for the agriculture and fisheries sectors. The Covid-19 pandemic highlights the need for a paradigm shift towards a more comprehensive and holistic approach to address multiple hazards in tandem, to strengthen overall resilience to disasters and to place a much greater emphasis on tackling drivers of risk ex-ante. Early warning systems (EWS) represent an important link between preparedness and response, as they can potentially trigger early response. Using data on socioeconomic vulnerabilities can improve risk and impact assessments, and consequently can lead to better-informed warnings.<sup>154</sup> In several countries disaggregated data based on various levels of vulnerabilities are not available and/or accessible. Various donors invested more than US\$57 million in the Caribbean during the period 2003–2016, but many interventions target vulnerable communities with, at times, no connections to national structures or frameworks. This has implications for the sustainability of such interventions beyond the life of the project(s).<sup>155</sup>

Given the damages to critical communications infrastructure and the absence of related contingency plans following some disasters, communication between internal and external actors has been hindered, affecting coordination with humanitarian and local community actors on the ground. Anguilla reported significant network damage, BVI complete damage during Hurricane Maria, while Dominica's national communication infrastructure was almost completely destroyed.<sup>156</sup>

Disaster risk reduction requires multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder actions. To effectively anticipate, mitigate, manage, and address these risks, strong governance systems duly owned by key stakeholders and relevant national entities are key. The health sector, including scientists and virologists, must also have strong representation in the disaster risk governance system to guide and lead strategies, policies, and plans on biological hazards, as well as DRR for health. Long-term interventions that address humanitarian needs as well as development and peacebuilding challenges also need to be considered. Potential links with long-term programmes and the inclusion of part of the response actions as part of the development process are needed.

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<sup>153</sup> Maher, B., Fitzgibbon, C. and Solórzano, A. 2018. Emerging Lessons in Financing Adaptive Social Protection. World Bank.

<sup>154</sup> WMO. 2018. Caribbean 2017 Hurricane Season: An evidence-based assessment of the early warning system [https://library.wmo.int/doc\\_num.php?explnum\\_id=5459](https://library.wmo.int/doc_num.php?explnum_id=5459)

<sup>155</sup> WMO. 2018.

<sup>156</sup> WMO. 2018.

### Path to 2030

Today's environmental, health, food, energy, information, financial and communication systems, and supply chains are complex, interconnected, and vulnerable. Given the intention of channelling the management of risks through multi-sectoral and inclusive development processes, fostering resilience, and ensuring the sustainability of livelihoods and the environment, key recommendations have been proposed. These recommendations range from supporting small-scale, local, rural, peri-urban, and community-based technological solutions for integrated water and wastewater management, to the use of marine spatial planning and enhanced political will and capacity-building for the improved management of marine protected areas (MPAs), marine management areas (MMAs) and terrestrial protected areas. A comprehensive list of these recommendations (featuring the climate crisis, natural resources, waste management, and resilience and recovery) has been provided in Annex 5. These recommendations are also featured in the Conclusion and serve as a component of 150 recommendations that have been integrated into the 6 entry points needed for accelerating and scaling the change needed for SDG attainment, as well as the 4 levers required to catalyse change through each entry point. Recommendations are labelled so that details are provided on specific groups of persons or issues (for example, the *environment and climate resilience*) that are being addressed.

## 5. Financing sustainable development

### Economic transformation

Economic transformation across the Eastern Caribbean will depend on how effectively the sub-region is able to build on its comparative advantages while overcoming small size and vulnerability by leveraging their natural capital, human endowment and regional connectivity, and embracing innovation, agility, and new technologies for the sustainable expansion of social opportunities.

### Existing strategies and policies

#### Productivity and growth performance

Many of the islands skipped a traditional development phase and transitioned directly from agricultural to services-based economies, with a heavy dependence on the tourism sector (see Table 4).

Table 4: Drivers of national added value for selected Eastern Caribbean countries as % of GDP\*

	Antigua & Barbuda	Barbados	Dominica	Grenada	St Kitts & Nevis	St Lucia	St Vincent & Grenadines
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	1.7	1.5	11.1	5.2	1.2	2.1	7.2
Industry (including construction)	21.1	23.1	15.8	13.3	25.7	10.1	15.0
<i>Of which:</i>							
- <i>Manufacturing</i>	2.5	6.1	2.2	3.2	5.8	2.6	5.0
Services	65.8	75.4	53.4	65.0	67.2	73.8	61.8
Misc.	11	0	20	17	6	14	16
Tourism**	44.1	34.9	33.4	56.6	62.6	41.8	45.5

\*2018 or most recent year

Source: World Development Indicators and World Tourism and Travel Council (<https://tool.wttc.org/>)

Generally, Eastern Caribbean countries have found it difficult to compete internationally in manufacturing due in large part to their inability to take production to scale, reduce unit costs and compete effectively in international markets. Sources of income for Barbados and the OECS countries are mainly from abroad which makes the sub-region extremely vulnerable to downturns in external demand. The total contribution from tourism to national income typically ranges between 20 per cent (Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines) to 50 per cent (Antigua and Barbuda) of GDP (see Table 5), with the direct contributions ranging from between 5 and 15 per cent.<sup>157</sup> Since 2010, while the number of tourist arrivals has been increasing, average receipts have remained stable. The average spend of tourist arrivals has ranged between US\$1,500 and US\$3,000 per person per visit. For employment, the travel and tourism sector accounts for 20–50 per cent of the total labour force (almost 75 per cent in the case of the British Virgin Islands) of these small island economies.

<sup>157</sup> In the case of British Virgin Islands tourism accounts for about 90% of GDP (direct 33% of GDP).

Table 5: Dependence on tourism, remittances, and foreign direct investment for selected Eastern Caribbean countries, % of GDP, 2019

	Antigua and Barbuda	Barbados	British Virgin Islands	Dominica	Grenada	St Kitts and Nevis	St Lucia	St Vincent and the Grenadines
Tourism, total	52.4	41.23	92.0	37.6	23.3	26.8	43.3	23.9
(Direct)	(13.1)	(13.1)	(33.0)	(12.3)	(6.9)	(6.6)	(15.6)	(6.0)
Remittances	2.02	2.15	-	8.41	3.74	2.12	2.05	5.42
Foreign direct investment	7.2	3.8	-	-6.7	10.7	8.4	7.0	12.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>61.6</b>	<b>47.18</b>	<b>92.0</b>	<b>39.31</b>	<b>37.74</b>	<b>37.32</b>	<b>52.35</b>	<b>41.72</b>

While tourism has been the mainstay of many Caribbean SIDS, it too has been under increasing pressure to compete with other destinations, notably in East Asia and the Pacific. Competitiveness has been undermined by high energy and labour costs which have been compounded by relatively high import duties and value-added tax that have substantially increased the cost for tourists. Moreover, weak backward linkages in the tourism industry have meant the following: supply has been sourced externally through imports; tourism-associated markets have failed to capture their revenue potential; and weak transport infrastructure – airports, ports and roads – has made travel within and between the islands challenging for many. As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, global tourist flows have sharply declined resulting in a shock and major loss of revenue for tourism-dependent SIDS, including the Eastern Caribbean. It is likely that the effect of the economic contraction on SIDS will be lasting, and that they will need about 4 to 5 years to be able to return to the baseline forecast path.<sup>158</sup>

While Barbados and the OECS countries rely less heavily on remittances compared to tourism this remains a significant source of income. Like tourism it is similarly concentrated among a few source countries, with inflows ranging between 2 per cent and 8.5 per cent of GDP. Remittances are largest for Dominica at 8.4 per cent of the GDP and smallest for Antigua and Barbuda. Since 2010, total nominal remittances inflows have generally increased: Dominica (99 per cent), followed by Antigua and Barbuda (72 per cent). Remittance flows for Barbados (37 per cent) and St. Lucia (39 per cent), while still substantial have increased at a lower rate in the past 10 years.<sup>159</sup>

Foreign direct investment (FDI) has been quite volatile for the region. However, its contribution to GDP has been three to four times that of remittances. Country dependence on FDI inflows ranges between 4 per cent and 12.5 per cent of GDP across the sub-region, with St. Vincent and the Grenadines with the highest proportion, followed by Grenada (10.7 per cent) and St. Kitts and Nevis (8.7 per cent). In Dominica, net inflows of FDI have been declining in recent years, registering a net outflow of -6.7 per cent in 2018.

Macroeconomic policy has not been consistent with the volatility brought by the external shocks of disasters, 9/11, global financial crises and fuel crises. Pro-cyclical fiscal policy has often resulted in persistent fiscal deficits and the realisation of contingent liabilities on the government's balance sheet. This has led to an accumulation of public debt, the servicing of which has crowded out much-needed social protection and development expenditures to build resilience and future prosperity in these economies. The welfare costs of volatility fall most heavily on the poor and others who lack access to

<sup>158</sup> Kim, N. 2020. How long will it take for LDCs and SIDS to recover from the impacts of COVID-19? Working Paper no. 170. October 2020. UN DESA [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/wp170\\_2020.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/wp170_2020.pdf)

<sup>159</sup> In the case of St. Kitts and Nevis, remittances inflows have halved.

financial resources to protect their assets and buffer consumption. Public debt owed by the OECS is among the highest globally with all countries having public debt of in excess of the ECCU target of 60 per cent of GDP. Global public debt relief initiatives in response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have had limited benefits to the sub-region. The recent restructuring of public debt in Barbados has made an important contribution to the restoration of debt sustainability and is a critical addition to the country's financial resilience. Innovative elements used for this restructuring included treasury bonds, the use of retrofitted collective action, and the inclusion of natural hazard-triggered disaster clauses in the bulk of Barbados' new public debt instruments.

The size of this sub-region is a factor limiting the scope for scale economies and the capacity of the public sector to effect change. Private sector-led growth, jobs and competitiveness also suffer from scale, as well as being beset by complex business regulations and high costs of doing business (associated with trade, logistics, transactions, energy, registering property, getting credit, and resolving insolvency). The latest ease of doing business rankings (2019) show the best performer for this sub-region (St. Lucia), ranked 93 (of 191) and the worst performer (Grenada), ranked 146.<sup>160</sup> The financial sector has a strong role to play in promoting private sector growth through efficient financial intermediation and the provision of instruments which help firms mitigate risk.

With exports being concentrated on a few products and destinations, countries could address 'doing business' obstacles<sup>161</sup> through new policies to open new markets or promote product diversification, and which would also enable importers to diversify their supply of imports, providing greater security of supply. Caribbean SIDS will need to look to non-traditional sources of future growth. Such sources could include circular business models, the digital economy, cultural industries, and agro-technology which could serve to promote inter-regional trade and reduce food miles and exposure to external markets. With exclusive economic zones (EEZ) many times larger than land area, the blue economy presents enormous potential for creating new sources of economic value. For Barbados, its EEZ is almost 450 times the size of its land area, much of which is underdeveloped, and which eventually could provide a substantial source of income and jobs.

#### Potential for greater inclusion

Recent data show that participation rates in the labour force range between 72 per cent (St. Vincent and the Grenadines) and 78 per cent (Barbados) suggesting that growth is fairly inclusive. Pre-COVID-19, unemployment levels, though, ranged between 10 per cent (Barbados) and 20 per cent (St. Lucia). Youth unemployment is particularly pronounced in St. Lucia (45 per cent). For those employed, those in vulnerable employment range between 16 per cent (Barbados) and 30 per cent (St. Lucia).

With key labour market challenges like the size of the informal market facing this sub-region, addressing structural rigidities, and orienting education systems to reduce skills gaps, particularly among the youth, are needed to retain talent. Further, with the potential advent of new economic opportunities – the development of the blue, green, orange, and circular economies in SIDS – skills training will need to be tailored to ensure that growth remains inclusive. The informal economy accounts for between 24 per cent and 52 per cent of employment.<sup>162</sup><sup>163</sup> Factors that give rise to the informal sector in Barbados and St. Lucia include cost, where the tax burden is perceived to be high and there is a lack of information on the benefits of formalisation. With the informal economy being so pervasive, it adds to vulnerability to unemployment, and to the extent of indecent jobs.

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<sup>160</sup> World Bank <https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/rankings?region=latin-america-and-caribbean>

<sup>161</sup> Insurance, particularly micro insurance in key sectors (like fisheries and agriculture) to mitigate risk and encourage new investments would also promote greater growth diversification and economic resilience. See COAST and CRAIC initiatives <https://www.ccrif.org/projects/crai/climate-risk-adaptation-insurance> as examples.

