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FOCUS

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MAINSTREAMING YOUTH IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



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ABOUT ECLAC/CDCC

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is one of five regional commissions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It was established in 1948 to support Latin American governments in the economic and social development of that region. Subsequently, in 1966, the Commission (ECLA, at that time) established the subregional headquarters for the Caribbean in Port of Spain to serve all countries of the insular Caribbean, as well as Belize, Guyana and Suriname, making it the largest United Nations body in the subregion.

At its sixteenth session in 1975, the Commission agreed to create the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) as a permanent subsidiary body, which would function within the ECLA structure to promote development cooperation among Caribbean countries. Secretariat services to the CDCC would be provided by the subregional headquarters for the Caribbean. Nine years later, the Commission's widened role was officially acknowledged when the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) modified its title to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Key Areas of Activity

The ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean (ECLAC/CDCC secretariat) functions as a subregional think-tank and facilitates increased contact and cooperation among its membership. Complementing the ECLAC/CDCC work programme framework, are the broader directives issued by the United Nations General Assembly when in session, which constitute the Organisation's mandate. At present, the overarching articulation of this mandate is the Millennium Declaration, which outlines the Millennium Development Goals.

Towards meeting these objectives, the Secretariat conducts research; provides technical advice to governments, upon request; organizes intergovernmental and expert group meetings; helps to formulate and articulate a regional perspective within global forums; and introduces global concerns at the regional and subregional levels.

Areas of specialization include trade, statistics, social development, science and technology, and sustainable development, while actual operational activities extend to economic and development planning, demography, economic surveys, assessment of the socio-economic impacts of natural disasters, climate change, data collection and analysis, training, and assistance with the management of national economies.

The ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean also functions as the Secretariat for coordinating the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The scope of ECLAC/CDCC activities is documented in the wide range of publications produced by the subregional headquarters in Port of Spain.

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CONTENTS

Director's Desk: Integrating youth-led innovation, in support of the 2030 Agenda implementation	3
Mainstreaming Youth perspectives in Caribbean sustainable development	4
Youth2030: a new approach to youth engagement and development at the United Nations	8
Financing for Youth Development in the Caribbean	10
Youth mainstreaming in development processes: raising youth voices in the Caribbean	12
Regular Features	
Recent and upcoming meetings	15
List of Recent ECLAC Documents and Publications	15

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DIRECTOR'S DESK: INTEGRATING YOUTH-LED INNOVATION, IN SUPPORT OF THE 2030 AGENDA IMPLEMENTATION.

Youth represent a rapidly increasing segment of the Caribbean population. It is therefore important for the countries of the subregion to consider how the youth might play a more integral role in determining the sustainable development of the Caribbean. This issue of FOCUS highlights four issues important to the integration of youth into sustainable development processes in the Caribbean.

We will explore approaches to promote the participation of youth in policy making; discuss new strategies through which the UN system may strengthen its work with and for young people; review opportunities for financing youth development in the Caribbean; and highlight the role being played by youth-led organizations in championing the rights of young people based on strategies that incorporate their capacities, participation and interests.

While the role of youth in the sustainable development processes cannot be overstated in light of the part they play in the demographic transition, their more meaningful involvement is undermined by several economic, social and environmental constraints. In this FOCUS, we argue that a cohesive framework for youth development with adequate implementation mechanisms and support from all stakeholders, public and private, is necessary to enhance the impact that young people can have on sustainable development in the Caribbean. Strategic collaboration and partnerships in youth policy development should therefore be reinforced to support country effort in fine-tuning youth development policies across the Caribbean.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development places youth at the heart of all development and has declared them critical agents of change. The UN, however, will need to enhance its capacity to engage young people and benefit from their perspectives and ideas, as well as to promote greater coordination and cohesion in the UN's work on youth issues. This FOCUS accordingly highlights 'Youth2030: the United Nations Strategy on Youth'. Launched in September of 2018 during a high-level event of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly, the Strategy acts as an overarching framework to guide the entire UN system as it strengthens its work with and for young people across the organization's three pillars – peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development.

Youth advocates and youth networks are also working to ensure youth mainstreaming in development plans and policies. Moreover, across the Caribbean, youth are becoming more vocal about the things they wish to see happen in government and on how they expect these changes to occur. In this FOCUS, we also underscore that while young people's commitment to social, economic and environmental progress is unquestionable,

increased collaboration is required among public policy makers, development agencies and all other stakeholders to empower Caribbean youth to achieve their aspirations, while making meaningful contribution to their communities.

Mindful that youth policies need to be financed, in this FOCUS, we analyze the main trends in funding youth in the Caribbean and make recommendations for increasing the finances and the effectiveness of policy intervention in youth development in the subregion. It is our hope that this edition stimulates interest in supporting the contribution that young people can make towards the achievement of sustainable development in the Caribbean.

Yours in Focus

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Diane Quarless'.

