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CAVE HILL CAMPUS
BARBADOS, WEST INDIES

DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT,
SOCIOLOGY, SOCIAL WORK
AND PSYCHOLOGY

POLICY BRIEF SPECIAL EDITION ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
CAVE HILL CAMPUS

JULY 2021

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THE EFFECTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT ON MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19 AMONG BARBADIANS

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What is the issue?

Since the initial incidences of COVID-19 were discovered in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, there have been 83.5 million cases worldwide and 1.82 million deaths (Worldometers 2020). The alarming rates at which the disease continues to advance have resulted in widespread fear and severe reactions worldwide. These reactions include countrywide lockdowns, social distancing requirements and social isolation (British Broadcasting Corporation 2020). Such consequences have led to a major breakdown in the regular social interactions of people across the world who must adjust to the new mitigation protocols, most of which have led to many forms of social disruption.

Social disruption is defined as any breakdown or alteration to the normal functioning of a social system (McGrath 1991). The numerous types of social disruption, such as 24-hour curfews and the closing of borders, resulted in businesses shutting down temporarily, or in severe cases, permanently, later leading to unemployment (King 2020). Mariolis, Nikolaos, and Soklis (2020) argued that the tourism industry experienced the most severe effects of the pandemic, as was seen in Barbados. Major (2020) reported that over 40,000 Barbadians (25% of the working population) became unemployed due to the pandemic, the majority of whom were employed in the tourism sector.

Perspectives on the effects of unemployment have expanded substantially to include not only financial struggles but also the effects on mental health. Generally speaking, mental health refers to an individual's cognitive, psychological and emotional well-being, which affects how they think, react and manage the various situations with which they are presented. In this way, stability and functionality are predicated on being mentally healthy. Dating back to as early as the Great Depression of the 1930s, the drastic and negative impact of financial instability was highlighted, with persons reportedly being more emotionally unstable when unemployed compared to when employed (Institute for Work and Health 2009). Moreover, in the new

global economy, most recently introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment has become a central concern for many. Since it reintroduced a wide array of stressors such as financial instability, debt and general uncertainty (Godinic, Obrenovic, & Khudaykulov 2020), altogether, such stressors may negatively impact the multifaceted underpinnings of mental health.

The literature generally highlights three main factors that mediate the impact of unemployment on mental health: helplessness, low self-esteem, and low self-efficacy. Helplessness is defined as the feelings elicited by an inability to act effectively to accomplish the desired goal. Farre, Fasani, and Meuller (2018) examined the effects of unemployment on mental health and found a strong correlation between these two variables, with helplessness acting as a mediator. Farre et al. (2018) argued that helplessness becomes acute among persons who have been unemployed for a prolonged period. Another study supported these findings, showing that hopelessness acts as a mediator between financial hardships and mental health (Frankham, Richardson, & Maguire 2020). These authors defined hopelessness as a lack of optimism regarding the future, which in some ways coincides with the current operationalisation of helplessness.

Self-esteem is defined as a person's beliefs about his or her self and worth and has been consistently shown to impact mental health (Karaca et al. 2019; Urzúa et al. 2019; Thoma et al. 2021). It is anticipated that unemployment will lead to lowered self-esteem, which will contribute to poor mental health. Lee and Allen (2020) supported this as their study showed a partial mediation of the relationship between economic well-being and mental health by young adults' self-esteem. Similar findings were revealed by Pelaez-Fernandez, Rey, and Extremera (2021), who showed that self-esteem mediated the relationship between emotional intelligence and depression among the unemployed. Self-efficacy is defined as a person's confidence in their abilities. The mediating effect of self-efficacy for unemployment was also explored in the literature. For example, Rusu et al. (2013) found that job search self-efficacy mediated the relationship between employment status and anxiety symptoms. Similarly, Kim et al. (2019) found that financial self-efficacy mediated the relationship between financial stress and depressive symptoms.

Why is it important?

The increase in unemployment rates in any country should attract significant concern, due to the unfortunate and predictive effects of unemployment, such as loss of income, financial constraints and the inability to meet one's basic needs, which can extend to other problems such as poor or diminished mental health (Leonhardt 2020). Examinations of good mental health benefits demonstrated positive personal effects such as improved moods, clearer thinking, increased self-esteem, reduced anxiety, and a lower risk of depression (Miller 2021).

By contrast, the effects of poor mental health include anger, fear, sadness, and feelings of helplessness (American Addiction Centers Resource 2021). The National Alliance on Mental Illness (2021) also addressed some warning signs and symptoms of poor mental health and mental illness, among which were the avoidance of social activities, overuse of substances, physical ailments without clear causes and inability to manage daily challenges and stress. Altogether, it is easy to see how poor mental health reduces the overall functionality of individuals in different contexts.

However, when modelling the complex dynamics shaping mental health effects, it is

impractical to focus solely on its effects on the individual. Rather, such perspectives should be broadened to include the effects of others around them, notably their family. Evidence suggests that mental health among parents and guardians is among the most important factors for maintaining healthy and stable familial interactions. For instance, Prime, Browne, and Wade (2020) opined that social disruption elicited by the Covid-19 pandemic would generate increased psychological distress levels for caregivers, subsequently impacting the quality of relationships among members of the entire family.

In general, the literature supports the consensus that adverse familial interactions such as physical and psychological abuse have negative impacts on individuals' social and mental well-being. The National Crime Records Bureau reported that 'family problems' were the leading cause of suicide rates in India in 2019, accounting for an alarming 32.4% of all suicides (Narayanan 2020). In this regard, family problems generally referred to any negative verbal, physical or psychological interactions, excluding marital conflict.

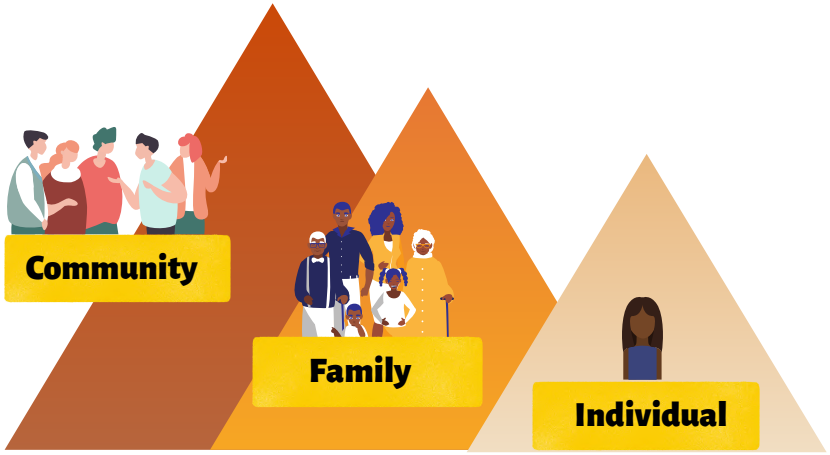
Mental health among individuals is also becoming widely acknowledged to be critical in maintaining functioning communities and societies. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC) highlighted the importance of mental health to communities and wider society (de Caestecker 2017). They viewed good mental health as an asset for attaining social benefits such as education, economic productivity, and even social cohesion. By contrast, poor mental health can contribute to social inequality and exclusion by means of overt stigma and discrimination (de Caestecker 2017). Further support is provided by McDaid and Park (2011), whose systematic review demonstrated the importance of investing in mental health by explaining the consequences of poor mental health. They noted that, within Europe, the costs of depression and anxiety disorders alone accumulate approximately 136 billion pounds (McDaid & Park 2011).

As economies have access to only a finite number of resources within and beyond the health system, relevant efforts must be augmented to protect the mental health of citizens.

What should be done?

Taken together, the effects of unemployment strongly suggests that this issue should be considered a public matter. Recommendations in this regard can be made on three levels: the community level, the family level, and the individual level.

Figure 1:Diagram showing the Different Levels of Intervention



Community Level

The ultimate goal of addressing issues at the community level entails identifying the most vulnerable communities that may require specific interventions and strengthening their social support networks. Vulnerable populations in this regard would include low-income communities. This community specification comes from understanding the unequal impacts of social disruption such as lockdown and unemployment. Relevant authoritative figures (local policy authorities, health authorities, social workers, and educators) must be able to identify these at-risk communities and use research-based methods, such as surveys, to assess which communities are experiencing this impact the most. If the families within a community meet the criterion for being deemed at risk, Community Based Counselling (CBC) should be offered. Considering the social distancing requirements to mitigate the spread of Covid-19, CBC can be offered over internet-based platforms such as Zoom. Additionally, by allowing pseudonyms, these interventions may reach more families within a community than would be the case with face-to-face interventions.

CBC will aim to help communities plan and manage the areas that are expected to contribute to conflict within pockets of families. Generally speaking, it will help persons adopt alternative decision-making solutions at every level (socially, financially, mentally) while acknowledging and accounting for the changes elicited by the Covid-19 pandemic. It will also offer help in more specific situations. For example, it is anticipated that low-income families may experience dissonance regarding how they prioritise protecting themselves and their families against Covid-19 and worsening household poverty. In such a case, CBC would offer advice on how to manage these situations to avoid experiencing deteriorating health on both sides of this equation.