<sup>162</sup> 46% Barbados, 52% St Lucia

<sup>163</sup> <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Estimating-the-Size-of-the-Informal-Economy-in-Caribbean-States.pdf>; [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---sro-port\\_of\\_spain/documents/publication/wcms\\_619979.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---sro-port_of_spain/documents/publication/wcms_619979.pdf)

## Poverty and Inequality

Limited job opportunities have hindered poverty reduction. Notwithstanding the absence of recent data on poverty and inequality, Barbados and the OECS prior to the global financial crisis had made significant progress in reducing poverty. Extreme poverty – measured at \$1.90 per day 2011 PPP – is extremely low across the sub-region ranging between 0 per cent for St. Kitts and Nevis and 3.2 per cent for Antigua and Barbuda. Consumption-based measures of poverty show the Leeward Islands – St. Kitts and Nevis and Antigua and Barbuda – having lower levels of poverty at 10.3 per cent and 13.2 per cent respectively, compared with the Windward Islands – Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines – where poverty levels were between 20 per cent and 30 per cent.<sup>164</sup>

The global financial crisis was also affected by hurricanes (Irma, Maria) and major storms which have caused widespread destruction in recent years. With few poor households having insurance coverage and with heavy dependence on agriculture, tourism or other climate-sensitive industries, economic disasters triggered by natural hazards of the recent past would have pushed many across the region into poverty.<sup>165</sup> The challenges of those working in informal sectors are likely to be compounded by the inaccessibility of social protection.<sup>166</sup> Inequality, measured by the Gini coefficient, decreased for most countries across the sub-region between the late 1990s and the mid-2000s, except in Dominica. The decline in inequality, driven by a narrowing wage-inequality, was most pronounced in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, where the Gini coefficient fell by 0.16.<sup>167</sup>

## Environmental performance and climate change

Global measures of environmental performance and ocean health show a mixed picture for the region. The 2018 Environmental Performance Index<sup>168</sup> shows that while absolute scores have improved, relative performance has declined. From the Ocean Health Index,<sup>169</sup> scores have stagnated for all countries indicating that investment in environmental management is barely keeping pace with what is needed to sustain and enhance the region's oceanic capital. On both fronts, there is concern that any comparative advantage is slowly being eroded, which will have consequences for the economic value of these natural assets and their future vitality.

The majority of coral reefs are threatened by both local threats – overfishing, pollution from agricultural runoff and coastal development – as well as the global climate crisis and the associated increase in water temperatures and acidification.<sup>170</sup> With an estimated economic value of US\$3.1–4.6 billion for the Caribbean region annually, and the dependence of these small island economies on the blue economy for livelihoods and jobs, insufficient protection measures will have significant future economic consequences. Climate change poses a more pervasive longer-term threat to this sub-region. The erosion of soft shores, increased salinity of estuaries and aquifers, rising coastal water tables, and more severe coastal flooding and storm damage are likely to have a profound economic impact across this sub-region. Intensive land development, high population density in coastal zones and poorly developed coastal infrastructure will mean that the greater frequency as well as severity of natural hazards in this sub-region will impose a substantial future cost burden on these already limited economies. Natural hazards are estimated to have already cost the sub-region an average of 3 per cent of GDP in the two decades since 1995, with individual events – Hurricanes George and Ivan – causing damage of around 2.2 times the GDP of the affected countries.<sup>171</sup> Offshore, climate change is the single greatest threat to coral reefs as it fosters acidification processes and mass bleaching events.

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<sup>164</sup> See <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/300861530819875538/pdf/OECS-Systematic-Regional-Diagnostic-P165001-1.pdf>

<sup>165</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Insurance\\_for\\_the\\_Poor.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Insurance_for_the_Poor.pdf)

<sup>166</sup> <https://www.ilo.org/caribbean/areas-of-work/social-protection/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>167</sup> [https://www.caribank.org/sites/default/files/publication-resources/Study\\_The-Changing-Nature-of-Poverty-and-Inequality-in-the-Caribbean-New-Issues\\_-New-Solutions.pdf](https://www.caribank.org/sites/default/files/publication-resources/Study_The-Changing-Nature-of-Poverty-and-Inequality-in-the-Caribbean-New-Issues_-New-Solutions.pdf)

<sup>168</sup> <https://epi.yale.edu/>

<sup>169</sup> <http://www.oceanhealthindex.org/>

<sup>170</sup> <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/30054>

<sup>171</sup> <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/30054>

Thus, reef restoration and more broadly marine resilience are vital to the preservation of this sub-region's natural assets and its ability to reap the returns from the blue economy in the years to come.

### Opportunities and constraints

With expansive and underutilised EEZs, an important element to enhancing the sub-region's growth trajectory will be how best it can sustainably further the economic potential of the blue economy, which can contribute substantially to the incomes of this sub-region's major industries, such as tourism and recreation, agriculture, fishing and aquaculture, and transport. There are wide-ranging actions that the sub-region can take to facilitate its economic transformation in light of the challenges faced as SIDS, vulnerability to shocks, economies largely dependent on tourism, as well as within the context of the pandemic. A list of exclusive recommendations (that is, those pertaining to economic transformation) have been provided in Annex 6. Such recommendations are also a subset of composite recommendations that have been provided in the Conclusion, and which have been labelled 'economic transformation' for ease of reference and understanding.

## SDG financing landscape

The Eastern Caribbean needs efficient and sound financial systems to channel funds to productive uses, provide insurance against shocks, reduce information asymmetries, potentially alleviate poverty and inequality, foster innovation, and entrepreneurship through risk diversification, and to generate sustained and inclusive development. For many, growth has slowed considerably since the withdrawal of trade preferences – increasing market volatility, and successive economic and environmental shocks have given rise to higher unemployment. The sub-region faces high debt and exposure to external shocks hindering development prospects, including the recent loss of correspondent banking relations. For some countries, debt servicing obligations have been beyond the capacity of governments, resulting in debt negotiations and restructuring to reduce debt and interest payments.

Traditional sources of development finance – FDI, remittances and official development assistance (ODA) flows – while remaining important to the sub-region have been broadly stable or in decline over the past decade. While flows of concessional development finance from bilateral and multilateral sources have increased to developing countries over the past decade,<sup>172</sup> the higher income status of many countries in the sub-region has meant that Barbados (2011) and St. Kitts and Nevis (2014) have graduated from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list of ODA-eligible countries. Antigua and Barbuda recently regained its eligibility in 2017 but may again be graduated in the 2020 review.<sup>173</sup> Prior to COVID-19, Barbados and Grenada had made good progress in implementing economic reforms aimed at restoring fiscal and debt sustainability, rebuilding reserves, and increasing growth.

### Existing strategies and policies

After the 2008–09 global financial crisis, Barbados had been caught in a vicious cycle of low or negative growth and increasing debt, with public debt increasing to almost 160 per cent of GDP by mid-2018. International reserves, which reached a low of US\$220 million (5–6 weeks of import coverage) at the end of May 2018,<sup>174</sup> increased to more than US\$600 million by the end of October 2019, supported by lending from international financial institutions (IFIs) and a negotiated external commercial debt moratorium. The rapid completion of the domestic part of debt restructuring has been very helpful in reducing economic uncertainty, and the new terms agreed with creditors have helped to put debt on

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<sup>172</sup> See World Development Indicators

<sup>173</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2020-flows.pdf>

<sup>174</sup> <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/08/28/pr20289-barbados-imf-staff-concludes-virtual-visit>

a clear downward trajectory. As of 30 October 2020, a staff-level agreement was reached, which with Executive Board approval would see augmentation of the EFF by US\$66 million and a relaxation of the fiscal targets<sup>175</sup> due to the impact of COVID-19 reducing economic growth by over 10 per cent.<sup>176</sup>

Recent debt-restructuring efforts by Grenada and St. Kitts and Nevis were successful in reversing a trend of over-indebtedness. Grenada's 2013–15 debt restructuring exercise included a 50 per cent principal haircut on both domestic and external debt to private and bilateral official creditors and helped bring the debt-to-GDP ratio down to 72 per cent in 2017 from 108 per cent in 2013, putting it on track to achieve the regional target of 60 per cent by 2020.<sup>177</sup> In St. Kitts and Nevis, an aggregated 65 per cent net present value haircut on exchanged debt resulted in the debt-to-GDP ratio falling from 157 per cent in 2010 to 62 per cent at the end of 2017.<sup>178</sup> These afforded Caribbean countries with additional fiscal space to re-engage with development expenditures to deliver the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Both cases were underpinned by IMF programmes that supported comprehensive fiscal adjustment. In addition, the restructuring operations had some innovative features built into new debt contracts, such as a clawback feature and a two-step haircut approach that provided incentives for sustained prudent fiscal policy. Grenada's restructuring also included a hurricane clause which provides automatic liquidity relief in the event of a qualifying disaster. Despite these restructuring episodes, public debt remains high and above the OECS regional target of 60 per cent of GDP in all countries and the averages for small states and upper-middle-income countries. The growth in public debt in the past four decades is also associated with a decline in external grant financing. A share of their combined gross national income (GNI) has declined from an average of 6.4 per cent of GNI in 1977–89 to an average of 2.1 per cent in 2000–16.<sup>179</sup>

The large size of the diaspora in many countries has been an important factor sustaining remittance flows. OECS remittances have provided steady support for the balance of payments and for poverty reduction. For Barbados, while increasing in recent years, remittances account for just 2 per cent of the GDP. Comparatively, other islands rely heavily and increasingly so on these flows. Over the past decade, remittances have become more important for economic development and poverty reduction in Dominica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and to a lesser extent Antigua and Barbuda. This contrasts with Grenada and St. Kitts and Nevis who exhibit the opposite pattern.

### *Opportunities and constraints*

There are essentially three key determinants of access to finance for households – physical barriers (for example, long distance to a bank branch, and poor transportation), eligibility barriers (for example, documentation requirements, and literacy), and affordability (for example, minimum balances and fees). The IMF shows<sup>180</sup> that financial inclusion and development could be improved with policies to strengthen institutional and legal frameworks related to property rights and collateral registries, as well as by improving the credibility of financial systems and deposit insurance, enhancing capital and liquidity buffers, and addressing balance sheet mismatches. Recommendations (see Annex 7) have been provided as a means of improving the financing landscape in the sub-region.

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<sup>175</sup><https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/10/30/PR20326---Barbados---IMF-Reaches-Staff-Level-Agreement-4th-Review-Economic-Program-Under-EFF>

<sup>176</sup> Central Bank of Barbados. 2020. Review of Barbados' Economic Performance January to September 2020. [http://www.centralbank.org.bb/Portals/0/Files/Central%20Bank%20of%20Barbados%20Review%20of%20the%20Economy%20\(Jan-Sept%202020\).pdf](http://www.centralbank.org.bb/Portals/0/Files/Central%20Bank%20of%20Barbados%20Review%20of%20the%20Economy%20(Jan-Sept%202020).pdf)

<sup>177</sup> <https://www.imf.org/~media/Files/Publications/WP/2017/wp17171.ashx>

<sup>178</sup> <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2015/cr15297.pdf>

<sup>179</sup> <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/30054>

<sup>180</sup> <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2018/03/13/Financial-Development-and-Inclusion-in-the-Caribbean-45689>

## 6. Institutional gaps, capacity, and challenges

Despite laudable progress made in key human development sectors, Eastern Caribbean nations continue to experience significant challenges in SDG advancement. Inequalities persist for vulnerable and socially excluded populations. These populations and groups are the most affected by poverty, limited job opportunities, disasters, and climate change. Policy instruments and the responsiveness of public institutions to human rights principles and non-discriminatory practices will be necessary to close existing socioeconomic disparities and accelerate SDG achievement.

When compared to other post-colonial societies, Barbados and OECS countries and territories generally enjoy stable governance and political rights with uninterrupted transfers of power through multi-party elections, generally perceived to be free and fair. Political constraints appear to limit policy autonomy, thereby preventing long-term and sustainable development planning. Policy priorities often change with the electoral cycle.

The greatest regional integration in CARICOM has arguably been demonstrated in the OECS. The establishment of a common currency and central bank have contributed to a well-coordinated approach to price stability, supervision of local banks and promotion of economic data transparency. Despite these advances in regional integration, the persistent low-growth trajectory could be attributed to the small size of these economies, and vulnerability to shocks with an overreliance on beach tourism and a lack of diversification in this and other sectors of the economies.

### Governance and institutional capacity

Despite stable governance, a lack of medium to long-term development planning is a common feature across the sub-region. Public sector capacity is stymied by fragmentation, and outdated legal and regulatory frameworks, which undermine the performance and responsiveness of civil service administration, public financial management, the governance of information and communication systems, citizen participation and the business environment.<sup>181</sup> In addition, the Eastern Caribbean faces unique challenges in providing services to children and their families, and all countries have considerable work left to do to ensure the full realisation of the rights of children. Prioritising social inclusion, improving data collection and research on a regular basis to strengthen public policy design and strategic planning, and reinforcing capacities of institutions in charge of the administration of social protection programmes will have positive social outcomes. Relying on existing public institutions with solid governance and technological infrastructure, such as social security organisations, will provide economies of scale and coherence in delivering social policies.

In line with SDG16, the development of effective and transparent institutions and processes can help leverage efforts in favour of the achievement of sustainable and inclusive public policies. The 11 Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development<sup>182</sup> provide a guiding framework for a broad analysis of the capacity of public institutions to effectively address social inclusion and contribute to SDG achievement. Details of 7 of these principles, within the context of Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, have been provided in Annex 9 as they are deemed to be most relevant.

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<sup>181</sup> World Bank. 2018. OECS Systematic Regional Diagnostic

<sup>182</sup> These Principles were developed by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) and endorsed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council on 2 July 2018. They are intended to help interested countries build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels with a view to achieving the shared vision for people and planet as embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:  
[https://publicadministration.un.org/Portals/1/Images/CEPA/Principles\\_of\\_effective\\_governance\\_english.pdf](https://publicadministration.un.org/Portals/1/Images/CEPA/Principles_of_effective_governance_english.pdf)

## 7. Conclusion

The achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires acceleration in the Caribbean to shift towards systems thinking which maximises the synergies between the SDGs and brings solutions to scale. The recommended actions from this CCA are captured below according to the six entry points identified by the Global Sustainable Development Report,<sup>183</sup> recalling the four levers within each entry point: governance, economy and finance, individual and collective action, and science and technology. Each recommendation is also labelled based on the specific group of persons or issues that are being addressed.

