



United Nations

ECLAC

ECLAC SUBREGIONAL HEADQUARTERS FOR THE CARIBBEAN

FOCUS

Magazine of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC)

CARIBBEAN TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE SDGs

ISSUE 4 / OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2019

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.

MEMBER COUNTRIES

Antigua and Barbuda	Haiti
The Bahamas	Jamaica
Barbados	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Belize	Saint Lucia
Cuba	Saint Vincent
Dominica	and the Grenadines
Dominican Republic	Suriname
Grenada	Trinidad and Tobago
Guyana	

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

Anguilla
Aruba
British Virgin Islands
Cayman Islands
Curaçao
Guadeloupe
Martinique
Montserrat
Puerto Rico
Sint Maarten
Turks and Caicos Islands
United States Virgin Islands

CONTENTS

Director's Desk: Caribbean Technology Partnerships for the SDGs	3
--	---

Waste Not, Want Not: Partnerships and New Thinking for Sustainable Waste Reduction and Management in the Caribbean	4
--	---

Investing in public/private and regional partnerships to improve the availability of high-speed connections in the Caribbean	6
--	---

NGO partnerships and ICTS in the Caribbean	8
--	---

Regular Features

Recent and upcoming meetings	14
------------------------------	----

List of Recent ECLAC Documents and Publications	14
---	----

FOCUS: ECLAC in the Caribbean is a publication of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) subregional headquarters for the Caribbean/Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC).

EDITORIAL TEAM:

Director	Diane Quarless, ECLAC
Editor	Alexander Voccia, ECLAC
Copy Editor	Denise Balgobin, ECLAC
Coordinator	Amelia Bleeker, ECLAC
Design	Blaine Marciano, ECLAC

Cover Photo: Courtesy Pixabay.com

Produced by ECLAC

CONTACT INFORMATION

ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean
PO Box 11113, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
Tel: (868) 224-8000
E-mail: spou-pos@eclac.org
Website: www.eclac.org/portofspain



DIRECTOR'S DESK: CARIBBEAN TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE SDGS

Many Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) can be described as multi-island States and territories, where the population of a single country is divided across several, typically small land masses, each with various governance structures and institutions.¹

Caribbean SIDS tend to have high debt burdens and public service costs, small domestic markets vulnerable to external shocks and natural disasters, and difficulties creating economies of scale due to high transportation and production costs. In addition, multi-island SIDS are in some cases spread over a large distance and populations in small or outlying islands can experience poorer quality and availability of public services. These unique characteristics create both challenges and opportunities for Caribbean countries in their pursuit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To overcome these challenges, Caribbean SIDS require effective technological partnerships to create a digital bridge between their many islands. The strategic application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and knowledge management can build resilience to economic shocks, natural disasters and climate change, and act as an important equaliser by extending the reach of and access to information and public services to people in small and outlying islands.

Both the 2030 Agenda and the SIDS development agenda, the SAMOA Pathway, promote partnerships as a means of finding innovative technological solutions. Indeed, the goals of the 2030 Agenda will be hard to achieve without partnerships built on technology. This is especially so for Caribbean SIDS, many of which have difficulties funding new technologies

due to the above-mentioned constraints.

This issue of FOCUS discusses emerging Caribbean technological partnerships in three areas: waste management, high-speed connectivity, and in enhancing the capacity of the region's non-governmental organisations. Sustainable waste management is an urgent social and economic issue for Caribbean SIDS given their typically small land mass, weak infrastructure and municipal services for effective solid waste management and sewerage systems, and increasingly frequent extreme weather events, which threaten the stability of landfills and contribute to marine and land pollution. This challenge transcends national and maritime boundaries and cannot be effectively tackled without the cooperation of regional stakeholders.

Governments in the subregion have begun to place waste management on their political and legislative agendas, with the enactment of laws banning Styrofoam and single-use plastic bags. However, regional and public/private partnerships (PPPs) can play a vital role in promoting and supporting the sustainability of initiatives and financing and a shift to viewing waste as a valuable resource.

Similarly, improving high-speed connectivity in the region will require partnerships between governments, regional telecommunications providers and regional and international organisations. Focus is also given to the role that partnerships in collaboration with neighbouring states can play in enabling Caribbean SIDS to realise

the economies of scale experienced by larger countries in negotiating contracts for improved broadband availability and bandwidth. The Caribbean Regional Communications Infrastructure Programme (CARCIP), financed by the World Bank and coordinated by the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU), provides a blueprint for such an approach.

Finally, Focus examines the importance of technological partnerships in increasing the capacity of NGOs in the Caribbean. NGOs are acknowledged as an essential partner for governments in pursuing sustainable development. Durable partnerships supported by technology can go a long way in overcoming challenges caused by limited resources and geographical constraints. An example of ECLAC's work with the Trinidad and Tobago Women's Network of NGOs demonstrates how use of ICTs and knowledge management effectively records the achievements and historical perspectives of Caribbean feminists. ICTs and knowledge management are powerful tools in the hands of NGOs who wish to maintain and preserve institutional knowledge and nurture lasting partnerships for the benefit of the subregion.

