

**Progress in implementation of
the SAMOA Pathway:
Caribbean Regional Synthesis
Report**

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Acronyms/Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island Developing States
BPoA	Barbados Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of SIDS
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARIFORUM	Caribbean Forum
CARILEC	Caribbean Utilities Services Cooperation
CARPHA	Caribbean Public Health Agency
CBT	Community Based Tourism
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CCCCC	Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre
CCH IV	Caribbean Cooperation in Health Phase IV
CCREEE	Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency
CCRIF SPC	Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility – Segregated Portfolio Company
CDCC	Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee
CDEMA	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CEP	Caribbean Environment Programme
CIMH	Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology
COAST	Caribbean Ocean and Aquatic Sustainability Facility
COP	Conference of Parties
COTED	Council for Trade and Economic Development
CFR	Caribbean Resilience Fund
CROSQ	CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality
CSTPDF	Caribbean Sustainable Tourism Policy and Development Framework
CTO	Caribbean Tourism Organization
DALA	Damage and Loss Assessment
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DFI	Direct Foreign Investment
DRFI	Disaster Risk Financing and Insurance
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EIS	Energy Information System
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization

GBV	Gender Based Violence
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFDRR	Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery
GPNM	Global Partnership on Nutrient Management
HFC	Hydrofluorocarbons
ICCAT	International Commission for Atlantic Tuna
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ICU	Intensive Care Unit
IFI	International Financial Institution
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMPACS	Implementation Agency for Crime and Security
IRRP	Integrated Resource and Resilience Plans
IRP	Integrated Resource Plans
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
LBS	Land Based Sources of Pollution
LDC	Least Developed Country
LMO	Liability Management Operations
MSI	Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of SIDS
MVI	Multi-dimensional vulnerability index
NCD	Non-Communicable Diseases
NOO	National Ozone Officer
NSS	National Statistical System
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
PAHO	Pan American Health Institute
R&D	Research and Development
RSAP	Regional Strategic Action Plan
SAMOA	SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action
SCP	Sustainable Consumption and Production
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPAW	Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife
STI	Science Technology and Innovation
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TVET	Technical and Vocational Educational and Training

UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UN-OHRLLS	United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
UNSD	United Nations Statistical Division
UWI	University of the West Indies
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

I. Introduction

This report has been prepared by the Economic Commission for the Latin America and the Caribbean's (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, on behalf of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in support of the Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States, taking place in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 8 -10 August 2023.

The Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States as called for by resolution 76/203 will take place in Antigua and Barbuda in 2024. To identify and develop input for the conference, resolution 77/245 calls for the convening in 2023 of regional preparatory meetings in each of the three regions of small island developing States (SIDS), as well as an interregional preparatory meeting for all SIDS.

The Caribbean preparatory meeting is expected, among other things, to assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps and challenges in the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. Such an assessment will assist Caribbean SIDS identify new and emerging priorities, and opportunities towards advancing their sustainable development agenda which will be articulated through the outcome document of the Caribbean preparatory meeting.

This report seeks to assess the status of implementation of the SAMOA Pathway by Caribbean SIDS between 2014 – 2023, outline any challenges and emerging issues faced by Caribbean SIDS during that period and identify new and emerging priorities.

The report is structured as follows:

- Sections I – III outline the purpose of the report, provides an overview of the Caribbean subregion, and the SIDS development process.
- Section IV presents the findings and analysis of the SAMOA pathway priorities as defined through clusters and organized under five thematic areas, using the quantitative and qualitative approach designed to assess SAMOA Pathway implementation.

- Section V discusses issues related to the monitoring and evaluation of the SAMOA Pathway.
- Section VI outlines approaches through which identified gaps and challenges could be successfully addressed.
- Section VII defines emerging issues that could impact Caribbean SIDS moving forward.
- Section VIII identifies potential priorities to be considered in preparation for the Fourth International Conference on SIDS.

II. Caribbean Region Overview

The Caribbean subregion encompasses the insular Caribbean - represented by three distinct groups of islands: the Bahamas, the Greater Antilles¹, and the Lesser Antilles – as well as the countries of Guyana and Suriname in South America and Belize in Central America. These countries exhibit substantial variation in physical size, with Cuba being the largest island and Montserrat being one of the smallest (Heileman, 2007). In total the Caribbean subregion encompasses 29² small island developing and low-lying States – of which 16 are independent nations. The total population of the Caribbean subregion was estimated in 2022 to be 44.3 million with the most populous countries being the islands of the Greater Antilles.³ The subregion’s history has resulted in a rich and diverse heritage, with a population of African, East Indian, European, Chinese, and indigenous descent - a key contributing factor in its rich diversity of culture. The main languages spoken in the Caribbean, English, French, Dutch, and Spanish reflect the colonial past of the subregion.

Caribbean SIDS are dependent on the ecosystem goods and services of the natural environment. The main economic sectors include tourism, agriculture, light manufacturing, and mineral extraction. Caribbean SIDS - due to their size and geographical location - are characterized by fragile natural environments; fresh-water scarcity; exposure to natural disasters (earthquakes and volcanic eruptions); and threats associated with the effects of climate change (higher intensity hurricanes, floods, landslides, and droughts) (ECLAC, 2022a). More recently the region has been inundated by massive influxes of Sargassum blooms which have negatively impacted coastal communities and economies. Together, these threats exacerbate vulnerabilities of Caribbean SIDS and can impact negatively on the subregion’s ability to advance its development agenda (Climate Studies Group Mona (Eds.), 2020).

The economies of Caribbean SIDS are considered vulnerable, as many of these island States have a narrow resource base, limited economic diversification, and high transportation costs (Gomes and Chase

¹ The islands of the Greater Antilles include Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico.

² According to the United Nations, the list of Caribbean small island developing States include: Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Curacao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Montserrat, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Martin, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos and Unites States Virgin Islands.

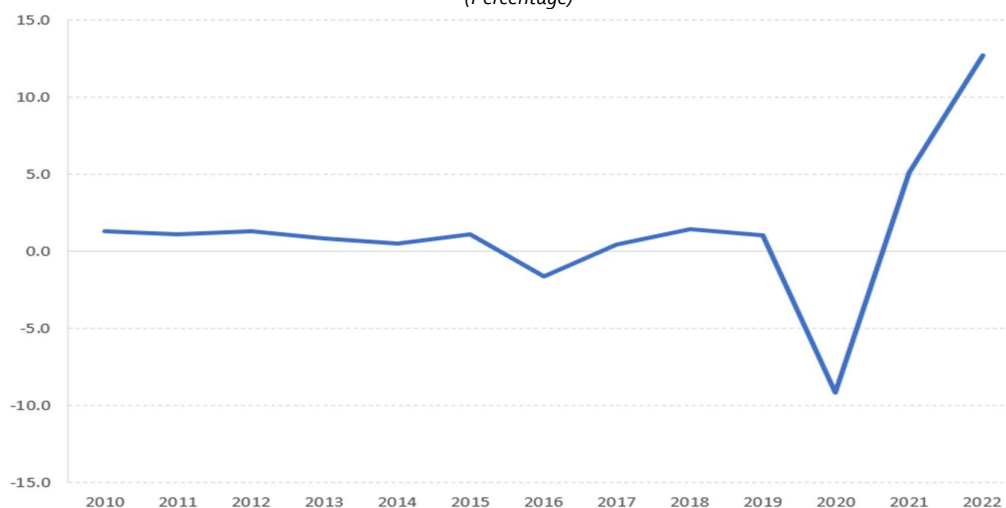
³ World Bank data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=ZJ>

2014). Further, since the 2008-2009 global financial crisis, Caribbean SIDS have been experiencing low productivity, high debt, rising inequality, high unemployment, and limited institutional capacity to address developmental challenges (UN, 2021). The classification of many Caribbean SIDS as high or middle-income countries has greatly limited the ability of the countries to access bilateral and multilateral loans, and other sources of concessional funding (ECLAC, 2018, 2022a). Annual economic growth between 2010 to 2019 averaged 0.75 per cent per year.⁴

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 presented significant socio-economic challenges to the Caribbean subregion. The measures taken to contain and retard the spread of the virus, such as border closures and lockdowns, which were widely implemented in the Caribbean, had severe adverse effects on the productive industries of the respective countries, particularly the tourism dependent economies. Governments already shouldering heavy debt service obligations struggled to strike a balance between implementing these measures and preventing economic collapse, in the face of already fragile healthcare systems and social safety nets stretched beyond capacity. The tourism sector, the principal driver of economic growth for most Caribbean countries, drew to a near complete halt, severely impacting those in the industry through loss of income, particularly those in the informal economy who lacked unemployment and other social welfare support. The socio-economic dislocation forced governments to prioritize the restoration of economic activity over a collective effort at strategic planning for the provision of healthcare across the subregion (Resiere and others, 2021). There were also significant impacts on education across the Caribbean, the closure of schools in favour of virtual classrooms exposing the inequalities in access to broadband services and computer equipment across socio-economic groups, putting the education of children in underserved and poor communities at severe disadvantage.

With the slowdown in economic activity in 2020, the subregion experienced an economic contraction of 13.1 per cent, on average⁵ (Figure 1). With the gradual reopening of the global economy in 2021 and the slow easing of pandemic restrictions, average growth of 5.1 per cent and 12.7 per cent was reported for 2021 and 2022 respectively.

Figure 1
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth across the Caribbean
(Percentage)



Source : Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), based on official data.

Too many Caribbean SIDS face the debilitating challenge of high debt-to-GDP ratios. The debt-to-GDP ratio for the period 2010–2019 averaged 67.6 percent of GDP. While there was a slight downward

⁴ The averages in this paragraph and the next refer to the English and Dutch speaking independent member states of Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

⁵ The exception was Guyana, which experienced expansive growth owing to the introduction of oil production.

trend in that period, any gains that the subregion may have achieved were reversed with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic when many Caribbean governments were forced to increase public borrowing to support severely affected vulnerable groups during the pandemic. This was evident in 2020 when the subregion's average debt-to-GDP ratio rose by more than 20 percentage points to 87.3 per cent. This number fell slightly to 82.6 per cent in 2021 with the uptick in economic activity across the subregion. Frequent natural disasters across the Caribbean have negatively impacted on public debt to GDP ratios, through the reduction in government revenue and the reallocation of resources to disaster preparedness and reconstruction. The persistently high debt-to-GDP ratios experienced by Caribbean SIDS results in high debt service costs, limited fiscal space for investment in sustainable development, and increased financing costs in capital markets.

From a social perspective, the Caribbean subregion is grappling with high poverty levels and inequality, rising levels of crime and violence, high youth unemployment and increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The Caribbean subregion has struggled for years with high levels of unemployment particularly among women and youth. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic about a quarter of Caribbean youth were unemployed, a rate three times higher than that of adults with the unemployment rate highest among 15–19-year-olds, and closely followed by those 20–24 year-olds (ECLAC, 2022b). A study by the Inter-American Development Bank prior to the pandemic identifies the Caribbean as having one of the highest rates of violence in the world, with gender-based violence being perceived as a threat to social security (Sutton and Ruprah, 2017, ECLAC 2018a). Such issues were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (ECLAC 2020, 2022a).

III. The SIDS Sustainable Development Process: From Barbados to SAMOA

The international community for the first time recognized SIDS as “*a special case for both environment and development*”, acknowledging that they are “*ecologically fragile and vulnerable*” during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (United Nations, 1992). Indeed, Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development adopted at that landmark forum provided the basis for the convening of the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (ECLAC, 2003).

The Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS held in Bridgetown, Barbados in 1994, provided an opportunity for the global community to focus on the environmental and developmental challenges faced by SIDS and identify solutions to address them. Griffith (1995) describes the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS as part of a broader process by which SIDS sought “*to articulate their special concerns and vulnerabilities to redefine their relationships in international environment-development negotiations.*”

The Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (BPoA) defined principles and strategies to support the sustainable development of SIDS (ECLAC, 2003). The BPoA comprises of fourteen priority areas with prescribed specific actions to support SIDS in achieving sustainable development. The BPoA, seen as a significant global achievement for SIDS at that time, was a successful attempt by a group of marginalized states to define their problems, highlight their special characteristics and devise a specific programme of action towards their sustainable development (Ashe and Griffith 1994).

Despite this achievement and the effort of Caribbean SIDS to advance the implementation of the BPoA priority actions, a review of the subregion’s efforts at implementing the BPoA noted that – “*notwithstanding the solid foundation that the Caribbean SIDS have acquired, both as individual countries and as a subregion, in the area of sustainable development approaches since the adoption of the SIDS POA, the SIDS of the Caribbean have seen their efforts frustrated by, inter alia, the non-materialization of adequate, predictable, new and additional financial resources; the deficit in institutional capacity; the absence of the explicit integration of sustainable development approaches into national planning; and the inability to stimulate sustained broad based public participation*” (ECLAC, 2003).

Ten years after the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS, the International Meeting to Review Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was held in Port Louis, Mauritius in 2005, in the wake of the most devastating tsunami in history on 26 December 2004, causing widespread devastation and loss of over 230,000 lives across fourteen countries, many of these SIDS in the Indian Ocean. This catastrophic event punctuated as never before the high vulnerability of small island and coastal states to exogenous shocks, especially natural disasters.

The Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (MSI) adopted by the meeting built on the 14 thematic areas of the BPoA, while adding issues critical to the viability of SIDS including trade, sustainable production and consumption, health, knowledge management, and culture (MSI, 2005). A survey administered by ECLAC in 2010 as part of the midterm review of the MSI noted that 60 per cent of respondents indicated that at least 10 priority actions had been incorporated into their national development plans (Gomes and Chase 2014). The 2014 assessment of the implementation of the MSI in the Caribbean region noted substantial progress in policy formulation, the development of comprehensive and integrated plans and strategies and changes in perception of the role the environment plays in sustainable development (Gomes and Chase, 2014). Despite these advancements, overall implementation of the MSI had been slow - hindered by limited technical, financing and human resources and a number of exogenous factors (Gomes and Chase 2014).

The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in 2014 in Apia, Samoa, saw the adoption of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway which recognized the need for continued support and investments to SIDS to achieve sustainable development. Attention was therefore given to increased cooperation through partnership, and to strategies for advancing implementation of the SIDS agenda. The SAMOA Pathway acknowledges the adverse impacts of climate change and sea-level rise on SIDS's efforts to achieve economic development, food security, disaster risk reduction and ocean management, among other challenges.⁶

Important to keep in mind on this brief historical review is that the year following the adoption of the SAMOA Pathway, Member States of the United Nations in 2015 adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁷ The agenda articulated a "*transformative vision towards economic, social and environmental sustainability*".⁸ It was expected that the SDGs would support the implementation of the SIDS agenda - and in some instances this was indeed the case. However, it has been argued compellingly that the overwhelming attention and support given to implementation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs by the international community, including all SIDS, as well as the absence of indicators and a mechanism for monitoring progress on SAMOA Pathway implementation, resulted in slower than anticipated progress with the SAMOA Pathway.

⁶ OHRLLS About the SAMOA Pathway <https://www.un.org/ohrls/content/samoa-pathway>

⁷ Resolution 70/1 <https://documentsddsny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/291/89/PDF/N1529189.pdf?OpenElement>

⁸ ECLAC, 2023 About the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development <https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/2030-agenda-sustainable-development/about-2030-agenda-sustainable-development>

IV. Findings and Analysis

The analysis of SAMOA Pathway progress in Caribbean SIDS is presented below. An analysis of the quantitative indicators outlined under the Monitoring Framework is first undertaken. This is followed by an analysis of the qualitative (policy) indicators of specific clusters under each of the five themes. Given the unavailability of some policy data, it was not possible to comprehensively assess each SAMOA Pathway cluster. The review concluded that while progress in implementation of the SAMOA Pathway within the Caribbean was recorded, increased commitment from Caribbean SIDS, as well as resources and support from the international community are needed to ensure more meaningful and sustained impact.