### Human well-being and capabilities

#### Governance

1. Formulate national population policies based on comprehensive population situation analyses on the interlinkages and understanding of the relationship between demographic variables and the attainment of development imperatives. [*LNOB - Data availability*]
2. Address attitudinal and legal barriers across all sectors that result in discrimination against persons with disabilities, including through public awareness, targeted capacity-building for service providers, legislation, and the development of a strategic plan. [*LNOB - PWDs*]
3. Mainstream disability in national development policy frameworks and develop/revise relevant policies (population, health, education, ageing), ensuring that they are disability-inclusive and guarantee full access to independent, non-discriminatory, and assisted essential services, goods, and information. [*LNOB - PWDs*]
4. Increase OPDs' participation in policymaking and UN programming through the capacity-building of OPDs and policymakers, and by facilitating engagement between key stakeholders. [*LNOB - PWDs*]
5. HRW: Repeal all laws that criminalise consensual sexual activity among persons of the same sex. [*LNOB - LGBTQI*]
6. HRW: Pass laws defining the crime of rape in a gender-neutral way so that non-consensual sex between men or between women is included and subject to equal punishment. [*LNOB - LGBTQI*]
7. HRW: Consistent with the principle of non-discrimination, ensure that an equal age of consent applies to both same-sex and different-sex sexual activity. [*LNOB - LGBTQI*]
8. HRW: Pass comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that prohibits discrimination, including on the grounds of gender identity and sexual orientation, and includes effective measures to identify, prevent, and respond to such discrimination. [*LNOB - LGBTQI*]
9. HRW: Introduce and implement a gender recognition procedure in accordance with international standards and good practices to allow people to change their legal gender on all documents through a process of self-declaration that is free of medical procedures or coercion. [*LNOB - LGBTQI*]
10. Create policies and strategies to reach PLHIV sooner with available services. [*LNOB - PLHIV*]
11. Amend discriminatory laws and policies so that they facilitate increased access to health and social welfare support for all people most in need. [*LNOB - PLHIV*]
12. Enact legislation and develop policy for pregnant learner retention and re-entry into the formal education system. [*LNOB - Youth and children*]
13. Develop inter-sectoral policies to address child labour, taking into consideration education, health, and poverty dimensions. [*LNOB - Youth and children*]
14. Enact legislation to ban corporal punishment. [*LNOB - Youth and children*]

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<sup>183</sup> Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The Future is Now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development  
[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24797GSDR\\_report\\_2019.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf)

15. Establish social protection floors, including through the expansion of the coverage and level of social protection, in particular non-contributory pension schemes, to reach the most vulnerable groups. [*LNOB - Elderly/other vulnerable groups*]
16. Amend existing or adopt national policies and strategies and/or action plans on ageing, as well as national development planning and sustainable development and poverty reduction strategies, which include a rights-based approach. [*LNOB - Elderly/other vulnerable groups*]
17. Improve and/or strengthen the monitoring and evaluation aspect of responsible bodies for the national policies on ageing and related frameworks, including the implementation of a system with indicators and the collection of disaggregated data by age, gender, migratory status, disability, and any other relevant variable. [*LNOB - Elderly/other vulnerable groups*]
18. States should adopt an annex to their existing disaster preparedness and emergency response plans to address the contingency of mass migratory flows into the state for refugee-like reasons, and should liaise with emergency preparedness entities in other states and regional organisations to ensure adequate coordination. [*LNOB - Migrants and refugees*]
19. Countries should draft and adopt domestic legislation, implementing in national law the obligations and provisions of the international refugee protection instruments. [*LNOB - Migrants and refugees*]
20. Ratify additional international human rights instruments and accede to their optional protocols. [*LNOB - Human rights*]
21. Reform national legislation to meet human rights standards in line with international treaty instruments and obligations. [*LNOB - Human rights*]
22. Establish National Human Rights Institutions consistent with the Paris Principles to facilitate implementation, monitoring and reporting on human rights obligations. [*LNOB - Human rights*]
23. Fast-track legislation, policies, and programmes to promote gender equality, women's empowerment, and the elimination of gender-based violence, addressing underlying causes, including patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes, inequality in the family and the neglect or denial of women's rights, agency and voices. [*LNOB - Gender equality/ women's empowerment*]
24. Strengthen national gender/women's machineries to realise the effective implementation, monitoring and mainstreaming of national, regional, and international commitments on gender equality. [*LNOB - Gender equality/ women's empowerment*]
25. Strengthen economic governance by linking debt reduction, stimulation of growth and the achievement of other macro-economic targets with measures that support women's productive capacities and social protection. [*LNOB - Gender equality/ women's empowerment*]
26. Support the development/upgrading of formal mechanisms of tripartite social dialogue as instruments for consensus in labour policy. [*Institutions and capacity-building*]
27. Facilitate open budget dialogues and user-producer dialogues to facilitate open data. [*Institutions and capacity-building*]
28. Facilitate multi-stakeholder and inter-generational/LNOB fora. [*Institutions and capacity-building*]

### *Economy and finance*

29. Increase domestic investment and improve service delivery to accelerate progress towards ending AIDS. Innovative financing strategies are needed to ensure the sustained progress, efficacy, and efficiency of HIV-related services. [*LNOB - PLHIV*]
30. Accelerate poverty reduction among the youth population by increasing access to quality education and lifelong learning, and by fostering the employability of young people. [*LNOB - Youth and children*]

31. Build capacity with technical assistance to implement child-responsive and gender-responsive national budgets and development plans that are strategic and rights-based. [*LNOB - Gender equality/ women's empowerment*]
32. Identify adequate fiscal space to progressively achieve universal social protection with links to climate risk finance. [*Social progress and social cohesion – Social protection*]
33. Invest in making social protection systems and programmes more adaptive/shock-responsive to better respond to the needs of the most vulnerable, prior to and/or after a disaster. [*Social progress and social cohesion – Social protection*]
34. Increase focus on strategies to create higher-value jobs and better-adapted quality education fit for the changing and emerging industries, including access to specialised education programmes emphasising practical skill sets and competencies. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
35. Prioritise skills development to enable employability and entrepreneurship, considering the foreseen economic downturn – preparing for jobs of the future. [*Social progress and social cohesion - Education*]
36. Ensure adequate financing to ensure the continuity of the delivery of instruction, and learner/trainee access to e-learning platforms. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
37. Reinforce public employment services and labour market information systems. [*Institutions and capacity-building*]
38. Use recent experiences to strengthen emergency preparedness and ensure critical emergency response mechanisms for the continuity of school access. [*Social progress and social cohesion - Education*]

#### *Individual and collective action*

39. Strengthen access for women and girls with disabilities to GBV services and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health rights programmes, services, and information. [*LNOB - PWDs*]
40. HRW: Enable LGBT people to undergo needs assessments for their health (including mental health) and develop programming to address those needs. [*LNOB - LGBTQ*]
41. HRW: Conduct awareness-raising campaigns for the general public, journalists, and public officials, including law enforcement officials and medical professionals, that promote tolerance and respect for diversity, including gender expression, gender identity, and sexual orientation. [*LNOB - LGBTQ*]
42. Scale-up effective strategies to ensure early presentation for antenatal care and continuity of treatment for pregnant women living with HIV, including those in poverty and those who are migrants or survivors of gender-based violence. [*LNOB - PLHIV*]
43. Have stronger strategies to reach all pregnant women living with HIV and their children with services, including HIV and syphilis diagnosis and treatment. [*LNOB - PLHIV*]
44. Ensure access to comprehensive sexuality education for young people in an effort to address knowledge, attitudes and practices rendering young people at higher risk for HIV infection. [*LNOB - PLHIV*]
45. Scale-up client-centred and community-based/led HIV interventions to achieve universal health coverage. [*LNOB - PLHIV*]
46. Have differentiated, decentralised and non-discriminatory services to expand combined prevention and treatment coverage, especially for young people. [*LNOB - PLHIV*]
47. Expand the use of proven methods of active case finding and linkage to (and retention in) care, including through community-based programmes, and the roll-out of comprehensive evidence-based prevention interventions (for example self-testing, PrEP). [*LNOB - PLHIV*]
48. Strategically engage youth as both beneficiaries and change-makers, for meaningful participation and inclusion in decisions that impact young people and their communities. [*LNOB - Youth and children*]
49. Sustainably engage and partner with young people and their organisations, networks, and movements, through formal and informal mechanisms and platforms to realise universal

- rights-based youth participation in line with the United Nations 2030 Youth Strategy. [*LNOB - Youth and children*]
50. Strengthen the delivery of age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education in the HFLE curriculum and for out-of-school adolescents and youth. [*LNOB - Youth and children*]
  51. Fast-track the reduction of teenage pregnancy in line with the CARICOM Regional Strategic Framework to reduce adolescent pregnancy in the Caribbean. [*LNOB - Youth and children*]
  52. Disseminate international and regional agreements and standards on the rights of older people at the national level, including to older persons themselves. National policies should also be made available to older persons in accessible and age-friendly formats, in urban, rural, and remote areas. [*LNOB - Elderly/other vulnerable groups*]
  53. Reinforce existing consultative and participatory mechanisms in national councils/commissions/divisions/ministries leading on issues affecting the well-being of older persons, in order to effectively allow them to participate and contribute to decision-making affecting their lives. [*LNOB - Elderly/other vulnerable groups*]
  54. Promote the universalisation of the right of older persons to health, which should be based on a comprehensive and integrated social and health-care approach in order to respect and promote their autonomy, independence, and dignity. [*LNOB - Elderly/other vulnerable groups*]
  55. Raise awareness on all forms of financial, physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, violence, abandonment, and neglect of the elderly and to break taboos and negative images related to ageing. [*LNOB - Elderly/other vulnerable groups*]
  56. Strengthen cooperation nationally and regionally through the analysis of national data systems, the capacity-building of national stakeholders and the sharing of best practices. [*LNOB - Migrants and refugees*]
  57. Develop regional guidelines, and a roadmap for regional cooperation on environmental migration and security issues. [*LNOB - Migrants and refugees*]
  58. Promote shared family responsibilities between women and men to increase women's participation in public life. [*LNOB - Gender equality/ women's empowerment*]
  59. Enhance the delivery of essential services for GBV survivors in health, social services, justice, and police sectors. [*LNOB - Gender equality/ women's empowerment*]
  60. Expose youth to training in skills, values, and attitudes to live together in harmony, peacefully and with prosperity. [*Peace and security*]
  61. Expose youth to skills in conflict resolution to promote a recognition, and respect for others and to prevent violence in school settings, communities, and family environments. [*Peace and security*]
  62. Strengthen evidence-based gender-responsive decision-making to reduce crime and violence levels. [*Peace and security*]
  63. Use evidence-based approaches to strengthen tools for parenting and discipline without violence and promote interventions that target risk factors for youth. [*Peace and security*]
  64. Fortify the interaction between community-based child protection mechanisms and national child protection systems. [*Peace and security - children*]
  65. Build and strengthen collaboration between community-based and national systems to represent a holistic, inclusive, sustainable, and well-coordinated way to protect all children while addressing the more specific needs of specific groups of affected children. [*Peace and security - children*]
  66. Increase sub-regional and international cooperation for improved law enforcement capacity for intervention in dealing with exogenous factors (such as illicit flows from transnational organised crime activities) in an effort to drive the region's capacity to respond more effectively to intercepting, investigating and prosecuting these threats. [*Peace and security*]
  67. Use targeted, evidence-based interventions to address how national and extra-regional factors intersect to strengthen the resilience of communities to crime and violence, while reducing vulnerabilities to illicit flows. [*Peace and security*]

68. Conduct in-country e-learning needs assessments to form the basis for dialogue between education and training providers, and public and private enterprises on partnerships for the sustainable financing of e-learning platforms and resources. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
69. Continuous professional development should be made available for instructors on the use of LMS, instructional design for e-learning, and the use of online learning resources. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
70. Partnerships between education and training institutions, and public and private enterprises should be developed as a necessary condition to maintain continuity of access to the LMS and the availability of e-learning resources. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
71. Reiterate the value of education in building resilient societies in recovery plans and other instruments, and the need for multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder, and regional coordination through mechanisms such as the Caribbean Safe School Initiative. [*Social progress and social cohesion – Education*]
72. Reform social protection systems and/or develop a new social protection policy to ensure more coherence, including common and shared vision, coordination, and financing mechanisms. [*Social progress and social cohesion – Social protection*]
73. Invest in the development of core administrative tools such as registries and management information systems to improve key business processes of social protection programmes (such as the identification of beneficiaries, and enrolment). [*Social progress and social cohesion – Social protection*]

#### *Science and technology*

74. Improve efforts and sustained funding for integrated risk assessment and disaggregated data collection to better understand systematic risk in the Caribbean region and its impact on achieving the SDGs. [*LNOB - Data availability*]
75. Harness disaggregated data across different global frameworks and indicators that can be used to compare outcomes and changes over time – among and within countries and households – and to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable populations do not continue to go unnoticed. [*LNOB - Data availability*]
76. Strengthen national systems to collect, analyse, disseminate, and utilise disaggregated data on PWDs including from the census, through capacity-building and through the introduction of data collection tools and methods, to inform evidence-based policies and programmes. [*LNOB - PWDs*]
77. Ensure increased investments in data generation systems to support data-driven and evidence-based decision-making, programming, and policies. [*LNOB - PLHIV*]
78. Use innovative technologies that increase access to testing and treatment for key populations at higher risk for HIV exposure. [*LNOB - PLHIV*]
79. Enhance data and evidence regarding environmental migration. [*LNOB - Migrants and refugees*]
80. Strengthen data collection and analysis of violence against women and girls for improved programming, monitoring, and reporting on the achievement of SDG 5 and other goals. [*LNOB - Gender equality/ women's empowerment*]
81. Develop ICT systems providing secure, electronic case registry and case management systems. [*Peace and security*]
82. Develop the evidence base for accurate, regular, and up-to-date data and information for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of national progress in modernising youth justice and in preventing and responding to all forms of child harm. [*Peace and security - children*]
83. Enhance the collection, analysis and use of data to strengthen sector planning and support relevant decision-making and policy development through strengthened Open Education