Additionally, CBC would involve investigating how families within a community can help each other, thus undertaking a whole-of-society approach.

One area to be addressed is the need to strengthen psychosocial support services that already exist and form new ones in areas that lack. This can be done by identifying community leaders and ensuring that they have consistent access to psychosocial first aid services and training programmes. Community leaders can also be leveraged to identify more severely at-risk families who may need more personal training and support at the familial and individual levels. Some examples of more severely at-risk families would be single-parent families, families where both parents are unemployed, and families where the head caregiver is elderly, disabled, or has a mental illness. In such instances, it may be deemed that much closer and more focused attention is needed than would be offered with CBC and consequently, Family-Based Counselling (FBC) would be recommended.

Family Level

UNICEF (2020) reported that over 70% of Caribbean homes (Barbados included) practise violent disciplining measures for their children. With the forced increase in time spent together due to social disruption and unemployment, coupled with the added frustration and anxiety resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, this problem will inevitably be perpetuated (UNICEF 2020). This may later result in either an increased percentage of violence or worsening of the types of disciplining measures used. To avoid such occurrences and to protect the physical and psychological safety of Barbadian children, it is important for these families to be identified and provided with the services necessary to manage their respective situations. Some humanitarian organisations

including the Alliance for Protection Against Children, End Violence Against Children, UNICEF and WHO (2020) collectively recognised the importance of protecting children against violence and abuse during the Covid-19 pandemic and suggested several measures for doing this. These measures were adapted to suit the Barbadian context and are subdivided into three main themes in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Table showing the Different Levels of Intervention

Strategy	Description
Raise awareness of all citizens	1. Those made aware should not be limited to professionals alone, especially considering that children are spending less time with professionals (e.g. teachers) due to social disruption. 2. Awareness should be raised for identifying and reporting signs of abuse and neglect. 3. Friends and neighbours thus become empowered to help children in such situations.
Child protection as essential service	1. All social services relating to child protection should be designated as an essential service. 2. There should be improvement of the social service workforces' capacity to support children and families facing challenges such as abuse. 3. Social service providers should be authorised to assess such situations and conduct unscheduled home visits when necessitated.
Strengthen child help resources	1. Provision must be made for additional resources to strengthen children support helplines in the context of Covid-19. 2. This includes providing child-friendly counselling for children who have been abused. 3. It may also extend to counselling for families who are facing difficulties with adapting to the new mitigation protocols.

Individual Level

Under some circumstances, assessments may reveal that an unemployed individual within the family might be at the centre of familial conflict, tension or strife and they may require individual-based counselling. These cases will be addressed with the use of targeted interventions aimed at improving the ways in which they cope with mental health challenges caused by unemployment. This can be done by directly addressing the primary areas that are thought to have elicited such challenges. Interestingly, Bhat (2010) provided an in-depth analysis of improving the mental health of the unemployed by creating job club interventions. These interventions aim to reduce the impact of unemployment by exploring and providing recommendations for many issues which are raised due to job loss, including financial and psychological struggles. It is believed that online job club interventions should be hosted for unemployed Barbadian citizens. The increase in the use of online platforms presents a noteworthy opportunity to apply such understandings and reach an even wider audience as face-to-face interactions would.

The literature previously reviewed, and Bhat's

(2010) proposal were adapted to suit the cultural context of Barbadian citizens. Subsequently, the following model was developed which will act as a guide for the intervention. As research has shown that self-esteem, self-efficacy and helplessness mediates the impact of unemployment on mental health (Alvora et al. 2019; Rusu et al. 2013; Farre et al. 2018), the job club intervention will target ways to improve persons' self-esteem, self-efficacy and to lessen feelings of helplessness

Figure 1:Diagram showing the Different Levels of Intervention

The introductory phase of the intervention will entail providing a general overview of how unemployment can lead to poor mental health through various cognitive channels such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and helplessness. This will then be followed by advising methods for addressing each channel. For example, the self-esteem channel will be addressed using sessions on building resilience to the impact of unemployment, rejected applications and other such instances such that they do not negatively affect self-esteem levels. The impact of unemployment through self-efficacy will be discoursed by empowering persons with the knowledge needed to overcome difficult financial situations. Financial advisors can be brought on to speak about debt advice and managing limited resources. This financial literacy is hoped to give participants the confidence needed to improve levels of self-efficacy in a number of areas.

Finally, feelings of helplessness can be addressed by providing individuals with the opportunity to develop new skills that can be incorporated into their current area of work or utilised to find new work. Such empowerment is expected to decrease feelings of helplessness and provide encouragement and optimism about participants' work-related futures.

Good mental health and wellness is important for individuals, families, communities and by extension, societies. Subsequently, all areas negatively impacting mental health must be prioritised and sufficiently addressed.

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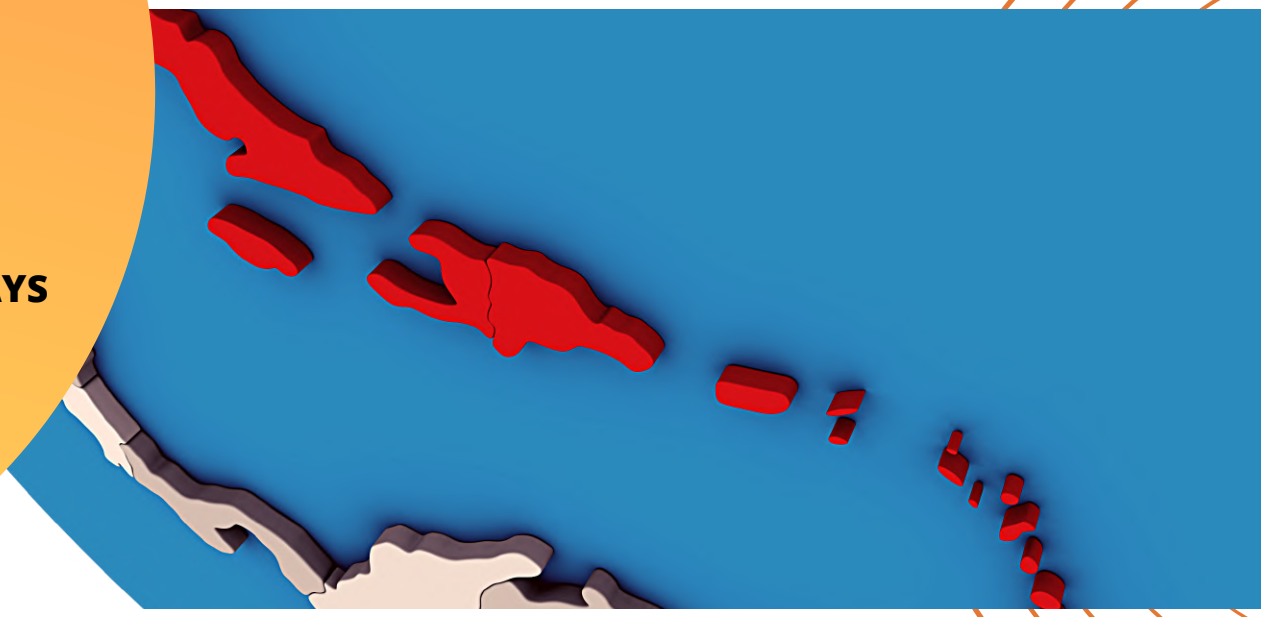
THE COVID-19 CRISIS: REIMAGINING NEW PATHWAYS FOR THE CARIBBEAN



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What is the issue?

The year 2020 ushered in a global catastrophe of enormous proportions. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic, as developed and developing countries alike became entangled in a battle with an invisible enemy. Since then, the global community has been engulfed in three major crises, which must be confronted simultaneously: the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a severe health crisis. While the virus is claiming lives and inflicting havoc on health systems, its impact transcends the health sector. The virus has invaded the deep crevasses of the world economy, penetrating the bloodstream of economic life. Those two interlocking crises are ongoing against the backdrop of the climate crisis. What is at stake are lives, livelihoods, and the survival of the natural environment. Powerful countries, which possess military and economic capabilities, have been confounded by the severity of the pandemic. Industries have been severely impacted, and societies immensely set back.

The purpose of this policy brief is to use the case of the COVID-19 crisis to (re)imagine new pathways for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Following this introduction, the paper provides a broad global context. It will then focus on the Caribbean's condition and specifically on two interrelated themes: political economy; and political governance. For each theme, I will examine a few lessons and offer some preliminary ideas to form pathways to recovery.

For the CARICOM region, crises are not new. Caribbean countries have been disrupted with crises from inception. As Sir Shridath Ramphal (2011) argues:

> …our goal of freedom kept changing its form as the world changed: internal self-government in the pre-war years; formal independence in the post-war years; the reality of freedom in the era of globalisation; overcoming smallness in a world of giants (p.3).