A. Methodology and Limitations

The findings and analysis presented in this section of the report have been undertaken in accordance with the SAMOA Pathway Monitoring Framework⁹, designed specifically to effect both quantitative and qualitative (policy) assessments. The monitoring framework comprises indicators drawn selectively from those of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, and the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. These were chosen specifically for their commonality in identifying progress on priority objectives articulated in the 30 SAMOA Pathway clusters.

Data used as part of the quantitative analysis were sourced from the Global SDG Indicator Database maintained by the Statistics Division of DESA and Sendai Framework Monitor maintained by United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. To accomplish the comprehensive quantitative analysis, the

⁹ See Annex A and B of SAMOA Pathway Monitoring Framework https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/Final_Report_DevelopmentofFrameworkformonitoring_SAMOA_Pathway.pdf

status of progress in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway was classified in the following five categories based on the average annual growth rate of the subregion:

- a) Category 1 (progressing): the rate is greater than 0.5 per cent in the desirable direction;
- b) Category 2 (stagnant): the rate is less than 0.5 per cent;
- c) Category 3 (regressing): the rate is greater than 0.5 per cent in the undesirable direction;
- d) Category 4 (insufficient data): insufficient data to make an assessment;
- e) Category 5 (no data): no data or desirable direction available.¹⁰

It should be noted that many data gaps were found. Consequently, for many clusters it was not possible to adequately assess the true performance of the indicator within the SAMOA Pathway timeframe.

To guide the assessment of qualitative (policy) indicators, contributions were received on the status of SAMOA Pathway priority actions from ten United Nations agencies and five regional and international organizations. Information obtained through desktop review was also used as part of the assessment.

In the absence of national reports on the status of SAMOA Pathway implementation, a survey was developed and administered to government officials in 27 Caribbean SIDS (16 Member States and 11 Associate Member Countries). The survey which comprised both open and close ended questions sought to identify gaps and challenges faced since the adoption of the SAMOA Pathway which may have hindered implementation of the SIDS agenda. It also sought to identify opportunities for redress. Responses were received from 19 Caribbean SIDS (15 Member States and 4 Associate Member Countries).¹¹ These have been incorporated into the ensuing sections of this report. Literature reviews of substantive research papers were also used to supplement the content of the report.

B. Quantitative Analysis of SAMOA Pathway progress

The Caribbean has shown mixed results where progress as a subregion in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway is concerned. Given the limited data for assessment at the country level, available information showed that the Caribbean had made the most progress in thematic area 5, on fostering partnership. While appreciable progress was recorded in specific clusters in other thematic areas, it was not enough to establish overarching progress in the implementation of the respective themes (see Figure 2).

For thematic area 1, *Promote sustained and sustainable inclusive and equitable economic growth with decent work for all, suitable consumption and production and sustainable transport*, only in the cluster entitled "sustained and sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth with decent work for all" did some 20 per cent of countries of the subregion make progress. Just over 16 per cent of countries made progress in the education cluster and almost 7 per cent recorded progress in the tourism cluster. Given the critical role that tourism plays in the economy of most Caribbean countries, it is noteworthy that the number of countries that regressed in the tourism cluster was twice the number that made progress, signaling an undesirable trend in the tourism sector with negative growth implications for national economies.

In thematic area 2, *Act to mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts by implementing sustainable energy and disaster risk reduction programs*, only in one of the three clusters (sustainable energy) did more than a third (36.1%) of countries make progress with another 18.7 per cent stagnating, accounting for more than half of Caribbean countries making progress or maintaining their baseline status in the area of sustainable energy.

¹⁰ For more detailed information on the methodology used for the quantitative assessment, please refer to Annex 1.

¹¹ Responses to the questionnaire were received from the following States and Territories: Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Curacao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

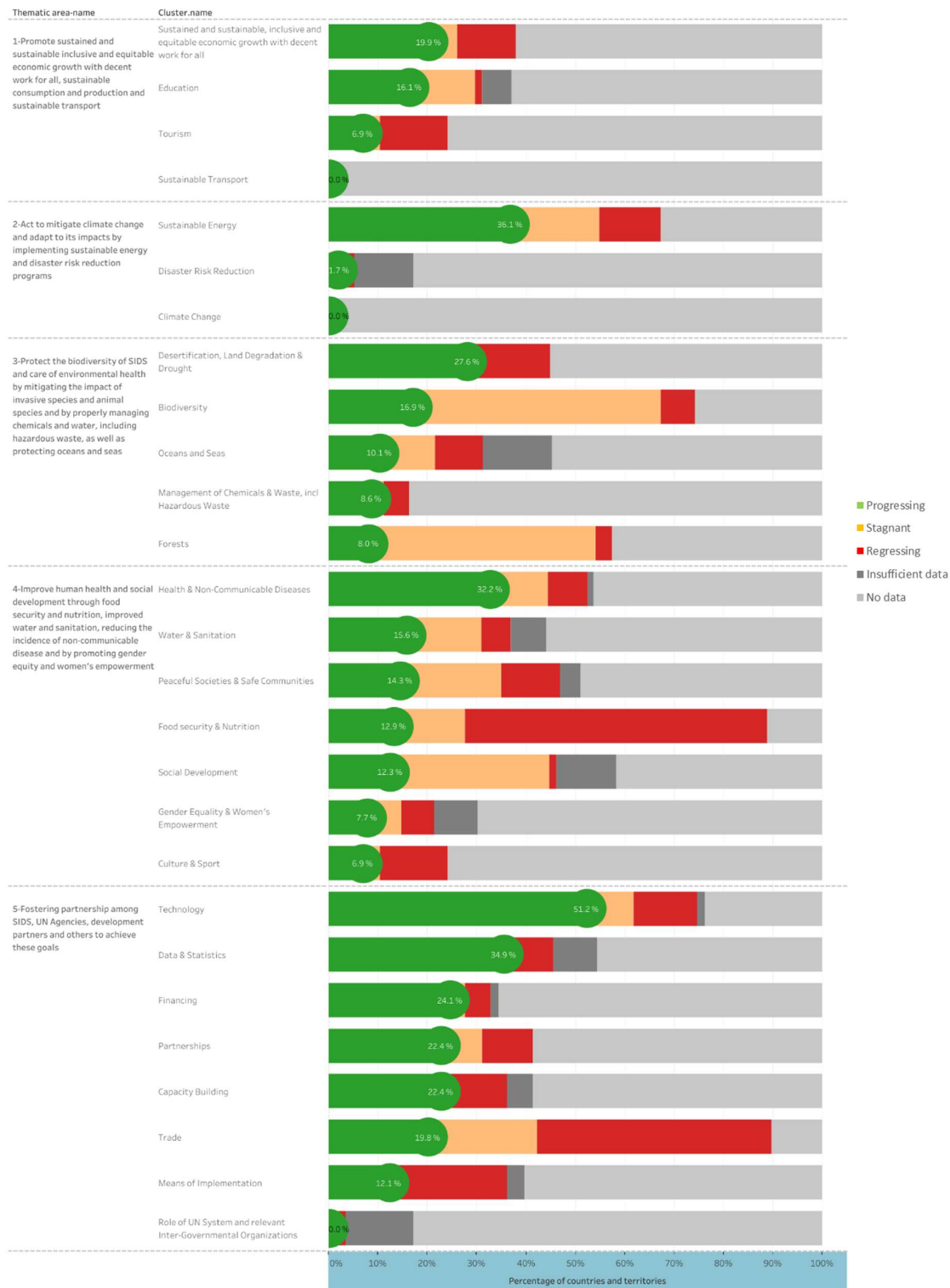
Similarly, in thematic area 3, *Protect the biodiversity of SIDS and care of environmental health by mitigating the impact of invasive species and animal species and by properly managing chemicals and water, including hazardous waste, as well as protecting oceans and seas*, only in the desertification, land degradation and drought cluster did just above a quarter (27.6%) of countries record progress. At the same time, more than 17 per cent of countries regressed in this cluster. Less than 20 per cent of countries recorded progress on the remaining four clusters in the thematic area. Notably, half of the countries (50.4%) stagnated on biodiversity compared with 16.9 per cent that made progress and 46 per cent of countries stagnated on forests compared with 8 per cent that made progress. Comparable proportions of Caribbean countries made progress (10.1%), stagnated (11.4%) and regressed (9.7%) on the oceans and seas cluster. Only 8.6 per cent of countries made progress in the management of chemicals and waste, including hazardous waste.

In thematic area 4, *Improve human health and social development through food security and nutrition, improved water and sanitation, reducing the incidence of non-communicable disease and by promoting gender equality and women empowerment*, only in one of the seven clusters did more than a quarter of Caribbean countries record progress. Almost a third of countries (32.2%) made progress in the health and non-communicable disease cluster while less than 20 per cent made progress on the other six clusters. However, while the proportion of countries making progress on water and sanitation (15.6%), peaceful society and safe communities (14.3%), food security and nutrition (12.9%), and social development (12.3%), respectively, is not particularly significant, a comparable proportion of countries remained stagnant in the following clusters — water and sanitation (15.4%), peaceful society and safe communities (20.7%), food security and nutrition (14.7%), and social development (32.4%) — resulting in more than a quarter of Caribbean countries progressing or maintaining their baseline status in these clusters. This notwithstanding, the food security and nutrition and culture and sport clusters showed particularly negative trends worthy of note. More than 61 per cent of Caribbean countries regressed on food security and nutrition, overshadowing the 12.9 per cent that made progress and the 14.7 per cent that stagnated, while 13.8 per cent of countries regressed on culture and sport compared with 6.9 per cent that made progress.

Thematic area 5, *Fostering partnership among SIDS, UN Agencies, development partners and others to achieve these goals*, is where the Caribbean has shown encouraging sign of progress. More than half of Caribbean countries (51.2%) made progress in the technology cluster, representing Caribbean's best performance on any of the SAMOA Pathway clusters. More than a third (34.9%) made progress on data and statistics and almost a quarter (24.1%) made progress on financing. Appreciable proportions of Caribbean countries also recorded progress on partnerships (22.4%), capacity building (22.4%), and trade (19.8%). However, the proportion of countries (47.4%) that regressed in the trade cluster outweighed those that progressed or remained stagnant (22.4%). A similarly disturbing situation is observed in the means of implementation cluster where the proportion of countries that regressed (24.1%) is double the proportion that progressed (12.1%).

Despite the progress of the Caribbean in the data and statistics cluster, bolstered by the number of countries that conducted a population and housing census within the last decade, the subregion showed significant data gaps across the five thematic areas and their associated clusters. Of particular importance is the absolute lack of data in all countries on climate change and sustainable transportation, and the insufficiency of data on the role of the UN system and relevant inter-governmental organizations. Furthermore, there is a significant lack of data in most countries on important clusters such as disaster risk reduction (82.8%), tourism (75.9%), culture and sport (75.9%), gender equality and women's empowerment (69.8%), financing (65.5%), education (62.9%), economic growth (62.1%), partnerships (58.6%), capacity building (58.6%), water and sanitation (55.6%), desertification, land degradation and drought (55.2%), and oceans and seas (54.8%). Given the importance of these clusters in advancing the SAMOA Pathway and in promoting the sustainable development of Caribbean SIDS, the absence or significant dearth of data in these areas inhibits the subregions' ability to monitor progress in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. Enhancing the subregion's capacity in monitoring and evaluation and other evidence-based processes will help to inform policies and programmes that can accelerate efforts in those clusters where progress may be lagging and sustain progress in those clusters where desirable outcomes are being made.

Figure 2
Progress of the Caribbean subregion in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway
(percentage of countries)



Source: UNESCAP, based on data from UNSD and UNDRR.

C. Findings per cluster for Thematic Area 1: Promote sustained and sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth, with decent work for all, sustainable consumption and production and sustainable transportation

1. Sustainable Tourism

Tourism is vital to the Caribbean economy. Many countries in the subregion count among the most tourism-dependent in the world. The direct contribution of the travel and tourism sector to GDP exceeds 10 per cent in more than half of the Caribbean economies (ECLAC 2022d). Indirect contribution is even greater; so too is the contribution to employment. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, The Bahamas led the subregion¹² with around 6.5 million visitors annually, followed by Jamaica with over four million, and the Cayman Islands with over two million (Mohammed and Rei, 2020). Most of these visitors were from cruise passengers, with cruise ships being responsible for between 60 to 70 per cent of visitors to the Caribbean.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant dampening effect on economic expansion in Caribbean SIDS. Unsurprisingly, the 73 per cent decline in stayover tourist arrivals resulting from pandemic-related travel restrictions had severe impact on tourism-dependent economies and foreign exchange earnings (ECLAC, 2022a). Countries within the subregion saw dramatic falls in passenger arrivals in the first three months of 2020 which resulted in many hotels laying off their staff in an attempt to consolidate revenue shortfalls caused by the lockdown (ECLAC, 2020 and Mohammed and Rei, 2020). Respondents across the Caribbean acknowledged that the slowdown in the economy from the impact of the pandemic led to major job losses. This resulted in an increase in claims for unemployment benefits from persons enrolled in the national social security system. Most of those claims were made by workers directly employed in tourism but were not limited to this sector. The increase in unemployment extended to the distribution, construction, and real estate sectors. This underscored how significantly tourism activity impacts other areas of the economy. Also impacted were a large number of informal workers and businesses operating in the tourism and related sectors. The Government of Barbados suggested that this revealed a gap in Barbados' social protection framework.

Despite the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector, Caribbean countries in the last few years have been making advances towards incorporating more sustainable approaches into the sector. The Caribbean Sustainable Tourism Policy and Development Framework (CSTPDF), developed in 2020, is a reference tool that offers benefits to member countries, the private sector and regional partners and the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), in supporting the sustainable development of tourism and fostering the competitiveness of our regional tourism sector. The CSTPDF 2020 is intended to guide the vision for sustainable development of Caribbean tourism for the next decade. It brings together broad but integrated policy thematic areas that reflect current regional needs and priorities seen as critical to the sustainable development of Caribbean tourism.

The OECS Commission, with funding from the European Union through the 10th and 11th European Development Fund (EDF) is implementing a Community Based Tourism (CBT) Programme Initiative. This project aims to foster the involvement of local people in the tourism sector and to increase their direct benefits through diversifying and enhancing tourism products across OECS Member States; advancing competitiveness and building resilience; and developing a more sustainable and inclusive tourism industry (OECS 2022). Saint Lucia recently passed Community Tourism Legislation that saw the establishment of a Community Tourism Agency to discover unique offerings, create opportunities, and grow tourism businesses and experiences that result in sustained livelihoods for all involved. Saint Lucia, Barbados and Dominica, in particular, have deliberately targeted initiatives to support CBT over the past 20 years. Jamaica developed a National Community Tourism Policy and Strategy in 2015. In Belize, the ILO conducted a Value Chain study on Sustainable Tourism, expected to be published shortly. Actions will be

¹² This study focused on the countries in the English and Dutch speaking Caribbean. The Spanish speaking countries are not included in this assessment.

developed with local communities in the south of Belize to strengthen their tourism planning and business development.

2. Sustainable Consumption and Production

The SAMOA Pathway recognized that the nexus between poverty eradication and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production are essential to the achievement of sustainable development. The global population is consuming more of the planet's public goods than ever before, yet the gap between rich and poor is widening. The generation of waste and its management continues to be of growing concern to Caribbean SIDS.

A Sustainable Consumption and Production Initiative for SIDS was launched in 2014, to support specific activities, projects and capacity building aimed at facilitating sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns responding to SIDS priorities. However little progress was recorded with this initiative, possibly because it was never fully resourced.

During the mid-term review of the SAMOA Pathway, the Caribbean reiterated the importance of SCP and called on UNEP to establish the Caribbean SIDS sustainable consumption and production initiative and a SCP framework in collaboration with other regional organisations to support implementation of the SCP priorities under the SAMOA Pathway.¹³ The issue of SCP received high-level political support from the Environment Ministers in specific Decisions adopted during its XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers for LAC in 2021. The Ministers called for the acceleration of regional policies, as well as for the implementation of approaches related to the prevention and minimization of waste, and promoting sustainable production practices, such as the circular economy.