Diane Quarless



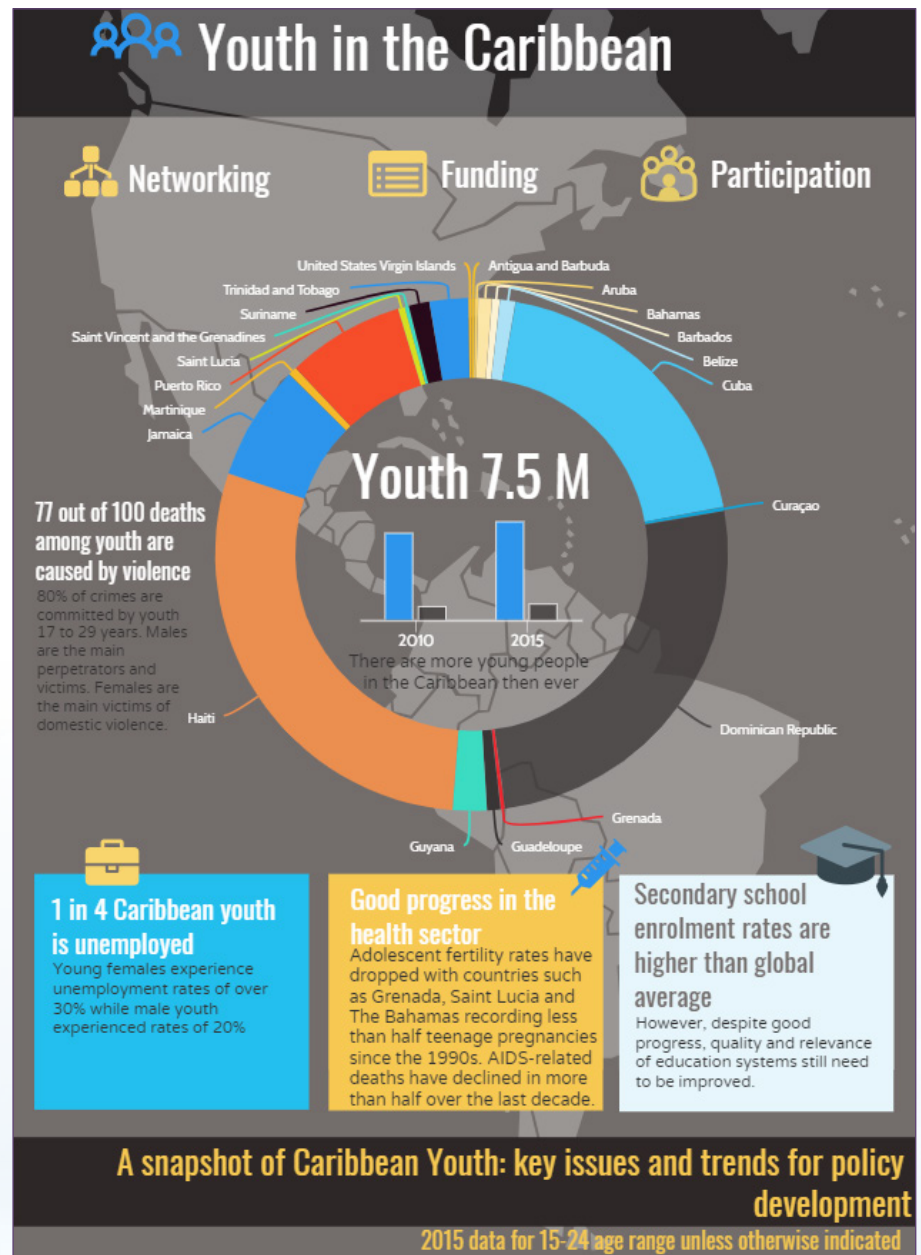
MAINSTREAMING YOUTH PERSPECTIVES IN CARIBBEAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Catarina Camarinhas*

The Caribbean subregion is experiencing a demographic transition, which offers the opportunity to invest in the sustainable development of present and future generations. The subregion is home to nearly 7.5 million youth (15-24 years of age), comprising almost 17 per cent of the total population.

Most of the Caribbean countries are still in the vital demographic dividend period, the period when countries can benefit from the growth potential that results from the increase of the working age population (20-64) in relation to the non-productive population. Although globally observed, this demographic transition may vary greatly across countries in terms of its timing, speed and implications for sustainable development. For some Caribbean countries this window of opportunity may be fairly narrow, which conveys a sense of urgency for investing in youth in the subregion.¹

While the Caribbean stands to benefit economically from the demographic dividend, the subregion is hampered by several constraints that affect youth in a disproportionate manner. These include lack of good employment opportunities, poverty, and limited access to health, social services, recreational opportunities and other forms of support. In fact, youth unemployment rates in the subregion are among the highest in the world - a quarter of Caribbean youth is unemployed,² more than three times the adult rate of 8 per cent – and gender differences are notable.³ These pressures heighten youth risk factors, contributing to the high incidence of crime and violence in