Since independence, the region has witnessed moments of triumph, reversal and pause in its

quest to achieve development. At several defining crossroads, Caribbean people have been forced to ask: "Who are we? What is the nature of our condition? What can we do to change that condition? What can we change it to?" (New Jewel Movement Manifesto, 1973 as cited in Wilder,2016, p. 478). Almost fifty years after, those questions are still relevant. The current moment is by far the most defining in modern history, and it provides an opportunity for critical reflection on the Caribbean's condition, almost sixty years after the region first embarked on the journey of political independence in 1962. Importantly, the gravity of the COVID-19 crisis demands new thinking and bold action for the way forward.

Why is the Issue Important?

The issue is critically important given the multidimensionality of the crisis. In terms of the health crisis itself, for the CARICOM region, the first confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported in Jamaica on March 10, 2020. At the time of writing (March 30, 2021) there has been community spread in some Caribbean countries and sporadic cases in others. However, to date, within the Caribbean, the health crisis itself is not as drastic as what is unfolding in more developed countries. Table I provides a panoramic overview of the regional situation. To date, reported incidences range from 44 cases in St. Kitts and Nevis to 43,890 in Jamaica. The total number of COVID-19 related deaths recorded in the CARICOM region range from zero in St. Kitts and Nevis to 723 in Jamaica (See Table 2).

Table I: Newly reported and cumulative COVID-19 cases and deaths as of 25 April 2021

WHO Region	New cases in last 7 days (%)	Change in new cases in last 7 days*	Cumulative cases (%)	New deaths in last 7 days (%)	Change in new deaths in last 7 days*	Cumulative deaths (%)
Americas	1 400 004 (25%)	-8%	60 951 004 (42%)	36 530 (42%)	-7%	1 481 266 (48%)
Europe	1 466 680 (26%)	-12%	50 714 995 (35%)	25 341 (29%)	-5%	1 061 218 (34%)
South-East Asia	2 269 114 (40%)	49%	19 965 648 (14%)	17 126 (19%)	81%	254 958 (8%)
Eastern Mediterranean	378 248 (7%)	-2%	8 822 942 (6%)	6 370 (7%)	17%	176 950 (6%)
Africa	49 453 (1%))	-9%	3 274 714 (2%)	1 155 (1%)	-1%	81 870 (3%)
Western Pacific	131 777 (2%)	3%	2 337 462 (2%)	1 304 (1%)	-10%	36 222 (1%)
Global	**5 695 277 (100%)**	8%	**146 067 511 (100%)**	**87 826 (100%)**	**5%**	**3 092 497 (100%)**

**Percent change in the number of newly confirmed cases/deaths in past seven days, compared to seven days prior*

Source: World Health Organisation: COVID-19 Weekly Epidemiological Update

Table 2: Overview of COVID-19 Situation within CARICOM Member States and Associate Members

Country	Population	Confirmed Cases				Deaths				Recoveries			
		Aug 29, 2020	Nov 30, 2020	Jan 21, 2021	Apr 18, 2021	Aug 29, 2020	Nov 30, 2020	Jan 21, 2021	Apr 18, 2021	Aug 29, 2020	Nov 30, 2020	Jan 21, 2021	Apr 18, 2021
Anguilla	15,205	3	6	15	29	0	0	0	0	3	3	15	25
Antigua & Barbuda	98,064	94	141	192	1,216	3	4	6	31	89	130	162	938
Bahamas	393,873	2,057	7,541	8,088	9,634	50	163	75	194	755	5,889	6,720	8,984
Barbados	287,432	170	276	1,156	3,773	7	7	9	44	141	253	493	3,656
Belize	398,746	870	5,854	12,538	12,538	12	148	289	318	93	3,151	10,962	12,143
Bermuda	62,240	168	260	684	2,123	9	9	12	18	151	214	611	1,237
British Virgin Islands	30,265	35	72	114	187	1	1	1	1	8	71	95	182
Cayman Islands	65,851	205	282	382	525	1	2	2	2	202	254	346	499
Dominica	72,016	20	85	113	165	0	0	0	0	18	63	104	159
Grenada	112,610	24	41	139	155	0	0	1	1	24	30	129	152
Guyana	787,183	1,180	5,406	7,067	11,762	35	151	170	268	633	4,392	6,277	10,161
Haiti	11,425,866	8,174	9,294	11,035	12,918	201	233	243	251	5,743	8,023	8,979	11,791
Jamaica	2,963,314	2,011	10,810	14,658	43,890	19	258	332	723	888	6,364	11,833	19,710
Montserrat	4,992	13	13	13	20	1	1	1	1	12	12	12	19
Saint Lucia	183,766	26	259	755	4,401	0	2	10	67	25	131	412	4,238
St Kitts and Nevis	53,262	17	22	35	44	0	0	0	0	17	19	33	44
St Vincent and the Grenadines	110,998	60	85	690	1,819	0	0	2	10	57	80	126	1,677
Suriname	587,511	3,848	5,312	7,880	9,545	66	117	146	187	2,971	5,194	7,027	8,805
Trinidad and Tobago	1,400,240	1,645	6,669	7,450	8,940	19	120	133	153	894	5,771	6,974	7,940
Turks and Caicos Islands	38,805	490	748	1,193	2,369	3	6	7	17	148	717	954	2,291
TOTAL	19,092,239	21,110	53,176	73,335	126,053	427	1,222	1,439	2,286	12,872	40,761	62,264	94,651

Source: Worldometers.com and the World Health Organisation

It is still too early to provide a clinical analysis of the Caribbean's response to the health crisis. From cursory examination, it is safe to argue that, despite limited resources, Caribbean countries are managing the spread of the virus relatively well by a combination of instruments. It is noteworthy that globally, the countries which best succeeded in reducing the spread of the virus in the first wave were not necessarily those with more resources, but rather those which did not hesitate to implement aggressive measures to contain the virus: travel restrictions, testing, contact tracing, lockdowns, etc. For example, New Zealand's government adopted early and forceful measures and was one of the success stories during the first wave.

The situation is very fluid, but based on preliminary observation, it is safe to argue that: astute leadership, which balances science, common sense, and compassion, can be an antidote to the successful management of the pandemic. Within CARICOM, regional institutions, such as the Caribbean Health Policy Agency (CARPHA), The University of the West Indies (UWI), and in particular the UWI COVID-19 Task Force;[1] the Regional Security System (RSS) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CEDMA) have all been at the vanguard of the battle, providing support in various interrelated areas.

The issue is also significant due to the economic ramifications. Beyond the direct implications for the health sector, the COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in the sharpest and deepest economic contraction in the history of capitalism. The World Bank (WB) (2020) reported that the crisis has worsened inequality and disproportionately impacted the poorest and most vulnerable, particularly women and children.

The WB cautions that over the longer the deep recessions triggered by the pandemic are expected to leave lasting scars through lower investment, an erosion of human capital, lost work and schooling, and fragmentation of global trade and supply linkages.

The issue draws attention to ways in which neoliberal policies and Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) had long damaged the vital organs of many developing countries. Four decades of neoliberalism, which focused on fiscal discipline; redirecting public expenditure; privatisation, trade liberalisation etc., meant, in effect, that as governments tried to balance their budgets, they were at times off-balancing the people. What resulted in many cases was low growth, high unemployment, and high debt. In many countries, insufficient attention is often paid to building and sustaining the public health infrastructure. In fact, in many cases, healthcare is not viewed as a right but as a privilege for the few who can afford it. Therefore, the COVID-19 virus found broken health systems, a welcoming host: with under-resourced labs, limited ICU beds, non-existent funding for health research etc. This situation is compounded by unequal power relations, uneven development, and unfair trade.

While Caribbean countries have made enormous strides since independence, a major lesson is that there is a need to disrupt the DNA defects in the region's political economy. A significant issue is the Caribbean's over-dependence on tourism and the implications of the pandemic for Caribbean economies. The Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) captured the economic fallout during the first phase of the pandemic in this way:

As countries around the world and in the region moved to shut their borders and economies to safeguard lives, livelihoods

1. The UWI COVID-19 Task Force was established in March 2020. It aims to leverage the University's knowledge and experts to assist the Caribbean in its readiness and response to the virus outbreak.

became the second-round casualties of the pandemic. Tourism ground to a halt, with devastating spill-over effects; and our economies have been in free fall ever since. Unemployment is estimated to be as high as 50.0 per cent in some member countries. Revenues have plummeted by at least 50.0 per cent. At all levels of society, some of our best-laid plans have been confounded as we have all had to adjust to new ways of doing things and to embrace a new normal in this COVID-19 world (Antoine, 2020, xi).