Yours in Focus

Diane Quarless

¹ The Caribbean has ten multi-island states and territories, namely Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, and the United States Virgin Islands.



WASTE NOT, WANT NOT: PARTNERSHIPS AND NEW THINKING FOR SUSTAINABLE WASTE REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

Amelia Bleeker*

Effective waste management is an urgent sustainable development challenge for Caribbean economies that rely heavily on tourism, agriculture and fisheries.¹ Caribbean SIDS are the highest waste generators per capita in the Latin America and Caribbean region and most of the waste from these countries is disposed of in landfills, if it is not burned or illegally dumped as recycling schemes are often non-existent or nascent.²

Waste management is a particular concern for Caribbean countries given their typically small landmass and the subregion's increasingly frequent natural disasters, which threaten the stability of landfills and contribute to waterway and ocean pollution. These challenges are compounded by typically weak infrastructure and municipal services for effective solid waste management and sewerage systems.

Recent flooding events caused by intense rainfall and storm surges from hurricanes have been exacerbated by municipal waste clogging drainage systems, with significant impacts on people's livelihoods.³ An earthquake in Haiti in 2010 generated 60,000,000 tonnes of waste, or the equivalent of 51 years of normal waste generation.⁴ In the absence of established procedures, electronic goods and white waste, such as televisions, washing machines and microwaves, are disposed of improperly.

In the Caribbean, 80 per cent of

marine pollution comes from land-based sources, including litter, agricultural by-products and untreated wastewater.⁵ In Barbados, marine litter or debris has been shown to have a significant economic cost because it reduces the likelihood of tourists returning.⁶ Reducing marine litter in order to improve the quality of coastal and marine resources is vital for the sustainability of the Caribbean's tourist product. However, the cost of inaction extends beyond the tourism industry to human health, loss of ecosystems, land use and economic opportunities and the acceleration of climate change.

Global estimates suggest that the societal cost of inadequate waste management is five to ten times higher than the cost of implementing proper waste management in a middle- or low-income city.⁷ In the Caribbean, reef degradation is estimated to cost an annual revenue loss of between US\$350 million and US\$870 million.⁸ Overfishing and marine pollution, predominately from sewage, are the main causes of coral reef loss in the

subregion. Increased pollution renders coral reefs more vulnerable to climate change effects, bleaching from warming seas and ocean acidification.

LOCAL RESPONSES TO CALLS TO ACTION

The SAMOA Pathway recognises that environmentally sound waste management is crucial for human health and environmental protection.⁹

Consistent with the 2030 Agenda, countries have also acknowledged that waste management is vital to the fulfilment of basic human rights, such as the right to better quality of life, including improved access to health care, food, water, housing and sanitation. SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production includes targets focused on waste prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse.¹⁰

Governments in the subregion have begun to place the issue of waste management on their political and legislative agendas, with new laws

* Amelia Bleeker is an Associate Programme Management Officer in the Caribbean Knowledge Management Center of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

¹ Phillips, Willard and Thorne, Elizabeth. "Municipal solid waste management in the Caribbean: A benefit-cost analysis" Studies and Perspectives series-ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean, No. 22, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2014.

² Silpa, Kaza, Yao, Lisa, Bhada-Tata, Perinaz and Van Woerden, Frank. "What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050", Urban Development Series, World Bank, 2014.

³ Fontes de Meira, Luciana and Phillips, Willard. "An economic analysis of flooding in the Caribbean: the case of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago", Studies and Perspectives series-ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean, No. 78, ECLAC, 2019.

⁴ United Nations Environment Programme. "Small Island Developing States Waste Management Outlook", 2019, p. 55.

⁵ United Nations Environment Programme-Caribbean Environment Programme. "Land-Based Sources and Activities in the Wider Caribbean Region", CEP TR No. 52: Updated CEP Technical Report No. 33, 2010; "Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter Management (RAPMaLi) for the Wider Caribbean Region", CEP Technical Report No. 72, 2014.

⁶ Schuhmann, Peter. "The Economic Value of Coastal Resources in Barbados: Vacation Tourists' Perceptions, Expenditures and Willingness to Pay", CERMES Technical Report No. 50, University of the West Indies, 2012.

⁷ United Nations Environment Programme. "Small Island Developing States Waste Management Outlook", 2019, p. 13.

⁸ Diez, S.M., Patil, P.G., Morton, J., Rodriguez, D.J., Vanzella, A., Robin, D.V., Maes, T., Corbin, C. "Marine Pollution in the Caribbean: Not a Minute to Waste", World Bank Group, 2019, p. 44.