Management Information Systems (OpenEMIS). [*Social progress and social cohesion - Education*]

84. Update curricular content, pedagogy, and school infrastructure to facilitate a wider set of student options and approaches in keeping with current technology and societal needs and in collaboration with parents. [*Social progress and social cohesion - Education*]
85. Focus on the professional development and capacity-building of teachers so that they could utilise low, medium, and high-tech solutions to assure the continuity of inclusive and quality learning. [*Social progress and social cohesion - Education*]
86. Ensure that the best possible technical solutions are available so that schools could be provided with required connectivity, and countries with safe, secure, reliable, fit for purpose infrastructure to support future digital development needs, including last mile connectivity. [*Social progress and social cohesion - Education*]
87. Create guidelines in areas including cybersecurity, digital identity, digital inclusion, and global communications infrastructure and promote good ICT practices for social security institutions. [*Social progress and social cohesion – Social protection*]
88. Enable capacity-building for open data and the strengthening of national statistical offices to facilitate timely data/evidence to inform policy and SDG monitoring. [*Institutions and capacity-building*]
89. Provide human rights and due diligence training for civil servants and develop non-discriminatory operations manuals. [*Institutions and capacity-building*]

## Sustainable and just economies

### Governance

1. Create a policy and regulatory environment which offers potential for greater private capital investment and innovative financing for sustainable development solutions in different sectors from current and new funding sources. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
2. Streamline coordination and risk-informed decision-making within and across Ministry divisions/departments and ensure that systemic risks are integrated into the design of new or existing service delivery programmes. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
3. Recovery policies need to trigger investment and behavioural changes that will reduce the likelihood of future shocks and increase society's resilience to them when they do occur. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
4. Policy instruments/tools that promote anticipatory action and access to insurance, shock-responsive social protection, forecast-based financing, and others should be developed and promoted. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
5. Enact comprehensive legislative and regulatory frameworks to safeguard the confidentiality of individuals and protect their privacy and other interests. [*Social progress and social cohesion – Social protection*]
6. Financial inclusion and development could be improved with policies to strengthen institutional and legal frameworks related to property rights and collateral registries, as well as by improving the credibility of financial systems and deposit insurance, enhancing capital and liquidity buffers, and addressing balance sheet mismatches. [*Financing landscape*]
7. Policies to support SMEs are warranted. Key supporting measures include understanding the determinants of banks' fees and charges, examining the existence of, and eliminating predatory practices, and reviewing the adequacy of banking sector competition (including the framework for entry). [*Financing landscape*]
8. Measures to reduce information costs (strong credit bureaux), efforts to reduce operational costs (using mobile networks and correspondent banking), and measures to improve the efficiency of courts and collateral recovery systems are necessary. [*Financing landscape*]

9. Advances in standards of transparency and the exchange of information will be required to enhance compliance and avoid blacklisting measures that can interrupt international financial flows to the sub-region. [*Financing landscape*]
10. Address obstacles to the access of women and vulnerable groups to justice, providing legal recourse against sexual harassment and physical harm, unfair labour practices and exploitation. [*Peace and security*]
11. Prioritise system-based strengthening of government child protection systems. [*Peace and security - children*]
12. Integrate child protection protocols into health, education, justice, and broader social welfare services. [*Peace and security - children*]
13. Provide comprehensive policies for artificial intelligence as it poses ethical challenges with a potentially disruptive effect on the labour market. [*Economic transformation*]

#### *Economy and finance*

14. Strengthen private sector partnerships and investments and develop fiscal and financial policies and investment programmes geared towards MSMEs to provide further impetus and agility for change. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
15. Develop and strengthen intraregional trade facilitation and integration, implementing tax incentives for local and regional produce and supporting CSME initiatives, and focusing on closing the logistical gap between islands in the sub-region. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
16. Economic policies and recovery packages should be designed to facilitate investment opportunities supporting improved production, better marketing infrastructure and reliable safety nets for vulnerable actors along the value chain. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
17. Facilitate more and stronger sectoral linkages to support food production and trade programmes to build back better. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
18. Accelerate the transition to a sustainable green recovery, ensuring it has a strong focus on biodiversity and its links with the climate change agenda. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
19. Build resilience to external shocks that takes a broad and comprehensive view that builds on the traditional disaster risk management agenda and encompasses fiscal risks, financial sector resilience and the preservation of human and natural capital. [*Economic transformation*]
20. Embed growth in the blue economy to fully leverage the economic potential of the natural assets contained within the oceans. [*Economic transformation*]
21. Embed growth by strengthening cultural and creative industries and build on the rich Eastern Caribbean cultural heritage. [*Economic transformation*]

#### *Individual and collective action*

22. A greater dependence on export promotion outside of tourism and a greater focus on raising agriculture's contribution to GDP through exports and local consumption are required, including the sustained adoption of the elemental principles of food security as a pillar of economic sustainability and a foundation for healthy lifestyles. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
23. Strengthen regional integration. Some of the ways to increase economies of scale are through increasing connectivity between the islands, harmonising regulations, data, and government procedures, and boosting regional cooperation. [*Economic transformation*]
24. Joint action is needed to address transboundary matters such as ocean governance. [*Economic transformation*]

#### *Science and technology*

1. Early warning early action systems can increase the capacities of countries to better prepare for major shocks and hazards. [*Sustainable economic growth*]

2. Invest in reliable high-speed communication infrastructure in all inhabited islands and navigated waters. This infrastructure should support fixed and mobile telephony and fixed and mobile broadband internet and be available to the public sector, households, individuals, and businesses at affordable prices. [*Social progress and social cohesion – Social protection*]
3. Ensure reliable, robust, and resilient ICT infrastructure (communication and coordination) that is available during post-disaster recovery processes. [*Social progress and social cohesion – Social protection*]
4. Tools and capacity-building should accompany demonstrating solutions for sustainable mobility to support countries in generating green jobs. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
5. Integrate waste flows and ecosystem carrying capacities in planning the growth of the tourism sector to ensure that environmental impacts are minimised, and public health is protected. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
6. Climate-proof energy systems, merging mitigation co-benefits into climate change adaptation actions, and focusing on NBS to assist countries and cities in designing and deploying resilient infrastructure. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
7. Strengthen collaboration through a coherent sub-regional science, technology, and innovation (STI) strategy or policy to boost research and development, particularly around a new economic model and emergent industries. [*Economic transformation*]
8. Embrace new technologies to reduce the cost and typical dependence on economies of scale. [*Economic transformation*]
9. Advance data and knowledge bases to better inform decision-making and improve strategic planning. [*Economic transformation*]
10. Pursue the rapid introduction and uptake of AI to address pressing development challenges (for example, introduction into different commercial aspects of tourism); to raise the accessibility of quality health services; to enhance agricultural productivity; and to understand climate change, reducing marine pollution, and contributing to large-scale action for preserving the environment. [*Economic transformation*]

## Food systems and nutrition patterns

### Governance

1. Modernize and create policy and legislative frameworks that are conducive to the transformation of food systems towards competitiveness, integration, resilience, and sustainability. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
2. To support measures, including policies and instruments, to support and promote initiatives that improve and seek to ensure the affordability and accessibility of healthy diets through sustainable food systems and to promote policies and programmes aiming at preventing or reducing overweight and obesity [*Social progress and social cohesion – Social protection*]
3. Streamline coordination and decision-making within and across institutions (including Government agencies and Parliamentarians, intergovernmental organizations and development partners) and sectors to enable healthy diets and improved nutrition through sustainable food systems, strengthened policy and legal frameworks and institutional capacities that address the multiple causes and consequences of malnutrition in all its forms and food-related economic, social and environmental challenges. [*Sustainable economic growth*]

### *Economy and finance*

4. Promote development of more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable value chains and digitalization as drivers of food system transformation. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
5. Develop climate risk finance including insurance mechanisms and products tailored to the needs of farming and fishing communities in the Caribbean SIDS context. [*Sustainable economic growth*]

### *Individual and collective action*

6. Support the creation and strengthening of farmers and fisherfolk organisations to better participate in strong value chains and well-established farmer-market links. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
7. Equip farmers and fisherfolk with entrepreneurship training, technology, climate smart agricultural practices and business development services and other support needed to be commercially viable and be aware of their role and opportunities within value chains. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
8. Create the conditions and policy incentives for a widespread reverting to more healthy diets, to stop the obesity epidemic and to link better to nutritious, locally produced foods.
9. To promote nutrition within agriculture and food supply chains [*Social progress and social cohesion – Social protection*]
10. Leverage, adapt, and scale-up existing social safety nets, such as school meals programmes, providing healthy diets and creating linkages with the agricultural and fisheries sectors. [*Social progress and social cohesion – Social protection*]
11. Leverage income generating opportunities and employment for the most vulnerable, empowering youth and women across food systems. [*Social progress and social cohesion – Social protection*]
12. Support the strengthening of public procurement systems by ensuring healthy diets are available, accessible, affordable and convenient in public settings and institutions, including kindergartens and other childcare facilities, schools, hospitals, foodbanks, government offices and workplaces, military bases and prisons, nursing homes, and care settings, in line with national food-based dietary guidelines, and engaging with, where available, smallholders and family farmers and vulnerable local food producers.
13. To utilize policies and tools to provide education and information on healthy diets and sustainable food systems [*Social progress and social cohesion – Social protection*]

### *Science and technology*

14. Design instruments that promote the adoption of digital solutions in agriculture and fisheries (for example, digital marketing and market information tools), climate-resilient technologies (for example, protected structure cultivation, water harvesting, renewable energy) and new and emerging tools such as precision agriculture. Support adoption through the improved collection and monitoring of and access to updated agricultural and fisheries information tools and systems (statistics and digitalisation of data). [*Sustainable economic growth*]
15. Mainstream climate adaptation and mitigation across sustainable food supply chains [*Sustainable economic growth*]
16. Monitor new technologies and promote trends for healthy diets through sustainable food systems
17. Support and develop, where appropriate, evidence-based food-based dietary guidelines for different age groups and people with special dietary requirements that define context-specific healthy diets by taking into account social, cultural, ancestral, scientific, economic, traditional, ecological, geographical and environmental drivers. It is also important to invest, where

appropriate, in public health nutrition tools to improve nutrition education and promote healthy diets and sustainable food systems

18. Promote and support science and evidence-based food and nutrition labelling, including considering diverse science and evidence-based FOPL schemes, (which could include interpretive and informative labelling), to support healthy diets

## Energy decarbonisation with universal access

### Governance

1. Incentivise renewable energy (that is, solar PV) and utilise policy instruments agreed at the Caribbean regional level and financial mechanisms that can provide the climate, energy, and financial benefits for the Eastern Caribbean. [*Environment and climate resilience*]

### Economy and finance

2. Assist small states to unlock financing to fight climate change and build resilience. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
3. Utilise integrated approaches and solutions to address economic drivers in order to build resilience to the impacts of climate change; approaches may focus on sustainable transportation, renewable energy, and energy efficiency. [*Environment and climate resilience*]

### Individual and collective action

4. Addressing cooling, which ranges from cold chains for preserving food and medicine as well as thermal comfort in buildings and transportation, should be a priority. [*Environment and climate resilience*]

### Science and technology

5. Leapfrog to high efficiency lighting in a permanent and sustainable manner, starting with carbon neutral street lighting and expanding to other sectors. A balanced mix of pull (financial mechanisms, consumer campaigns, demonstration projects) and push market activities (standards and regulatory mechanisms) can achieve a complete permanent transition. [*Environment and climate resilience*]

## Urban and peri-urban development

### Governance

1. Establish a regional technical cooperation facility to support three main areas: policy, city-wide programmes, and capacity development implementation. [*LNOB - People in informal settlements*]
2. Prepare national informal settlement upgrading policies or strategies. [*LNOB - People in informal settlements*]
3. Establish a multi-governance framework to undertake interagency coordination to support the implementation of informal settlement upgrading programmes. [*LNOB - People in informal settlements*]

### Economy and finance

4. Support the needs of national governments in implementing informal settlement upgrading programmes, ranging from support for the design of hillside drainage and sanitation systems,

to the establishment of community-managed funds, regional databases, guides on building codes, retrofitting infrastructure on hillside informal settlements upgrading, and financing and delivery mechanisms. [*LNOB - People in informal settlements*]

#### *Individual and collective action*

5. Develop a regional guide on how to prepare a national housing strategy and provide support for regional workshops/online fora to share best practices, improve housing sector capacity, and improve information, education, and communication (IEC) programmes to build awareness. [*LNOB - People in informal settlements*]

#### *Science and technology*

6. Collect data through national surveys to measure the demographic diversity of informal settlements, disaggregated by sex, age and other key variables. [*LNOB - People in informal settlements*]
7. Equip planners and decision-makers with a better understanding of the relationships among population, poverty, gender inequity and inequality, health, education, the environment, financial and human resources. [*LNOB - People in informal settlements*]
8. Explore electric mobility initiatives, which include addressing the integration of electric vehicles (EVs) with the grid and their convergence as a distributed energy resource for electricity storage and ancillary services, including technical assistance to promote the integration of renewable energy with smart grids and EVs. [*Environment and climate resilience*]