It is necessary to locate tourism within its global context. Based on World Trade and Tourism Council data, the global travel and tourism industry supported 330 million jobs worldwide in 2019 while generating 10.3 per cent of global GDP. It was reported that 1.5 billion international tourist arrivals were recorded in 2019, representing a 4 per cent annual increase and the tenth consecutive year of growth. Similar growth was predicted for 2020, confirming tourism as a leading and resilient economic sector (Glasco, 2020). Yet despite, the significance of the travel and tourism industry to the global economy, for tourism-dependent economies in the developing world, the paradox is this. One of the root causes for the spread of the virus, that is, global travel and tourism, is the route to recovery for Caribbean economies. The challenge is to disrupt the almost total over-dependence on tourism, given the extreme fragility and vulnerability of the travel and tourism industry. One of the crucial lessons is that it cannot be business as usual. While there have to be fundamental changes in the medium to long term, in the short term, there is a security dilemma. That is, the imperative to promote health security clashes with the necessity for economic security.

What is to be done?

Given the severity and intensity of the issue, a fundamental question needs to be addressed: what type of economy for what type of society in what type of polity? The COVID-19 crisis has provided an opportunity to reflect on the political economy model pursued by most Caribbean countries. It is important to ask, what should be the role of the state in the economy? Should the invisible hand of the market not be guided by the visible hand of the State? For post-colonial economies, what should be the relationship between growth and development? New pathways require economic transformation. I propose that a 'post-COVID-19' transformative political-economic model should have at its core:

- Lessons from previous experiments;
- Environmental security to include climate adaptation and climate resilience;
- Renewed emphasis on agriculture to include a national and regional food strategy and policy;
- Regional Health Security as a core pillar for sustainability;
- Manufacturing to include agri-business;
- Regional niche markets as part of an invigorated Caribbean Single Market and Economy;
- A digital revolution - Creating and utilising Information and Telecommunications technologies and the Orange Economy;
- An environment that empowers young people to maximise their creativity;
- Transnational joint ventures, in partnership with the Caribbean Diaspora;
- Affordable and reliable regional transport that utilises our air and maritime spaces;
- Within every sector, there should be sensitivity around issues of gender, race and class;
- A revolutionary approach to education that disrupts old modalities and mindsets; and
- Legal arrangements that promote access to justice for all.

I will elaborate on a few of these.

Lessons from previous Experiments

It is useful to draw lessons from the past to determine what approaches can be modified and adapted for a new time. There have been previous experiments at the non-capitalist path to development, such as Guyana's Cooperative Socialism, Jamaica's Democratic Socialism, and the Grenada Revolution. For example, during the period of the Grenada Revolution (1979-83) there was a plan for the economic development of Grenada, which consisted of four basic sectors: (1) Agriculture, (2) Fisheries, (3) Agro industries and (4) New Tourism. This economic model was also linked to a revolutionary approach to education. The intention was to disrupt ways of thinking and doing to transform society. A major lesson from the economic model of the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) was that all things being equal, a mixed economy approach, which involves strategic State planning, cooperatives and the private sector, can lead to socio-economic transformation.

A Digital Revolution - Creating and Utilising Information and Telecommunications Technologies and the Orange Economy

There needs to be a disruption to the mindsets that limit the creativity of Caribbean people. ICTs must seriously become a core pillar of economic transformation. There is an opportunity for young persons to maximise their ingenuity to create and utilise digital platforms. The future jobs would cater to young people who can create industries, become specialists in software engineering; artificial intelligence, automation, and build and manage information security systems, among other critical areas.

Relatedly, the orange economy is critical going forward. That refers to the creative industries such as music, mass, dance, films, etc. For example, the impact of COVID-19 should be captured in films and documentaries. One of the weaknesses in the Caribbean region is that there is insufficient documentation. I am proposing that The UWI spearhead the production of films and documentaries that chronicle the lived experiences of a wide cross-section of Caribbean people during the various waves of the pandemic. The documentary could highlight the faces of COVID-19 and some of the coping strategies employed. It could bring to the fore the success stories and the challenges. The objective is to capture the various dimensions of the pandemic for historical records. It could then be part of the Public Library and the National Archives in every Caribbean country. This could also be used as a teaching tool, demonstrating how small developing countries managed a pandemic. It could also be used as part of heritage tourism.

New pathways to recovery require that we collectively disrupt the disruption caused by youth-on-youth violence so young people can benefit from safe, smart societies that are youth-driven. This requires a whole of society approach. There is a need for partnerships among Civil Society Organizations, the private sector, the academic community, and governments to conduct workshops to assist the youth with the necessary tools to write business and marketing plans, networking skills, emotional intelligence, ethics for business and understanding legal rights and responsibilities in a cyber environment.

Environmental Sustainability

Caribbean countries must be commended for the multiple ways they are seeking to promote environmental security. The Caribbean Community Climate Change Center in Belize coordinates the Caribbean region's response to climate change, working on effective solutions and projects to combat the environmental impacts of climate change and global warming.

The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) continues to be at the forefront of disaster management. The University of the West Indies (UWI), as part of its mandate to revitalise Caribbean development, continues to work through the Center for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES), at the Cave Hill Campus and The UWI's Seismic Research Center at the St. Augustine Campus, for example. These are some of the regional web of institutions at the forefront of research, teaching and advocacy with respect to environmental sustainability. Efforts are ongoing with respect to the Blue Economy and the Green economy. However, the way forward must include alignment in the various efforts to achieve sustainability. Ocean Governance becomes critical in this regard.

Regional Health Security as a Core Pillar for Sustainability

There needs to be a disruption in the disconnect between public health and economic development. The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) should be commended for capitalising on its inheritance of a common currency and building institutions to sustain a deep form of sub-regionalism. The OECS must be applauded for its Pharmaceutical Procurement Service and its supply chain management systems. Regional health security becomes important for economic viability and overall societal well-being. The OECS has a very sound COVID-19 response strategy. In addition to what is already being done, I recommend the following:

a) Mobile Community Health Caravans to be set up periodically in communities throughout the OECS to promote a culture of preventative health.
b) The establishment of a Sub-regional Health Research Institute.
c) As a larger diversification strategy, a Medical Institute for Traditional Medicine be established within the OECS sub-region.
d) Enhanced training in biotechnology; Laboratory technology, epidemiology etc.
e) Use of an OECS member state to pilot a SMART health system

Sustainable Tourism

Since independence, tourism has been the main driver for Caribbean development (Daye et al 2008) and Roberts, et al (2015). However, there is an urgency to overhaul the philosophy that guides policymaking with respect to tourism. There is need for a new tourism that is safe, smart, and sustainable. Given the structure of Caribbean economies, there is a need to diversify within and across the tourism sector. I propose a sort of indigenised, authentic tourism product that is accompanied by a comprehensive Risk Management Plan. Similar to a Disaster Plan, Tourism Risk Management Plans should involve mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. There is a need for a rebranded approach to Caribbean tourism which should have at its core: protecting lives; promoting safe work with dignity, unionised rights, and benefits for workers; ensuring that there be enshrined in Law the preservation of patrimony, sovereignty and heritage and protection of the environment. Intra-Caribbean tourism needs to be enhanced, through increased educational exchanges; boosting education, heritage and conference tourism. Part of that authentic, indigenous tourism must include the wider Caribbean. Given its linguistic diversity, there are possibilities for the Caribbean and Latin America to become a global linguistic hub to boost conference tourism. Sustainable Caribbean tourism must include a well-functioning Caribbean transportation network. There is a need to disrupt the disruption to Caribbean transport. There is scope to utilise more fully maritime resources by establishing

ferry services throughout the region, for example.

Transnational Joint Ventures, in Partnership with the Caribbean Diaspora

The diaspora is often referred to as the 16th State of CARICOM. The COVID-19 moment provides enormous possibilities to enhance transnational relations between the Caribbean and its diaspora. Caribbean people in the diaspora can engage in joint ventures and business enterprises with persons at home in the various territories. There is also scope to utilise digital platforms for knowledge transfer, mentorship, building connections and networks across distances.

Politics and Governance

Re-imagining new pathways for the Caribbean must include new thinking and bold action with respect to politics and governance. In the two decades which spanned 1962 to the early 1980s, the majority of small states in the Commonwealth Caribbean acceded to independence from Britain. Except for Grenada 1979-83 and Guyana at various periods, Commonwealth Caribbean countries have adapted Westminster (Payne, 2003) and have sustained liberal democracy (Domínguez, et al., 1993). Yet, despite the trappings of electoral democracy, there are glaring democratic deficits that undermine governance. In many ways, "Westminster-style governance is both ill-suited and even potentially deleterious, to the quality of democracy that prevails" (Bishop 2011, p. 420). Political life in the Commonwealth Caribbean is characterised by an adversarial political culture, which marginalises opposition forces, thrives on clientelism and patronage, promotes corruption and compromises democracy (Barrow-Giles, 2011; Girvan, 2015; Hinds, 2008; Munroe 1999; Ryan, 1999).

Therefore, a major contradiction is the Caribbean's ability to sustain liberal democracy within a majoritarian political culture that lacks a democratic ethos. This in turn limits compromise and consensus, which are imperatives for genuine, substantive democracy. The dynamics of political life erodes trust, ruptures state-society relations and impedes rights, justice, and freedom. In many CARICOM countries, the reality is, at any one time, a large percentage of citizens is isolated from contributing to national and regional development because of tribal politics. There is a need to disrupt the political culture. New pathways to recovery must confront the democratic deficiencies in the region's political praxis.