⁹ United Nations General Assembly. "SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.M.O.A.) Pathway", Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, 2014.

¹⁰ See SDG targets 12.4 and 12.5.

banning Styrofoam, single-use plastic bags and plastic bottles. More than 14 Caribbean countries have banned single-use plastic bags and/or Styrofoam. However, bans on plastic bottles, the most common marine litter in the Caribbean, are still to be pursued.¹¹ Countries like Trinidad and Tobago are trying to close landfills and develop nationwide waste recycling projects.¹²

Hazardous waste, such as medical, electronic and chemical waste, presents a serious challenge to countries of the subregion given the high cost of environmentally sound technologies for the safe and effective management of such waste. The inability to create economies of scale given the small size of most islands of the Caribbean further exacerbates the problem. Some countries, including Jamaica and Saint Kitts and Nevis, have enacted laws preventing the importation of hazardous waste and facilitating its exportation as envisaged by the Basel Convention, but enforcement is sometimes lacking.¹³

REGIONAL AND PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS TO MANAGE WASTE

Caribbean States are therefore actively engaged in partnerships to manage waste.¹⁴ The Caribbean Environment Programme (UNEP-CEP), an initiative

of UN Environment Programme, is designed to help countries in the subregion find practical ways to address the impacts of marine and coastal pollution within the framework of The Protocol on the Control of Land Based Sources of Marine Pollution (LBS Protocol).¹⁵

Countries are encouraged to invest in new approaches to collecting, transporting and disposing of solid waste, restrict the import and use of single-use plastics and promote recycling as ways to stimulate new industries and job opportunities.

The programme on Implementing Sustainable Low and Non-Chemical Development in Small Island Developing States (the ISLANDS programme) is a five-year initiative including nine Caribbean SIDS¹⁶ that seeks to eliminate 23,236 tonnes of toxic chemicals and avoid the release of over 185,000 tonnes of marine litter.¹⁷ Founded in 2017, the Clean Seas Campaign has attracted 20 Latin American and Caribbean signatories, with a five-year plan to address the root-causes of marine litter by targeting the production and consumption of non-recoverable and single-use plastic. As the largest global partnership for preventing marine plastic pollution, the campaign includes commitments covering more than 60 per cent of the world's coastlines.¹⁸

Countries in the subregion are also using local public/private partnerships (PPPs) to implement waste management solutions. In Barbados, solid waste is sorted at a privately owned and operated facility with the aim of directing recyclable materials away from landfills. Globally, about one third of waste management services are provided by PPPs.¹⁹ While private sector involvement can bring investment and efficiency to waste collection, treatment and disposal, it must be regulated and managed properly in order to ensure service quality.

Governments can put incentive structures and enforcement mechanisms in place to ensure the accountability and sustainability of private waste management operations. Jamaica plans to launch a deposit refund scheme for plastic bottles, which will provide a JMD\$1 cash refund for the return of plastic bottles to privately-operated recycling depots.²⁰ Barbados has had a similar incentive scheme in place since 1986 pursuant to its adoption of the Returnable Containers Act.

► (continued on page 10)

¹¹ Diez, S.M., Patil, P.G., Morton, J., Rodriguez, D.J., Vanzella, A., Robin, D.V., Maes, T., Corbin, C. "Marine Pollution in the Caribbean: Not a Minute to Waste", World Bank Group, 2019, p. 15.

¹² News.gov.tt. "Government working to shut down landfill", 2018, <http://www.news.gov.tt/content/government-working-shut-down-landfills#.Xb3v-hKjIU>. Accessed on 4 November 2019.

¹³ Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (1989). See, for example, Jamaica's Natural Resources (Hazardous Waste) (Control of Transboundary Movement) Regulations 2002.

¹⁴ The SAMOA Pathway promotes durable technological partnerships and instruments at all levels to address waste management and reduction, while SDG target 17.7 urges countries to "promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favorable terms".

¹⁵ For the Caribbean ratification status of this Protocol, see <https://www.unenvironment.org/cep/who-we-are/cartagena-convention>.

¹⁶ Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

¹⁷ The Global Environment Facility (GEF), as one of the programme's main financiers and coordinators, used a variety of tools to develop aims to eliminate specific tonnages of toxic chemicals and marine litter, in order to measure the impact of the programme. Some of the baseline data used to formulate the aims was outdated and, as a result, figures will be revised as the programme is implemented. For more information, see https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/web-documents/10185_PFD_SIDS_PFD.pdf.

¹⁸ For more information, see <https://www.cleansseas.org/impact/caribbean-addresses-scourge-plastic-pollution>.

¹⁹ Silpa, Kaza, Yao, Lisa, Bhada-Tata, Perinaz, and Van Woerden, Frank. "What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050", Urban Development Series, World Bank, 2014, p. 5.