SCP has been integrated in the recently approved GEF funded Demonstration of a Caribbean Mechanism Toward the Establishment of a SIDS-SIDS Green-Blue Economy Knowledge Transfer Hub Project.

3. Education

Before the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic, Caribbean countries had largely achieved universal access to primary and secondary education services. Still, they continued to struggle to ensure equitable access to inclusive quality learning from early childhood to post-secondary levels (UN, 2021). However, in March 2020 with the closure of educational facilities due to the pandemic, nearly 12 million students in 29 Caribbean countries were impacted (ECLAC, 2020). The lengthy closure of schools, up to five months at the start of the pandemic, and subsequent interruption to classes, cancelation and/or postponement of assessments and examinations, all had detrimental consequences for the academic development of children. The closures also exposed the critical role that schools play in supporting children's social development, their physical and mental health and well-being, and as safe spaces protecting them against risks such as abuse, violence, teenage pregnancy and crime. Children from low income or unstable households were found more likely to be affected by this separation from their peers and the supportive environment that schools provide (Parker and Alfaro, 2022).

Six respondents identified the disruptive impact of the pandemic on the education of children. They noted how the pandemic unveiled the defects and inequities in the education system across the Caribbean. This was reflected in the access to broadband and computers needed for online education, and the supportive environments including family structures needed to focus on learning, including disparity between resources and needs. Educators had to adjust to new pedagogical concepts and methodologies for the delivery of online teaching for which some lacked formal training. Students in the most marginalized groups, who lacked the resilience and engagement to learn independently, obviously could not cope and inevitably fell behind.

¹³ San Pedro Declaration priorities XX and XXI https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/events/files/final_san_pedro_declaration_004.pdf

To improve its education system, the Dominican Republic has taken decisive steps towards developing a national learning assessment system.¹⁴ The subregion has also acknowledged that more is required to promote Technical and Vocational and Educational Training (TVET) to prepare the future workforce for employability and to mitigate potential economic shocks (UN 2021).

Therefore, in relation to TVET skills development policies, in March 2023, UNESCO Office for the Caribbean in close connection to UNESCO-UNEVOC conducted two capacity building workshops for policy makers and education planners to strengthen the resilience, greening and gender responsiveness of TVET institutions and programmes. UNESCO has also been providing supportive policies and systems to teachers in the delivery of more innovative and attractive ICT teaching practices to reduce school dropout rates.

Further, the UNESCO Global Action Programme for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has strengthened the capacities of SIDS Member States to integrate ESD and climate change into education policies, plans and programmes. As the lead agency for ESD, UNESCO coordinates the implementation of the Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD, which was launched in 2014. UNESCO has also coordinated Flagship Projects in each of the five GAP Priority Action Areas: advancing policy; transforming learning and training environments; building capacities of educators and trainers; empowering and mobilizing youth; and accelerating sustainable solutions at the local level. The projects helped to strengthen ESD in eight local municipalities/communities in the Bahamas, Jamaica and Sint Maarten; and mobilize ESD youth leaders in 9 SIDS, including in Barbados, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

D. Findings per cluster for thematic area 2: Act to mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts by implementing sustainable energy and disaster risk reduction programmes

1. Climate Change

The impacts of climate change are becoming more evident in the Caribbean subregion with more observed very hot days and nights in a year, increased incidences of drought, rainfall and flood events, as well as rising sea levels (Climate Studies Group Mona (Eds.), 2020). During the 2017 hurricane season, 22 Caribbean SIDS were impacted by at least one category 4 or 5 hurricane (Mycoo and others 2022). Such events negatively affect the social, economic and environmental welfare of Caribbean people and result in a “cumulative community vulnerability” which amplifies the effects of the events, increasing the vulnerabilities of the subregion to natural and external shocks (Mycoo and others 2022).¹⁵ Future projections for the region suggest more frequent and intense incidences of drought, and extreme hydroclimatic events. To better respond to these events, the subregion will need to build its resilience by defining new policies and implementing programmes and projects.

The Caribbean Community Centre for Climate Change (CCCCC) assists its Member States in building their resilience to climate change. The organization, which is accredited to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) works with donors such as USAID and Global Affairs Canada to develop readiness proposals that support and build member States capacity to access funding. With the support of the CCCCC, Barbados is implementing two water resilience projects. The CCCCC has also supported resilience projects in renewable energy - such as solar Photovoltaic (PV) - and agriculture and has partnered with other regional organizations such as Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH), Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) and University of the West Indies (UWI). The CCCCC estimates that they have raised over \$260 million in support of resilience building in the Caribbean.

¹⁴ [https://blogs.worldbank.org/latinamerica/republica-dominicana-todos-bordo-las-reformas-educativas-requieren-socios\(cited 02.07.2023\)](https://blogs.worldbank.org/latinamerica/republica-dominicana-todos-bordo-las-reformas-educativas-requieren-socios(cited%2002.07.2023))

¹⁵ For more detailed information on the impacts of hurricanes on Caribbean economies please refer to the Disaster Risk Reduction cluster.

The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) is also an accredited implementing entity with the GCF and has supported the development of GCF proposals for Saint Kitts and Nevis and Suriname; and is implementing an initiative entitled “Promoting Climate Resilient Development in Urban Areas” by facilitating complementarity funding in Belize, Haiti, Jamaica, and Saint Kitts and Nevis. The initiative, with over \$1 million in seed funds, is expected to develop a common framework and support a fully functional climate finance monitoring, reporting and verification system and develop an investment project concept that targets the building of resilience in urban spaces in participating countries.

Further, FAO has supported at least two Caribbean SIDS in reducing national vulnerability and building resilience by supporting the integration of climate change adaptation into national development planning processes. UN Women is an implementing partner in the EnGender Project being implemented in nine Caribbean SIDS which has developed important knowledge and capacity around gender inequality of climate risk and the cost of inaction.

2. Sustainable Energy

The slow rate of sustainable energy penetration in the subregion is partly due to insufficient access to finance, as well as to inadequate understanding of how these new technologies may be successfully integrated. There is the challenge policy-makers face of having to justify and effecting the displacement of well-tested, operational and functional fossil fuel energy markets. While financing agencies like the CDB argue that governance related barriers such as inadequate regulatory frameworks including tariffs, inefficient administration, and maintenance as well as persistent monopolies in generation, transmission and distribution further stymie progress; the issues are perhaps deeper. Project risks within the context of Caribbean SIDS, therefore, are generally associated with high and uncertain project development costs, the small scale of projects, high initial investment costs including resource assessments; and more specifically, exposure to regulatory risk by potential investors through the absence of the appropriate regulatory environment (Hussain et al. 2011).

Electricity prices in the Caribbean average around \$0.25 per kWh, more than double the average price in the United States and in some countries reaches over \$0.40 per kWh. Out of 11 Caribbean countries with available data, nine generated more than 80 per cent of their electricity using imported fuels and five imported 90 per cent of their energy.¹⁶ The CDB noted that the vast majority (84%) of its Borrowing Member Countries (BMCs) rely on imported petroleum products (in the form of diesel fuel and petrol) for electricity generation, transportation, industry, and cooking services. The CDB's borrowing member countries imported more than 85 per cent of their commercial energy supplies valued at \$8.2 billion in 2019 approximating to 8 per cent of their total GDP.¹⁷ Fuel prices are expected to remain volatile, but an upward trend could affect the most vulnerable households and worsen the economies of Caribbean countries struggling with high debt levels and limited fiscal space. Despite this reality, transition to clean energy from indigenous sources (which are abundant in the Caribbean) continues to be slow.

To promote energy efficiency in the subregion, a Regional Sub Policy, Strategy and Action Plan on Energy Efficiency in the Caribbean was developed in 2019 with financial support from GIZ, and in collaboration with the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CCREEE), the CDB, CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) and the Caribbean Utilities Services Cooperation (CARILEC).

In March 2022, CARICOM launched the CARICOM Regional Energy Information System (sieCARICOM) which is a tool for collecting and processing energy sector data and information. The energy information system (EIS) seeks to support the sector by enhancing the regional energy data and statistics used for energy management and planning. The energy information system is hosted and managed by CCREEE. The data collected through the EIS allows energy agencies, utilities, project developers and other energy sector personnel to better understand the energy balances in the sector and to plan for future energy needs more effectively. A similar initiative, the BIEE (Base de Información de

¹⁶ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/latinamerica/clean-energy-caribbean-triple-win> (cited 21.06.2023)

¹⁷ <https://www.caribank.org/newsroom/news-and-events/speeches/keynote-energy-transition-caribbean-challenges-and-opportunities> (Cited 21.06.2023)

Eficiencia Energética) was also introduced to the Caribbean subregion by ECLAC, in partnership with ADEME (The French Agency for Ecological Transition), in 2018.

The CCREEE is a specialized agency with an official CARICOM and SIDS DOCK mandate to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency investments, markets and industries in the Caribbean. CCREEE has supported the development of Integrated Resource and Resilience Plans (IRRPs) for four Caribbean States (Belize, Guyana, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Trinidad and Tobago), and is working on supporting the development in another three. Other islands which have developed IRRPs and Integrated Resource Plans (IRPs) are Barbados and Jamaica.¹⁸ The CCREEE is also partnering with CARICOM member States to review and recommend the available resources for development, to include conventional power plants (diesel engines, gas turbines etc.) and renewable energy sources, like solar farms, wind farms, hydropower and geothermal power plants.

3. Disaster Risk Reduction

Since the adoption of the SAMOA Pathway in 2015, the Caribbean has been ravaged by a number of significant hydroclimatic events and natural disasters. In 2017, two category five hurricanes, Irma and Maria barreled across the Caribbean within twelve days of each other, leaving an unprecedented path of destruction in their wake. The entire island of Barbuda had to be evacuated following the passage of Hurricane Irma, Antigua and Barbuda having sustained damage, losses and recovery costs exceeding \$377 million. Further, Hurricane Maria was estimated to have caused \$1.3 billion in damage to the island of Dominica or 224 per cent of its GDP.¹⁹ ECLAC undertook Damage and Loss Assessments (DALAs) on the impact of these events on Anguilla, The Bahamas, British Virgin Islands (BVI), Sint Maarten and Turks and Caicos. The assessments estimated the total loss and damage for these countries at \$5.4 billion (ECLAC, 2018b). Two years later in 2019, Hurricane Dorian, another category 5 hurricane, was estimated to have generated damages and losses of \$3.4 billion to The Bahamas, with the most physical damage experienced on the islands of Grand Bahama and Abaco (UNDP 2021). Amidst the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic in August 2021, Haiti registered a 7.2 magnitude earthquake. Two days later Tropical Storm Grace struck the country. These two disasters resulted in unprecedented human and financial losses, with approximately 2,500 dead and missing, and over 53,815 houses destroyed. The damage and losses incurred from these two events have been estimated to be between \$1.5 billion (8.9 per cent of GDP) to \$1.7 billion (10.3 per cent of GDP) (Cavallo and others, 2021). Further, to the south of the Caribbean in 2021, the volcanic eruption of the La Soufrière volcano was another major natural event, causing major population displacement, significant damage and losses not only in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, but also in Saint Lucia and Barbados. The volcanic ash disseminated the agriculture industry in the northern part of Saint Vincent and made it impossible to utilize surface water (UNDP, 2021a). Further, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated that economic losses associated with the La Soufriere eruption amounted to 30 per cent of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines GDP (IMF, 2021). A few months later in July 2021, Hurricane Elsa impacted Saint Lucia and Barbados. Elsa was the first hurricane to directly hit Barbados in 65 years resulting in widespread property damage and power outages.

These continued threats associated with the impacts of climate change and other natural disasters inevitably undermine the region's ability to advance with its development agenda as resources are constantly diverted from development programmes to recovery and rehabilitation initiatives (Climate Studies Group Mona (Eds.), 2020). Taking this into account and considering the frequency of weather-related disasters particularly over the last 15 to 20 years, the Caribbean subregion needs to continue efforts at strengthening preparedness systems while also strengthening their capacity to effectively respond post-disaster. Such an approach will not only increase the subregion's resilience but also protect public safety and safeguard development gains.

¹⁸ An IRRP is a plan for how a country can supply its need for electricity for the foreseeable future. IRRPs are integrated because they consider many different resources to satisfy the need for electric power.

¹⁹ World Bank. 2017 A 360 degree look at Dominica Post Hurricane Maria. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/11/28/a-360-degree-look-at-dominica-post-hurricane-maria>

The Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 was adopted by UN Member States in March 2015. This platform, building on the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015, presents seven global targets with four priority actions towards “*the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.*”

Since the adoption of the Sendai Framework, Caribbean SIDS have sought to complete national disaster risk reduction strategies, with varying levels of success (table 1).

Table 1
Caribbean SIDS status in developing National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies

Completed/CWPs Endorsed at Policy Level	Require Endorsement at Policy Level	Near completion/CWPs require Endorsement at Policy Level	Step 1 initiated	Not initiated
Barbados	Trinidad and Tobago	Antigua and Barbuda	The Bahamas	Anguilla
British Virgin Islands			The Cayman Islands	Belize
Dominica			Grenada	Montserrat
Guyana			Jamaica	Suriname
Haiti			Saint Kitts and Nevis	Turks and Caicos
Saint Lucia				
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines				

Source: UNDRR 2023

On the issue of the mainstreaming of policies related to disaster risk reduction (DRR), climate change adaptation (CCA) and development, an assessment on the degree of coherence between national policies and plans on these issues was undertaken by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) for 16 Caribbean SIDS.²⁰ The assessment found that all 16 participating Caribbean countries have achieved a partial degree of coherence among sustainable development, CCA and DRR policies, strategies, and plans. It further noted that while countries appeared to have advanced with stakeholder engagement coherence, this was not the case for financial, institutional, and monitoring, evaluation and research coherence which required additional attention.

Since the adoption of the SAMOA pathway, the Caribbean subregion has seen heightened investment in risk insurance facilities. The Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF) initially established in 2007 and restructured in 2014 as the CCRIF - segregated portfolio company (SPC) was formed as the first multi-country risk pool in the world. It was the first insurance instrument to successfully develop parametric policies backed by both traditional and capital markets. It is owned, operated and registered in the Caribbean and 19 of its members are Caribbeans SIDS.²¹ The Caribbean Ocean and Aquatic Sustainability Facility (COAST) is another innovative climate risk insurance mechanism to promote food security; livelihoods of fisherfolk; resilient fisheries; sustainable management of coastal infrastructure; and disaster risk reduction in the Caribbean.

Further, the World Bank in partnership with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and in close alignment with the work advancing under the EU's 11th EDF Intra-ACP envelope designed an evidence-based strategic roadmap and an investment plan to improve disaster preparedness and response in the Caribbean region. An institutional assessment of the National Disaster Management Organizations of Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Saint Lucia, as well as CDEMA was undertaken by the World Bank and the Disaster

²⁰ The 16 Caribbean SIDS assessed include: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago

²¹ The following 19 governments are members of CCRIF Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Sint Maarten, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago and Turks & Caicos Islands.

Management Center of the University of Bournemouth. This assessment determined the best organizational structure and funding model to provide the most impact in terms of preparedness and response.²²

E. Findings per cluster for thematic Area 3: Protect the biodiversity and environmental health of small island developing States by mitigating the impact of invasive species and by properly managing chemicals and water, including hazardous waste, and protecting the oceans and seas

1. Oceans and Seas

Caribbean SIDS have long regarded themselves as large ocean states with many relying on artisanal fishing and tourism to provide livelihood opportunities to coastal communities. Inevitably, the coastal waters of the Caribbean Sea have remained under increasing threat, the result of habitat degradation, unsustainable fishing, land-based sources of pollution and climate change. Further, the influx of pelagic sargassum has been negatively impacting the subregion's tourism and fisheries sectors. This phenomenon is thought to be associated with an increase of nutrients entering the Caribbean Sea from major rivers and increases in sea surface temperatures, a result of climate change.

The Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) is the regional seas programme for the Caribbean, and through the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention) seeks to conserve and ensure the sustainable use of the region's vulnerable coastal and marine ecosystems and species. To assist Contracting Parties, implement the Convention, CEP has engaged in transboundary projects and initiatives that have benefited Caribbean SIDS.²³ Despite these initiatives, it remains difficult to assess the extent to which the objectives of the regional seas programme have been reflected in national policies and legislation in Caribbean SIDS.

As regards the issue of marine pollution, Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention in 2021 adopted a Regional Nutrient Reduction Strategy and Action Plan. Two Caribbean SIDS (Barbados and Jamaica) with support from the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM) have developed a National Nutrient's Strategy and Reduction Plan. Further, the CEP is working with Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, and Saint Lucia to develop National Action Plans on Marine Litter.

Under the SPAW Protocol, 36 protected sites are listed.²⁴ Many of the SPAW protected areas are located within the exclusive economic zones of SIDS and contain coral reef habitats. However, only a few Caribbean SIDS were able to successfully meet the SAMOA Pathway target of conserving at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas.²⁵ Coastal and marine habitats in the Caribbean continue to be under threat with ocean acidification and its impact on economically important species and habitats is a growing area of concern in Caribbean SIDS. To assist countries better respond to the impacts of ocean acidification, the CEP is working closely with organizations such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the International Atomic Energy.

On the issue of the sustainable development of small-scale fisheries, regional fisheries bodies such as the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism and the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have been providing support to Caribbean SIDS through undertaking safety-at-sea training, and supporting the development of fisheries management plans. FAO has also supported the Caribbean SIDS in the development of an Aquaculture Management Strategy, Small Scale Pelagic Fisheries Strategic Design and Development Action Plan and a Climate Change

²² CDEMA: Disaster Preparedness and Response Capacity Assessment and Technical Assistance | GFDRR (Cited 11.06.2023)

²³ These include: GEF Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (IWEco) Project; GEF CREW+ Project – Implementation integrating water and waste water solutions for a clean and healthy Caribbean Sea; GEF CLME+ Project; and GEF Caribbean Blue Economy Financing (BlueFin) Project.

²⁴ Marine protected areas listed under the SPAW protocol <https://www.car-spaw-rac.org/?Protected-Areas>

²⁵ For more information please visit <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/c1b717765c764ccb91e3ed5047bcd6a?item=1>

Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management Plan. Further, FAO has been providing capacity building support in the areas of food safety and handling.

CARICOM Member States are implementing the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy, a binding treaty focusing on cooperation and collaboration of Caribbean people, fishermen and governments in the conservation, management and sustainable use of fisheries resources.²⁶ The International Commission for Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) is a regional fisheries management organization where countries and fishing entities come together to develop international fisheries management measures for a number of important species such as tunas, sharks, marlin and swordfish. So far, only five Caribbean SIDS are Contracting Parties to ICCAT.²⁷

2. Management of Chemicals and Waste, including Hazardous Waste

The management of waste and chemicals are important in mitigating public health risks, contributing to economic growth and enhancing human wellbeing. The following initiatives have been undertaken in the Caribbean to support the management of chemicals and waste.

To improve the management of plastic waste, the REPLAST OECS Pilot Plastic Project was launched in 2019 to set up an incentivized plastic waste collection and recycling scheme. Following on from this pilot initiative, the European Union in 2022 in collaboration with Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM) countries and with co-financing support from the German Cooperation is working with UNEP, the German Agency for International Cooperation, the French Development Agency and the OECS to implement the Zero Waste in the Caribbean initiative, under the theme *New Ways, New Waves*.²⁸ This initiative is expected to strengthen national legislative frameworks and establish a regional policy structure to support Caribbean-wide action. It will also pilot innovative technologies and methodologies to support the operational elements of waste treatment and recovery in the region.

The Basel Convention Regional Centre for Training and Technology Transfer for the Caribbean supports Caribbean countries through the implementation of projects and other initiatives which assist countries meet their obligations under the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata Conventions by managing waste and chemicals.²⁹

UNEP's OzonAction supports Caribbean SIDS with the implementation of the Montreal Protocol through hydrofluorocarbons (HFC) phase out management projects, institutional strengthening project and HFC phase down project. Through its Compliance Assistance Programme, UNEP ensures that countries remain compliant by providing supporting services and technical assistance. This includes capacity building for National Ozone Officers (NOOs) – with training provided to new NOOs and Assistants in 2018 and 2023. This supports efforts to ensure sound and timely annual data reporting as required by the Protocol.

3. Biodiversity

The Caribbean is well known as a biodiversity hotspot with 11,000 plant species 72 of which are endemic to the subregion. The subregion's biodiversity faces many threats, including over-exploitation of biological resources; habitat destruction and fragmentation; urban tourism and industrial/commercial development; predation and competition by invasive species; and climate change (CANARI, 2019).

All 16 Caribbean States are parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, however only seven Caribbean States are party to the Nagoya Protocol.³⁰ The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention

²⁶ Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy https://www.crfm.int/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=677:caribbean-community-common-fisheries-policy&Itemid=463

²⁷ Caribbean SIDS party to ICCAT include: Barbados, Curacao, Grenada, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago. <https://www.iccat.int/en/contracting.html>

²⁸ Zero Waste in the Caribbean: New ways, new waves <https://www.unep.org/zero-waste-caribbean-new-ways-new-waves>

²⁹ For more information, please see <https://www.bcrc-caribbean.org/>

³⁰ List of Parties Nagoya Protocol <https://www.cbd.int/information/parties.shtml#tab=2>

on Biological Diversity which entered into force in October 2014 aims at “sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources in a fair and equitable way”.³¹

The OECS Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management Framework (2020 -2035) endorsed in 2020 has five strategic priorities: (1) Protecting restoring and maintaining ecosystems, (2) Climate and disaster resilience, (3) Invasive species management, biosafety and biosecurity, (4) Fair and equitable access to and sharing of benefits from biodiversity resources: and (5) Assessing and integrating biodiversity and ecosystems into national development processes. To advance the implementation of this framework the Commission is working with its Member States in implementing projects and initiatives such as the Biodiversity Support for ACP Coastal Environments (BioSPACE) and Integrated Landscape Approaches and Investments in Sustainable Management.³²

The BIOREACH: Biodiversity Conservation and Agroecological Land Restoration in Productive Landscapes Project is being implemented by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, with support from FAO. This project is working to promote biodiversity conservation, restore degraded lands, and improve livelihoods of rural communities in targeted productive landscapes (agriculture, forestry, and other land uses).

Cuba’s participation in the Biodiversity Finance (BIOFIN) initiative has led to the development of a financial plan for biodiversity; the establishment of an institutional platform between the ministries of environment, economy and finance; the approval of a standard of environmental accounting; and the training of over 300 stakeholders in biological diversity, economic and finance.³³

4. Invasive Alien Species

Invasive alien species (IAS) are acknowledged as a threat to biodiversity integrity in SIDS and have caused serious ecological and economic damage. The spread of IAS in the Caribbean is mainly a result of the region’s open borders due to its large dependence on imports and air travel and its exposure to extreme weather events (CANARI, 2019).

Target six of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted in December 2022 prioritizes the elimination, minimization, reduction and the mitigation of the impacts of invasive species on biodiversity and ecosystem services. One of the platforms that has been put in place in the subregion to address invasive alien species is the Caribbean Invasive Alien Species Network which was launched in 2010. The network comprises organizations engaged in invasive species control, including UNEP, GEF, Caribbean Plant Health Directors Forum, Centre for Agriculture and Bio-Sciences International, and the Caribbean Invasive Species Working Group. The Network serves as a Hub for Caribbean SIDS to share strategies and plans developed to address invasives, as well as approaches and best practices for curbing the threat posed by invasive species nationally and sub-regionally. The OECS Commission in 2016 produced an Invasive Alien Species Strategy and Action Plan (2016-2025) and is engaging with development partners to support its implementation.

F. Findings per cluster for Thematic Area 4: Improve human health and social development through food security and nutrition and improved water and sanitation and by reducing the incidence of non-communicable diseases and promoting gender equity and women’s empowerment

1. Food Security and Nutrition

³¹ Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit sharing <https://www.cbd.int/abs/>

³² <https://oecs.org/biospace-ilm/>

³³ BIOFIN was initiated by UNDP and the European Commission at the CBD COP 11 in response to an urgent need to divert finances towards the achievement of global and national biodiversity goals. For more information on BIOFIN Cuba please see <https://www.biofin.org/cuba>

The issue of food security is an increasingly urgent concern within the subregion. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, food security was a challenge mainly confronting lower income families and households (UN 2021). However, this changed drastically during the pandemic with over 40 per cent of respondents acknowledging the issue of food security as an emerging socio-economic challenge exacerbated the pandemic. An assessment undertaken by the United Nations on Food Security and Nutrition for Latin America and the Caribbean revealed that the Caribbean was most affected by food insecurity during the period 2019 to 2021 (FAO and others, 2023). In Haiti, during that 3-year period, 82.5 per cent of the population suffered moderate or severe food insecurity (FAO and others, 2023). The assessment notes that in Jamaica over half of the population was affected, while in Trinidad and Tobago 43.3 per cent experienced moderate to severe food insecurity (FAO and other 2023). Another survey conducted by CARICOM and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in 2022 found a significant increase in households experiencing moderate levels of food insecurity.³⁴ This increase is associated with several different factors including the rising cost of food and other commodities associated with the fallout from the Ukraine war. It should be further noted that apart from Belize and Guyana, all English-speaking CARICOM States import at least 50 per cent of their food which contributes to the high cost of food in the subregion (UN, 2021).

The increased cost of foods, particularly more nutritious foods, left 52 per cent of the population in the Caribbean unable to afford healthy diets in 2020. As a result, more people turned towards high energy density foods with minimal nutritional value (FAO and others, 2023). This and other factors have resulted in an increase in the levels of obesity being observed in the subregion. During the period between 2000 to 2016, obesity in adults increased by 9.5 per cent, with more women prone to becoming obese as compared to men (FAO and others 2023). The highest prevalence of obesity among adults, more than 30 per cent, was observed in the Bahamas in 2016, while Dominica, Dominican Republic and Suriname had levels of over 25 per cent (FAO and others, 2023).

Notwithstanding these food security and nutrition challenges, organizations such as FAO and the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) have been providing support to Caribbean SIDS through the adoption of good and innovative agricultural practices. The FAO has promoted sustainable and inclusive agricultural industries in the Caribbean using a market driven applied value chain methodology, which focuses on climate resilient and gender sensitive agricultural development approaches. These include the production of ginger, soursop, honey, and vegetables and the farming of seamos and tilapia. Further, FAO has also been supporting the development of small-scale fisheries in the subregion through training in safety-at-sea and aquaculture. Additional support has been provided to build capacities in food safety and handling practices for fisheries. CARDI has also continued to provide technical support to the subregion's agricultural stakeholders through the testing and evaluation of production technologies for several food crops, the deployment of technologies for seed production, and the production of small ruminants.

2. Water and Sanitation

Access to drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) are critical to health and well-being. Although there have been vast improvements with WASH in the subregion, incidences of diarrhea, malaria and trachoma persist primarily among young children (PAHO, 2020). Access to water and sanitation for all, not only results in better health, but enhanced social and economic progress, through higher school enrolment and lower health cost.

The importance of access to clean water in SIDS became even more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, as greater attention was placed on hygiene in attempts to contain the spread of the virus. Despite this, the water source in Caribbean SIDS is continually threatened due to increased incidences of drought linked to climate change, and other natural disasters - such as the ash fall associated with the eruption of the La Soufriere volcano in 2020. Added to this complexity, are increased incidences of drought which impact the quantity and quality of surface and groundwater inevitably increasing costs associated with obtaining clean water. Other events including hurricanes can negatively impact treatment

³⁴ For more information on the results of this survey please visit World Food Programme at <https://www.wfp.org/news/food-insecurity-caribbean-continues-upward-trajectory-caricom-wfp-survey-finds>

plants, for instance, power outages disrupting service, in some cases for extended periods, make it difficult for communities to access water after such events.

An assessment undertaken by Pan American Health Institute (PAHO) showed many of the smaller islands in the Caribbean, including Martinique, United States Virgin Islands, Barbados, Saint Lucia and Guadeloupe to be almost fully compliant with the standard of universal access to improved drinking water facilities with little difference between rural and urban areas. However, this was not the case with Haiti which had the lowest coverage, followed by the Dominican Republic (PAHO, 2020).

Nonetheless, Caribbean SIDS have sought to improve the management of the water sector through the development of a Regional Strategic Action Plan (RSAP) for the Water Sector in the Caribbean developed in 2018. The RSAP, noting the common challenges facing the water sector by Caribbean countries, seeks to set out a framework of action at both the national and regional levels. To support the implementation of RSAP, the region has developed Implementation Plans.³⁵

Untreated domestic waste continues to be a problem in the Caribbean despite improved coverage in recent years, impacting on human health and the environment. According to the CEP, an estimated 15 x 10⁹ cubic meters of domestic municipal wastewater was generated in the Wider Caribbean region in 2015, of which 37 per cent reached treatment plants (UNEP and CEP, 2019).

The Global Environment Facility funded CREW+: An Integrated Approach to Water and Wastewater Management Using Innovative Solutions and Promoting Financing Mechanisms in the Wider Caribbean Project, commenced in 2019 and is being co-implemented by UNEP and the IDB. The CREW+, which is being implemented in 12 Caribbean SIDS,³⁶ seeks to implement innovative, technical small-scale solutions, using an integrated water and wastewater management approach, and build on the sustainable financing mechanisms piloted under the predecessor Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater Management (CREW) Project.

Other notable initiatives include the CDB working with its Member States to upgrade dated water and sanitation infrastructure. In 2021, the CDB approved a \$39.5 million project for Dominica. The project will improve the efficiency and climate resilience of the water supply and distribution infrastructure and enhance the operational capacity of Dominica Water and Sewerage Company Ltd. Improved water supply is expected for nearly 100,000 Jamaicans under a programme approved for \$30 million in funding from the CDB in 2020.

The IDB has also provided support to Caribbean SIDS in support of water and sanitation initiatives, such as support to the Dominican Republic, through a \$140 million loan to increase the coverage of sanitation services managed in a safe manner in the localities and to improve the management of drinking water services.

3. Health and Non-communicable Diseases

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) in the Caribbean, notably hypertension and diabetes, continue to be a major health challenge, being one of the leading causes of death in adults under the age of 70 (Alleyne, 2018). Despite the adoption of the Declaration of Port of Spain by CARICOM Heads of Government, in 2007, to reduce incidences of NCDs and the risks associated with them, this issue persists in the subregion and is even more critical given the underlying health impacts associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. In a subsequent High-Level Meeting on NCDs held at the UN General Assembly in 2011 CARICOM Heads of Government drew international attention to the potential for impairment of adult working populations caused by NCDs as a threat to both health and development. The Fourth High-Level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of NCDs will be held in 2025.

³⁵ The first Implementation Plan was developed in 2019 and the second one in 2021. The first Implementation Plan focused on the impacts of climate change and climate variability to the water sectors and its response, whilst the second Implementation Plan, amongst others, provides a framework for monitoring implementation of regional initiatives which seek to improve the Caribbean water sector's response to climate impacts.