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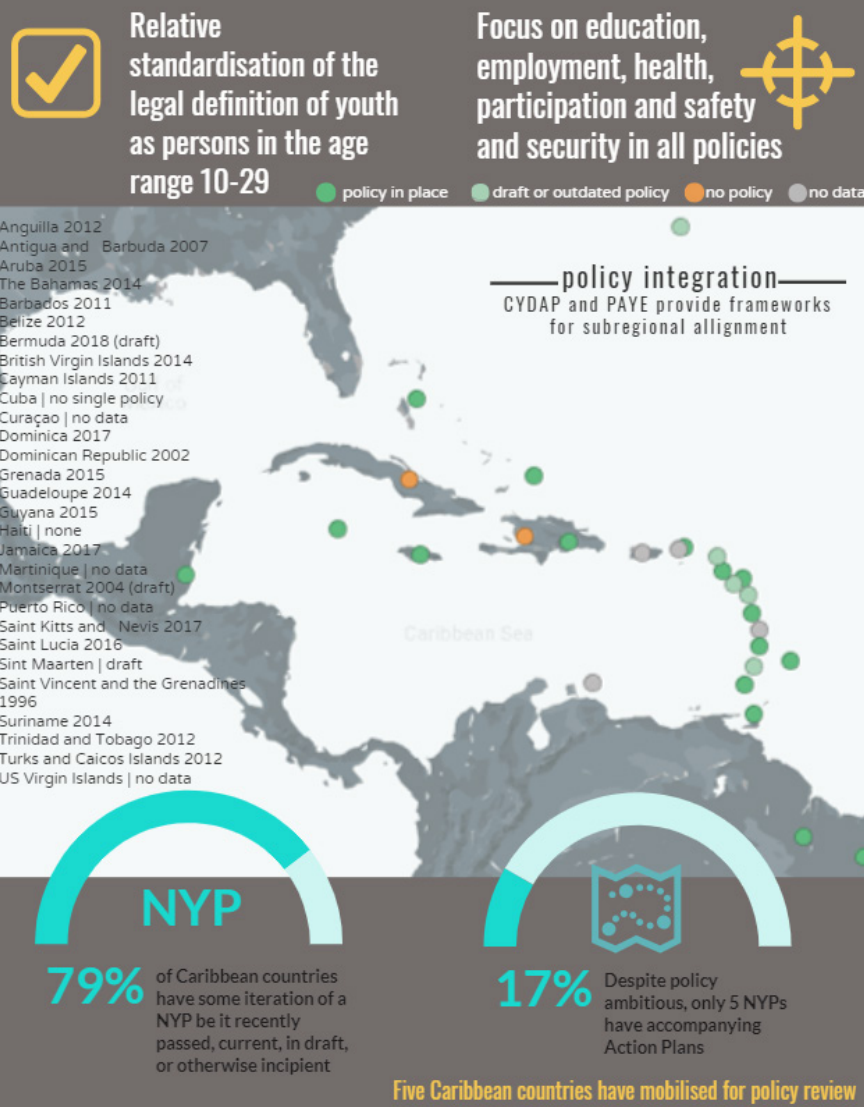
¹ Jones, Francis (2016), Ageing in the Caribbean and the human rights of older persons, ECLAC Studies and Perspectives Series - The Caribbean, United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

² According to a study conducted by the CDB and based on data from 14 Caribbean countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago. CDB (2015), Youth are the Future: The Imperative of Youth Employment for Sustainable Development in the Caribbean.

³ 30% for female youth and 20% for male youth.

⁴ On climate change as a risk multiplier and the particular vulnerabilities of young people to climate change impacts, see UNFPA (2009), At the Frontier: Young People and Climate Change, Youth Supplement to the State of the World Population and UNICEF (2015) Climate change, violence and young people, London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies.

The status of National Youth Policies in the Caribbean



the Caribbean, with youth identified as both perpetrators and victims.

Beyond these endogenous challenges, youth risks are heightened by the impacts of climate change. Caribbean youth may be impacted by climate change in a variety of ways, posing a threat to the long-term sustainability of development results. Poverty, migration, discrimination and changing labour market dynamics will affect young people's chances for personal development, living conditions, and overall wellbeing.²

Caribbean countries have made encouraging progress in developing National Youth Policies which serve as national frameworks for guiding the implementation of commitments under the Lisbon Declaration (1998) and in ensuring successful outcomes for youth. These youth policies are also guided by common global and regional frameworks such as the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY, 1995), CARICOM's Youth Development Action Plan (CYDAP, 2012-2022) and the Commonwealth's Programme of Action for Youth

Empowerment (PAYE, 1998). While there has been progress in terms of the transformational agenda for Caribbean youth, several trends which hinder this progress, and which are linked to the subregion's demographic transition, can be identified:⁵

- Slow adjustment of education and training systems to the transitions from childhood to adult life;
- High unemployment rates and overrepresentation of young persons in marginal and precarious employment;
- High dependency rates with reliance on family structures and social support systems;
- Increasing violence suffered and committed by youth with significant health and social impacts on youth, families and economies of the Region; and
- The varied vulnerabilities of youth, in particular those that are affected by poverty as well as rural youth, due to the impacts of climate change.

Caribbean countries have begun initiatives to promote the participation of youth at policy and decision making levels and progress has been made in advocating for the protection of the wellbeing of youth, as recognised at the Caribbean Forum on Population, Youth and Development, held in Guyana in 2018.⁶ Acknowledging the important role of civil society in the implementation of the National Youth Policies, many governments have adopted significant measures to promote the involvement of civil society groups in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring.

► (continued on page 6)

⁵ On this matter see Camarinhas, Catarina (2019), Implementation strategies for youth mainstreaming in sustainable development processes, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, Studies and Perspectives Series, LC/CAR/2019/3.

⁶ Camarinhas, Catarina et al (2018), Report of the meeting on the implementation of the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, ECLAC, LC/CAR/2018/13.

MAINSTREAMING YOUTH PERSPECTIVES IN CARIBBEAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CARIBBEAN INITIATIVES

The existence of national and regional youth councils and development agency-supported youth platforms that include opportunities for wider networking and participation in development are evidence of this shared conceptual approach.

However, some critical policy development constraints in addressing implementation gaps persist, notably: inconsistent political support and funding mechanisms; lack of capacity and relevance of the institutional frameworks; lack of coordination mechanisms; and inadequacy of youth groups and networks, including participation and roles of youth organisations.⁷ These persistent implementation gaps result in inefficiencies translating policy into action and in youth development work being perceived as idealistic and unlikely to result in measurable impacts.