## **Global environmental commons**

#### *Governance*

1. Additional ratifications and implementation of the Escazú Agreement will promote better governance of natural resources by ensuring access to information, citizen participation, and access to justice in environmental matters. [*Sustainable economic growth*]
2. Address critical policy, legislation, and capacity gaps to ensure the long-term and sustainable management of water and wastewater. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
3. Climate change needs to be mainstreamed in the water sector policies and management practices, considering disproportional impacts of climate change on women and children. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
4. Develop National Invasive Species Strategies and Action Plans and update relevant legislation. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
5. Implement effective, operable, transparent, and sustainable National Biosafety Frameworks. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
6. Integrate the cultural sector into the disaster risk preparedness, response and management strategies and plans at the national and sub-regional levels. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
7. Include EbA and NBS in DRR strategies and national development plans and integrate disaster risk into national planning. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
8. Adopt regional strategies for the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of biodiversity. This requires adopting ambitious targets for the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of ecosystems. [*Environment and climate resilience*]

### *Economy and finance*

9. Apply a circular economy approach to retain or recapture the value of the resource before final disposal through many iterations, including of repair, refurbishment, remanufacture, and recycling. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
10. Water infrastructure needs to adapt to the increased intensity of hurricanes and flooding. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
11. Compile and implement innovative solutions to ensure the sustainable financing and implementation of small scale, local, rural, peri-urban, and community-based water, and wastewater solutions. [*Environment and climate resilience*]

### *Individual and collective action*

12. Apply coastal ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA), including building community-based capacity, as a cost-effective tool for resilience. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
13. Work jointly to address marine litter by building awareness, advancing initiatives on marine litter, and sharing ongoing initiatives, policy changes, and action plans. [*Environment and climate resilience*]

### *Science and technology*

14. Identify and implement innovative technological solutions based on their specific needs and which are both replicable and sustainable in the long-term. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
15. Implement appropriate solutions at selected watersheds and freshwater basins through targeted water resources conservation measures, wastewater and water reuse, improved land use practices and greater water use efficiency. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
16. Support small-scale, local, rural, peri-urban, and community-based technological solutions for integrated water and wastewater management. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
17. Use marine spatial planning and enhanced political will and capacity-building for the improved management of MPAs, MMAs and terrestrial PAs. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
18. Assess, design, and implement eradication/control measures for invasive alien species. [*Environment and climate resilience*]
19. Foster dialogue between indigenous peoples and scientists to capture long-term, intergenerational observations and analyses of the natural and physical environment and enable the potential co-production of knowledge to address risks and maximise resilience. [*Environment and climate resilience*]

# Annex 1 – Leaving no one behind

## Recommendations (Path to 2030)

### Data Availability

Availability of sex and age-disaggregated data generally remains problematic across the Eastern Caribbean. Most countries do not conduct household surveys regularly, which means limited information is available on several key SDG indicators that are critical for advancing the situation of vulnerable populations.

Recommendations include the need to do the following:

- Improve efforts and sustained funding for integrated risk assessment and disaggregated data collection to better understand systematic risk in the Caribbean region and its impact on achieving the SDGs.
- Harness disaggregated data across different global frameworks and indicators that can be used to compare outcomes and changes over time – among and within countries and households – and to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable populations do not continue to go unnoticed.
- Formulate national population policies based on comprehensive population situation analyses on the interlinkages and understandings of the relationship between demographic variables and the attainment of development imperatives.

### People in Informal Settlements

The following recommendations seek to provide a way forward to continue addressing the ongoing challenges of populations living in informal settlements in the Eastern Caribbean.

- Establish a regional technical cooperation facility to support three main areas: policy, citywide programmes, and capacity development implementation.
- Provide technical support to national governments for the preparation of national policies or strategies for informal settlement upgrading and establish a multi-governance framework to undertake interagency coordination to support the implementation of informal settlement upgrading programmes.
- Support the needs of national governments in implementing informal settlement upgrading programmes, ranging from support for the design of hillside drainage and sanitation systems, to the establishment of community-managed funds, regional databases, guides on building codes, retrofitting infrastructure on hillside informal settlements upgrading, and financing and delivery mechanisms.
- Collect data through national surveys to measure the demographic diversity of informal settlements, disaggregated by sex, age and other key variables.
- Develop a regional guide on how to prepare a national housing strategy and provide support for regional workshops/online fora to share best practices, improve housing sector capacity, and improve information, education, and communication (IEC) programmes to build awareness.
- Equip planners and decision-makers with a better understanding of the relationships among population, poverty, gender inequity and inequality, health, education, the environment, financial resources, and human resources.

## Persons with Disabilities

Recommendations include the need for the following:

- Inclusive evidence and data gathering systems: Strengthen national systems to collect, analyse, disseminate and utilise disaggregated data on persons with disabilities including from the census, through capacity-building, and through the introduction of data collection tools and methods, to inform evidence-based policies and programmes.
- Equality and non-discrimination: Address attitudinal and legal barriers across all sectors that result in discrimination against persons with disabilities. Public awareness-raising on disability inclusion is necessary to counteract stereotypes and misperceptions, as is targeted capacity-building for service providers. This is in an effort to create an enabling environment for genuine CRPD implementation. National legislation and the development of a strategic plan are required to prohibit discrimination against PWDs and to ensure their right to full and equal participation and inclusion in society.
- Service delivery: Mainstream disability in national development policy frameworks and develop/revise relevant policies (population, health, education, ageing) so that they are disability-inclusive and guarantee full access to independent, non-discriminatory, and assisted essential services, goods, and information.
- Accessibility: Strengthen access for women and girls with disabilities to GBV services, and comprehensive SRH rights programmes, services, and information.
- Participation of persons with disabilities: Support increased participation of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in policymaking and UN programming. This can be done through the capacity-building of OPDs and policymakers, and through facilitating engagement between key stakeholders to encourage cross-sectoral partnerships, networking, collaboration, visibility and inclusion in national development and policy-making processes to advance the rights and needs of PWDs.

## LGBTQI Persons

The following recommendations were made by Human Rights Watch<sup>184</sup> to improve the situation of LGBTQI.

- Repeal all laws that criminalise consensual sexual activity among persons of the same sex.
- Pass laws defining the crime of rape in a gender-neutral way so that non-consensual sex between men or between women is included in the definition and subject to equal punishment.
- Consistent with the principle of non-discrimination, ensure that an equal age of consent applies to both same-sex and different-sex sexual activity.
- Pass comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that prohibits discrimination, including on grounds of gender identity and sexual orientation, and includes effective measures to identify, prevent, and respond to such discrimination.
- Introduce and implement a gender recognition procedure in accordance with international standards and good practices to allow people to change their legal gender on all documents through a process of self-declaration that is free of medical procedures or coercion. Such a gender recognition procedure should ensure that changes to documents are made in a way that protects privacy and dignity.
- Enable LGBT people to undergo needs assessments for their health (including mental health) and develop programming to address those needs. Such assessments should be strictly

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<sup>184</sup> Human Rights Watch. 2018. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/03/21/i-have-leave-be-me/discriminatory-laws-against-lgbt-people-eastern-caribbean>

voluntary, provide options for anonymity and other protections for participants' identities, and be conducted in ways that respect the privacy and dignity of LGBT individuals.

- Conduct awareness-raising campaigns for the public, journalists, and public officials, including law enforcement officials and medical professionals, that promote tolerance and respect for diversity, including gender expression, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

### Persons Living with HIV/AIDS

Recommendations include:

- Policies and strategies to reach PLHIV sooner with available services
- Scale-up of effective strategies to ensure early presentation for antenatal care and continuity of treatment for pregnant women living with HIV, including those in poverty and those who are migrants or survivors of gender-based violence
- Increased investments in data generation systems to support data-driven and evidence-based decision-making, programming, and policies
- Countries need stronger strategies to reach all pregnant women living with HIV and their children with services, including HIV and syphilis diagnosis and treatment.
- Differentiated, decentralised and non-discriminatory services are required to expand combined prevention and treatment coverage, especially for young people.
- As external donor support decreases, countries must continue to increase domestic investment and improve service delivery to accelerate progress towards ending AIDS. Innovative financing strategies are needed to ensure the sustained progress, efficacy, and efficiency of HIV-related services.
- Discriminatory laws and policies must be addressed to increase access to health and social welfare support for people most in need.
- Access to comprehensive sexuality education for young people must be ensured to address knowledge, attitudes and practices rendering young people at higher risk for HIV infection.
- Scale-up client-centred and community-based/led HIV interventions to achieve universal health coverage.
- Expand the use of proven methods of active case-finding and linkage to (and retention in) care, including through community-based programmes, the roll-out of comprehensive evidence-based prevention interventions (for example, self-testing, PrEP<sup>185</sup>), and the use of innovative technologies that increase access to testing and treatment for key populations at higher risk for HIV exposure.

### Youth and Children

Recommendations include the following:

- Strategic engagement of youth as both beneficiaries and change-makers, for meaningful participation and inclusion in decisions that impact young people and their communities
- Accelerate poverty reduction among the youth population by increasing access to quality education and lifelong learning, and by fostering the enhanced employability of young people.
- Sustainably engage and partner with young people and their organisations, networks, and movements, through formal and informal mechanisms and platforms to realise universal rights-based youth participation in line with the United Nations 2030 Youth Strategy.
- Fast-track the reduction of teenage pregnancy in line with the CARICOM Regional Strategic Framework to reduce adolescent pregnancy in the Caribbean.

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<sup>185</sup> Pre-exposure prophylaxis

- Enact legislation and develop policy for pregnant learner retention and re-entry into the formal education system.
- Strengthen delivery of age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education in the HFLE curriculum and for out-of-school adolescents and youth.
- Develop inter-sectoral policies to address child labour taking into consideration education, health, and poverty dimensions.
- Enact legislation to ban corporal punishment.

### Elderly and Other Vulnerable Groups

Recommendations include the following:

- Establish social protection floors, including through the expansion of the coverage and level of social protection, in particular non-contributory pension schemes, in order to reach the most vulnerable groups. This will reduce the risk of living in poverty and indigence.
- Amend existing or adopt national policies and strategies and/or action plans on ageing, as well as national development planning and sustainable development and poverty reduction strategies, which include a rights-based approach.
- Disseminate international and regional agreements and standards on the rights of older people at the national level, including to older persons themselves. National policies should also be made available to older persons in accessible and age-friendly formats, in urban, rural, and remote areas.
- Improve and/or strengthen the monitoring and evaluation aspect of responsible bodies for the national policies on ageing and related frameworks, including the implementation of a system with indicators and the collection of disaggregated data by age, gender, migratory status, disability, and any other relevant variable.
- Reinforce existing consultative and participatory mechanisms in national councils/commissions/divisions/ministries leading on issues affecting the well-being of older persons, in order to effectively allow them to participate and contribute to decision-making affecting their lives.
- Promote the universalisation of the right of older persons to health. This should be based on a comprehensive and integrated social and health-care approach in order to respect and promote their autonomy, independence, and dignity.
- Raise awareness on all forms of financial, physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, violence, abandonment, and neglect of the elderly and to break taboos and negative images related to ageing.

### Migrants and Refugees

Recommendations include the following:

- States should adopt an annex to their existing disaster preparedness and emergency response plans to address the contingency of mass migratory flows into the state for refugee-like reasons, and should liaise with emergency preparedness entities in other states and regional organisations to ensure adequate coordination.
- Countries should draft and adopt domestic legislation, implementing in national law the obligations and provisions of the international refugee protection instruments.
- Strengthen cooperation nationally and regionally through the analysis of national data systems, the capacity-building of national stakeholders and the sharing of best practices.
- Develop regional guidelines, and a roadmap for regional cooperation on environmental migration and security issues.

- Enhance data and evidence regarding environmental migration.

## Human Rights

Recommendations include:

- Ratifying additional international human rights instruments and acceding to their optional protocols
- Reforming national legislation to meet human rights standards in line with international treaty instruments and obligations
- Establishing National Human Rights Institutions consistent with the Paris Principles to facilitate the implementation, monitoring and reporting on human rights obligations

## Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Given the unprecedented social and economic impacts of COVID-19, a number of joint UN programmes have been rolled out to promote the empowerment of women, foster gender equality and eliminate sexual and gender-based violence. The programmes build on previous and current efforts by a wide range of government, civil society and UN stakeholders to increase the capacity of regional institutions, women's movements and civil society organisations, increase functional cooperation across the region, inform public policy, support evidence-based prevention programming, and foster greater accountability.

Recommendations include:

- Fast-tracking legislation, policies, and programmes to promote gender equality, women's empowerment, and the elimination of gender-based violence, addressing underlying causes, including patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes, inequality in the family and the neglect or denial of women's rights, agency, and voices
- Strengthening national gender/women's machineries in order to realise the effective implementation, monitoring, and mainstreaming of national, regional, and international commitments on gender equality
- Building capacity with technical assistance to implement gender-responsive national budgets and development plans
- Strengthening economic governance by linking debt reduction, stimulation of growth and the achievement of other macro-economic targets with measures that support women's productive capacities and social protection
- Promoting shared family responsibilities between women and men to increase women's participation in public life
- Enhancing delivery of essential services for GBV survivors in health, social services, justice, and police sectors
- Strengthening data collection and analysis of violence against women and girls for improved programming, monitoring, and reporting on the achievement of SDG 5 and other goals

## Annex 2 – Risks to peace and security

### Recommendations (Path to 2030)

Case backlogs lead to accused individuals spending years on remand without being formally indicted and put on trial which can constitute a denial of human rights and which can contribute to a lack of public confidence and distrust in the judicial system. Countries should therefore develop ICT systems providing secure, electronic case registry and case management systems.