²⁰ Jamaican Information Service, "Plastic Bottle Refund Deposit Scheme on Track", 12 April 2019, <https://jis.gov.jm/plastic-bottle-refund-deposit-scheme-on-track/>. Accessed 4 November 2019.



INVESTING IN PUBLIC/PRIVATE AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE THE AVAILABILITY OF HIGH-SPEED CONNECTIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN¹

Amelia Bleeker*

Improving high-speed connectivity is a priority for Caribbean States dispersed across the significant ocean space of the Caribbean Sea. The subregion is challenged by a lack of physical connectivity both between and within States of multi-island character.²

Due to the subregion's poor access to low cost development finance, it has limited capacity to build ICT infrastructure capable of delivering high-speed connections in support of country's sustainable development objectives. In these circumstances, partnerships between governments, private sector telecommunications providers, development banks and other international and regional organisations have assumed increasing importance.

Despite the Caribbean's rapid expansion of mobile and broadband technology in the past decade, more than half of the households in the subregion still lack access to the internet.³ The quality of access is also an issue, with connection speeds improving but not keeping pace with the rest of the world. National networks are typically made up of a combination of fibre-optic, copper and wireless technologies. The replacement of older copper technologies with infrastructure capable of supporting latest generation technology is taking place gradually. For now, high-speed connections are still out of reach in many less populated islands as well as in the remote, rural areas of larger countries, such as Guyana and Jamaica.⁴

and funding approaches are needed to facilitate investment in current fourth-generation and emerging technologies. Caribbean countries have so far used a mixture of regulatory instruments, subsidies and other market-based mechanisms, as well as public-private partnerships (PPPs) and infrastructure-sharing arrangements. Forming subregional blocs through partnerships with neighbouring governments has proved particularly effective in enabling Caribbean SIDS to realise advantages of scale experienced by larger countries in negotiating contracts for improved broadband availability and bandwidth.

CASE STUDY: CARIBBEAN REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMME (CARCIP)

Financed by the World Bank and coordinated by the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU), CARCIP is a regional initiative that addresses challenges in the ICT sector, bridging the remaining gaps in broadband communications in the participating countries and advancing the development of an ICT-enabled services industry.

to the three participating countries, Grenada, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, has been through PPPs established in collaboration with the subregional telecommunications provider, Digicel.

An undersea fibre cable system designed in a loop configuration for redundancy and resilience to volcanic activity from nearby Kick 'em Jenny, is being built to connect Grenada and Saint Vincent as well as islands of the Grenadines. This has enabled some smaller islands, such as Bequia and Carriacou, to access fourth and fifth generation technologies for the first time. These islands have previously only been served by microwave technology and they had already outgrown its capacity.

Public offices and schools were also connected to government wide area networks, which resulted in increased bandwidth of 10 Mbps per school, while educational networks were created for libraries and community centres. Saint Lucia and Grenada focused on developing an IP telephone network,⁵ which has resulted in a significant reduction of telecommunications costs for governments. The undersea fibre cable projects have filled gaps not addressed by the Eastern Caribbean Fibre

Flexible and innovative partnerships The main mode of delivery of projects

* Amelia Bleeker is an Associate Programme Management Officer in the Caribbean Knowledge Management Center of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

¹ The author thanks the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) for being interviewed for the purpose of this article.

² The SIDS Development Agenda emphasises the need for genuine, durable partnerships in ensuring SIDS access to appropriate reliable, affordable, modern and environmentally sound technologies. See UNGA (2014), SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (UN Res A/RES/69/15), Apia, para. 110.

³ ECLAC (2017), State of broadband in Latin America and the Caribbean 2017 (LC/TS.2018/11), Santiago. Note that this is a regional statistic including Latin America and the Caribbean.

⁴ 'SIDS' has no internationally accepted definition and four low-lying coastal states—Belize, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, and Suriname—declare themselves to be SIDS.

⁵ An IP telephone system uses internet telephony to transmit telephone calls as opposed to traditional circuit-switched telephony.

Cable System (ECFS) and improved the accessibility and affordability of telecommunications services in the participating countries.

As a requirement for participating in CARCIP, countries were required to enter into a World Bank loan to finance PPPs with Digicel. High levels of indebtedness placed taking such a loan out of reach for some Caribbean countries. However, where countries were able to incur this debt, they benefited from significant cost benefits. According to the CTU, the participating countries negotiated a significant reduction in costs by procuring the broadband infrastructure of their respective government wide area networks jointly. The success of the project also lay in countries' ability to align their interests and to speak with a single and stronger collective voice when negotiating. Countries built a community of trust through relationships, knowledge-sharing and commitment to the community objectives. The countries also benefited from a robust framework for implementation with project coordination units in each country to oversee implementation and a CTU regional coordination unit.