Facilitating youth-led innovation can bring about important economic, cultural, social and environmental dividends, in support of the 2030 Agenda implementation. A cohesive framework for youth development with adequate implementation mechanisms on taking youth policy into action has been proposed⁸ and support from all stakeholders, public and private, can increase the impact that young people make in the Caribbean.

Initiatives in support to Youth empowerment may be highlighted: for example, the Government of Belize, has identified a range of programmes and activities in this area. Through the Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports &

Culture, the Department of Youth Services is supporting key youth-led projects, including the Restore Belize Programme, the Youth Apprenticeship Programme, the Conscious Youth Development Programme (CYDP) and the CDB-funded Youth and Community Transformation Project. The National 4-H and Youth

Development Centre is committed to equipping Belizean youth with marketable skills that will support and sustain their efforts to become productive citizens. The program has focus on opportunities for males and females between the ages of 14-19 years who are out of school. The primary function of the National

From youth policy to action: main recommendations



- 

1 Ensure **high-level political commitment** and **championship for policy implementation and investments**

This fundamental principle ensures strategic collaboration and partnerships in youth policy development to enable inclusive and multi-sector multi-stakeholder involvement among agencies such as CARICOM, The Commonwealth, the UN system, the Caribbean Development Bank and other development partners, regional youth networks and the academia. Governments and development agencies should work together to agree on more consistent and targeted funding and programming for youth development priorities.
- 

2 Strengthen institutional **capacity building**

This should include but not be limited to capacities in the areas of research, strategic planning, private/public sector partnerships and stakeholder engagement, building resilience and managing vulnerabilities in the face of climate change, managing gender equality and mainstreaming in development, and managing effective community-based arrangements to achieve local solutions and ownership of development.
- 

3 Promote a **coordination system for youth mainstreaming across policy areas**

Coordination mechanisms should ensure that the youth agenda is not a disjointed, but a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach, and may include:

 - Support to the creation and regular functioning of inter-ministerial and multi-sector multi-stakeholder committees as well as national youth mainstreaming framework and reporting.
 - Strengthening synergies between youth policies and broader development policies and frameworks notably as regards the linkages with the SDGs, the SAMOA pathway, the New Urban Agenda, regional articulation with SIDs and LAC agendas as well as with national development plans.
- 

4 Promote the **participation and active engagement of youth in all phases of the NYP**

This is key to the success of implementation, including the involvement of young people living in challenging circumstances, vulnerable groups, gender sensitive approaches, in all phases of the process of formulation, implementation and follow-up and review of the policies. The ownership process will contribute immensely to the relevance and inclusiveness of the youth policies.

 - Ensure sustained recognition and resources for the roles and accountability of Representative Youth Organizations (Youth Councils etc.) including where appropriate, through legislative action.
 - Ensure that participation is extended to different policy domains, in particular through the inclusion of the Youth Council as a partner in the National Planning mechanism, as well as other relevant bodies.
- 

5 Update, reinforce or develop **new areas of youth development within the NYPs**

This may include new and emerging areas such as climate change or migration, or areas that were not sufficiently developed in previous policy, such as gender mainstreaming for youth development. Housing and territorial inequalities are areas of basic and fundamental youth development, at the source of many of the dependency trends that affect Caribbean youth and which remain untackled at policy level.
- 

6 Ensure that **effective results-frameworks are integrated in all policy development**

The persistent issue surrounding a National Youth Policy is its diminished relevance to young people and national development if it is not implemented in a way that can be measured and adjusted. Monitoring and evaluation systems should be an integral basis of a robust NYP, addressed as a transparent and inclusive process.
- 

7 Adopt **Baku principles**

A standard design methodology and checklist of qualitative and quantitative markers to inform how key NYP principles - rights-based, gender-responsive, inclusive, participatory comprehensive, knowledge-based and evidence-informed, fully resourced, and accountability-driven (Baku Declaration 2014) - should be represented within hard policy objectives and programming.



Principles

for a second generation of NYPs

Appropriate strategies and mechanisms for implementation

⁷ For specific cases, see results of the survey administered by ECLAC to 29 Caribbean countries in 2018: Camarinhas, Catarina and Dwynette D. Eversley (2019), Caribbean synthesis report on the implementation of the Lisbon Declaration on youth policies and programmes, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, Studies and Perspectives Series.

⁸ Ibid.

4H Youth Development Centre is to provide agriculture and tourism training to young persons who have completed or dropped out of primary school and were not able to continue into the secondary school system. BOOST program is another example, providing conditional cash transfer program to help families within the poverty line to have income to provide food in homes and retain children in schools.

The CDB-funded Youth Resilience and Inclusive Social Empowerment (Youth RISE) is another project being executed in the Belize (Stann Creek and Cayo districts), that targets youth through public sector and NGOs to scale up social services to the population to build their resiliency.⁹

Cooperation between youth organizations, governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, international and regional organizations and academic institutions, making use of private investment opportunities and other public-private initiatives, should provide enabling environments to increase financing mechanisms and improve legal and regulatory frameworks. Ensuring proper training and research is key to allow young innovators and their solutions to thrive. Such collaboration may, in turn, build synergies for implementation and help overcome the barriers that are currently preventing skilled and innovative young people from contributing their fullest towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Caribbean countries, supported by the UN system and other organizations such as CARICOM, The Commonwealth Secretariat, the Caribbean Development Bank and other development partners, regional youth networks and the academia, should work together, making use of classic strategic planning tools, to set targets, define budget requirements and support access to financing for youth development. The integration of youth development principles through strategic alliances will promote sustained and scaled-up investments to amplify evidence-based programming interventions with and for youth as a central strategy to achieve the global goals of the 2030 Agenda. ■



Photo of Caribbean youth ambassadors.