A fundamental question is this: in the quest to build nations, are the governance arrangements in the region sufficiently aligned to the people's aspirations for freedom? I am of the strong view that there is an urgency for Caribbean countries to move beyond the politics of survivability towards a politics for sustainability. The politics of survivability refers to a politics that privileges the paramountcy of the political party and gives excessive powers to Prime Ministers. This political culture: marginalises opposition forces, breeds fear among public servants; constructs citizens as mere voters, often alienating many of them from the political process. This political praxis perpetuates under-development. There is a need for a new kind of politics; a politics for sustainability that requires a paradigm shift in the political culture. This refers to a political model where national development planning transcends narrow partisan interests. That is developmental politics, where the national development vision is insulated from the political cycle. COVID-19 recovery presents an opportunity for long-term sustainability, which requires a shared national vision; inclusiveness; unity of purpose and collectivity of efforts.

Conclusion

This central argument was that the COVID-19 crisis presents scope for Caribbean countries to re-imagine new pathways going forward. This is imperative to break entrenched historical arrangements that have perpetuated disruptions in the region's quest for development. Several proposals have been advanced to transform the Caribbean's political economy and its political culture. The main essence of this Policy Brief is that "Tragedy need not be the only legacy of the COVID-19 crisis. On the contrary, the pandemic represents a rare but narrow window of opportunity to reflect, reimagine, and reset our world to create a healthier, more equitable, and more prosperous future" (Schwab, 2020).

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RE-IMAGINING TOURISM: LEVERAGING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES TO REVIVE THE CARIBBEAN TOURISM INDUSTRY

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COVID-19 and the Caribbean[1] Tourism Industry

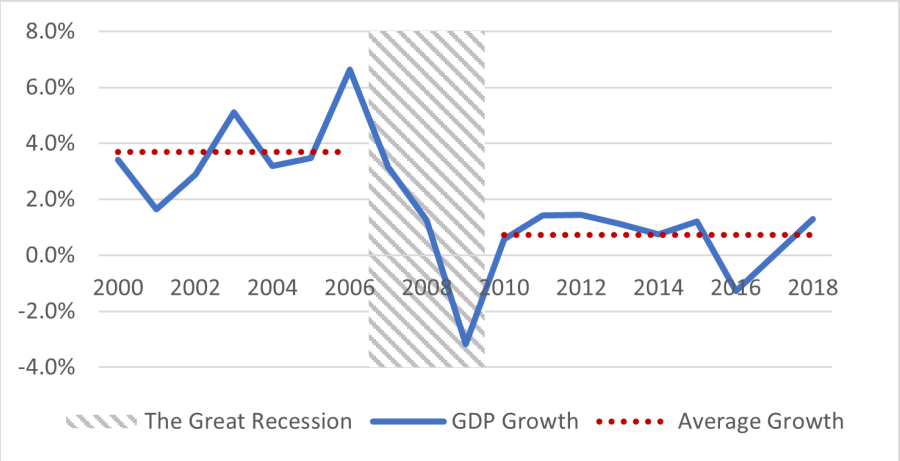
The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted the global tourism industry. In the first half of 2020, international tourist arrivals dropped by 65%, leading to a loss of US$ 460 billion in international tourism export revenues – five times the loss experienced in international tourism receipts in 2009 during the global financial crisis (UNWTO 2020a). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) further predicts an overall loss of between US$ 910 to US$ 1.2 trillion in exports from tourism for 2020, resulting in a loss of between 1.5% to 2.8% of global GDP, placing between 100 to 120 million direct tourism jobs at risk, and jeopardising the economic stability of several small island developing states (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs) (UNWTO 2020b).

No region has been spared, but the economic consequences stemming from the decimation of the tourism industry will prove less forgiving in tourism-dependent regions like the Caribbean[2]. Already suffering from persistently weak economic growth[3] (see Figure 1), a sudden blow to the tourism industry creates a dismal economic prognosis for 2020. In the first quarter of 2020, the Caribbean had already recorded a decline of more than 50% in tourist arrivals (UNWTO 2020b). Border closures and travel restrictions forced hotels, attractions and other tourism-related entities to lay off staff, downsize or even to close. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that almost half a million Caribbean tourism workers will be impacted (Mohammed 2020)[4]. Under a best-case scenario[5], Caribbean tourism revenues from stay-over arrivals for 2020 are expected to decline by more than 49% when compared to tourism revenues in 2019 (Dukharan 2020)[6]. Furthermore, if COVID-19 cases continue to increase in the region's main tourism source markets (North America and

1. For the purpose of this paper, the term the Caribbean refers to the 15 Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).
2. 10 CARICOM Member States rank among the top 20 out of 166 countries in the Tourism Dependency Index (Mooney and Zegarra 2020).
3. The region's weak economic performance is a product of structural imbalances (mirrored in persistent current account deficits and unsustainable debt), and a lack of competitiveness and productivity (OECD 2019).
4. The ILO's assessment extends beyond the 15 CARICOM Member States. Some relevant insights include Jamaica where 75% of the total tourism workforce was laid off and the remaining 25% experienced a reduction in working hours and rates; and Belize where 30% of the total beneficiaries of stimulus relief packages were from the tourism sector (Mohammed 2020).
5. Dukharan (2020) assumes best-case scenario to be a regional average decline of around 50% in stay-over tourist arrivals this year.
6. Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago (who are less dependent on tourism) were not included in Dukharan (2020) stay-over arrivals scenarios which also included other Caribbean countries outside of CARICOM.

Europe), recovery will be delayed.

Figure 1: CARICOM's GDP Growth Rate



Source: UNCTAD Stat 2020

Tourism has long been a catalyst for economic development in the Caribbean, with significant direct and indirect contributions to GDP, employment and exports (see Figure 2). Over the years, travel receipts have continually driven CARICOM's services exports (Morgan 2020a), allowing the region to maintain a surplus in its trade in services (see Figure 3). In 2019, travel receipts accounted for 81% (US$ 16 billion) of the region's total services exports (UNCTAD Stat 2020).

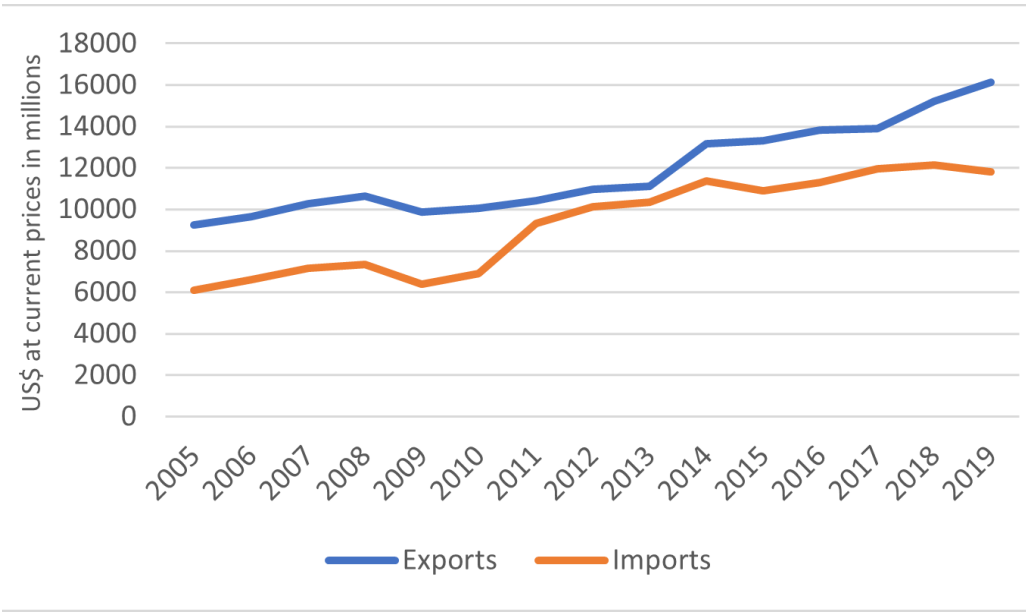
Figure 2: CARICOM's GDP Growth Rate

Country	Total Contribution to GDP (%)	Total Contribution to Employment (%)	Contribution to Total Exports (%)
Antigua & Barbuda	44.7	44.7	76.75
Bahamas	40.3	48.1	78.05
Barbados	36.2	36.4	64.99
Belize	44.7	38.9	45.84
Dominica	38	34.7	68.66
Grenada	55.8	51.6	85.45
Guyana	4.4	4.7	N/A
Haiti	8.3	7.2	N/A
Jamaica	34.7	31.5	N/A
St Kitts and Nevis	62.6	60.2	60.61
St. Lucia	43	43	82.32
St Vincent and the Grenadines	46.2	42.7	74.53
Suriname	3.7	3.5	2.24
Trinidad and Tobago	7.8	9.9	4.61

Source: Dukharan 2020, UNCTAD Stat 2020 and WTTC 2020[8]

7. % of travel receipts in total exports of goods and services, calculated using UNCTAD Stat Database – n/a indicates that data is not available.
8. Data for Guyana was obtained from WTTC 2020.