The CTU is advocating for follow-up projects, which will build on the infrastructure gains of the first project by optimising use of the new technology. Moving forward, the focus of one of the projects will be on digital transformation, which will require the development of e-government services, mobile payments and cyber security legislative and regulatory frameworks. That project is expected to include the three original participating countries as well as other countries.

WHERE TO NEXT? CARICOM'S SINGLE ICT SPACE PROJECT

Approved by Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Heads of Government in 2017, the Single ICT Space project envisions creating an ICT-enabled borderless space that fosters economic, social and cultural integration for the betterment of Caribbean citizens.

The project will put in place the digital layer of the Caribbean Single Market Economy (CSME). The CTU Secretariat has been promoting the need for Caribbean Governments to become 21st Century Governments, as a critical aspect of the CARICOM Single ICT Space.⁶ A 21st Century Government is defined as one that is citizen-centric, seamless, and makes effective use of ICT to efficiently and transparently engage with and deliver government services to its citizens and clients using multiple service channels.

Since regional partnerships are not possible without an enabling framework, the initial focus of the Single ICT Space project in the short term is regionally harmonised ICT policy, legal and regulatory regimes. A prime objective of the harmonised environment will be support for a regional competitive market, elimination of roaming rates and broadband infrastructure projects, mostly with a national focus. Countries are being encouraged to draft flexible, technologically neutral legislation and regulations that can be easily amended in order to keep pace with technological change.

CARICOM is spearheading a gap analysis to ascertain the changes required to countries' policy, legal and regulatory frameworks. However, progress is behind in meeting many of the project's implementation milestones, and renewed collaboration is necessary to deliver fully on the ambitious plan.

BARRIERS TO HIGH-SPEED CONNECTIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN

There is a significant supply of fibre-optic cable in the subregion, but some infrastructure gaps remain. Many Caribbean countries still have rural areas and smaller islands unserved or underserved by high-speed connections. For example, the islands of Trinidad and Tobago are still not linked by commercial fibre cable. In countries with indigenous peoples, such as Suriname and Dominica, there is a need to lay infrastructure without disruption of the environment and livelihoods of indigenous people.

The CTU explains that, while much of the basic hardware is in place, work is required to make high-speed connections affordable. Guyana still has a monopoly fixed-line provider and Suriname's market would also benefit from more vibrant competition with a state-owned incumbent being the exclusive provider of fixed-line and broadband services. Competitive broadband rates were almost instantaneous in Trinidad and Tobago when a second undersea cable provider arrived in that telecommunications market. Governments of other countries should encourage telecommunications regulators to liberalise the market in this way, including by repealing or amending legislation that creates barriers for new providers.

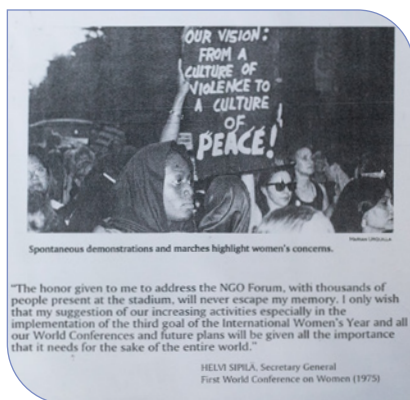
► (continued on page 11)

⁶ CTU (2017), "Towards 21st Century Government: Citizen-Centric, Seamless Government", <https://events.idloom.com/files/events/1307/files/towards-21st-century-governments-issue-1-4.pdf>.

NGO PARTNERSHIPS AND ICTs IN THE CARIBBEAN

Blaine Marciano*

The importance of NGO partnerships for Caribbean sustainable development and the role of technology in facilitating these partnerships are explored below, with the need for knowledge management to ensure that partnerships can endure over time. Focus is given to ECLAC interviewed members of the Trinidad and Tobago Women's Network of NGOs, Grace Talma and Hazel Brown, to get an account of their experience using Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) and knowledge management in support of lasting, effective partnerships.



It is well established that in the Caribbean limited access to financial resources compounded by lack of scale economies resulting, inter alia, in high transport and resource mobilization costs, has contributed significantly to the challenge of sustainable development. Consider, for example, the resources needed to carry out a capacity building workshop for participants across several Caribbean islands. The chronic inadequacy of such funding presents a barrier to the organic scaling up of development initiatives across the Caribbean, which can stymie the development of small groups of actors committed to operating in the development space.

Partnerships for development are one of the tools regularly harnessed in response to limited resources and geographic separation; and technology can be an indispensable resource for facilitating partnerships.

NGOs AND THE 2030 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) have become essential partners in development along with governments and regional and international organizations. They usually play an important role in facilitating

communication between people, including marginalized groups, and decision makers.