⁹ For more examples, consult Camarinhas, Catarina and Dwynette D. Eversley (2019), Caribbean synthesis report on the implementation of the Lisbon Declaration on youth policies and programmes, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, Studies and Perspectives Series.



YOUTH2030: A NEW APPROACH TO YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE UNITED NATIONS

Heidi Ullmann*

The Caribbean is a young region and young people are key agents of change and can play a leading role in building a Caribbean without poverty or inequality. With respect to poverty and inequality, the situation of youth in the Caribbean has improved. For example, the sub-region has experienced significant decline in adolescent fertility¹ and Caribbean countries have improved access to all levels of education, achieving near universal secondary education in most countries.²

The challenges faced by some young people in the Caribbean, which include lack of access to high quality education and training, limited access to decent work opportunities and limited avenues for political and cultural participation, not only hinder their personal development but also act as a formidable barrier to sustainable development. In fact, sustainable development also implies youth development and this fact is not always recognized in an adult-centric world.

In order to bring youth into development discourse the United Nations launched Youth2030: the United Nations Strategy on Youth in September of 2018 at the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly. This Youth Strategy acts as an overarching framework to guide the entire UN system as it strengthens its work with and for young people across the organization's three pillars – peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development. Among other aspects, this Strategy seeks to enhance the UN's capacity to engage young people and benefit from their perspectives and ideas, as well as to promote greater coordination and cohesion in the UN's work on youth issues.

The objective of Youth2030 is to facilitate increased impact and expanded global, regional and country-level action to address the needs, build the agency and advance the rights of young people. Youth2030 also seeks to ensure youth engagement and participation in the implementation, review and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as other relevant global agendas and frameworks.³ The Strategy outlines four cross-cutting system-wide actions and interventions, each containing a series of measures, which will support the overall capacity of the UN to advance and deliver on the five key priority areas. The system-wide actions and interventions are:

1. Leadership example: the UN will support youth leadership across the organization and builds staff awareness and capacity on youth-related issues.
2. Knowledge and innovation pioneer: the UN will strengthen knowledge production and management systems; become a credible source of expertise on youth development and engagement; and facilitate evidence-based global awareness on the realities and needs of the world's young people.
3. Investment and solution catalyst: the UN will accelerate resource

mobilization efforts and facilitate partnership solutions to advance the implementation of the UN Youth Strategy and strengthen the funding base and mechanisms for youth-focused programming and youth-led actions at all levels.

4. Accountability leader: the UN will seek to ensure UN entities successfully address youth issues through their programming; effectively and meaningfully engage young people in their work; and track budget allocations and expenditures.

THE FIVE PRIORITY AREAS INCLUDED IN THE STRATEGY ARE:

The five priority areas included in the Strategy are:

1. **Engagement, Participation and Advocacy** – to amplify youth voices for the promotion of a peaceful, just and sustainable world.
2. **Informed and Healthy Foundations** – to support young people's greater access to quality education and health services.
3. **Economic Empowerment through Decent Work** – to support young people's greater access to decent work

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¹ Camarinhas, C. and D. Eversley (2018), Caribbean synthesis report on the implementation of the Lisbon declaration on Youth policies and programmes. Studies and Perspectives Series. Available [online]: https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/events/files/draft_caribbean_synthesis_report_on_the_implementation_of_the_lisbon_declaration_on_youth_policies_and_programmes_22july2018.pdf

² ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) (2018), The Caribbean Outlook, (LC/SES.37/14/Rev.1), Santiago, 2018.

³ United Nations (2018), Youth2030: The United Nations Strategy on Youth. Available [online]: https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/18-00080_un-youth-strategy_web.pdf

and productive employment.

4. Youth and Human Rights – to protect and promote the rights of young people and support their civic and political engagement.

5. Peace and Resilience Building – to support young people as catalysts for peace and security and humanitarian action.

The ownership of the UN Youth Strategy is shared by all members of the UN system at the global, regional and national levels. It is anticipated that in the coming months, an Action Plan will be prepared for the operationalization of the UN Youth Strategy.⁴

Actions are already taking place in the UN system to contribute to the delivery of Youth2030. Generation Unlimited (or “Gen-U”) is a UNICEF initiative that brings together the private sector, governments, international and local organizations, and youth in partnership towards ensuring that all young people are in school, training or employment by 2030. The partnership will focus on three key challenges, specifically: access to secondary age education; acquisition of employability skills; and empowerment, with a special emphasis on girls.⁵

Youth2030 and initiatives that will support its implementation, such as Generation Unlimited, represent a

renewed commitment by the UN system for the rights and the participation of youth around the world and they signal a clear recognition of the centrality of youth participation in the work of the UN. These initiatives are an opportunity for young people in the Caribbean and other regions to become involved in the work of the organization, to be leaders of change in their schools and communities, and ultimately to be part of the solution that brings us closer to a better world. ■



Photos of youth representatives at United Nations meeting in Santiago, Chile.

⁴ United Nations (2018), Youth2030: The United Nations Strategy on Youth. Available [online]: https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org/ecosoc/files/18-00080_un-youth-strategy_web.pdf

⁵ United Nations Children’s Fund (2018), World leaders unite under new initiative to provide quality education and training for young people ‘Generation Unlimited’ seeks to get every young person prepared for future employment by 2030 (press note). Available [online]: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/world-leaders-unite-under-new-initiative-provide-quality-education-and-training>.