Special attention should be given to women and vulnerable groups who have traditionally been denied access to justice. Addressing the obstacles to women's access to justice is essential to eliminating gender-based violence because access to justice provides legal recourse against sexual harassment and physical harm, unfair labour practices and exploitation.

Youth need training in skills, values, and attitudes to live together in harmony, peacefully and with prosperity. Youth need skills in conflict resolution to promote a recognition, and respect for others and to prevent violence in school settings, communities, and family environments.

Efforts to strengthen evidence-based decision-making to reduce crime and violence levels must be gender responsive, recognising that sexual violence in particular can have multiple levels of impact on youth and their communities and is often the most under-reported type of violence.

Also essential are evidence-based approaches to strengthening the tools for parenting and discipline without violence, while reducing violence in homes and promoting interventions that target risk factors for youth, steering them away from drug involvement and gangs.

For children, it is recommended that governments:

- Prioritise system-based strengthening of their child protection systems
- Fortify the interaction between community-based child protection mechanisms and national child protection systems
- Build and strengthen collaboration between community-based and national systems to represent a holistic, inclusive, sustainable, and well-coordinated way to protect all children while addressing the more specific needs of specific groups of affected children
- Integrate child protection protocols into health, education, justice, and broader social welfare services as children's protection is closely linked to other child welfare services
- Develop the evidence base required for accurate, regular and up-to-date data and information for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of such systems to determine national progress achieved in modernising youth justice and in preventing and responding to all forms of child harm

Where crime prevention measures are less effective in dealing with exogenous factors like illicit flows from transnational organised crime activities, increased sub-regional and international cooperation for improved law enforcement capacity for intervention will drive the region's capacity to respond more effectively to intercept, investigate and prosecute these threats. Likewise, targeted interventions to address how the national and extra-regional factors intersect will also be crucial in strengthening the resilience of communities to crime and violence, while reducing vulnerabilities to illicit flows. These efforts must be based on evidence, requiring dedicated efforts to improve data collection across the sub-region.

## Annex 3 – Risks to sustainable economic growth

### Recommendations (Path to 2030)

Nature-based solutions (NBS) towards green and blue economic diversification and growth must be considered as central to the pathway for transition to economic resilience and sustainability for Caribbean SIDS. To this end:

- A policy and regulatory environment must be created which offers potential for greater private capital investment and innovative financing for sustainable development solutions in different sectors from current and new funding sources.
- Strengthen private sector partnerships and investments and develop fiscal and financial policies and investment programmes geared towards micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to provide further impetus and agility for change.
- Streamline coordination and risk-informed decision-making within and across Ministry divisions/departments and ensure that systemic risks are integrated into the design of new or existing service delivery programmes.
- Recovery policies also need to trigger investment and behavioural changes that will reduce the likelihood of future shocks and increase society's resilience to them when they do occur.

Additional ratifications and implementation of the Escazú Agreement, the first environmental human rights treaty in Latin America and the Caribbean, will promote better governance of natural resources in the region by ensuring access to information, citizen participation, and access to justice in environmental matters.

A greater dependence on export promotion outside of tourism and a greater focus on raising agriculture's contribution to GDP through exports and local consumption are required, including the sustained adoption of the elemental principles of food security as a pillar of economic sustainability and a foundation for healthy lifestyles. Actions towards achieving this should include efforts to:

- Develop and strengthen intraregional trade facilitation and integration, implementing tax incentives for local and regional produce and supporting CSME initiatives, and focusing on closing the logistical gap between islands in the sub-region.
- Design economic policies and recovery packages to facilitate investment opportunities supporting improved production, better marketing infrastructure, and reliable safety nets for vulnerable actors along the value chain.
- Facilitate more and stronger sectoral linkages to support food production and trade programmes to build back better.
- Support the creation and strengthening of farmers' and fisherfolk organisations to build strong value chains and well-established farmer-market links.
- Equip farmers and fisherfolk with the entrepreneurship training and business development services and support needed to be commercially viable and be aware of their role and opportunities within value chains.
- Develop climate risk insurance mechanisms and products tailored to the needs of farming and fishing communities in the Caribbean SIDS context. Lessons learnt from pilot projects can provide the baseline for further development. These projects include the COAST parametric insurance product for fisherfolk in Grenada and St. Lucia to enhance resilience against the impacts of climate-related disasters and external shocks, and the weather-based index insurance for nutmegs in Grenada.
- Design instruments that promote the adoption of digital solutions in agriculture and fisheries (for example, digital marketing and market information tools), climate-resilient technologies

(for example, protected structure cultivation, water harvesting, and renewable energy) and new and emerging tools such as precision agriculture. The use of digital solutions will increase the reliability of and access to risk information, promote efficiency within and across value chains, and help more farmers and fishers establish a digital financial footprint and enhance their ability to access financing. Adoption should be supported through the improved collection and monitoring of and access to updated agricultural and fisheries information tools and systems (statistics and digitalisation of data).

Policy instruments/tools that promote anticipatory action and access to insurance, shock-responsive social protection, forecast-based financing, and others should be developed and promoted. This can include the development of innovative risk transfer instruments such as index-indemnity-based hybrid agriculture insurance products. Early warning, early action systems can also increase the capacities of countries to better prepare for major shocks and hazards.

Successful implementation of the use of ICT for distance learning must take into consideration continuous professional development for instructors on the use of LMS, instructional design for e-learning, and the use of online learning resources. In-country e-learning needs assessments should be conducted to form the basis for dialogue between education and training providers, and public and private enterprises on partnerships for the sustainable financing of e-learning platforms and resources. Adequate financing is important to ensure the continuity of delivery of instruction, and learner/trainee access to e-learning platforms. Hence, partnerships between education and training institutions, and public and private enterprises should be developed as a necessary condition to maintain continuity of access to the LMS and the availability of e-learning resources to strengthen the resilience of the education and training system.

Increase focus on strategies to create higher-value jobs and better-adapted quality education fit for the changing and emerging industries, including access to specialised education programmes emphasising practical skill sets and competencies.

## Annex 4 – Risks to social progress and social cohesion

### Recommendations (Path to 2030)

#### Equitable Access to Quality Education

- Enhanced access to good quality early childhood programmes and services for nurturing care and learning for children 0-5 years
- Enhance collection, analysis and use of data to strengthen sector planning and support relevant decision-making and policy development through strengthened Open Education Management Information Systems (OpenEMIS).
- Support to Ministries of Education to update curricular content, pedagogy, and school infrastructure to facilitate a wider set of student options and delivery of education approaches in keeping with current technology and societal needs and in collaboration with parents.
- Focus on the professional development and capacity-building of teachers so that they could utilise low, medium, and high-tech solutions to assure the continuity of inclusive and quality learning.
- Prioritise skills development to enable employability and entrepreneurship, considering the foreseen economic downturn – preparing for jobs of the future.
- Use recent experiences on potential hazards impacting school access to strengthen emergency preparedness and ensure the development of critical emergency response mechanisms to appropriately respond to the range of challenges.
- Ensure connectivity to every school through the best possible technical solutions available to provide schools with required connectivity, and countries with safe, secure, reliable, fit-for-purpose infrastructure to support future digital development needs. This includes determining the best possible solutions for last mile connectivity.
- Recovery plans and other instruments being designed by national and regional entities, present an opportunity to reiterate the value of education in building resilient societies, and the need for multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder, and regional coordination through mechanisms such as the Caribbean Safe School Initiative.

#### Internet Connectivity

To leverage the opportunities afforded by internet connectivity for e-commerce, economic diversification, trade and market access, learning, digitalisation, big data, real-time monitoring, civic engagement, inter alia, it is recommended that countries:

- Invest in reliable high-speed communication infrastructure in all inhabited islands and navigated waters. This infrastructure should support fixed and mobile telephony and fixed and mobile broadband internet and be available to the public sector, households, individuals, and businesses at affordable prices.
- Ensure reliable, robust, and resilient ICT infrastructure (communication and coordination) that is available during post-disaster recovery processes.
- Enact comprehensive legislative and regulatory frameworks to safeguard the confidentiality of individuals and protect their privacy and other interests.

## Social Protection

Conscious of the role that integrated social protection systems can play, several countries and territories are currently:

- Reforming their social protection systems (for example, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines) and/or are planning to develop a new social protection policy (for example, the British Virgin Islands, St Kitts and Nevis supported by the OECS Commission) to bring more coherence, including common and shared vision, coordination and financing mechanisms
- Investing in the development of core administrative tools such as registries and management information systems to improve key business processes of social protection programmes (identification of beneficiaries, enrolment, and so on)
- Identifying adequate fiscal space to progressively achieve universal social protection
- Investing in making their social protection systems and programmes more adaptive/shock-responsive to better respond to the needs of the most vulnerable, prior to and/or after a disaster
- Creating guidelines in areas including cybersecurity, digital identity, digital inclusion, and global communications infrastructure and promoting good ICT practices for social security institutions

## Annex 5 – Risks to the environment and climate resilience

### Recommendations (Path to 2030)

#### The Climate Crisis

The United Nations should take greater steps to revitalise the climate agenda, including by addressing the need for adequate climate financing amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>186</sup> The UN is called on to assist small states to unlock financing to fight climate change and build resilience. The situation is dire and financial support should be provided in an urgent manner.<sup>187</sup>

Specific approaches highlighted by states include the utilisation of integrated approaches and solutions to address economic drivers in order to build resilience to the impacts of climate change.<sup>188</sup> These approaches may focus on sustainable transportation, renewable energy, and energy efficiency.

Although large capital investments are needed to convert the energy sector from its overreliance on fossil fuels to renewables, there are viable near-term opportunities that can deliver significant impacts. Addressing cooling, which ranges from cold chains for preserving food and medicine as well as thermal comfort in buildings and transportation, should be a priority.<sup>189</sup> A combination of best practice policies, programmes, awareness-raising and capacity-building should be marshalled to change the landscape with respect to cooling strategies in the Eastern Caribbean. One such initiative, the Caribbean Cooling Initiative (part of UNEP's United for Efficiency (U4E) programme), was launched in 2018 in Barbados and St. Lucia and in several other Caribbean nations outside of the OECS.<sup>190</sup>

Eastern Caribbean countries should position themselves to leapfrog to high efficiency lighting in a permanent and sustainable manner, starting with carbon neutral street lighting and expanding to other sectors, including high efficiency LED lighting in commercial and residential sectors. A balanced mix of pull (financial mechanisms, consumer campaigns, demonstration projects) and push market activities (standards and regulatory mechanisms) can achieve a complete permanent transition. Demonstration projects on solar-powered street lighting have primed the markets, for example, in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, and St Kitts and Nevis (if sufficiently publicised) for other sectors (residential and commercial) which can trigger a broader market transformation. To provide carbon neutral street lighting, countries may wish to incentivise renewable energy (that is, solar PV) and utilise policy instruments agreed at the Caribbean regional level, and financial mechanisms that can provide the climate, energy and financial benefits for the Eastern Caribbean.

Electric mobility initiatives, which include addressing the integration of electric vehicles (EVs) with the grid and their convergence as a distributed energy resource for electricity storage and ancillary services could be explored, including technical assistance to promote the integration of renewable energy with smart grids and EVs. Tools and capacity-building should accompany demonstrating solutions for sustainable mobility, in an effort to support the countries in generating green jobs. Barbados rolled out 33 electric buses in its public transport fleet in August 2020<sup>191</sup> and the Prime Minister committed to the government leading in the phasing out of internal combustion engines from

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<sup>186</sup> Address by Prime Minister of Barbados, Hon. Mia Mottley, to the 2020 UN General Assembly

<sup>187</sup> Address by Prime Minister of Dominica, Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit, to the 2020 UN General Assembly

<sup>188</sup> Communication from Ministry of Sustainable Development, Government of St Kitts and Nevis to UNEP, 2 Oct 2020

<sup>189</sup> Excerpt from Barbados's Draft National Cooling Strategy, v.2, March 2020

<sup>190</sup> <https://united4efficiency.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/C-COOL-Concept-Paper-20180403.pdf>

<sup>191</sup> <https://barbadostoday.bb/2020/08/22/33-new-electric-buses-hit-the-road/>

its fleet with the use of hybrids and EVs, even as mechanisms for sector-wide transformation were being deliberated.<sup>192</sup>

## Natural Resources

The Eastern Caribbean needs to focus on addressing critical policy, legislation and capacity gaps to ensure long-term and sustainable management of water and wastewater, including the compilation and implementation of innovative solutions to ensure the sustainable financing and implementation of small scale, local, rural, peri-urban and community-based solutions. Efforts must stimulate and assist countries and communities mainly in rural and peri-urban areas to identify and implement innovative technological solutions based on their specific needs and which are both replicable and sustainable in the long-term.<sup>193</sup> These countries must implement appropriate solutions at selected watersheds and freshwater basins to ensure greater water security for vulnerable rural communities. This will be achieved through targeted water resources conservation measures, wastewater and water reuse, improved land use practices and greater water use efficiency. These interventions will increase the resilience of local communities to the impacts of droughts, and more generally to climate change and variability, on the water sector. Improving water and wastewater management through integrated approaches contributes directly to other socioeconomic concerns such as human health and job creation.