³⁶ Participating Caribbean SIDS in the CREW+ Project include: Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

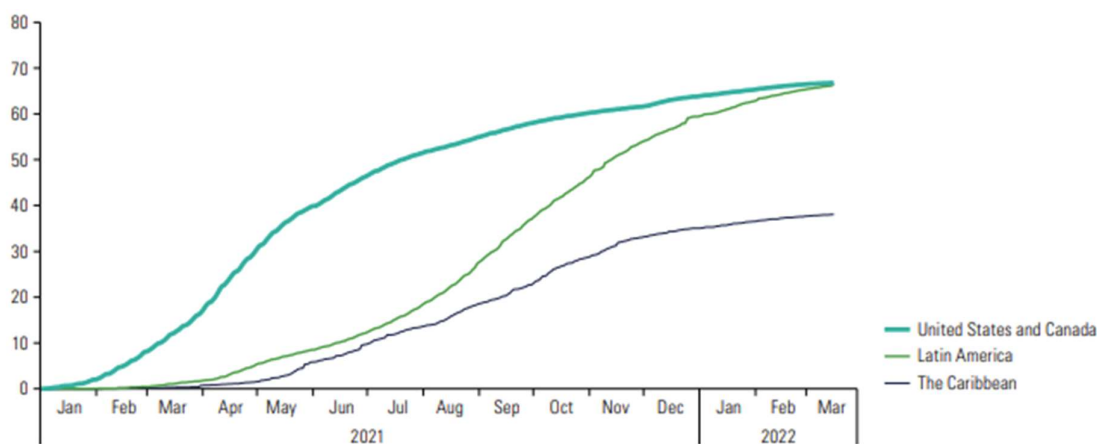
As the COVID-19 pandemic spread rapidly across the Caribbean, it exposed the frailties of the health care systems in the subregion. Over 60 per cent of respondents underscored this point. Haiti, which is the only least developed country (LDC) among Caribbean SIDS, acknowledged a range of inadequacies with its health system, which included deficiencies in functionality, adapted contingency, and response planning. Given the high levels of indebtedness and debt servicing being shouldered by Caribbean governments, it is not surprising that many public health systems in the subregion are underfunded with public spending on health falling below the regionally agreed threshold of 6 per cent of GDP (ECLAC, 2022b).

One of the major challenges to at-risk countries was the inadequacy of hospital capacity. With competing priorities and smaller populations relative to most developed countries, Caribbean SIDS were grossly unprepared for the required Intensive Care Units (ICUs) designed to cater to pandemics. Increased ICU capacity requires increased infrastructural and human resources, i.e. fully trained staff and equipment. Several respondents affirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic placed a microscope on the deficiencies in the healthcare system and in access to health care. Caribbean countries struggled with little success to cope with the demands of the pandemic, leaving many residents with limited access to the care needed. The pandemic also highlighted inherent suspicions by the population on the credibility of international institutions, reflected in the high rate of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy particularly among the youth of the subregion (MacDonald et al, 2015).

The overall COVID 19 vaccination rate in the Caribbean subregion was 38 per cent, which was lower than that of Latin America (66%), and globally (57%) (Figure 3) (ECLAC, 2022b). In a study on vaccine hesitancy in Jamaica, it was concluded that this was related to widespread disinformation, cultural beliefs, and concerns regarding the immediate and long-term effects of the vaccine. Even where there was eventual acceptance of the vaccine, the study found that some respondents were three times more likely to delay/refuse the vaccine for their children (Wynter-Adams and Thomas-Brown, 2023).

Other assessments noted the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on mental health and psychosocial well-being of the populations. An assessment undertaken by UNICEF of 8,444 adolescents aged 13 to 29 in Latin America and the Caribbean noted that 73 per cent of respondents acknowledged they needed help concerning their physical and psychological wellbeing.³⁷

Figure 3
Population fully vaccinated
(percentage)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of H. Ritchie and others, "Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19)", 2020 [online] <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus> and data from Johns Hopkins University.

Note: Daily estimates of the percentage of the population fully vaccinated (complete schedules per 100) is based on data from 22 Caribbean countries and territories (Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands,

³⁷ The Impact of COVID 19 on the mental health of adolescent and youth <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/impact-covid-19-mental-health-adolescents-and-youth>

Curaçao, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sint Maarten, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and the Turks and Caicos Islands)

The COVID-19 event, coupled with the rising prevalence of chronic NCDs, increased mortality in patients with underlying health issues. It is estimated that 36,800 people lost their lives as a result of COVID-19 in Caribbean SIDS.³⁸ This served to raise awareness of the fragility of national health infrastructure and of the need for more robust primary healthcare programmes. The lessons learned post COVID should serve as impetus for a more focused approach to the strategic planning for and management of infectious disease in the Caribbean.

The Caribbean Cooperation in Health Phase IV (CCH IV) (2016-2025) provides a framework for CARICOM Member States to address common health and development challenges. CCH IV provides a framework for CARICOM Member States to address common health and development challenges efficiently and effectively through functional cooperation and joint action – emphasizing the development of regional public goods. The intention is to build capacity to improve the conditions for health for all by developing and maintaining cost-effective and efficient health systems.

The Caribbean Roadmap for Human Resources for Universal Health 2018-2022 was developed through a joint effort of 15 CARICOM Member States, with the technical support of the Pan American Health Organization /World Health Organization (WHO). Ten Caribbean countries are at various stages of finalizing Human Resource Plans for Universal Health. The objective of the plan is to improve the subregion's timely and quality access to an optimal and stable health workforce.

4. Gender and women's empowerment

Despite the substantial progress that has been made in the advancement of gender equality in the subregion, a few challenges persist. When compared to males, females have higher unemployment rates in the region despite having better performance records at the secondary and tertiary educational levels, and higher enrolment than men in the latter education level (Abdulkadri and others, 2022). Such gender gaps in unemployment rates, while existing prior to COVID-19, have been aggravated by the pandemic and further contribute to the social deficits that post-pandemic recovery measures must address (ECLAC, 2022a).

Women in the Caribbean have also been found to be disproportionately affected by shocks, such as natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic. They occupy some two thirds of jobs in the informal economy, leaving them without social welfare protection in times of disaster. In Dominica, after Hurricane Maria, single female-headed households were found to lack the finances required to recover and were more prone to poverty (Burunciuc, 2023).

As regards the COVID-19 pandemic, there were reports of an increase in substance abuse, intimate partner violence and child abuse. According to data reported by the Crime and Problem Analysis Branch of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, in 2020, amidst the COVID-19 lockdown measures, the number of cases reported increased significantly by 148 per cent, shifting from 986 cases in 2019, to 2,442 in 2020.³⁹ Further, it is estimated that at least one in three women in the Caribbean subregion has been a victim of gender based violence (GBV) in their lifetime.

ECLAC identified the highest femicide rates in the Caribbean for 2021 in Belize (3.5 cases per 100,000 women); Dominican Republic (2.7 cases per 100,000), and Guyana (2.0 per 100,000) (ECLAC, 2022c). Government agencies in the subregion, are making efforts to record and track incidences of GBV. However, the lack of comprehensive national data remains an impediment to the subregion in determining its progress towards addressing GBV both nationally and internationally (Haarr, 2020).

All Caribbean countries have signed the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In so doing, governments across the region have committed to and are accountable for both protecting and ensuring equal rights for women and girls. Further, UNESCO together with the Institute for Gender and Development Studies of the University of the West Indies,

³⁸ Source World Health Organisation (COVID-19) Dashboard for all 29 Caribbean SIDS covid19.who.int/data/

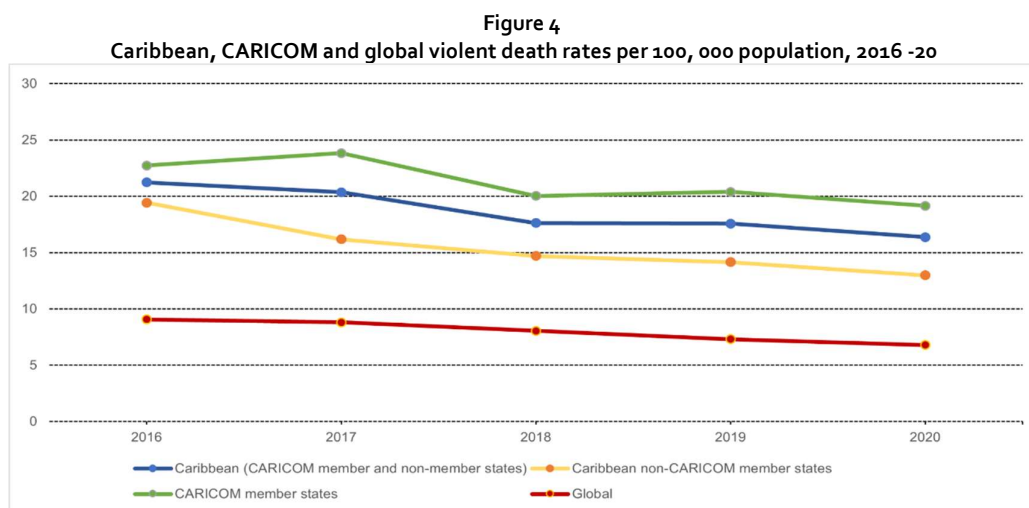
³⁹ Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, Crime and Problem Analysis Branch.

launched the Caribbean Sheroges Initiative, a project intended to produce knowledge and enhance the skills of young people to promote gender equality. UN Women has supported Trinidad and Tobago in drafting and updating a National Strategic Action Plan on Gender Based and Sexual Violence. They have also supported the development of a National Gender Policy and Action Plan in Aruba, a National Gender Equality Policy for Turks and Caicos and are working with Jamaica to develop a Victims Rights Policy.

As regards tackling structural and socioeconomic inequalities, UN Women and others are supporting a programme in Guyana to empower women and girls with disabilities by increasing access to information on GBV related legislation. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) under the Spotlight Initiative is supporting the development of a Disability Policy in Belize, and in Jamaica is focusing on children with disabilities in a programmatic intervention to scale-up and sustain the implementation of the Health and Family Life Curriculum in and out of schools.

5. Promoting peaceful and safe communities

The Caribbean has one of the highest rates of violent deaths with firearms globally, (figure 4) (Fabre and others, 2023). Given the large number of cays and inlets on coastlines which makes it difficult to implement border controls and fight illicit trafficking activities, the Caribbean subregion remains a transshipment point for the trafficking of drugs to the United States and Europe. The CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS), established by the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM in 2006,⁴⁰ has been working to monitor and manage the increasing incidence of gun violence in the subregion. Further, in 2020 CARICOM member States and the Dominican Republic adopted a Roadmap for Addressing Caribbean Priority Actions on the Illicit Proliferation of Firearms and Ammunition across the Caribbean in a Sustainable Manner by 2030 (Firearms Roadmap) (Fabre and others 2023). In April 2023, the CARICOM Heads met in Trinidad and Tobago for a Regional Symposium to Address Crime and Violence as a Public Health Issue. The Declaration adopted articulates CARICOM Member States' commitment to put in place measures to "address the extra-territorial threats to citizen security".⁴¹



Source: Fabre and others 2023.

Note: Non-CARICOM member states include Anguilla, Aruba, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Curaçao, Dominican Republic, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Puerto Rico, Turks and Caicos Islands, and the US Virgin Islands.

Of particular concern is the escalating incidences of violence in Haiti. According to the United Nations, Haiti is suffering from one of the "worst human rights and humanitarian emergencies in decades" with increasing incidences of homicides, kidnappings and displacements associated with increased gang-related violence (UN, 2023).

⁴⁰ CARICOM IMPACS seeks to manage CARICOM's action agenda on crime and security.

⁴¹ For more information on the Declaration by CARICOM Heads of Government on Crime and Violence as a Public Health Issue, visit <https://today.caricom.org/2023/04/18/declaration-by-heads-of-government-on-crime-and-violence-as-a-public-health-issue/>.

Strong correlation has been discerned between high levels of unemployment among youth and increased crime and violence in local communities, perpetrated mainly by young men. The Caribbean has struggled for years with high levels of unemployment, particularly among women and youth. Within the subregion, young men under the age of 30 were found most likely to be impacted by or involved in violent crime. In 2020, 90 per cent of the victims of deadly crime in the subregion were young men, as compared to 83 per cent globally (Fabre and others 2023).

G. Findings per cluster for Thematic Area 5: Fostering partnerships among small island developing States, United Nations agencies, development partners and others to achieve the goals

1. Partnerships

The establishment of partnerships to support implementation of priority actions was a key focus of the SAMOA Pathway. To facilitate this, the SIDS Partnership Framework was established to monitor progress of existing, and stimulate the launch of new, genuine and durable partnerships for the sustainable development of SIDS. The High-Level Meeting to review progress made in addressing the priorities of SIDS through the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway called for the scaling up and development of genuine and durable partnerships at national, regional and international levels.⁴² The importance of partnerships in mobilizing resources in Caribbean SIDS for the achievement of their countries sustainable development objectives is well acknowledged. However, the view is somewhat different when assessing governments' ability to enter into partnership arrangements specifically aimed at supporting the implementation of the SAMOA pathway with 42 per cent of respondents noting a positive experience, While the same percentage of respondents (42%) noted a more negative experience. This may be because for many Caribbean countries, partnerships are viewed as formalized arrangements with international development corporations, which often require a longer time and more resources to finalize than informal partnership mechanisms. Partnership arrangements supportive of sustainable development ranged from national endeavors- such as the establishment of a tripartite consultative mechanism established in the early 1990s to support development consisting of representation from government, the private sector and the labour unions. Other partnership arrangements supportive of the SAMOA pathway include the Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework established in 2017 by the United Nations to improve the efficiency and coherence with which it supports the development of countries in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean.

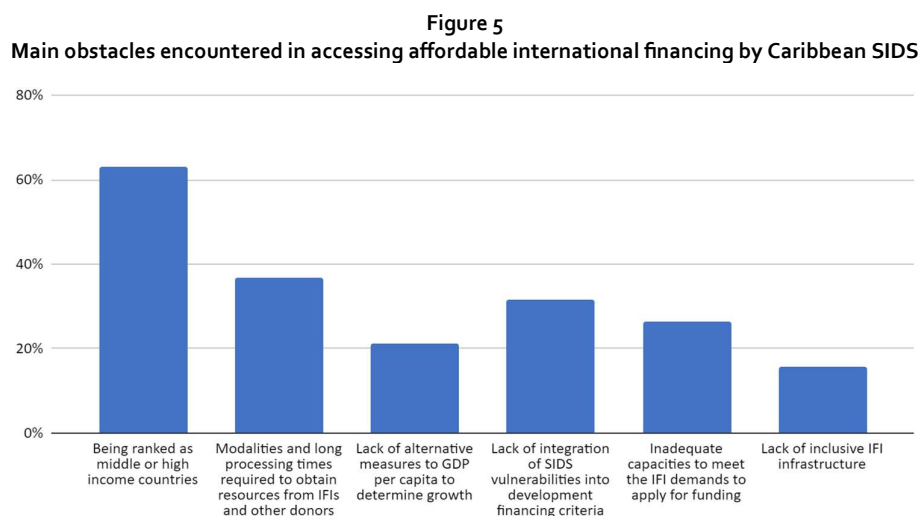
Further, the COVID-19 pandemic provided many useful lessons on inter-regional cooperation. The response by Caribbean governments to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the value of solidarity in enhancing and building of healthcare capacity thanks to cooperation between governments, CARICOM, PAHO, CARPHA, and the OECS Commission. This interface which was experienced between the disease, political action, and interference by non-government organizations provided the key to effectively dealing with the pandemic and simultaneously strengthening the healthcare system in the Caribbean.

2. Financing

Over 60 per cent of respondents highlighted access to affordable financing as a major impediment to the implementation of the SIDS development agenda. This was because countries are deemed ineligible for concessional financing based on their middle or upper income status, notwithstanding their high exposure to exogenous shocks, particularly natural disasters, and the onerous debt and debt servicing burdens being carried. Countries also noted the modalities and lengthy processing times to obtain resources from International Financing Institutions (IFIs) and other donors and the absence of alternative measures to GDP per capita as the determinant for assessing the income status of developing countries.

⁴² Resolution 74/3 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N19/311/91/PDF/N1931191.pdf?OpenElement>.

The severe implication of a high debt ratio is the inability to borrow or access credit for development purposes, stymieing the economic development options of heavily indebted States. Direct Foreign Investment (DFI) has also diminished as a source of development finance, increasing the need for other forms of investment finance.