FINANCING FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

Michael Hendrickson and Iskuhi Mkrtychyan *

The Caribbean is benefiting from a demographic dividend¹ that should be leveraged to advance its development. However, sustained investment in all-round youth development is essential for young people to achieve their full potential. Adequate and sustained finance is vital for harnessing the creative talents and innovative capacities of the region's youths, which should be leveraged to boost economic growth, reduce inequality, lower criminality and tackle environmental damage, pollution and climate change.

CARICOM has made a major push forward in integrating youth in development through its CARICOM Youth Development Action Plan (CYDAP) in 2012-2017, recently revised to cover the period 2017-2022. Through regional partnerships, the Plan seeks to promote an enabling environment for youth wellbeing, empowerment and participation in regional development.

There have been some key achievements under the CYDAP so far. These include the training of 346 participants in 13 countries in entrepreneurship and business skills under the Creativity for Employment and Business Opportunity (CEBO) project, also 143 persons have been trained community assessors to evaluate youths at risk of engaging in crime and violence to pave the way for targeted preventative interventions under the 10th EDF CARIFORUM Crime and Security Cooperation Programme: Support for Crime and Violence Prevention and Social Development (CVPSD) project.² Importantly, there is also a focus on restoration and reintegration of youths with criminal records, including members of gangs through regional training programmes.

Nevertheless, the CYDAP programme seems to be somewhat slanted towards the deficit model of youth development

that sees youths as a risk to society, more than as an asset that could realize a real demographic dividend for the region.³ Arguably, the programme of action needs to focus more on the creativity and talents⁴ of the region's youths and how this can be liberated to contribute to the development process.

Another important area of concern is the region's treatment of its youth with disabilities. The region lacks an enabling environment that provides the adaptations and reasonable accommodations to help persons with disabilities to participate fully and equally in society. Progress is therefore urgently needed in this respect.

The signing of the UN 2030 Agenda and the SDGs have given added priority to financing youth development. The Agenda is anchored on measures to empower citizens through education and training, access to digital technologies and small business development skills to improve opportunities for social mobility for more citizens. The Agenda also acknowledges that different levels and sectors of society need to be integrated to achieve sustainable development. In addition, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda calls on countries to develop sustainable financing mechanisms to fund important development activities, promote adequate skills development for all and to create

concrete initiatives to promote youth employment.

This article analyzes the main trends in youth financing in the Caribbean and proposes a few recommendations for increasing the level of resources for effective use in youth development in the subregion.

TRENDS IN FINANCING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

As is the case in most countries, Caribbean governments are the main financiers of youth development activities through their Ministries of Youth and other line ministries.

This means that the capacity of governments to fund youth development will depend on their ability to generate revenues and grant receipts, as well as on the efficiency of public spending.

The overall vision for youth development in the Caribbean has focused on improving the wellbeing of youth, including their human rights, as a platform for increasing their contribution to the development process. Nevertheless, influenced by internal challenges and the global agenda, governments have been seeking to increase funding for key areas of youth development such as

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¹ The dividend stems from the decline in fertility and mortality rates that leads to relative increase in the active working population, a large portion of which comprises of youths.

² CARICOM. (2019), "Report on the CARICOM Youth Development Action Plan (CYDAP) Achievements to Date".

³ Charles, Henry and Jameson-Charles, Madgerie. (2014). "Youth Development Policy and Practice in the Commonwealth Caribbean: A Historical Evolution", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 63, No. 3/4, Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies, University of the West Indies.

⁴ Indeed, even youths who are engaged in criminal activity often display a resourcefulness that if harnessed for good could divert them into creative enterprises.

⁵ Jones, Francis and Serieux-Lubin, Luanne. (2018), "Disability, Human Rights and Public Policy in the Caribbean: A Situation Analysis", ECLAC.

training, health, sports, recreation and culture, entrepreneurship development and civic mindedness. Spending in these areas is not only progressive in the sense that it is geared towards optimizing the contribution of youth to development; it is also preventative in so far as it helps to divert youth from deviant behaviors, including crime.

Arguably, spending in areas other than education is below what is needed to optimize the potential of the subregion's youth. Caribbean countries spend 4 to 6 per cent of their GDP on education, but of this, less than 1 per cent of GDP is allocated to tertiary education.⁶ The limited data available indicate that government funding for ministries of youth has been relatively low. For example, in Barbados, the allocation for the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth was only 1.4 per cent of the total expenditure, while in St. Lucia it was only 0.6 per cent of expenditure. When we consider ministries which combine education, a big-ticket item, with their youth ministries, these figures are considerably higher (23.1 per cent for Belize and 14.1 per cent for Jamaica, for example). Nevertheless, spending on these Ministries of Youth and Education does not provide a full picture of youth development spending since it is usually scattered across other ministries also.

With respect to preparing youth for the labour market, education and training have been the main areas of focus of governments. Education and training accounts for a significant portion of the budgets of most Caribbean countries. Education for youth is primarily focused on secondary, advanced and tertiary levels, technical/vocation and on-the-job training and 'make-work' programmes. Education is a quasi-public service; most

schools are government-funded and these are complemented by privately financed institutions. Government financed development banks have long been a vital source of funding for education, especially for tertiary education in the countries of the OECS and Belize. However, fiscal constraints have posed a challenge to the availability of this pool of development financing.

Given the multiple demands for government financing, public finance of education has long been complemented by household savings, particularly for tertiary programmes, as well as by private sector financing in the case of specialized trainings that benefit private companies.⁷ This notwithstanding, state financing remains overwhelmingly the predominant source of finance for education and training.