Figure 3: CARICOM's Trade in Services



Source: UNCTAD Stat 2020

However, prior to the pandemic, concern had already been expressed about the Caribbean's declining share in the global tourism market. Laframboise et al. (2014) in a study focused on tourism flows to the Caribbean[9], noted the need for cost reduction in low-end destinations, structural reforms to improve product quality and aggregate consumption adjustment in response to a lower GDP contribution from tourism. Consequently, with strong economic importance and cross-sectoral linkages, it is easy to understand how the performance of the region's tourism sector affects the wider economy.

Leveraging Digital Technologies

In attempts to salvage the tourism industry, some Caribbean countries are capitalising on their low number of COVID-19 cases and marketing themselves as 'safe' destinations. Others like Barbados and Antigua and Barbuda are offering long-stay visas for remote workers. Intra-regional travel is also being promoted through the reduction of taxes on airline tickets in countries like Grenada and the creation of the CARICOM travel bubble (Dunkley-Malcolm 2020 and Morgan 2020b). While these are all noteworthy initiatives, a greater incorporation of digital technologies should be considered.

Digital technologies have been transforming the tourism industry, by redefining the traditional roles of producers and consumers, increasing the variety and volume of tourism experiences, services and products, and accelerating and scustomising the communication process (Dredge et al. 2018 and OECD 2020). The World Economic Forum (WEF) estimates that by 2025 digital transformation of the tourism industry could yield an additional US$ 305 billion through increased profitability, with US$ 100 billion

9. Main findings from the study include: "(i) tourism arrivals and expenditure are sensitive to both price and income factors in source markets; (ii) price and income elasticities of tourism have declined since 2008; (iii) price elasticity is statistically insignificant for "high-end" destinations; and (iv) the nominal cost of an average one week beach holiday in the Caribbean is higher than in other beach destinations around the world" (Laframboise et al. 2014).

of the newly generated value being captured by new digital competitors that have innovative business models with value-producing capabilities (WEF 2017).

Technologies impacting the tourism industry can be broadly grouped into: (i) business management technologies (data analytics, mobile technologies, cloud computing, automation/advanced robotics, blockchain); (ii) market intelligence technologies (artificial intelligence, data analytics and cloud computing); and (iii) technologies producing innovative tourism experiences, products and services (internet-of-things and virtual/augmented reality) (OECD 2017 and OECD 2020). Table 4 defines and summarises the (potential) uses of these technologies in the tourism industry.

Table 4: (Potential) Uses of Digital Technologies in the Tourism Industry

Digital Technology	Definition	(Potential) Use/Benefits
Mobile Technology	**Technology that accompanies the user, more specifically, portable two-way communications devices, computing devices and the networking technology needed for connection. Recent advancements include internet-enabled devices like smart phones, smart watches, and tablets (IBM 2020a).**	• **Medium for customised advertisements and increasing destination visibility (social media platforms, geo-tagging, hashtags, etc.).** • **Travel aid for tourists (online booking and mobile payments, real-time destination information, personal travel guide, etc.).**
Cloud Computing	**A computing model where networks, servers, storage, applications and development tools are enabled through the internet. Rather than buying equipment, providing ongoing maintenance or training staff, these aspects are now carried out by a cloud service provider (Accenture 2020).**	• **Faster and spersonalised service for travellers (continuous updates and easier data storage and synchronisation on the cloud are being used to create customised travel packages).** • **Cloud computing affords tourism firms the option of managing their businesses anywhere once high-speed internet is available.**
Data Analytics	**The process of analysing raw data in order to make conclusions and predictions. Data is used by a variety of digital technologies.**	• **Greater understanding and connection with markets (real-time analysis, early discernment of new trends, etc.).**

Digital Technology	Definition	(Potential) Use/Benefits
Internet of Things	The concept of connecting any device with embedded electronics to the internet and to other connected devices, allowing them to transfer data over a network (IBM 2020b).	• Smart tourism (increased operational and resource efficiencies can reduce environmental impacts and improve visitor experience). • Market intelligence (interoperability of sensors, data and automation can be used to obtain real-time insights and information for marketing and managing tourism).
Blockchain	"A shared, immutable ledger for recording transactions, tracking assets and building trust" (IBM 2020c).	• Secure and transparent travel booking operations (use of smart contracts which eliminate middlemen, lower costs and reduce processing times). • Easy, safe and traceable payments (potential for cryptocurrency to avoid the complications of foreign exchange fluctuations).
Artificial Intelligence	Machines and systems that acquire and apply knowledge and execute intelligent behaviour, like reasoning, learning, sensing and decision-making (European Commission 2018 and Brathwaite 2020).	• Smart Accommodation (rooms with voice assistances, digital check-in, digital concierge services, etc.). • Customised on-demand service (travel agencies can provide 24hr service using AI-powered chatbots).
Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR)	AR enhances real-world with text, images and other virtual information through devices like smartphones, heads-up displays, smart lenses, tablets and AR glasses. VR provides a fully immersive virtual experience, where users are completed immersed into a computer-generated reality (Marr 2019).	• Innovative tourism marketing and innovative tourism experiences (gamification, virtual visitor experiences, virtual travel assistants, etc.).

Source: Adapted from OECD 2020 using multiple sources

COVID-19's disruptive impact on the tourism sector forces the Caribbean, and other regions, to rethink their traditional approaches towards tourism. Greater incorporation of digital technologies in the tourism sector boasts several benefits. For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) potential benefits include reduced transaction costs, real-time engagement, product improvements and innovation, management efficiencies and increased competitiveness (Dredge et al. 2018 and OECD 2020). For travellers, customised products, enhanced visitor experiences, and price reductions are among cited advantages (OECD 2020). Overall, a digital transformation can significantly increase international exposure and render the region's tourism sector internationally competitive (Dredge et al. 2018 and OECD 2013).

COVID-19's disruptive impact on the tourism sector forces the Caribbean, and other regions, to rethink their traditional approaches towards tourism.

Now is the time for the region to reconfigure its tourism sector. Market intelligence technologies will be instrumental in discerning new travel trends during and post-COVID-19. Already, shifts towards near-term travel and closer destinations, domestic tourism and staycations, and touchless tourism are emerging, while declines are being seen in travel for business and educational purposes (Soni 2020 and Goyal 2020). In order to remain competitive, the region's tourism sector must be guided by real-time insights, which, thankfully digital technologies can provide.

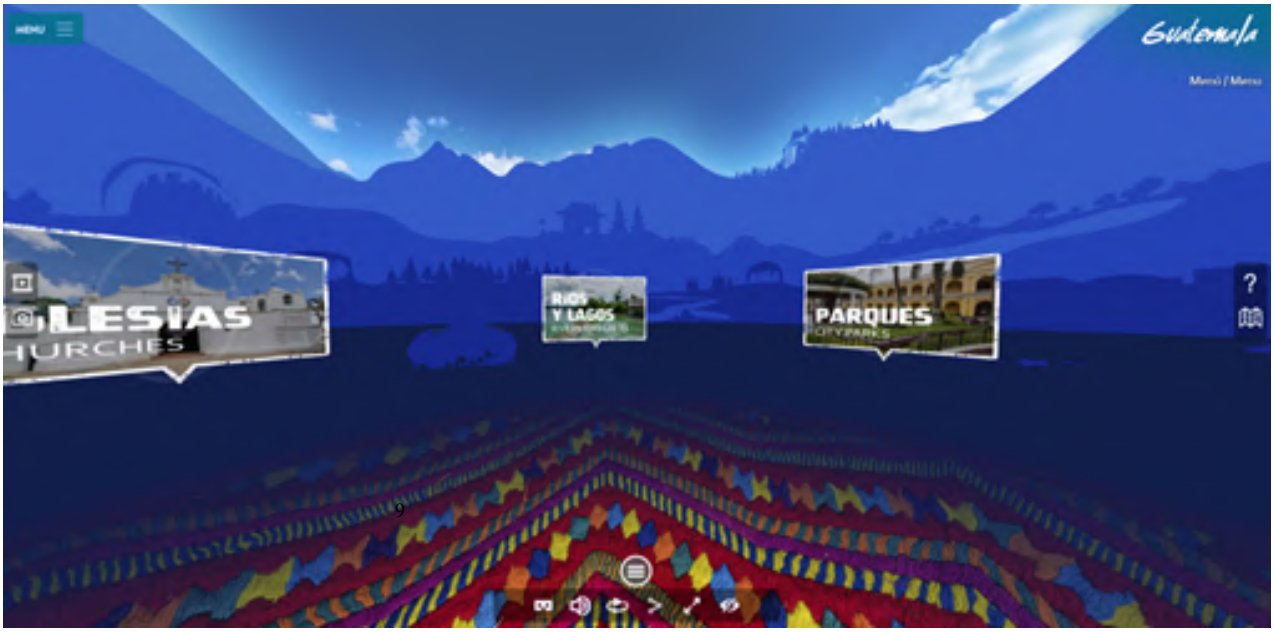
Capitalising on emerging trends like touchless (to reduce the potential spread of COVID-19) will require some level of integration of digital technologies. In the UNWTO's Global Guidelines to Restart Tourism, leveraging touchless technology[10] is a key pillar for recovering confidence through safety and security (UNWTO 2020c). Consequently, Beijing Capital International Airport partnered with SITA[11] to develop biometric boarding, where facial recognition systems guide the entire contactless boarding process (SITA 2020); Abu Dhabi International Airport partnered with Meta Touch[12] to install contactless elevators (Khaleej Times 2020); and Dutch hotel chain citizen launched a mobile app for contactless stay, which facilitates digital check-in/out and control of hotel-room appliances using a smartphone (Hospitality Net 2020). These innovations, although triggered by COVID-19, are revolutionising the future of tourism, and to avoid being left behind, the region must act now.