Water infrastructure will also need to adapt to the increased intensity of hurricanes and flooding. Climate change needs to be mainstreamed in water sector policies and management practices. These policies and activities need to be formulated in consideration of the disproportional impacts of climate change on women and children.

Future wastewater projects should support small-scale, local, rural, peri-urban, and community-based technological solutions for integrated water and wastewater management. Previous interventions have tended to focus on large-scale centralised treatment facilities, which require large-scale investment. However, it is the rural communities that are often lagging behind urban regions in terms of wastewater treatment and water resource management.<sup>194</sup>

Marine spatial planning and marine protected areas (MPAs) are among the most effective tools for ocean conservation. Biodiversity conservation in the Eastern Caribbean can be supported through the use of marine spatial planning and enhanced political will and capacity-building for the improved management of MPAs, marine management areas (MMAs) and terrestrial protected areas (PAs).<sup>195</sup>

With the threats from invasive alien species, much-needed support can be provided through the development of National Invasive Species Strategies and Action Plans, the assessment, design, and implementation of eradication/control measures and, the updating of relevant legislation. Implementing effective, operable, transparent and sustainable National Biosafety Frameworks (which cater to national and regional needs, deliver global benefits and are compliant with the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety) is needed to ensure that their biodiversity will be less vulnerable to any potential risks from introduced living modified organisms (LMOs).

## Waste Management

Although there are some successful initiatives that aim to tackle other types of single-use plastics, the recent drive for action by governments largely focuses on plastic bags and, to a certain extent, foamed plastic derivatives. Bans on single-use plastic bags and polystyrene foam products have swept across the region in the last few years. Further, a number of regional and global initiatives have been

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<sup>192</sup> <https://gisbarbados.gov.bb/blog/new-initiative-for-potential-homeowners-coming/>

<sup>193</sup> Excerpts from CReW+ project document

<sup>194</sup> Excerpts from GEF CReW+ project document

<sup>195</sup> Excerpt from UNEP GEF Project: Advancing Conservation in the Eastern Caribbean

developed to address the marine litter problem in the Eastern Caribbean. Addressing marine litter using a circular economy approach is gaining momentum in the region.

The end goal is that the production and consumption of material goods results in minimal environmental impacts and contributes to both the economic and social well-being of dependent human communities as a result. However, the by-products of plastic recycling can be just as harmful or even more harmful than the plastic itself. There is a growing recognition of the need to reduce the production of new plastic. This premise applies to all materials and thus a circular economy approach will seek to retain or recapture the value of the resource multiple times before final disposal through the many iterations, including of repair, refurbishment, remanufacture, and recycling.

Eastern Caribbean countries can consider working jointly to address marine litter by building awareness, advancing initiatives on marine litter (including solid waste management improvements, policy development, data collection and sharing, and monitoring programmes), and sharing ongoing initiatives, policy changes, and action plans with other Caribbean states and the wider global community. One assessment shows that tourists in the Eastern Caribbean countries contributed almost 50,000 tonnes of waste compared to 663,000 tonnes generated by residents, or 7 per cent.<sup>196</sup> It is highly recommended that waste flows and ecosystem carrying capacities be integrated in planning the growth of the tourism sector to ensure that environmental impacts are minimised and public health within the islands is protected for residents and visitors alike.

The global digital revolution is driven by the emergence of frontier technologies ranging from artificial intelligence to the Internet of Things and 5G. Whether rising sea levels, biodiversity loss, water shortages, air quality or food security, these technologies hold great potential for addressing the root causes and already devastating effects of the climate crisis.

## Resilience and Recovery

The significance of culture in the lives of communities and individuals serves as an anchor for identity and belonging. The cultural sector of the Eastern Caribbean emphasises the deep links between its people and their natural and cultural environment. Thus, highly desirable is the integration of the cultural sector into the disaster risk preparedness, response and management strategies and plans at the national and sub-regional levels.

To face challenges accelerated by climate change, indigenous peoples and local communities base their decision-making on their own knowledge systems. These indigenous and local knowledge systems provide long-term, intergenerational observations and analyses of the natural and physical environment. However, these local and knowledge systems are often not taken into consideration when designing climate change adaptation measures. The Paris Agreement specifically calls on governments to mobilise indigenous knowledge for adaptation to climate change. While the environmental transformations caused by climate change are expected to be unprecedented, indigenous, and local knowledge may nonetheless provide a crucial foundation for community-based observations of change and adaptation measures (UNESCO-UNU, 2012). Dialogues between indigenous peoples and scientists enable the potential co-production of knowledge to address risks and maximise resilience.<sup>197</sup>

Coastal ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) also provides tools which contribute to the building of resilience to the impacts of climate change that are cost-effective and relevant for SIDS. Building

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<sup>196</sup> Jambeck, J.R., et al. 2015. Plastic waste inputs from land into the ocean. *Science*, 2015. 347

<sup>197</sup> Mani, G. 2016. Indigenous knowledge and implications for the sustainable development agenda. Paper commissioned for the Global Education Monitoring Report 2016, Education for people and planet: Creating sustainable futures for all <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245623>

community-based capacity in EbA in the Eastern Caribbean will also strengthen this resilience and mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change.

EbA and NBS are increasingly being recognised as legitimate and important mechanisms for DRR, and their inclusion in DRR strategies and national development plans is touted and being applied particularly in the Asia-Pacific – the highest disaster-prone region.<sup>198</sup>

Climate-proof energy systems have great potential in the Eastern Caribbean. Merging mitigation co-benefits into climate change adaptation actions and focusing on NBS to assist countries and cities to design and deploy resilient infrastructure are strategies that are being used to ensure the availability of energy in a post-disaster situation, for instance. Technical assistance projects could be implemented in one or more Eastern Caribbean countries to take these concepts to practice.

Future pandemics can be prevented, and sustainable recovery accelerated in the Eastern Caribbean through the adoption of regional strategies and the strengthening of regional collaboration to help accelerate actions for the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of biodiversity. These countries have undertaken efforts and actions to promote the conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems and biodiversity, and to promote connectivity among ecosystems and people, in particular via the use of women and indigenous peoples. Cooperation among the biodiversity, climate change adaptation, mitigation and disaster reduction practices result in a greater ability to design interventions that deliver multiple benefits which can address the links between biodiversity and zoonotic diseases, climate change and disaster risk reduction. This requires adopting ambitious ecosystem-level targets, including in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the 2050 Vision of living in harmony with nature. Eastern Caribbean countries should also accelerate the transition to a sustainable green recovery, ensuring it has a strong focus on biodiversity and its links with the climate change agenda.

A first step towards this is the Caribbean Resilient Recovery Facility (CRRF), being designed to strengthen recovery, support building back better, and integrate resilience planning in the Caribbean region. The Facility will be a mechanism to provide strategic ex-ante guidance for recovery planning and ex-post capacities in post-disaster recovery, in relation to both economic and development drivers as well as affected populations at the regional, national and community levels. The CRRF would guide, advocate for, and provide solutions to recovery challenges of the Caribbean under the overall leadership of CARICOM, with implementation by CDEMA. The Facility embodies the principles of local ownership, local leadership, and it is fully driven by the region.

Addressing the climate challenge and developing sustainably are not possible without understanding the systemic nature of risk and, thus, the integration of disaster risk into national planning. This is an urgent task for countries to address.

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<sup>198</sup> UNDRR. 2020. Ecosystem-Based Disaster Risk Reduction: Implementing nature-based solutions for resilience. <https://www.undrr.org/publication/ecosystem-based-disaster-risk-reduction-implementing-nature-based-solutions-0>

## Annex 6 – Economic transformation - Opportunities and constraints

### Recommendations

#### Economic transformation

To further the economic potential of the economy in an inclusive and sustainable manner, there will be a need to:

- Build resilience to external shocks that takes a broad and comprehensive view that builds on the traditional disaster risk management agenda and encompasses fiscal risks, financial sector resilience and the preservation of human and natural capital.
- Strengthen collaboration through a coherent sub-regional science, technology, and innovation (STI) strategy or policy to boost research and development, particularly around a new economic model and emergent industries.<sup>199</sup>
- Embed growth in the blue economy to fully leverage the economic potential of the natural assets contained within the oceans.
- Embed growth by strengthening cultural and creative industries and build on the rich Eastern Caribbean cultural heritage.
- Embrace new technologies to reduce the cost and typical dependence on economies of scale.
- Strengthen regional integration: Some of the ways to increase economies of scale are through increasing connectivity between the islands, harmonising regulations, data, and government procedures, and boosting regional cooperation. Joint action is also needed to address transboundary matters such as ocean governance.
- Advance data and knowledge bases to better inform decision-making and improve strategic planning. Data on poverty are significantly outdated as are data on the functioning of the labour market and barriers to entry. An integrated analysis of migration and remittances at the household level is needed to improve understanding of the overall decision-making of households with respect to economic opportunities, migration, and education choices. Data and analytics on tourism should be significantly enhanced. There is a paucity of data on environmental indicators, with only a few examples of systematic data collection and management, such as Antigua and Barbuda’s Environmental Information Management and Advisory System (EIMAS) and the National Environmental Information System (NEIS). Such will be critical for monitoring and accountability with shifts towards more responsible natural resource management and leveraging natural capital for development.
- The rapid introduction and uptake of artificial intelligence (AI) has great potential to address some of the Caribbean’s most pressing development challenges, and support SIDS in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. For example, its introduction into different commercial aspects of tourism – one of the most important economic drivers – can significantly impact the relationship between tourists, destinations and ultimately profitability. Furthermore, AI could be employed to make quality health services more

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<sup>199</sup> UNESCO. 2015. UNESCO Science Report: Towards 2030 p.163  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000235406?posInSet=2&queryId=c477cbfd-c6f8-48ff-bb90-3ee49426d321>

accessible and enhance agricultural productivity, while also contributing to understanding climate change, reducing marine pollution, and contributing to large-scale action for preserving the environment. On the other hand, the increased use of AI systems and technology may have a disruptive effect on the Caribbean labour market, with automation impacting employment. This also poses ethical challenges that require comprehensive policies in Eastern Caribbean SIDS.

## **Annex 7 – Economic transformation – SDG financing landscape**

### **Recommendations**

Policies to support SMEs are warranted. Key supporting measures include understanding the determinants of banks' fees and charges, examining the existence of, and eliminating predatory practices, and reviewing the adequacy of banking sector competition (including the framework for entry). As systems and instruments for sustainable financing are strengthened and as financial inclusion improves with more users entering the market, what would become necessary are measures to reduce information costs (strong credit bureaux), efforts to reduce operational costs (using mobile networks and correspondent banking), and measures to improve the efficiency of courts and collateral recovery systems.

Concessional finance and supporting risk mitigating instruments to pool risk in Caribbean SIDS will be important areas for development for Barbados and the OECS to achieve transformational growth as well as to deliver the 2030 Agenda. To facilitate this for some countries in this sub-region, advances in standards of transparency and the exchange of information will be required to enhance compliance and avoid blacklisting measures that can interrupt international financial flows to this region.

## Annex 8 – Institutional gaps, capacity, and challenges

### Recommendations

The most prevailing and significant institutional gaps that prevent public institutions from delivering fully on the SDGs are those related to social exclusion, job creation, data collection<sup>200</sup> and knowledge management. These are outlined below, along with corresponding opportunities for capacity-strengthening and relevant entry points for SDG acceleration.

*Summary of institutional capacity analysis and potential mitigation strategies*

<b>Institutional Gaps</b>	<b>Institutional Strengths</b>	<b>Proposed Capacity-building Strategies</b>
Outdated or discriminatory laws and policies	Countries in the sub-region are signatories to legally binding human rights treaties and conventions, i.e. the CRC, CEDAW, etc.  Most Constitutions broadly provide for the protection of human rights	Technical support for non-discriminatory legislation and policies  Capacity-building for open data and the strengthening of national statistical offices to facilitate timely data/evidence to inform policy and SDG monitoring
Outdated or discriminatory institutional practices	There are codes that speak to professional behaviour/codes of conduct	Human rights and due diligence training for civil servants  Strategic and rights-based planning and budgeting (including child and gender-responsive budgeting and planning)  Development of non-discriminatory operations manuals
Weak institutional review mechanisms	Existence of Offices of the Ombudsman  Constitutionally appointed Auditors General  Social partnership/tripartite fora exist in Barbados and Grenada that could be replicated	User-producer dialogues to facilitate open data  Multi-stakeholder and inter-generational/ (Leave No One Behind (LNOB) fora  Open budget dialogues
Job creation	Legislation and social dialogue mechanisms exist	Reinforce public employment services and labour market information systems  Support the development/upgrading of formal mechanisms of tripartite social

<sup>200</sup> Limited data collection results in information gaps, which in turn makes it almost impossible to keep track of other social, environmental, or economic variables that could be going well or not.