As governments in the Caribbean confront high levels of public debt, the private sector is expected to play an even more important role in financing youth education and other development initiatives.⁸ The private sector provides both loan and grant financing for education and training in the region. Cooperatives, especially credit unions are important sources of funding for education for lower income households, including in rural areas.⁹

As expected, government financing is the main source of funds for health, sports and recreation, and conflict resolution programmes. Allocations are made based on government priorities, which in turn are guided by the goals of optimizing the well-being of youth and reducing health and other social risks. Fortunately, these areas have been prioritized by donor agencies. Therefore, donor funding has

complemented budget resources in areas such as HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, tackling of non-communicable diseases and sport development activities, including the construction of stadiums and training programmes and also crime prevention, guidance and counselling through the CARICOM-UNDP Cooperation Programme, for example.

Agencies such as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the World Health Organization, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and the United States Aid for International Development (USAID) have been instrumental in funding HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment activities in the subregion.¹⁰

With a growing focus on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), private businesses are increasingly willing to fund youth development activities that fit their vision. Nevertheless, there is ample room for the Caribbean private sector to play an even greater role in funding youth education and training initiatives. A crucial area to build upon is that of apprenticeship and internship programmes that bridge the gap between university and vocational training, on one hand, and the work environment on the other. This is vital as Caribbean businesses have expressed concern at the mismatch between formal academic training of youths and the skills and competencies that are required to perform 'real' jobs. Furthermore, many of the skills required for a worker to perform competently on the job are acquired skills which are learned from interaction and exchange with experienced workers.

► (continued on page 14)

⁶ The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (2018), *The Caribbean Outlook 2018*, ECLAC.

⁷ Downes, Andrew (2015), "Strategies for Financing Higher Education: the Caribbean Context", Conference on Institutionalizing Best Practice in Higher Education, St Augustine, June 24-26.

⁸ It was noted that student enrolment at the Cavehill Campus in Barbados fell by roughly 30% in the 2014/15 academic year after government introduced tuition fees for local students (Barbados Today, March, 12 2016).

⁹ Edwards, Melvin. (2014), "Business Networking- Pooling Ideas and Finances to Achieve Global Competitiveness- Credit Union Innovations", ECCU Business Symposium and Innovation Forum, October, 15, 2014.

¹⁰ OneCaribbean.org (undated), 'List of Main Donor/Aid Institutions in the Caribbean', Available [online]: <https://www.onecaribbean.org/wp-content/.../IntlAidPartners.pdf>.



YOUTH MAINSTREAMING IN DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES: RAISING YOUTH VOICES IN THE CARIBBEAN

A viewpoint of the Caribbean Regional Youth Council *

The Caribbean Regional Youth Council (CRYC) and other youth-led organizations throughout the Caribbean have recognized the importance of youth mainstreaming in development planning. Youth mainstreaming is a key process geared towards championing the rights of young people within the development of broad-based strategies that incorporate their capacities, participation and interests.

According to the United Nations, youth are individuals aged from 15 – 25. This age group is represented by nearly 7.5 million youth, with approximately 42 per cent of the subregions’ population being under the age of 25. Youth therefore are key stakeholders in advancing the development agendas of their communities, nation and the subregion.

CRYC has recognized the importance of all-inclusive stakeholder engagement process—one where each sector serves an imperative role, enabling for pragmatic and effective approaches in advancing youth’s participation in development. International conventions that recognize the importance of this approach include “Youth 2030: the United Nations Youth Strategy”, the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, and the CARICOM Youth Development Action Plan. However, rarely are these international conventions fully adopted, implemented and supported by youth stakeholders with the responsibility or authority to enable youth mainstreaming in development processes. As a result, it is necessary for stakeholders with an interest in youth to understand and work to ensure youth mainstreaming throughout the Caribbean.

Youth advocates and youth networks are working to promote youth mainstreaming in development processes. Examples

of this include the regional exercise being undertaken by the Caribbean Development Bank to develop its Youth Policy and Operational Strategy. This strategy engaged youth from across the region through consultation to provide feedback and comments, ensuring youth issues were adequately represented. In February 2019, the Caribbean Regional Youth Council also supported the Commonwealth Secretariat, in partnership with the Department of Youth Services of the Government of Belize, in the development of a strategy for youth mainstreaming in Belize.

CRYC has recognized that youth have a role to play in ensuring good governance, effective representation and transparency in the political process. This has emerged in response to the youth voicing their concerns about weak governance systems in the region. For example, the National Youth Parliament of Jamaica has been streamlined to provide a forum for young people to express their views on various issues, to network and to become involved in the process of democracy and governance at both the national and local levels. The sittings serve to introduce young people to parliamentary processes and procedures, while developing their skills in research, policy formulation and analysis, advocacy, public-speaking and communication.

In Guyana, following a period of political uncertainty, youth have self-organized

into a group known as the Policy Desk that travels around the country gathering young people’s views of the political parties and their expectations for the upcoming elections. These views will be collated and presented to parties for consideration and inclusion in their manifestos and plans of action. Through this and other engagements, the group aims to sensitize young people about political and civic engagements. These exercises are noteworthy and should be supported by all stakeholders across the subregion to scale up impact.

Effective political and civic engagement of youth demands that young people have the requisite knowledge and skills to meaningfully participate. CRYC therefore developed a three-part online series to build the capacity of young people in leadership and governance. This series was hosted across the region in three countries - Jamaica, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago – with simultaneous live-streaming provided via social media. This pilot project, in retrospect, is well-aligned with the UN Youth 2030 strategic priority one (1) Engagement, Participation and Advocacy - Amplify youth voices for the promotion of a peaceful, just and sustainable world.