Source: Author's compilation.

Multilateral overseas development aid grew nominally before 2010 but decreased substantially as per capita income levels became a major determinant influencing in aid policy. Caribbean countries have been negatively impacted by this which discounts these countries' high exposure to exogenous shocks and the combined effect of economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities experienced by small island and coastal states. This growing debt situation compounded by finance access restrictions are among the several factors hindering the successful implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. Sixty-one per cent of respondents reported that the high-and-middle-income classification of Caribbean countries has hindered their ability to access grant and concessional financing (figure 5). This reinforces the argument that the current eligibility criteria for financing for development are insensitive to the unique circumstances of SIDS.

Nearly 40 per cent of all respondents also noted that the modalities and long processing times required to obtain resources from international financial institutions and other donors was an obstacle which undermined access to financial resources (figure 5). Other respondents indicated that there is a need to integrate SIDS vulnerability into development financing and "*for changing the development financing landscape for small states to incorporate a vulnerability index.*" Such a call for a globally accepted vulnerability assessment was made as early as 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In the preamble to Agenda 21 (1992) the special circumstances of SIDS were already recognized and concluded that this would require a substantial flow of new and additional financial resources to cover the incremental costs for the actions that developing countries would have to undertake to deal with global environmental problems and to accelerate sustainable development (UN, 1992).

This call was repeated numerous times in the ensuing years. During the Third International Conference on SIDS, Member States of the United Nations reaffirmed their commitment to "*take urgent and concrete action to address the vulnerability of SIDS*".⁴³ Such a call was further reiterated by the Joint Inspection Unit which recommended that criteria "*should take into account the specific economic and*

⁴³ History of the MVI <https://www.un.org/ohrlls/mvi/history-of-mvi>.

environmental vulnerability of SIDS, so that international financial institutions, regional development banks and bilateral donors could use eligibility categories based on vulnerability.”⁴⁴

Despite the reduction in concessional financing available to Caribbean SIDS, the countries have pursued several innovative financing opportunities within the timeframe of the SAMOA Pathway. These included debt conversion agreements through the utilization of blue bonds which both Barbados and Belize have established and the implementation of a green bond for renewable energy in the Dominican Republic, carbon credit agreements (Dominica and Guyana⁴⁵); public private partnerships (Bahamas); and parametric insurance (Jamaica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines). Further, many Caribbean SIDS have established national funds. The Sustainable Island and Resources Framework Fund established by the Government of Antigua and Barbuda is a national environmental funding facility to support environmental management and climate adaptation and mitigation using microfinancing to promote resilience building and social inclusion. Trinidad and Tobago’s Green Fund, also known as the National Environmental Fund, introduced a levy on for-profit of 0.1 per cent which was later increased to 0.3 per cent. Proceeds from the fund are available to registered organizations and community groups working on environmental conservation.

3. Capacity Building

Capacity constraints remain a persistent challenge to all SIDS. In light of this, the SAMOA Pathway articulated measures to assist capacity opportunities in SIDS. This included support from the United Nations system for both capacity building and institutional strengthening. However, where national policy-makers were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with such efforts, most responses ranged from slightly dissatisfied to moderately satisfied. As one respondent noted: *“Support is generally not adequate and is focused primarily on short-term capacity support. At times, access to capacity support is often fraught with heavy transaction costs including burdensome reporting, lengthy and intensive project preparation, and the lack of clarity on financial support systems embedded in technical cooperation projects.”*

Further, the under-capacity of the key monitoring and evaluation institutions including those for data management and coordination has not improved; certainly not in the case of the OECS. This has resulted in a World Bank funded regional project for the OECS Commission entitled “OECS Data for Decision Making project” that seeks to improve the production and dissemination of statistical data in three member countries.⁴⁶

Despite this, countries did outline the capacity building support they received from the UN System and donor countries during the timeframe of the SAMOA Pathway. This ranged from (1) technical assistance support to countries like Belize, Dominican Republic, and Haiti; (2) knowledge transfer assistance in Aruba, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago; and (3) financial mobilization for projects in Barbados, Dominica, Guyana and Saint Lucia.⁴⁷ Further, during the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Environment Ministers of LAC, countries agreed to the establishment of a Caribbean SIDS Horizontal Technical Cooperation Programme to improve resilience and support capacity building in Caribbean SIDS.

⁴⁴ A72/119 Comprehensive review of United Nations system support for small island developing States: final findings JIU/REP/2016/7.

⁴⁵ In 2022, Guyana received its first payment for carbon credits under the agreement with the Hess Corporation. Approximately, US\$75 million was received in 2022, with two payments of US\$37.5 million each expected during 2023, bringing the total amount available for appropriation in this year’s National Budget to US\$150 million. The deal falls within the broader framework of the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030, formulated to find a pathway to prosperity and development that is non-polluting while mainstreaming climate resilience.

⁴⁶ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/05/17/eastern-caribbean-secures-27-million-from-the-world-bank-to-improve-data-driven-decision-making> (cited 05.06.2023).

⁴⁷ To see specific capacity building support received by countries refer to Annex X.

Box 1
University Consortium of Small Island States

The University Consortium of Small Island States (UCSIS) was created in 2005 among five universities in SIDS to enhance regional collaboration at tertiary level.⁴⁸ Very little activity related to the University Consortium of Small Island States took place between 2014 and 2018. This was due to a lack of funding required to support the implementation of activities. During the mid-term review of the SAMOA Pathway in 2018, it became apparent that the Consortium was not functioning optimally and needed to be revitalized. In 2019, a meeting was held between the original members and DESA to discuss the revitalization of the Consortium. The University of Delaware took on the role of international secretariat. Since then, UCSIS has been seeking to expand its membership and is reaching out to the global diaspora of SIDS experts working in international universities and interested in becoming part of the Consortium. UCSIS is also working on finalizing a strategic plan to be launched at the Fourth International Conference of Small Island Developing States in 2024. This strategy will address resource mobilization and the expansion of membership.

4. Technology

The SAMOA Pathway acknowledges the importance of access to reliable, affordable, and environmentally sound technologies in supporting the sustainable development of SIDS. The issue of science, technology and innovation (STI) was further highlighted as a priority for the Caribbean in the San Pedro Declaration. Unquestionably, the COVID-19 experience demonstrated the critical role that technology will inevitably play in knowledge generation and sharing, education, the viability of productive activity and social interaction. This notwithstanding, many countries remain challenged in their efforts to advance STI. An ECLAC 2022 study of 13 States and Territories in the English-speaking Caribbean showed only two countries (Barbados and Jamaica) with dedicated STI Ministries. Only three (Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago) had formally adopted STI policies (Walker and de Paula, 2022). Those countries with legislative and institutional frameworks in place noted that in many instances, many of the frameworks were absent or weak. Many STI units had small staff and even smaller budgets, making it near impossible to successfully implement their mandates (Walker and de Paula, 2022). One of the exceptions noted was that of Cuba, which has one of the most advanced STI systems in the subregion.

Research and development (R&D), critical to advancements in technology, is also seriously underserved. Investments in R&D by the public and private sectors are perceived as being largely inadequate (UNESCO, 2015 and 2021). While more emphasis is being placed on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) within the educational system, a greater level of investment in teacher training in this field is urgently required.

Discussion on the digitization of records as well as the use of digital technologies and data to replace processes at the operational level have been on-going for over 20 years. This was further reiterated by Caribbean SIDS with 37 per cent of respondents noting that technological gaps and a lack of digitalization of the statistical systems was a hindrance to improved data collection and statistical analysis. Within the subregion, there exists a digital divide among countries characterized by a diverse set of factors including access, affordability, bandwidth, content, age, disability access, education (literacy and numeracy), digital technology skills, gender differences, migration patterns, location, access to mobile devices, internet speeds, and useful usage e.g., e-government or e-commerce (Alexander et al., 2023).

In a study of eleven (11) Caribbean countries⁴⁹ to examine the impact of digital inclusion on digital transformation efforts, it was found that countries are at various stages of their digital transformation journey, and there appears to be a lack of strategic direction. Few of the countries and territories studied had an information and communications technology (ICT) plan in force, and most had not yet considered digital inclusion in their policy frameworks. Most countries took a sectoral approach, and many focused

⁴⁸ The University Consortium of Small Island States (USCIS) original members included: the University of Malta; University of Mauritius; University of the South Pacific; University of the Virgin Islands; and The University of the West Indies.

⁴⁹ Anguilla, Aruba, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago.

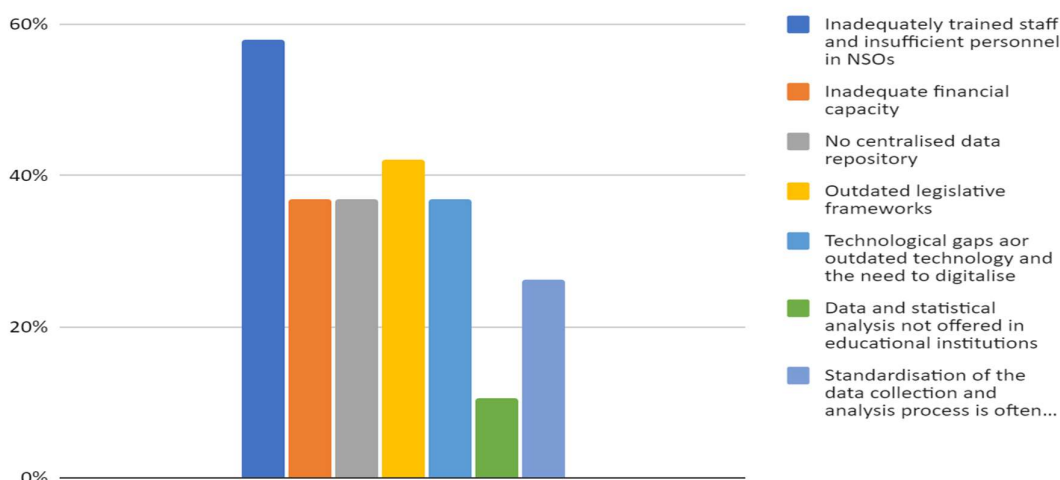
almost exclusively on e-government. As a result of the absence of any strategic direction, digital inclusion efforts are frequently piecemeal and ad hoc (Alexander et al., 2023).

5. Data and Statistics

The SAMOA Pathway reaffirmed the important role that data and statistics play in development planning in SIDS and recognized that improved data collection and statistical analysis are required to enable SIDS to assess progress towards agreed development goals. However, despite this and the commitments made during the Third International Conference on SIDS to strengthen the availability and accessibility of data and statistical systems, national statistical systems in Caribbean SIDS continue to be under-resourced and data collection and management continues to be a challenge.

A study of statistical legislation in 24 Caribbean States and territories found that although countries were beginning to update statistical legislation, many needed revision (Bleeker and Abdulkadri, 2020). These findings were corroborated through the SAMOA pathway implementation survey, where over 40 per cent of respondents acknowledged that outdated legislative frameworks were hindering advancements in data collection and management (figure 6). A further 58 percent of respondents noted that national statistical offices continue to have limited human and financial capacities and that many of the existing staff are not adequately trained. There is also often a lack of familiarity with statistical applications, as many of these are not often included in relevant tertiary educational programmes. Countries acknowledged that there was a need to introduce new technologies and to digitize the National Statistical Offices.

Figure 6
Main challenges to enhance national capacity for improved data collection and statistical analysis.



Source: Author's compilation.

At least six countries acknowledged gaps with sustained data collection and management. This issue was summarized by one country which noted that it *"faces challenges in the provision of high quality, accessible, timely disaggregated data that can support evidence-based decisions related to the SIDS Agenda which makes it difficult to monitor progress and identify areas where additional resources and support are needed."*

Taking such requests into consideration, some advancements have taken place during the timeframe of the SAMOA Pathway in relation to capacity building in data and statistics. To strengthen technical capacities of National Statistical Offices in Caribbean SIDS, ECLAC in partnership with the UN Statistical Department, CARICOM Secretariat, OECS Commission, PARIS21, CDEMA and UNDRR supported an initiative to generate relevant climate change and disaster indicators for evidence-based policies. Participating countries included: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. In partnership with CDEMA, the World Food Programme is contributing to efforts to ensure existing data systems such as CDEMA's Caribbean Risk

Information System (GeoCRIS) and impact assessment tools are up-to-date and can be used to inform preparedness actions and any consequent response.

The Government of Aruba is also in the process of implementing a National Statistical System (NSS) and in 2022, both the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) and ECLAC, provided a review of the NSS Implementation plan of Aruba.

6. Institutional Support for SIDS

During the high-level meeting convened in 2019 to review SAMOA Pathway implementation, it was acknowledged that after five years of the SAMOA Pathway implementation, small islands still face significant challenges in accessing sufficient, affordable development financing, including concessional financing. Despite the fact that countries committed to exploring innovative and sustainable sources of financing and discussed progress on combating the devastating impacts of climate change, building economic and environmental resilience, and other challenges, Caribbean SIDS have indicated that many of these challenges persist, almost 10 years after the adoption of the SAMOA Pathway.

As part of General Assembly resolution 69/288 entitled “Comprehensive review of United Nations system support for small island developing States”, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) was requested “to conduct a comprehensive review of United Nations system support for small island developing States, with a view to enhancing the overall effectiveness of such support”. Under this comprehensive review, nine recommendations were proposed to strengthen the system-wide coherence and effectiveness of the United Nations work in support of SIDS. These recommendations *inter alia* called for increased resources, capacity building efforts and multi-year funding to facilitate programmatic activities to support SIDS.⁵⁰ Despite such efforts, the absence of a follow-up framework and accountability system related to the recommendations outlined under the JIU makes it difficult to assess whether the recommendations have been fully incorporated. Further, Caribbean SIDS have noted the need for new SIDS institutional models in the areas of political coordination, advocacy, programming and in resource mobilization. Caribbean SIDS have also acknowledged that the lack of a dedicated financial mechanism to support implementation of the SIDS sustainable development agenda has hindered the advancement of priority actions articulated under the SIDS programme of action in the last 30 years.

Box 2 Regional Coordinating Mechanism

The proposal for a regional coordinating mechanism for the Caribbean emerged in 1995 during the implementation of the BPoA where the subregion recognized the need to establish mechanisms to assist with financial, technical, and manpower constraints. In the absence of a formalized mechanism, the subregion agreed to establish an interim institutional structure, with CARICOM and ECLAC requested to jointly provide support to the mechanism. It was only in 2006 at the Twenty First Session of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) that the regional coordinating mechanism (RCM) was formally accepted as a mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the MSI and resolution 100 (XXVII) from the 27th Session of the CDCC reaffirmed the need to fully operationalize the RCM to monitor implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda.

Caribbean SIDS reiterated in 2018 that the regional coordinating mechanism mandate should be revitalized with a focus on advancing political advocacy on SIDS issues at the regional level, facilitating SIDS-SIDS cooperation and spearheading implementation of the SAMOA Pathway in a coherent and effective manner (Dubrie, 2020). Considering this, resolution 104 (XXVIII) of the 28 Meeting of the CDCC approved the renaming of the RCM to the Caribbean SIDS Mechanism for Sustainable Development and agreed to an expanded mandate of the subregional mechanism to focus on monitoring and supporting sustainable development implementation in the Caribbean SIDS.

Despite such efforts, the RCM remained relatively inactive during SAMOA Pathway implementation. This was primarily due to a lack of resources to support the operationalization of the mechanism.

⁵⁰ Comprehensive review of United Nations system support for small island developing States: final findings JIU/REP/2016/7.

V. Monitoring and Evaluation

In the survey administered to member States, views were sought on the principal factors undermining implementation of the SAMOA Pathway at the national and subregional levels. Respondents isolated several institutional gaps in coordination at the national level for monitoring implementation of the SIDS agenda. At the top of the list was the lack of an inter-agency coordination process or mechanism followed by the lack of a dedicated financial mechanism to support implementation of the SIDS Sustainable development agenda. Respondents also felt that the M&E policy across the subregion was disjointed and lacked integration and incorporation at all levels and that data collection and analysis was poor. A few countries referenced the improper integration of non-governmental actors into the implementation of the SIDS agenda, a general lack of awareness of the SIDS Programme of Action and little information on SIDS focal points.