COVID-19 is also forcing us to imagine the possibility of tourism without travel. Industry 4.0 technologies, particularly virtual and augmented reality, are now bringing famous tourist attractions right to your home. In Central America, for example, Costa Rica is integrating virtual reality technology in its tourism product, Guatemala is offering 360° virtual tours of the country, the Dominican Republic launched a 'get to know the country without leaving home' initiative, and Nicaragua created a virtual space for tourists to learn cultural dances (Travel2Latam 2020). Many of these are marketing initiatives aimed

10. Touchless technologies are those requiring no form of physical input, in these technologies voice or gesture commands usually guide input. Some examples of touchless technology in the travel and tourism industry include sensor-operated facilities in airports and hotels, biometric boarding, contactless check-in/out, etc.
11. SITA is a Swiss tech company.
12. Meta Touch is a start-up in the United Arab Emirates.

promoting these countries as 'must visit/bucket list' destinations post-COVID-19. However, when broadly conceptualised, there is potential for monetising these initiatives. Consider, for example, packaging the region's tourism product into a virtual reality programme that is commercialised in the medical sector, where VR technology is being used to help patients coping with life-limiting and terminal illness and other issues (Huges 2019 andMencarini 2018). The older population segment who can no longer travel is another potential market for VR tourism and one where the region can promote nostalgic tourism to older members of its growing diaspora. Certainly, previously underserved markets can now be reached with digital technologies, creating new opportunities.

Figure 4: Video Clip of Guatemala 360° Virtual Tour



Beyond COVID-19, the region must consider how these technologies can build resilience by future-proofing the tourism sector to face any similar challenges while also exploring new opportunities. It is this type of forward-thinking that will revive the region's tourism industry and improve its international competitiveness.

The Way Forward: Considerations for Tourism Policy Makers

Greater integration of digital technologies in the region's tourism industry first requires an innovative digital culture to be fostered. Challenges like the limited uptake of technologies, lack of access to resources - whether financial, technical or knowledge-based, low appetite for innovation and inadequate supporting policy frameworks need to be addressed (OECD 2020 and Dredge et al. 2018). Some recommendations include:

Improving the region's digital infrastructure and access to digital technologies

Ubiquitous and affordable access to the internet and telecommunications services is paramount – reviewing existing tax structures on internet connectivity, improving market competition in the telecommunications sector through fair, evidence-based, market rules and dynamic competition policies, and using

market-based incentives to encourage private investments – are all strategies for improving the region's digital infrastructure. Furthermore, with the Caribbean as a net importer of most digital technologies, signing onto agreements like the World Trade Organization (WTO) Information Technology Agreement (ITA) which aims to provide universal access to ICTs by eliminating duties, can improve the region's access to digital technologies. Absent reliable digital infrastructure and affordable access to digital technologies, tourism initiatives like 'Smart Bridgetown'[13] will be difficult to develop.

Supporting Digital Research & Development

Research and Development (R&D) expenditure is low in the Caribbean, owing to resource constraints and other factors. However, The University of the West Indies (UWI) and other regional research bodies should be encouraged to pursue digital R&D with a focus on tourism application. Scholarships and grants can be used to redirect interest to this field. Additionally, the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) should foster partnerships with technology firms capable of developing innovative solutions for the industry (as seen in previous examples during COVID-19: recall Abu Dhabi International Airport partnership with Meta Touch and Beijing Capital International Airport partnership with SITA). Such partnerships can provide valuable technical expertise. The CTO can also be instrumental in encouraging R&D by launching innovation and entrepreneurship competitions, which should be supported by long-term mentorship programmes to ensure that fostered innovation creates value for the region.

Developing Supporting Policy & Legislative Frameworks

To support the tourism sector's digital transformation, other policy areas need to be considered. For one, the way in which data will be collected, stored and transferred needs to be properly addressed. Many Caribbean countries are without data protection legislation, and some existing frameworks are outdated (Brathwaite and Remy 2020). Cybersecurity is another area where the region falls short. Very few Caribbean countries have a Cyber Incident Response Team (CIRT) or a cybersecurity strategy, and government portals and websites lack appropriate security features (Jessop 2015). To really encourage innovation, the region's intellectual property legislation will also need to be improved. Individuals must have confidence in the region's legal systems to protect their works.

Certainly, this is not all that is needed but represents some of the groundwork that can be started to create enabling conditions for digital transformation in the region's tourism industry.

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EFFECTS OF COVID-19 AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE CARIBBEAN CONTEXT

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What is the issue?

Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) while contributing less than 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions, are one of the regions most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. Impacts include slow onset events like a rise in sea-level, prolonged droughts or floods (2005 Guyana, 2010 Belize), increased intensity of tropical storms and hurricanes (2017, 2019 and 2020 hurricane seasons) (CARICOM Secretariat 2020).

"During the past 10 years the Caribbean has been affected by 40 tropical cyclones of which 12 attained hurricane strength and 8 were classified as major hurricanes. Six Caribbean States are ranked in the top ten most disaster-prone countries in the world and all are in the top 50, costing the region 2% of its GDP every year" (CARICOM 2020).

This constant exposure to disasters affects most facets of Caribbean life, as the economies of the Caribbean are heavily dependent on natural resources, with tourism and agriculture forming two key economic segments. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC 2020), the travel and tourism sector represent, on average, 27.3% of GDP and 38.3% of employment in the Caribbean.

As a highly vulnerable region, one of the priorities of the Caribbean is supporting the long-term goal of the Paris Agreement to limit the global average temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels.

The year 2020 was key for international climate action. It was earmarked for the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to increase

climate ambition through updating/revising their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) (UNFCCC 2020). In addition, 2020 was also earmarked for communication of long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies (LT-LEDS), as well as national disaster risk reduction strategies under the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR 2020). Although emissions have dipped, due to reduced economic activities, once economies recover, emissions are expected to increase drastically. Any delay in climate negotiations for more ambitious actions will result in significantly worse long-term effects. A precious year can be considered lost, when the modelled projections show that global emissions must decline by 45% below 2010 levels by 2030 and further to net-zero by 2050 if a 50% probability of keeping warming below 1.5°C (with limited or no overshoot) can be maintained (IPCC 2018).

The Caribbean has not been exempted from the public health impacts of the novel coronavirus. However, proactive actions by the governments and the geographical advantage of natural isolation have limited the number of cases in the region to date (WHO 2020). In spite of that, the region has not been shielded from the associated economic impact, which has been devastating. As countries try to contain the spread of the virus and attempt to recover from the economic impact caused, the momentum towards achieving climate goals should not be lost. Some impacts of climate change are irreversible and can compound other vulnerabilities which can hinder achievements towards sustainable development goals.

This policy brief seeks to address the challenges faced by Caribbean countries that are limited by COVID-19 whilst simultaneously confronted by climate change.

Under the banner of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), the negotiators from the small islands were the driving force behind the 1.5 °C goal being included in Article 2 of the Paris Agreement in 2015; and the call for a special report on 1.5°C, which the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released in 2018 (Fry 2016, Caribbean Climate Blog 2018). The Caribbean negotiators, under the UNFCCC, have consistently championed the cause of limiting warming to 1.5°C rather than the 2°C target and driving both developed countries and countries with large emerging economies to commit to higher climate ambition.

However, the urgent need to prioritise economic recovery whilst seeking to contain the health impacts of COVID-19 has placed addressing climate change on the backburner.

Why Climate Mitigation is Important

Climate Change Mitigation

The response to COVID-19 directly impacted the NDC revision process in the Caribbean, as most countries were dependent on international technical support to revise their NDCs. The intention behind travel restrictions and social distancing is to prevent the spread of the virus, but these protocols have had widespread implications beyond health security and safety (Nicola et al. 2020). Due to travel restrictions, many international consultants/partners could not travel. Interactions, stakeholder consultations and access to data to support the review process were limited. Up to the end of September 2020, only Suriname, Jamaica and Cuba had submitted revised NDCs. COVID-related impacts on the NDC review process in the Caribbean are summarised in Table 1.