United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, has frequently underscored the importance of NGOs to the United Nations, referring to them as “indispensable partners” whose role is more important than ever in helping the organization to reach its development goals.¹

One of the requirements necessary for development proposed by both the SAMOA Pathway² and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is increasing the capacity of stakeholders to forge multi-stakeholder partnerships, and strengthening the monitoring and review process of these partnerships. Considering that NGOs are an essential partner in development, these organizations and the partnerships that they establish deserve to be nurtured and supported.

THE EXAMPLE OF THE REGIONAL GENDER AGENDA

The preparation done by women's NGOs across the Caribbean in the year leading up to the Fourth World Conference on Women provides a case

study of the importance of NGO-based partnerships to Caribbean development.

The landmark global conference ‘Action for Equality, Development and Peace’ was convened by the United Nations in Beijing, China in September 1995. Women's NGOs across the subregion were determined to have their perspectives, ideas and concerns voiced during this conference. As such, there was a well-coordinated movement to ensure the impactful involvement of the Caribbean delegation at the Beijing conference and the inclusion of their inputs in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.³

Members of the Trinidad and Tobago Women's Network of NGOs, Grace Talma and Hazel Brown, both of whom attended the Beijing conference and were active in the Network's preparations for its participation, shared with ECLAC Caribbean their first-hand accounts of the steps taken to establish effective partnerships. In a series of videos created recently with ECLAC support, they archived their experiences gained on the journey to Beijing and recounted the process, beginning one year before and covering the period up until the conference itself was held. Their retelling of the process places significant emphasis on

* Blaine Marciano is a Public Information Assistant in the Strategic Planning and Outreach Unit of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

¹ Global Policy Forum. (1999). NGOs and the United Nations. <https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/176-general/31440-ngos-and-the-united-nations.html>

² For more information on the SAMOA Pathway visit: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sids/samoareview>

³ United Nations, Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 27 October 1995, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3dde04324.html> [accessed 5 December 2019]

I went to BEIJING

Hazel Medina
Clotil Walcott
Thelma Henderson
Shirley Hussen

Joan Yuille Williams

Asha kambon
Monica Paul Mc lean
Gemma Tang Nain
Sheila Marcelle
Rawwida Baksh

Joycelyn Dow
JACQUELINE SHARPE

Rhoda Reddock
Gaietry Pargass
Roberta Clarke
Grace Talma
Hazel Brown
Judith Laird
Abbi Blackman
Josanne Leonard
Brenda Gopeesingh
Nelcia Robinson
Catherine Cumberbatch
Ramona Chuckaree

the role played by workshops and meetings held across the subregion supported by a communications strategy. These elements served as the medium through which women's groups across the Caribbean could consult, exchange ideas and develop partnerships. According to Talma and Brown, partnerships paved the way for the integration of ideas from women all across the subregion and led to draft policy proposals and the preparation of a Regional Gender Agenda, a "Caribbean Document", which listed the concerns of Caribbean women for discussion in Beijing in 1995.

SUPPORTING PARTNERSHIPS USING ICTs

Decades after the exemplary efforts of NGOs in Beijing, these organizations now have more technological tools available than ever before to expand and accelerate their work. ICTs provide some solutions to the challenge of high resource demands, by providing low cost alternative means for establishing partnerships. In the Caribbean, partnerships must connect persons across islands as well as borders.

Connection allows for agreement on common issues and the dissemination of innovative solutions, not to mention the cultivation of relationships and in some instances lasting friendships across islands. The Internet, social media, and other telecommunications technologies all provide invaluable tools for coordination, collaboration and the amplification of efforts that would otherwise be undertaken in isolation. Easily accessible devices and services also provide a means for NGO members to add their voice to discussion around development issues at little or no cost.

► (continued on page 12)

Photo: List of women who participated in 'Action for Equality, Development and Peace' convened by the United Nations in Beijing, China in September 1995.

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT: PARTNERSHIPS AND NEW THINKING FOR SUSTAINABLE WASTE REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN (CONTINUED)

A NEW WAY OF THINKING

With the development of regional partnerships and PPPs, governments in the subregion are making a crucial transition towards viewing waste as a resource. This is the theory behind ‘circular economy’, which seeks to transfer waste from the end of the supply chain back to the beginning for use as a secondary resource. This approach relies on the recovery of waste through reuse and recycling and requires products to be designed for disassembly and reuse.²¹

In a traditional economy, raw materials are eventually discarded into the environment after being used once. However, an economy can create new products from old products, which reduces the accumulation of waste and costs associated with disposal and pollution. Where reuse or remanufacturing are not possible, waste can be recycled or used as an energy source. Elements of such an economy are already being incorporated in development projects in the subregion. For example, with the support of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), Trinidad and Tobago plans to enter into a public/private partnership to develop a waste to energy project.²²

Issues like hazardous waste management and marine pollution cross national and maritime boundaries and therefore cannot be effectively tackled without the cooperation of all regional stakeholders. Guided by international and regional frameworks, such as the Cartagena Convention and its LBS Protocol, Caribbean SIDS should aim to formulate strong regulatory controls and financial incentives for both the public and private sectors. Regional Activity Centres have been established in Cuba and Trinidad and Tobago to provide technical support and assistance to assist Contracting Parties to implement the LBS Protocol.