A. Inter-agency coordination: deficits in the coordinating mechanisms

The lack of an effective coordination mechanism at the regional level has been consistently identified as a challenge undermining successful implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action. Such a challenge was identified as early as 1995 during a Caribbean Meeting of Experts on Implementation of the BPoA, which noted that an absence of a coordinating mechanism was a critical factor affecting the slow implementation of the action plan (Griffith, 1995 and ECLAC, 2003). As has already been highlighted this led to the establishment of an interim regional coordinating mechanism later renamed the Caribbean SIDS Mechanism for Sustainable Development.⁵¹ Despite the call for this mechanism at the regional level, respondents highlighted that “*the absence of an agreed and instituted coordinated and governance mechanism constituting SIDS governments*” continued to hinder the advancement of the SIDS development agenda. The issue of an institutional mechanism to support effective monitoring of the SIDS programme of Action was also considered by the Joint Inspection Unit during the comprehensive review of United Nations system support for SIDS.⁵²

⁵¹ Please refer to section V for an historical overview of the regional coordinating mechanism.

⁵² Refer to the Joint Inspection Unit Review for more detail:
https://www.unjiu.org/sites/www.unjiu.org/files/jiu_document_files/products/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2016_7_English.pdf

The SAMOA Pathway is cross-sectoral; successful implementation at the national level would therefore require effective coordination. While a few Caribbean SIDS have established mechanisms to track implementation of the sustainable development goals, 67 per cent of respondents noted the absence of an inter-agency coordination process or mechanism as a gap in monitoring implementation of the SIDS agenda. As one country noted *"the governance structures in many SIDS can be fragmented, with responsibilities for different sectors and issues spread across multiple government ministries or agencies."* Notwithstanding the establishment by the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) of a SIDS national focal network in 2018, many government agencies reported being unaware of their country's designated SIDS national focal point. Respondents also noted that there is room for increased communication between the SIDS units of the Secretariat (DESA and OHRLLS) and the Member States. This dearth in coordination among SIDS regional institutions and the UN systems has made it even more challenging to establish a SIDS specific institutional mechanism to drive intraregional coordination in relation to monitoring and evaluation.

B. Monitoring framework for SAMOA Pathway

Noting that the SAMOA Pathway did not have a monitoring framework associated with its implementation, paragraph 20, of resolution 74/217 called upon the United Nations system to identify targets and indicators for priority areas not covered by the SDGs and Sendai Framework to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of the SAMOA Pathway. In response to this request a framework for monitoring the SAMOA Pathway was developed in 2021 (Daly, 2021). Even though a monitoring framework for the SAMOA Pathway was developed in 2021 and revised in 2023, at least 27.8 per cent of respondents confirmed that the lack of *"an overarching framework for reporting with clear targets and indicators"* undermined successful implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.

Human resource capacity to assess and analyze data and information and feed them into the reporting processes was another constraint identified in the report and something to be considered when designing monitoring frameworks which SIDS need to report on.

Respondents also stated that inadequate integration of non-governmental actors in the implementation of the SIDS agenda was a discernible gap in coordination at the national level. While there has been some degree of civil society engagement at the national level with 40 per cent of respondents indicating frequency of engagement and an additional 30 per cent indicating occasional engagement with this stakeholder group, recent studies conclude little change in overall engagement with civil society. Furthermore it was noted that data chronicling such activity was still being collected in an ad hoc manner. It was also noted that there were no mechanisms to reliably and adequately monitor the effectiveness of policies and initiatives undertaken (Garmer, 2017).

VI. Recommendations for addressing identified gaps and challenges

The Human Development Report 2021-22 paints a sobering picture of the World as we know it (UNDP, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war have battered global supply chains, driving up price volatility on key commodities notably energy, food and fertilizers thereby creating the atmosphere for an impending food security crisis. Human action is determined to be the major contributor to unprecedented global temperature rise which has been described as an existential threat by UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres.⁵³ The recommendations below describe mechanisms and approaches for addressing the gaps and challenges, presented in the previous sections and which continue to undermine the effective implementation of the SIDS development agenda. The recommendations are presented as interventions based on national, subregional, inter-regional, international and UN System responses.

A. National

The paucity of **civil society engagement** both in terms of information sharing and quality of engagement remains unclear. While most respondents indicated the need for mechanisms to foster greater national inter-agency collaboration through the creation of national coordinating committees, there is room to pursue a more “stakeholder engagement” strategy rather than the traditional “stakeholder management” approach. In other words, there is a need to move away from mere engagement processes to the actual formation of relationships between partners that are equal in their interactions. Several respondents identified the need to increase engagement with local people and communities.

Capacity building support for Caribbean SIDS is required in several areas: for integrating social and environmental systems and capacities into National Statistical Systems; for developing country profiles on vulnerability and resilience; for promoting technical and vocational education and training in skills relevant to the labour market; for digitization and digital transformation; and for technical support in data standardization and management.

⁵³

<https://press.un.org/en/2021/sc14445.doc.htm#:~:text=Though%20climate%20change%20is%20indeed,to%20adequately%20respond%20to%20it.> (Cited 18.06.2023).

On the question of capacity development support for **data collection and management**, increased funding is required for national statistical offices. Further, the importance of timely and reliable data for decision making in an increasingly volatile world cannot be overstated. Caribbean SIDS have acknowledged that increased investment is also required in the following areas in data management: restructuring and improving national data collection and management systems; SIDS-SIDS capacity transfer initiatives for national statistical systems; modernization of legislation underpinning national statistical systems; and technology needs assessment and access to new technology.

Caribbean SIDS should continue exploring opportunities for **innovative financing** through blended finance, the establishment of carbon credit agreements, debt conversion initiatives such as blue and green bonds and public private partnerships. National funds to support economic, social, and environmental advancements should not be undervalued.

Finally, **digital transformation and ICT** should be priorities. While it was recognized that countries with clear ICT plans tend to have more digital inclusion initiatives in place, plans should be concrete, inclusive (especially of marginalized groups), and have specific provisions regarding review and reporting. As the digital transformation of government is currently the primary focus of most of the countries and territories, governments should secure training to increase the skill level of public servants in ICT. Given that these are important considerations for digital inclusion, further efforts should be made to deepen the understanding by the public, service providers and public servants on these topics. Data privacy and cybersecurity should be integrated into courses on ICT skills to ensure that people are able to use digital tools safely and effectively, while consciously managing their personal data (Alexander et al., 2023).

B. Subregional

Institutional mechanisms at the subregional level have been demonstrated as useful in addressing gaps in coordination for the monitoring and implementation of the SIDS agenda. Caribbean SIDS have noted the importance of having **SIDS driven institutional and governance mechanisms**. As such, consideration might be given to revisiting the renamed Caribbean SIDS Mechanism for Sustainable Development responsible for monitoring and supporting sustainable development implementation in the Caribbean small island developing States.

Further, respondents noted that a mechanism to facilitate the sharing of information by development partners at a regional level can ensure that resources are efficiently used to reduce the overlap, help identify gaps in the monitoring and implementation of the SIDS agenda and strengthen the support provided to SIDS.

Respondents further recommended that intergovernmental organizations like the CARICOM Secretariat and OECS Commission should consider establishing new modalities of cooperation to support implementation of the SIDS development agenda. While it is not recommended to increase the burdens and agendas of the existing inter-regional decision-making mechanisms like the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED), expanded opportunities should be provided for reporting on implementation, monitoring and review of progress.

From an economic perspective, **developing SIDS specific investment vehicles through regional financing institutions** will facilitate SIDS-driven institutional and governance mechanisms to address debt management and further access to financing options. The Government of Barbados in collaboration with the Green Climate Fund is pursuing the establishment of a Green Climate Finance Bank for the Caribbean. The Blue-Green Investment Corporation (BGIC), the first green bank in the Caribbean, was approved by the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The Bank will assist Caribbean countries to meet their targets for Nationally Determined Contributions and achieve a climate-resilient low-emission future. The aim is for BGIC to become a major institution for financing climate action in the region. The ECLAC initiative the Caribbean Resilience Fund (CRF) could provide a solid framework that combines debt relief with increased liquidity through Liability Management Operations (LMOs) that could drive the provision of long-term, low cost financing at scale for climate adaptation and economic transformation in the Caribbean.

C. Inter-regional

Acknowledging that all SIDS are working towards the implementation of the SIDS programme of action, Caribbean SIDS advocated for increased **SIDS-SIDS collaboration and cooperation**. Such cooperation could be achieved through **SIDS-SIDS Knowledge Transfer and Capacity Support mechanisms** to support knowledge exchange, peer learning and to identify capacity needs. Respondents also called for new institutional models in the areas of political coordination, advocacy, programming and resource mobilization, to support the reporting processes.

The potential benefits of south-south and triangular cooperation and integration were also acknowledged, through the establishment of trade agreements, forged alliances and partnerships, and shared data collection systems and services.

ICT efforts to reduce the digital divide from a regional perspective is essential and necessary for the SIDS development agenda in the Caribbean and throughout the SIDS regions. At an inter-regional level, discussions on what metrics are appropriate for SIDS would ensure better knowledge transfers and shared learning to reduce the digital divide within country borders, as well as among Caribbean countries and other SIDS regions. Further, awareness regarding the regulatory framework on data privacy and cybersecurity is needed (Alexander and others, 2023).

Moving forward, Caribbean SIDS have expressed the need for a **monitoring framework** which is streamlined to other global agreements to assess the implementation of the SIDS agenda. **National, Regional and Interregional SIDS Major Group Consultative and Platforms** should also be established to support Annual Reporting processes. Such interactions, it was further noted, could provide opportunities for knowledge exchange, peer learning and identifying the capacity needs of SIDS.

D. International

Respondents identified a range of support mechanisms recommended for governments as they engage the international community. Notwithstanding the need for a common platform for engagement, noted in the previous section, respondents requested mechanisms to support technology transfer; mechanisms to ensure accountability of pledges; and reform of IFIs as per the Bridgetown initiative.

In July 2022, Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados convened a high-level retreat in Bridgetown, Barbados, which resulted in the "Bridgetown Initiative". This is a set of unequivocal requests to the international community to address the immediate financial needs of SIDS while also beginning to isolate systemic issues that require transformation of the international financial system. Three priority actions were initially proposed under the Initiative and included: providing emergency liquidity to abate the debt crisis; expanding multilateral lending to governments by \$1 trillion; and activating private sector savings for climate mitigation and fund reconstruction after a climate disaster through new fund mechanisms.⁵⁴ In May 2023, a 2.0 version of the Bridgetown Initiative was defined and it proposes six priority actions to support the reform of IFIs.

Countries also called for the establishment of **mechanisms to address trade-related barriers and promote market access for SIDS products**. A **"No SIDS Left Behind" SDGs Impact Accelerator** to support SIDS capacities for achieving their SDG targets within the context of the specific vulnerabilities identified in the SAMOA Pathway was also recommended. The role of the international community in providing increased and predictable development assistance, including official development assistance (ODA) and other concessional finance, to SIDS through the mobilization of support for implementing tools like the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) was also reiterated.

Since the Bridgetown Initiative was first promoted, progress has been made on multiple fronts, including the long anticipated "Loss and Damage Fund" which was agreed to during the UN Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP27) held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, and for which modalities are to be agreed upon at the next COP28 scheduled for Expo City, Dubai, UAE. Caribbean governments share

⁵⁴ Government of Barbados 2022.

optimism about the potential of the “Loss and Damage fund” and its potential to significantly impact financing the sustainable development needs of SIDS. The recently concluded Financing for Development Forum 2023 also welcomed the Secretary-General’s call for the SDG Stimulus.

E. UN System

Respondents outlined recommendations specific to the UN system which they believe will support SIDS in the implementation of the future SIDS programme of action, and included, among others, the enhanced advocacy for SIDS within the UN system.

Countries noted that the role of the follow-up and review framework of the 2030 Agenda, developed by the United Nations regional commissions, should also be connected to the overall monitoring and accountability framework to report on the contribution of the United Nations system work for the sustainable development of SIDS.

Further, a number of countries noted that a central reporting framework would be welcomed for the standardization of reports among agencies. This should also consider the limiting or consolidation of indicators to be reported on. Others noted that the Voluntary National Reviews used to track SDG implementation, have provided a best practice in reporting.

Respondents also acknowledged that greater interaction with SIDS representatives and with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), should be institutionalized. Transaction costs/time for access to UN support systems needs to be restructured and significantly reduced to facilitate easier and more timely access to technical assistance resources, particularly at the national level. It was also noted that improved coordination among entities of the UN System is critical to leverage support and avoid duplication, while reducing transaction burden on SIDS, and fostering national sustainable impacts.

VII. Emerging issues

The COVID-19 pandemic and Ukraine-Russia conflict have highlighted issues, many of them socio-economic, which have caused renewed focus and interest in the areas addressed below. These could be perceived as priorities for Caribbean SIDS.

A. Strengthening health systems and improving health

The pandemic exposed the structural weaknesses of the health systems in many Caribbean SIDS. Heavy indebtedness and constrained fiscal space limited investment within the health sector, resulting in low per capita levels of health expenditure, shortages of human resources, and inequality in accessing services (ECLAC, 2022b). The COVID-19 pandemic was a wake-up call to the countries of the subregion to give priority to investing in strengthening their health care systems. This can be achieved through the strengthening of institutional and legal frameworks, improving the healthcare infrastructure, moving towards universal health care, and strengthening national social protection systems (ECLAC, 2022b).

At the subregional level, cooperation measures utilized by regional intergovernmental organizations during the COVID 19 pandemic should be further encouraged and formalized (Resiere and others 2021). From a health perspective, increased attention needs to be given to the long-term impacts that the COVID 19 pandemic had on mental health and coping measures should be made available for those in need. Further, the subregion needs to refocus attention on NCD prevention and treatment to improve overall health and wellbeing.

B. Investing in social protection systems

COVID-19 dramatically highlighted the degree of vulnerability of SIDS to external shocks. The existence of social protection systems is important in that they provide a means through which poor and vulnerable families can cope with shocks and crises, improve productivity, and invest in the health and education of their children.

The pandemic drew attention to the existence of large populations within the informal sector who are uninsured and who lack unemployment benefits. As indicated by the World Bank, the strengthening of social protection systems within Caribbean SIDS could entail: (1) updating social data on poverty; (2) implementing economic inclusion programmes that include social protection, livelihood support and

financial inclusions; (3) modernizing the social protection system and increasing its institutional capacity; and (4) strengthening social insurance and labor market programmes (Burunciuc, 2022).

C. Security

Addressing the growing concern of increased violence in the subregion requires a multi-pronged approach. This should include the following: (1) ensuring the existence of increased social protection measures alluded to above that can provide opportunities for marginalized families; (2) increased attention placed on programmes for youth development - focusing on youth at risk by ensuring that educational and job opportunities are available to them; (3) addressing the issue of security as a 'whole of government, whole of society' priority and (4) ensuring that subregional and national organizations responsible for combating crime have the required resources to implement their mandates. Further, CARICOM member States should seek to implement the measures outlined in the Declaration by the Heads of Government on Crime and Violence as a Public Health Issue.

D. Food security and Nutrition

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict negatively impacted the price of grain and the transportation of food commodities, contributing to increased food insecurity within the subregion. Moving forward, the subregion needs to establish policies which would not only address the issues of poor nutrition, but also of the increasing levels of food insecurity. Agricultural policies that promote and support small scale farming and the production of nutritious and diverse foods should be encouraged (FAO and others, 2023, Phillips, 2022). Social protection systems, such as school feeding programmes, where the consumption of nutritious food is encouraged, should be expanded. In many Caribbean SIDS, many people struggle to obtain nutritious food options due to its prohibitive cost. Where possible, price incentives that support the consumption of more nutritious food options should be adopted. Programmes sensitizing consumers to the benefit of certain food options should become widespread within the subregion and consideration should also be given to "front of package nutrition labelling" to discourage the consumption of foods with low nutritional value (FAO and others, 2023).