Limited stakeholder consultations could lead to suboptimal inputs from different stakeholder groups affecting the probability of producing

an ambitious but implementable NDC. Because of the slow progress in implementing the goals, committed to in the 2015 NDCs, a significant amount of work is necessary if Caribbean countries

Table 1: Impacts of COVID-19 on NDC review process in the Caribbean

Country	Impacts of COVID-19 on NDC review process
Grenada **Trinidad and Tobago**	• Delayed/cancelled stakeholder consultations
St. Lucia **Antigua and Barbuda** **St. Kitts and Nevis** **Guyana**	• Delayed/cancelled stakeholder consultations • Delayed financial and technical support
Dominican Republic	• Delayed/cancelled Stakeholder consultations • Delayed financial and technical support • Submission date pushed back
Bahamas	• Delayed/cancelled stakeholder consultations • Delayed financial and technical support • Submission date pushed back

Source: (UNFCCC/RCC St. George's NDC Survey, 2020)

are to achieve their revised NDC goals by either 2025 or 2030.

Climate Change Adaptation, Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction

Similarly, adaptation to and resilience against climate change are key priorities for the Caribbean countries already affected by climate change vulnerabilities. Key issues addressed by countries preparing **National Adaptation Plans (NAPs**) are water security, impacts on agriculture, biodiversity loss, loss and damage from extreme weather events and impacts of rising sea levels (Karttunen et al. 2017). The Caribbean has struggled to attract sufficient funds at the scale needed to address these challenges (UNDP 2018).

According to the IDA Caribbean Quarterly Bulletin (2020), the combination of COVID-19 and climate change has impaired the economic growth prospects of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) member countries, thereby emphasizing the pre-existing socio-economic vulnerabilities of the region.

'The National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process was established under the Cancun Adaptation Framework (CAF). It enables Parties to formulate and implement national adaptation plans (NAPs) as a means of identifying medium- and long-term adaptation needs and developing and implementing strategies and programmes to address those needs. It is a continuous, progressive and iterative process which follows a country-driven, gender-sensitive, participatory and fully transparent approach" (UNFCCC 2020)

The widespread loss of livelihoods, due to the severe economic downturn, has increased the vulnerability of a larger percentage of the population to climate change-related disasters.

Climate Finance

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (2020) has recognised that the debt burden in the region has reduced the flow of finance for investment in climate change adaptation, resilience and disaster risk management in Caribbean countries, thereby increasing vulnerability to climate change. COVID-19 related travel restrictions have heavily affected the Caribbean, which is dependent on tourism as a major source of revenue (UN 2020). This has prompted Belize, the current Chair of AOSIS, to issue a Statement on Debt (AOSIS 2020). According to the statement, the economies of SIDS are in freefall because of the pandemic. It calls for a SIDS Compact – an urgent, coordinated international response to the need for, inter alia, injection of liquidity, and suspension or cancellation of existing debt. In the longer term, the compact calls for a SIDS vulnerability assessment not based on GDP per capita but based on a recognition of the special circumstances of SIDS.

Currently, Caribbean governments are focused on recovering by implementing stimulus packages for impacted sectors, e.g. tourism.

"Mitigation addresses the causes of climate change (accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere), whereas adaptation addresses the impacts of climate change. Both approaches are needed. On the one hand, even with strong mitigation efforts, the climate would continue changing in the next decades and adaptation to these changes is necessary. On the other hand, adaptation will not be able to eliminate all negative impacts and mitigation is crucial to limit changes in the climate system." (Locatelli 2011)

The type and scope of the recovery packages could decelerate climate actions and decrease sustainable development in the region (Hepburn et al. 2020). Therefore, the Caribbean governments must turn even more towards international support for their climate actions both in mitigation and adaptation. But with the global economy in a downturn, as most countries, including developed nations, struggle to recover from COVID-19, much-needed climate finance flows for the Caribbean to take climate actions are at risk of being delayed or discontinued.

Climate Technology Development and Transfer

Caribbean countries are generally buyers rather than suppliers of technology. The region depends on the availability of affordable technology to meet its climate needs. This dependency on the transfer of sustainable technologies, including renewable energy, has been exacerbated by COVID-19 (Bailey, 2020). The COVID-19 - induced drop in oil prices has led to decreased manufacturing and ultimately, the launch of many investments in clean technology (Bailey 2020). Further delays in the introduction and penetration of technology in the Caribbean will impede climate action and increase the costs to act.

Capacity Development

Due to social distancing protocols, in-person meetings among governments, the private sector and civil society have been limited (Wilder-Smith and Freedman 2020). These restrictions have led to cancellations of workshops and capacity building training programs to address climate-related challenges facing regions. (Newell and Dale 2020). Virtual training and education have become the norm at all levels, disadvantaging those on the wrong side of the digital divide.

Increasing access to devices and the internet has now become a priority. The COVID-19 pandemic has also emphasised the human resource constraints faced by most countries in the region as the partners, unable to travel, depend on small, resource-constrained government counterparts, to coordinate many of the actions on the ground.

Social & Gender Inclusiveness

Rural communities and low-income groups have been identified as more vulnerable to climate change impacts (Blatchford 2018). However, COVID-19 related isolation and lack of access to testing and treatment also increase the vulnerabilities of these communities. Hence, it is important to consider these particularly vulnerable groups in any strategies for addressing climate change in a COVID-19 context. Similarly, the effects of climate change can be shown to be gender-differentiated. Therefore, the responses to climate change also need to consider these differences (UNFCCC 2019). In addition, engaging and educating the youth on climate change must now incorporate distance learning and possible long-term closure of schools.

What should be done?

Climate Action-Oriented COVID-19 recovery for the Caribbean

According to the United Nations, the actions fundamental to a transformational and green recovery will be to address climate change, avoid further habitat loss and fragmentation, reverse the loss of biodiversity, reduce pollution, and improve waste management and infrastructure. Regional governments need urgent assistance to address their financial, technological and capacity gaps while also addressing the current priority of COVID-19 prevention and economic recovery.

Planning processes now need to address multiple priorities and risks simultaneously. The climate change solutions (NDCs, NAPS) disaster risk reduction in planning and implementation must be integrated with COVID-19 economic recovery as well as addressing COVID-19 prevention safeguards. While many issues are needed to be addressed nationally, some actions like addressing the displacement of persons and humanitarian support during emergencies need to be also addressed at regional levels.

When it comes to addressing financial challenges, investigating financial instruments, like debt swaps, that are targeted towards COVID-19 economic recovery and that also address the climate change priorities of countries are attractive options to consider. Stimulating underutilised private sector investment to address climate challenges and rebuilding efforts will be an important part of the solution (Okoye 2019). While the sector is relatively small, many young entrepreneurs are willing to engage in climate solutions, enabling diversification of the economy to create new jobs in clean technologies.

In other efforts to diversify, governments are considering innovative ways to attract investment in the region like nomad visas for virtual jobs, and virtual education for children. But it is important to consider multiple aspects

"Visas for digital nomads are travel permits that legalise the status of travelling professionals… While in theory individuals on tourist visas are not allowed to work (they can only engage in tourist activities), the digital nomad visa officially states that its holder can work while in the country, as long as they do it independently and remotely" (European Travel Information and Authorization System 2020).

such as infrastructure needs, how marginalised groups will be addressed and managing the impacts of climate-induced extreme weather events on these new facilities. Caribbean governments should also look at capitalising on the several bi-lateral and multi-lateral green recovery support programmes that have been launched and look for new support opportunities. Table 2 provides examples of some of the green recovery packages currently available

Table 2: Potential Green Recovery Packages

Green Recovery Plan	The Objective	The Agency
"Platform for Redesign 2020"	This platform helps countries redesign their economic and social systems during this time of dual crises: the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. The hub collates countries' climate and other environmental policies/ actions that are planned and implemented in the context of COVID-19 recovery.	UNFCCC, Government of Japan https://unfccc.int/news/new-online-platform-is-key-resource-for-green-recovery-measures-ndcs
German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety (BMU) Corona Response Package under its International Climate Initiative (IKI).	The package supports IKI's partner countries in addressing challenges, by giving selected ongoing projects and initiatives complementary support. The aim is to maintain and strengthen existing social structures and to promote and accelerate the transformation, to an economy with a focus on climate change mitigation and conservation of biodiversity.	International Climate Initiative (IKI) https://www.international-climate-initiative.com/en/coronaresponse
NDC Partnership's Economic Advisory Initiative	The NDC Partnership, through its Economic Advisory Initiative, is responding to the urgent needs of countries to prepare green recovery plans and packages in response to COVID-19. The Economic Advisory Initiative is a direct response to country needs of countries The Partnership will unveil a novel and responsive initiative to support developing countries to design green stimulus packages that strengthens their recovery from COVID-19.	NDC Partnership https://ndcpartnership.org/economic-advisory-support

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