Sustainable financing for waste management and reduction is possible through partnerships with international and regional development banks. For example, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and UNEP-CEP GEF have developed a Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater Management, with 13 participating countries.²³ Caribbean SIDS should look for innovative ways to finance waste management and pollution reduction, establishing PPPs with locally appropriate solutions.

Effective waste management relies on technology, but technology alone will not solve all the challenges in this area. Some countries still need to transition from open dumping and burning to improved recycling and disposal of waste at controlled, sanitary landfills. Sites for landfills should be selected for their stability in the event of hurricanes, flooding and other extreme weather events, while also paying close attention to the health and other interests of affected communities. Appropriate policy approaches that improve waste management while addressing waste disposal through effective partnerships should therefore be actively encouraged and pursued. The cost of waste management and the prevention of marine pollution will likely be far less than the cost of inaction, given the economic impact on key sectors such as tourism and fisheries. ■

²² For more information on circular economy, see: https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2017-07/Circular_Economy_UNIDO_0.pdf.

²³ Ministry of Planning and Development. “Government aims to reduce capital expenditure through public private partnerships”, 2019, <https://www.planning.gov.tt/content/government-aims-reduce-capital-expenditure-through-public-private-partnerships-0>. Accessed on 4 November 2019.

²⁴ For more information, see www.gefcrew.org.

► (continued from page 7)

INVESTING IN PUBLIC/PRIVATE AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE THE AVAILABILITY OF HIGH-SPEED CONNECTIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN (CONTINUED)

Governments also need to create an enabling environment for investment in ICT infrastructure by having an appropriate institutional framework in place. Ministries often work in silos, with each having a department responsible for ICT issues. Where ICT governance is lacking, governments should consider implementing centralised ICT governance structures and processes to ensure cross-government coordination. Centralised ICT governance requires government agencies to work together across portfolio confines, ensuring interoperability of systems.

Considering their situation in a subregion prone to natural disasters, Caribbean policy makers should pay special attention to ensuring reliable and resilient ICT infrastructure. A robust network of ICT infrastructure ensures that communication and coordination are available for critical pre-disaster preparation and post disaster recovery efforts and can act as an essential facilitator of recovery of government operations, and the productive and social sectors. Countries are evaluating the viability of satellite technologies and high-altitude platform services that can be incorporated into telecommunications infrastructures and are particularly useful in hinterland areas of larger Caribbean

countries. For example, Jamaica is currently implementing a private sector project to bring satellite services to its remote, mountainous areas.

INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGICAL PARTNERSHIPS

Given high levels of indebtedness in the subregion, it is in most cases necessary to have private sector telecommunication providers involved in the provision of ICT infrastructure. However, as CARCIP demonstrated, forming regional partnerships allows countries to more effectively negotiate with providers.

Governments benefit from private sector capital, while gaining high-speed broadband at affordable prices. This means that the challenge for improving access to high-speed connections in the subregion is not in convincing countries to invest but in creating an enabling environment for investment in telecommunications.

Having observed that the best outcomes are achieved when multiple stakeholders come together to bring technology to the subregion, the CTU created a collaboration forum in 2016 with a view

to promoting connectivity and ICT development. It provides a platform for various stakeholder groups to share information and opinions in order to inform CTU's policy recommendations.

Once high-speed connections are in place, Caribbean countries should consider focusing attention on bringing as many public services as possible online as well as on developing digital skills to enable people to benefit equally from these connections and to become entrepreneurs and innovators. Smaller players can deliver digital equipment and skills training in partnership with governments. Attention must be paid to the inclusion of vulnerable groups in particular, since the digital divide continues to grow for persons with disabilities and women.⁷ ■

⁷ ECLAC (2018), Information and Communications Technologies for the Inclusion and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/TS.2018/48), Santiago.

NGO PARTNERSHIPS AND ICTS IN THE CARIBBEAN (CONTINUED)

Beyond establishing partnerships, NGOs must also maintain and preserve the institutional knowledge established through years of collaborative effort. Twenty-five years after their involvement in the initial Beijing conference, Talma and Brown discussed with ECLAC Caribbean their concerns regarding continuity. The activists, now well experienced in the process of sustainable development, expressed the need to establish a lasting link to work achieved in the past. This significant effort, undertaken over several regional workshops and meetings leading up to the Beijing conference, was validated through the inclusion of a Caribbean perspective in the conference's outcome document. It was a signal achievement for the Women's NGO Networks of the Caribbean.