This priority describes mainstreaming action of “Incorporating across all entities of the UN and work relating to all UN pillars, the need to meaningfully and sustainably engage and partner with

* The Caribbean Regional Youth Council is a strategic youth governance and advocacy movement with one voice working towards regional representation, integration and co-operation as a platform for youth development.

young people and their organizations, networks and movements, through formal and informal mechanisms and platforms to realize universal rights-based youth participation". Through partnership with youth leaders across the subregion, CRYC started the discussions in Jamaica to build the capacity of subregional youth to contribute to decision-making processes while highlighting their role as catalysts for community change. For the conversation in Guyana, leaders spoke on the role of succession planning and record keeping, with special focus on selecting fitting candidates; mentoring and coaching; and on proper documentation.

Finally, the discussion in Trinidad and Tobago focused on developing a sustainable organization that addresses social, environmental and economic

factors; on social entrepreneurship, and on networking and relationships.

Across the Caribbean, youth are becoming more vocal about the things they wish to see happen in government and how they expect these changes to occur. Sometimes, as seen in Guyana, youth have started to be politically active as they seek to effect change from within. With the advent of technology youth are more connected and can readily access information. There is still some disparity in access to health and educational services in rural and urban areas. Future infrastructural development should take note of these in the design of projects. All youth engagements should ensure that youth from both urban and rural areas are adequately involved, informed and consulted. Materials should be translated in local or indigenous language

as appropriate to ensure everyone is involved.

CONCLUSION

Young people should be recognized as important participants and actors in the development planning throughout the Caribbean.

We must ensure that young people actively participate in development processes at all levels: locally in their communities; nationally in their countries both rural and urban; regionally within CARICOM; and internationally at the United Nations and other relevant fora. By so doing, we are laying the foundation for a sustainable Caribbean future. ■

FINANCING FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

The Caribbean also needs to pay attention to new trends in the commonwealth, such as ethical financing. This refers to the investments in people and in the environment in order to support improved living conditions and environmental conservation. Ethical finance seeks to provide a helping hand to marginalized groups, especially youth, to reduce their social exclusion by providing finance for self-employment, education, training and other activities that enlarge their livelihood options, whilst protecting the natural and cultural environment. Caribbean governments and NGOs have an opportunity to actively seek out and partner with international agencies and corporates, which are willing to ethical youth development projects in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FINANCING IN THE CARIBBEAN

Given the constraints and opportunities for youth development financing, the following recommendations are proposed for improving this form of financing in the region.

i) Governments should make sure that their youth financing programmes and projects are guided by their National youth policies which fit in with their national development plans/strategies to ensure policy coherence. In this regard, there is a case for priority to be given to youth entrepreneurship and continuous learning initiatives, in accordance with SDG target 4.4, as a way to reduce youth dependence on the state for employment. This would also help to advance youth businesses and employment under the CARICOM 'Creativity for Employment and Business Opportunity (CEBO) project.

ii) The region should make a major effort to improve the life chances of youth with disabilities. This requires policies and actions in key areas such as enforced legislation and regulations that determine their access to appropriate transportation; ramps and other conveniences to provide access to buildings; and relevant education and training facilities that enable disabled persons to learn alongside their abled peers, thereby reducing stigma and discrimination. In addition, given the importance of employment, legislation should advocate fairness in recruitment, stipulating quotas in some areas, along with better use of ICT and other technologies, while promoting support systems to create a more relevant work experience for disabled persons.

iii) Focus needs to firmly remain on the poorest and most vulnerable, as they need the greatest support and remove inequity in access to all services and benefits provided by the state. This would speed up the achievement of SDG targets 1.3 and 1.5.

iv) Given the scarcity of financial resources, a strong focus should be placed on improving the productivity and efficiency of spending on youth activities. Suitable benchmarks of performance should be established for projects alongside monitoring and evaluation systems.

v) Governments need to develop and strengthen mechanisms to ensure greater participation of youth in the decision-making process and address their perspective on which activities should be funded to advance their development.

vi) Given budget constraints, governments should provide incentives

for the development of such innovative forms of financing such as crowd funding, angel investing and bond issues for youth projects. This could include some blended finance, with governments and private partners sharing equally in any gains or losses. A similar approach could help to achieve SDG 17.4, which relates to measures to increasing fiscal space in developing countries.

vii) Countries should, as far as possible, ensure that development cooperation initiatives fit within national youth development priorities.

viii) Statistical systems should be strengthened to enhance the production of disaggregated data to support policymakers' efforts to make informed decisions that affect youth, in line with SDG 17.18.

CONCLUSION

Governments have long been the main source of funding for youth development in the subregion, but there is scope to broaden the financing of youth development beyond the public sector.

Therefore, governments should focus on improving the efficiency of their spending, incentivizing innovative ethical financing to complement their resources and promote youth entrepreneurship to reduce the burden on already over-leveraged states. These policies should ensure that all youth including the disabled and other at-risk youth are included in all programmes. A broadly reformed policy agenda as suggested above, could go a long way in helping the Caribbean subregion optimize the demographic dividend in advancing its development. ■

¹¹ A Khadan, Jeetendra. (2017), "Are Employers in Trinidad and Tobago just 'whining', or is the 'skills' problem real?", IADB

¹² Promoting Responsible Investment and Commerce in Europe (Price Project) (2014), "Introduction to Ethical Finance and Responsible Investment", Price.

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