**Institutional Gaps**

**Institutional Strengths**

**Proposed Capacity-building Strategies**

dialogue as instruments for consensus  
in labour policy

## Annex 9 – Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development

<b>Principle 1: Competence</b>	
<b>Indicative criteria for evaluation:</b>	
<i>Have governments (a) mainstreamed the SDGs in civil service training programmes? (b) in general, made the civil service aware of the SDGs? (c) allocated and expended resources in their budgets for SDG achievement?</i>	
State of affairs positives (+); negatives (-); progress (~)	Reasons for gaps/ Requirements (*)
+Public institutions in the sub-region are staffed by an educated and professional staff.	*The capacities to address social inclusion in particular require not only professional competencies, but individual and institutional acceptance of their role as duty bearers bound to protect and promote human rights principles.
<b>Principle 2: Sound policymaking</b>	
<b>Indicative criteria for evaluation:</b>	
<i>Have governments (a) updated legislation to implement the SDGs? (b) mainstreamed the SDGs in their national development-planning process?</i>	
State of affairs positives (+); negatives (-); progress (~)	Reasons for gaps/ Requirements (*)
~Several governments are in the process of incorporating the 2030 Agenda in their domestic and external political commitments.  +Barbados (2020), Saint Lucia (2019), and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (2020) have expressed their commitment in the High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development.  - Most countries face either delay in passing Bills and/or difficulties in implementing passed legislation.	*Barriers to passing legislation: slow action by legal drafting departments; a lack of resources; ambivalence on how to proceed in relation to existing legislation; other priorities; loss of momentum.  *Difficulties to implementing passed legislation: the lack of physical infrastructure to support implementation; a lack of resources, skills and staff or dedicated personnel; weak

	<p>adaptation of model Bills to local conditions before passing Bills.</p> <p>*Existing legislation and policies are not well disseminated; in some cases, stakeholders have little knowledge of their existence.</p>
<p><b>Principle 3: Collaboration</b></p> <p><b>Indicative criteria for evaluation:</b></p> <p><i>a) Have governments put in place an inter-ministerial coordination mechanism to plan, monitor and implement the SDGs? (b) How have SDGs been integrated into the work of various ministries? (c) What arrangements are in place to dialogue with non-state partners, including the civil society and the private sector, on the SDGs? (d) Where the social partnership/tripartite mechanisms are in place (for example, Barbados and Grenada), have these been used as platforms to discuss the SDGs?</i></p>	
<p><b>State of affairs</b></p> <p><b>positives (+); negatives (-); progress (~)</b></p>	<p><b>Reasons for gaps/ Requirements (*)</b></p>
<p>-Barbados and the OECS have big data collection gaps that hinder effective and evidence-based policy-making and inter-institutional coordination.</p> <p>-Integration of labour market and social protection policy tools is limited or non-existent.</p> <p>-Contributory or non-contributory mechanisms linked to the social protection sphere do not encompass labour market reintegration measures including access to training.</p> <p>-Even when data are publicly available, actual analysis aimed at the identification of trends and gaps (for example, skills gaps, profile of the labour force, profile of social assistance beneficiaries) is based, at best, on low frequency studies. As a result, inclusion of the findings into policy and programme design is partial and can be an object of additional investment.</p>	<p>*Most countries do not measure or report enough SDG indicator changes to estimate an overall evolution on their SDG progress.<sup>201</sup></p> <p>*The organised flow and offer of services to beneficiaries across different government entities is limited by weak coordination and hindered by fundamental obstacles in data sharing.</p>

<sup>201</sup> The Sustainable Development Report from the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) is unable to estimate the evolution on SDG progress for most OECS countries <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/profiles>.

**Principle 4: Integrity**

**Indicative criteria for evaluation:**

*(a) Have governments instituted anti-corruption policies and are these aligned to the SDGs? (b) Have codes of conduct for civil servants been upgraded to align with the SDGs?*

<p align="center"><b>State of affairs</b> <b>positives (+); negatives (-); progress (~)</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Reasons for gaps/ Requirements (*)</b></p>
<p>+ Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, and St. Lucia have ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption.</p> <p>-Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Vincent and the Grenadines are among the few countries worldwide not to have ratified this Convention.</p> <p>+All Eastern Caribbean countries have ratified the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (IACAC).</p> <p>+ -With the exception of Barbados, the Member States of the OECS are also Party to the Review Mechanism (MESICIC) of the IACAC.</p> <p>+ Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, have strengthened their anti-corruption frameworks in recent years. This has been done through the passage of legislation and the establishment of Integrity Commissions or oversight bodies that aim to strengthen approaches to prevent, identify and combat corruption, particularly in the public sector and that seek to regulate the conduct of officials in public life.</p>	<p>*Increased efforts are needed in some states to pass legislation that has been stalled for several years.</p> <p>*Independence and funding are needed for the effective implementation of laws and policies.</p> <p>*Improved data collection to measure the occurrence rates of corrupt acts, like bribery, are needed to improve evidence-based decision-making across the sub-region.</p> <p>*These oversight bodies/Commissions are often plagued by a lack of financial and human resources, and in some cases, they lack the independence and/or authority to effectively impose sanctions or actions against public officials suspected of acting in unlawful ways.</p>

**Principle 5: Transparency**

**Indicative criteria for evaluation:**

*(a) Do governments have Freedom of Information Acts? If not, are there plans to enact these? (c) Are National Statistical Offices autonomous and able to produce, analyse and disseminate data openly? What are the mechanisms to enhance open government data?*

<p align="center"><b>State of affairs</b></p> <p align="center"><b>positives (+); negatives (-); progress (~)</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Reasons for gaps/ Requirements (*)</b></p>
<p>+ (Only) Antigua and Barbuda has passed and promulgated a Freedom of Information Act and subsequently implemented an Office of the Commissioner of Information under this Act, in an effort to promote the participation of civil society in the prevention of corruption.</p> <p>NB This Act, nevertheless, allows the responsible Minister to exclude public officials from the application of the Act, an aspect which has been recommended for amendment to disallow these exclusions.</p> <p>~ St. Vincent and the Grenadines passed legislation in 2003, but to date, the Act has not been promulgated.</p> <p>~ Barbados, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Lucia, all have presented Bills for freedom of information legislation, but none have been signed into law.</p> <p>+ Between 2002 and 2012, all Eastern Caribbean states conducted a Country Poverty Assessment (CPA) which provides data on poverty and standards of living, and some conducted the MICS, with a focus on children and other MDGs.</p> <p>- Whereas a new round of CPA and MICS started, the survey data collection activities have been significantly impacted and delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>- Statistical information on the performance of duties and powers by the various oversight bodies, agencies, or departments, insofar as it relates to the oversight, investigation or prosecution of corruption is often limited.</p> <p>- Eastern Caribbean SIDS are among the most data-deprived countries. The World Bank statistical capacity indicator, an aggregated measure of a country's statistical system, indicates</p>	<p>* Antigua and Barbuda: It is necessary for increased human, financial and technological resources to be provided to the Office of the Commissioner of Information to allow for the effective implementation of its functions under the Freedom of Information Act.<sup>205</sup></p> <p>* States should take further action to ensure the entry into force of important pieces of legislation that contribute to the fight to improve transparency and reduce corruption in the public sector.</p> <p>- Systematically collecting and analysing the data is a challenge due to limited human resource capacities and budget allocations to National Statistics Offices (NSOs). This often results in a limited focus on a few specific indicators, therefore leaving significant gaps at household and population levels for social development indicators.</p> <p>- There is a lack of systematic standardisation, uniform formatting and timely reporting of administrative data across departments. Data are often collected and managed in an unsystematic manner and using different tools and methodologies, making data sharing, comparisons, and trend analysis difficult.</p>

<sup>205</sup> Review Mechanism of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, Antigua and Barbuda, 2015, [http://www.oas.org/juridico/PDFs/mesicic4\\_atg\\_en\\_final.pdf](http://www.oas.org/juridico/PDFs/mesicic4_atg_en_final.pdf)

<p>a generally low score of 52 points on average for the Eastern Caribbean SIDS on a scale of 0 to 100.<sup>202</sup> Strengthening the statistical score in the Eastern Caribbean requires addressing the data availability for child malnutrition, HIV/AIDS, poverty, and some education and gender data among others. The source data is also lagging due to the absence of a recent social/health (Demographic Health Survey, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey) and poverty survey (Survey of Living Conditions).</p> <p>- An assessment of data availability on SDG indicators among CARICOM states revealed that only 49 per cent of core Caribbean indicators are available and produced by the NSOs.<sup>203 204</sup></p> <p>N.B. While the NSOs are the principal data collection, processing and dissemination agency responsible for coordinating, monitoring and supervising the national statistical system, the other ministries and departments also produce useful statistics and have custody of administrative data that can contribute to national development planning and help monitor the SDGs.</p>	<p>- Sometimes data collection is project-driven and not integrated into national data and information management systems which would facilitate the sharing and accessing of data. Eastern Caribbean countries require continuous efforts to integrate administrative data into the existing statistical system, expand human capacities, strengthen technical skills, and significantly increase the capital investments to collect, analyse and disseminate data.</p>
<p><b>Principle 7: Leaving no one behind</b></p> <p><b>Indicative criteria for evaluation:</b></p> <p><i>(a) What are the current policies for promoting social equity and how are they being implemented? (b) What measures are in place to collect, manage, and use data in disaggregated formats in order to properly identify and address the needs of the furthest left behind? (c) What measures are in place to track and monitor the implementation of social development policies?</i></p>	
<p><b>State of affairs</b></p> <p><b>positives (+); negatives (-); progress (~)</b></p>	<p><b>Reasons for gaps/ Requirements (*)</b></p>
<p>+The Eastern Caribbean countries have developed policies aimed at improving the well-being and quality of life of its citizens. The OECS Commission collaborates with its Member States along with international agencies such as USAID and UNICEF to review, design or redesign laws</p>	<p>*Timely data on labour market performance are scarce. Systematic analysis of labour demand and the ensuing formulation/creation of training offers (currently based mostly on qualitative information rather than on a precise</p>

<sup>202</sup> The score is just below the level of the lowest income countries (60) and 19 points lower than the average for LAC countries.

<sup>203</sup> CARICOM, CARICOM Core Indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals: Assessment of Data Availability in Member States and Associate Members, 2018.

<sup>204</sup> UNICEF, Data availability on child-related SDG indicators in the Eastern Caribbean, 2018.

<p>on aspects including social protection, social safety net programmes, child abuse, juvenile justice, domestic violence and the protection of the most vulnerable groups.</p> <p>+The Statistical Services Unit of the OECS, through the Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics, leads a 13-year plan to design, strengthen and sustain the statistical infrastructure in each Member State in coordination with the NSOs. This is in order to produce useful information for targeted policies and programmes.</p> <p>+The OECS Commission works in collaboration with the CDB to implement the Country Poverty Assessments Programme which supports countries to collect information about living conditions, household spending patterns, government programmes and policies, with different demographic and socioeconomic conditions.<sup>206</sup></p> <p>- Quarterly labour force surveys are produced in only three countries (Barbados, Grenada, and St Lucia) and the COVID-19 crisis triggered a number of unanswered challenges to sound data collection at the household level. More than this, the utilisation of data for policymaking could be vastly improved. The targeting of public programmes to the labour market situation and, specifically, to the identification of vulnerable groups or sub-groups is quasi-non-existent.</p> <p>-There are delays in passing and implementing legislative and institutional reforms.</p> <p>-There is an absence of data on vulnerable groups, including migrants, children, people with disabilities, and “invisible” people, including missing children.</p> <p>-Data that are available are not real-time and, in many cases, outdated, making it difficult to analyse, and monitor the changes or progress over time.</p> <p>-There is a lack of comparable data across countries.</p>	<p>analysis of trends) is also wanting. More generally, the monitoring and evaluation of labour market policies is virtually non-existent.</p> <p>*There is limited coordination of effort across ministries, agencies, and sectors to maximise data collection, and to collect and use data in a harmonised manner on an agreed-upon set of regional indicators.</p> <p>*In Barbados and the OECS, SDG data are lacking primarily due to limited human capacities and budget allocations at NSOs and ministries, which has been a continuing bottleneck for effective monitoring and planning for SDGs. Strengthening data systems and the monitoring of child and human rights should be a priority in the sub-region.</p>
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<sup>206</sup> <https://www.oecs.org/our-work/economic-affairs/statistics>

**Principle 8: Non-discrimination**

**Indicative criteria for evaluation:**

*(a) What policies are in place to promote public service work force diversity (age, sex, ethnicity/race, sexual orientation, disability status) and at various levels/grades of the public service? (b) What are the existing policies to deliver services equitably and to take into account the needs of vulnerable groups? (c) Have governments introduced gender-responsive budgeting?*

<p align="center"><b>State of affairs</b></p> <p><b>positives (+); negatives (-); progress (~)</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Reasons for gaps/ Requirements (*)</b></p>
<p>+Most Eastern Caribbean countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and some have implemented programmes and policies aimed at mitigating the vulnerability of people with disabilities. Antigua and Barbuda, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, for example, have implemented programmes to provide assistive devices. Further, Barbados has programmes in education, employment, health care and financial support. Countries such as Grenada and St Vincent and the Grenadines have included protection measures in employment laws, while St. Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines specifically address education for children with disabilities in their education policy.<sup>207</sup></p> <p>+Various Eastern Caribbean countries have legislative measures to protect women in the labour market. In Grenada and St. Lucia, for example, the law mandates equal remuneration to women, as well as prohibits discrimination in employment based on gender. Barbados and St. Lucia have legislation on sexual harassment in employment.<sup>208</sup></p> <p>+All Caribbean countries have enacted some type of legislation against domestic violence, to protect and provide care services to victims, and to provide educational programmes to mitigate domestic violence. Antigua and Barbuda and St. Kitts and Nevis have national plans against domestic violence. There are little or no sex-disaggregated data; in that context, the Canada and UK-funded EnGenDER project is seeking to address data gaps related to gender inequality.</p>	

<sup>207</sup> UNDP, Caribbean Human Development Report, 2016 and ECLAC, Disability, human rights, and public policy in the Caribbean, 2017

<sup>208</sup> World Bank, Women, Business, and the Law. <https://wbl.worldbank.org/>