E. Promote economic diversification

As already mentioned, the recent shocks of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and natural and climatic disasters resulted in a deepening of existing structural problems of inequality, productivity, labour informality and limited access to social protection systems (ECLAC, 2022d). In their effort to address these constraints, Caribbean SIDS may wish to consider the development of an industrial policy designed to increase international competitiveness through economic diversification resulting in increased productivity - through the use of new and improved technology and a knowledgeable and skilled workforce (ECLAC 2022a). Further, ECLAC has proposed increased investment in the following nine sectors to support economic reactivation and transform the productive structure in Latin America and Caribbean: **the energy transition, e-mobility, the circular economy, the bioeconomy, the health-care manufacturing industry, digital transformation, the care economy, sustainable tourism, the micro-small, and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) sector, and the social and solidarity economy** (ECLAC 2022d).

Other emerging issues identified outside of this assessment and analysis may include migration, corruption, and population ageing.

VIII. Identification of priorities for the Fourth International Conference on SIDS

A. Introduction

Countries identified several critical areas in need of priority intervention for the next programme of action for SIDS to increase the resilience of the countries of the Caribbean. The priorities included the following: **climate action (inclusive of disaster risk management); sustainable energy; access to financing; health care; food nutrition and security; ocean governance and the blue economy; and youth. At a secondary level, but still for consideration included digital transformation; educational reform; technology and innovation; sustainable consumption and production; chemicals and waste management; sustainable tourism; biodiversity and habitat restoration; inclusive and sustainable trade; and investment in data management.**

Potential Government Thematic Priorities for Next SIDS Programme of Action

- Climate Action
- Sustainable Energy
- Access to Financing
- Health Care and Health
- Green, blue and orange economies
- Food and nutrition security and agriculture
- Youth
- SCP, chemicals and waste management
- Sustainable tourism
- Digital transformation and economy
- Educational reform
- Technology and innovation
- Biodiversity and habitat restoration
- Multidimensional vulnerability index
- Debt
- Disaster risk reduction
- Investment in data management
- Inclusive and sustainable trade

B. Managing debt and increasing access to finance

Improved debt management based both on reducing debt vulnerabilities and a reformed international debt architecture is critical for Caribbean countries to achieve sustainable development. Countries in the subregion will need to continue strengthening their fiscal management systems, including budget planning and execution, better revenue collection systems, upgraded expenditure management with the use of public expenditure reviews (PERs), periodic debt sustainability analysis and export diversification to build resilience to external economic shocks.

Alongside the need for domestic reform and better economic management, there is also the need for a reformed and fit-for-purpose international debt architecture. This modern architecture should focus on four key priorities that would enable highly indebted middle-income countries in the Caribbean to access more concessional financing that is vital to national efforts to relieve the burden of debt servicing, creating fiscal space for investment in both the productive and social sectors and for adaptation to climate change.

- Debt restructuring mechanisms should focus on providing adequate relief to enable indebted countries to achieve higher growth rates that could reduce their debt to GDP ratios.
- Criteria for access to concessional financing should be based on a Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index rather than just GNI per capita. This would provide a more equitable and dynamic mechanism for evaluating country risk, vulnerability and real resilience in the face of many and varied shocks.
- State-contingent debt instruments such as natural disaster clauses should be mainstreamed in debt contracts with Caribbean governments to provide much-needed relief and moratoriums on debt repayment after natural disasters such as hurricanes to enable affected countries to rebuild and recover.
- The multilateral development banks (MDBs) should be further capitalized to provide the scale of funding that is required for the Caribbean and other middle-income countries to achieve the SDGs and to avoid the middle-income trap.

As previously noted, the Bridgetown Initiative provides a blueprint to reform the global financial system with a view to securing greater equity in access to global finance. This should be pursued through simplified access to the “loss and damage fund” for which modalities for access are expected to be concluded at the upcoming COP28.

C. Climate Action and Resilience to Disaster Vulnerabilities

Ever-increasing global temperatures with associated impacts on biodiversity, sea-level rise, coral bleaching and associated coastal threats, not to mention increases in the frequency and intensity of tropical weather systems are well documented. While adaptation to climate change is critical, resilience to disaster vulnerabilities must also be highlighted. There are two related UN Initiatives that are being led by the World Meteorological Organization in collaboration with other UN entities that are targeting SIDS and LDCs. The first is the Early Warning for All that is aimed at protecting all persons with an early warning system for extreme weather and climate by 2027. The related Executive Action Plan was launched at COP27. Climate finance has been a growing priority for Caribbean SIDS and with increased risk of climate related disasters in the future, it is important that governments within the subregion ensure full engagement in negotiations for a ‘new collective quantified goal on climate finance’ which considers the vulnerability of SIDS. As stated above, Caribbean SIDS need to closely pay attention to mechanisms established to support the new “loss and damage fund” approved during COP 27 in Sharm el-Sheikh and continue to call for replenishments to already existing funds like the Adaptation Fund.

D. Sustainable Energy Transition

The matter of sustainable energy is intrinsically interrelated as many SIDS in the Caribbean are net importers of fuel for energy which contributes to high foreign exchange leakages as well as escalating production cost for both manufacturing and the tourism industry. In a study of four CARIFORUM member States the UNEP concluded that electricity contributed between 30-50% of total operating costs of hotels, regardless of type; and cooling alone accounted for between 50% and 60% of that figure.⁵⁵ Considering the over-dependence on tourism in the Caribbean region, sustainable energy transitions from high cost imported fossil fuels to indigenous sources of renewable energy is therefore inherently connected to improved economic performance of these sectors and reduction in foreign debt.

There is, consequently, an urgent need for effective energy transition planning. Given the fiscal realities of Caribbean SIDS and the very real challenges in attracting FDI, energy transition should be seen as both urgent and imperative. In this regard the Caribbean will need to stay abreast of new technologies for generation and transmission as well as for electricity end-use, and to consider all available technologies, including end-use efficiency and electricity generation using indigenous renewable resources. This requirement to remain current should also be pursued on a consistent basis. The long-term energy planning process aimed at de-risking investments for the private sector while protecting the purse of public funds is a recommended approach. In this regard strengthening the institutional and legal frameworks to facilitate private sector investment in the clean energy transition is vital.

Further, care must be taken to address issues of regulations for generation and distribution. These include appropriate feed-in-tariffs to address vulnerabilities of utility scale energy providers who must continue to provide reliable and affordable electricity for most of its customers who cannot afford to install renewable energy generation systems.

E. Disaster Risk Management

While disaster management was not highlighted by the majority of respondents, it remains an underlying concern for which several respondents identified parametric insurance to deal with disaster as a key component of innovative responses to financing challenges.

It is not a coincidence that the UN Human Development Report 2021-22 identified insurance and innovation as two out of three strategies needed to respond to global insecurities. The Report states that human societies are living through several unintended consequences of progress, as reflected in part, in the three layers of uncertainty. These are the dangerous planetary changes in the Anthropocene period, the unpredictability in uncharted transitions, and the social division and polarization of societies (UNDP, 2022). At least four respondents highly recommended that Governments invest in technological innovation to deal with disaster risk management and resilience building in all sectors.

F. Oceans, marine resource utilization and the blue economy

The ocean and its resources have always been important as a source of livelihood to Caribbean SIDS. However increasingly Caribbean governments are looking to the oceans as a source of economic diversification. The concept of the blue economy appears to have finally taken root in the region, evidenced in the approval of a number of blue economy related programmes and projects.⁵⁶ Caribbean SIDS that have not yet done so, should be encouraged to develop marine spatial plans and support their application as they advance the implementation of blue economy programmes. Further, there has been increasing interest by Caribbean SIDS in mineral prospecting and its potential economic benefits, as well as potential benefits to be accrued from marine genetic resources as articulated under the newly agreed international agreement on Biodiversity Beyond Areas of National Jurisdiction. Notwithstanding these

⁵⁵ UN Environment (2019) National Cooling Strategy -Saint Lucia, Barbados, Bahamas, Dominicana Republica

⁵⁶ Regional blue economy projects being implemented in Caribbean SIDS include the UNDP/GEF Protecting and Restoring the Ocean's natural Capital, building Resilience and supporting region-wide Investments for sustainable Blue socio-Economic development (PROCARIBE+); the GEF BE-CLME+ "Promoting National Blue Economy Priorities Through Marine Spatial Planning in the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Plus Project and the World Bank funded OECS Commission executed Unleashing the Blue Economy of the Caribbean (UBEC)

new concepts, traditional sectors like fisheries should not be ignored and the Caribbean subregion should seek to invest in mariculture opportunities. The unsustainably high prices associated with regional air travel have also opened the door for increased investment in the maritime transportation sector.

Despite these potential opportunities many marine and coastal resources continue to be at risk. It is therefore important that the subregion works towards achieving the 2050 goals and the 2030 targets under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework pertaining to marine and coastal resources. Further, the issue of plastics continues to be a growing problem in the Caribbean subregion. An estimated 1.3 million tonnes of plastics have been introduced in the coastal waters of the Caribbean Sea in 2015 (UNEP and CEP, 2019). In light of this, it is important that Caribbean SIDS continue to participate in the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution including in the marine environment.

G. Education

Considering the inequalities exposed in the education system and challenges to the one-size-fits-all approach to education, it is recommended that the increasingly popular and non-traditional competency-based learning assessment system should be examined further by educators in the region. This is already being explored in OECS countries as well as in Belize. Having a knowledge-based society and a skilled workforce that would allow the subregion to compete in a rapidly changing world, requires reconfiguration of the school curricula to incorporate new and emerging skill sets and expertise. Introducing students to STEM from an early age, and expanding technical and vocational programmes to include new and emerging subject areas will allow the subregion to have a competitive edge in the global economy. However, such advancements cannot take place in the absence of capacity development opportunities for tutors at all levels in the educational system.

H. Youth empowerment

As noted above, there is growing concern in the subregion regarding the issue of youth unemployment and the potential socio-economic challenges that could arise from such, particularly in relation to “youth at risk”.⁵⁷ It is therefore no surprise that Caribbean governments have identified youth as a growing priority to be considered under the new SIDS programme of action. The saying - it takes a village to raise a child - is proving accurate in ensuring that the region produces young people who have a sense of belonging; are provided with positive gender roles; and are connected to a positive role model. There is a need to reallocate resources to support effective youth programmes, such as family counselling and community-based training; to recognize the contributions of different actors within the society; and to develop short-run policies to help youth immediately at risk and long-term ones for youth of the future (Cunningham and others, 2008). These include putting in place measures to improve the quality of learning and training (both in person and remote), skills development, and the provision of opportunities and options for labour (ECLAC, 2022 b).

I. Technology and Innovation

To meet their sustainable development commitments, Caribbean governments acknowledge that increased investments in technology and innovation is required. Moving forward there is a need to advance the institutional environment for technology and innovation in Caribbean SIDS. Nationally, governments should consider revising existing, and putting in place, legislation to support investment and research into STI. Further, regional and international partnership arrangements, and south-south partnerships supporting research and technical cooperation should also be encouraged. The role of the Diaspora can be integral in providing support for R&D and business innovations. At the international level,

⁵⁷ These include young people who have factors in their lives which can lead them to engage in negative behaviors which may cause harm to themselves and their societies.

continued support is needed to leverage finances to support advancements in STI and support technology transfer.

As regards artificial intelligence (AI), it is increasingly apparent that such innovation will transform human lives. Rapid advancements are taking place with AI technologies. However Caribbean SIDS do not seem to be progressing as rapidly as other regions, with many Caribbean SIDS lacking national policies and strategies to assess the impacts of AI on their societies. Moving forward, it is important that Caribbean SIDS engage the whole of society (policy makers, private sector and civil society) in developing strategies, regulations and laws to effectively govern the deployment of AI technology (UNESCO, 2021b). Further, in ensuring that the region has the human capital required to compete with this rapidly advancing technology, it is important that such changes are reflected in the education curricula. To support the subregion's integration of AI, a proposed framework for a Caribbean AI Policy Roadmap, consisting of six principles,⁵⁸ regional and national priorities, has been developed (UNESCO, 2021b).

⁵⁸ The six principles as defined in the proposed policy roadmap include: resiliency, governance, transformation, upskilling, preservation and sustainability.

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Annex

Annex: Quantitative Analysis Methodology

The quantitative analysis in this report is based on the SAMOA Pathway monitoring framework⁵⁹. The monitoring framework consists of 109 indicators (drawn from the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, and the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) covering progress against all 30 priority action clusters of the SAMOA Pathway.

Data sources

SDG data used in this analysis are sourced from the Global SDG Indicators Database⁶⁰ maintained by the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction provided data for the Sendai Framework indicators, available at the Sendai Framework Monitor.⁶¹ For this report, data was last accessed in February 2023.

Methodology

In order to assess progress against each indicator, target values are desirable. However, in the absence of any clear targets in the SAMOA Pathway, a simple assessment of the degree of progress was made.

The assessment uses the desirable trend direction to determine whether a country or territory is progressing or regressing for any particular series. Stagnation is defined by an absolute compound average growth rate of less than 0.5%. In cases where a country or territory has only one data point for a particular series, the trend cannot be calculated. Therefore the series is classified as *insufficient data*. The possible categories based on the absolute value of annualized compound growth rate are:

- f) Category 1 (progressing): the rate is greater than 0.5 per cent in the desirable direction;
- g) Category 2 (stagnant): the rate is less than 0.5 per cent;
- h) Category 3 (regressing): the rate is greater than 0.5 per cent in the undesirable direction;
- i) Category 4 (insufficient data): insufficient data to make an assessment;
- j) Category 5 (no data): no data or desirable direction available.

Since indicators may be comprised of multiple series, the assessment is performed at the series level and then aggregated for indicators, which is the simple average of the number of countries in each category for each series.

The baseline year for the assessment is 2014, the start year of the SAMOA Pathway.

Limitations

The following limitation of the assessment should be noted:

- While disaggregated data are essential for identifying population groups that may be at risk of being left behind, they were not incorporated in the computations for the present report.
- Indicators that do not have a clear desirable direction for all countries were not included in the assessment and appeared as *no data*. This includes parity indicators, where the desired value needs to be within a range of a target.
- Since data sources were limited to SDGs and Sendai Framework, other framework indicators were not assessed due to the unavailability of data.

Quantifying Data Availability

⁵⁹ See https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/Final_Report_DevelopmentofFrameworkformonitoring_SAMOA_Pathway.pdf.

⁶⁰ See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal>

⁶¹ See <https://sendaimonitor.undrr.org/>

The assessment of data availability is evaluated for each country or territory and series using data from 2000 until the most recent year according to the following criteria:

- Sufficient data: two or more data points are available
- Insufficient data: only one data point is available
- No data: no data points are available

When an indicator has multiple series, the series with the best data availability represents the indicator. The aggregation for a region takes into account the number of countries or territories within each category as follows:

- Sufficient data (for a region): at least half of the countries or territories within the group have sufficient data
- Insufficient data (for a region): less than half of the countries or territories within the group have sufficient data, or most countries or territories have insufficient data
- No data (for a region): all countries or territories have no data.

Regions

Three geographical regions were adopted for the assessments to provide a clear picture of the progress of small island developing States. The composition of the regions is as follows:

- (a) **Atlantic Ocean, Indian Ocean, and South China Sea region:** Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Maldives, Mauritius, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, and Singapore;
- (b) **Caribbean region:** Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Anguilla, Aruba, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Curaçao, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Montserrat, Puerto Rico, Saint Maarten, the Turks and Caicos Islands, and the United States Virgin Islands;
- (c) **Pacific region:** Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, American Samoa, the Cook Islands, Guam, New Caledonia, Niue, and the Northern Mariana Islands.