The impact of this effort will endure for years to come. However, there is concern that elements of this achievement might be lost. At risk is the institutional knowledge gained and the experience earned from the process of establishing partnerships. Resources such as working documents, the minutes of meetings, communications materials, diaries, photos and recordings from the

journey represent a wealth of knowledge that should be passed on to the next generation of Caribbean women NGO leaders. When documented, this knowledge should contribute towards bringing various interest groups and institutions together. The concerns expressed point to the need for a more established and systematic approach to knowledge management in NGOs across the Caribbean.

The process of knowledge management for NGOs must include access to all of the knowledge and information accumulated through years of effort invested by individuals across the region. In the context of the Caribbean, it would be prudent, once again, to harness the support of ICT frameworks. This could include establishing websites, databases and cloud storage spaces which allow data to be archived, indexed and easily accessed wherever there is access to the internet – i.e. anywhere and everywhere. The ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean is currently working to support the Women's Network of NGOs through the use of knowledge management tools available on its Caribbean Development Portal.

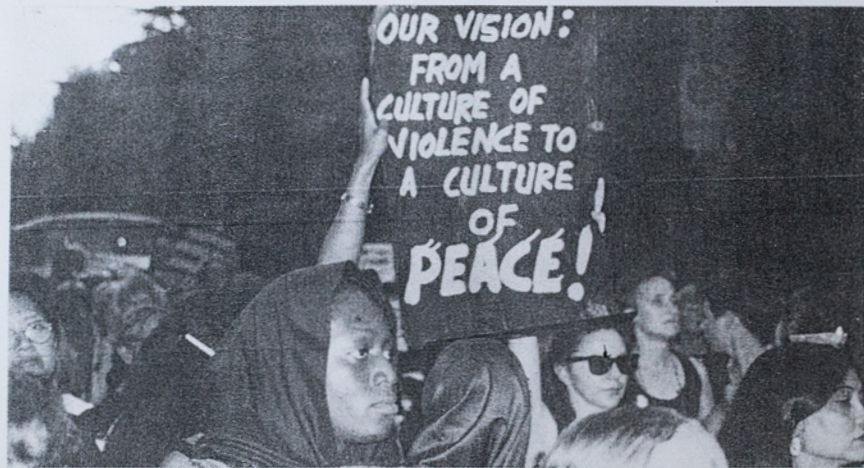
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT OF ECLAC CARIBBEAN

The Caribbean Development Portal, an initiative of the Caribbean Knowledge Management Center (CKMC), was established to provide a range of services for Caribbean governments and NGOs to become acquainted with the knowledge management process.

The Caribbean Development Portal provides a website for the display of and easy access to Caribbean projects and initiatives, technical assistance to assist Caribbean SIDS in their own knowledge management processes, and capacity building to enhance the capabilities of NGOs across the region. Through the efforts of the CKMC, ECLAC Caribbean aims to empower NGOs to take control of the fate of their developmental patrimony. The goal is nurturing and supporting hard won and essential Caribbean NGO partnerships for years to come. ■

Our vision:

"To bring together women and men to challenge, create, and transform global structures and processes at all levels through the empowerment and celebration of women. We are committed to equality, peace, justice, inclusiveness, and full participation of all."



MARIAN URRUTIA

Spontaneous demonstrations and marches highlight women's concerns.

"The honor given to me to address the NGO Forum, with thousands of people present at the stadium, will never escape my memory. I only wish that my suggestion of our increasing activities especially in the implementation of the third goal of the International Women's Year and all our World Conferences and future plans will be given all the importance that it needs for the sake of the entire world."

HELVI SIPILÄ, Secretary General
First World Conference on Women (1975)

Photo: Newspaper clipping showing Caribbean participants at the NGO Forum on Women in Huairou, China.

SEPTEMBER

17 - 18 September 2019

Regional workshop on Repositioning of the CDCC-RCM as the Caribbean SIDS mechanism for sustainable development - Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

OCTOBER

23 October 2019

Training session on increasing access to technology for Persons with Disabilities - Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

NOVEMBER

26 - 27 November 2019

Symposium on Mainstreaming Gender in Water Resources Management, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policies in the Caribbean - Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

List of Recent ECLAC Documents and Publications

Listed by Symbol Number; Date and Title

LC/CAR/TS.2019/2

October 2019

Using universal service funds to increase access to technology for persons with disabilities in the Caribbean

LC/CAR/TS.2019/3

October 2019

Preliminary overview of the economies of the Caribbean 2018–2019: Economic restructuring and fiscal consolidation as a platform to increase growth

LC/CAR/2019/20

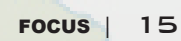
December 2019

Policy Brief: Incorporating the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in Caribbean national statistical legislation

LC/CAR/2019/24

December 2019

Policy Brief: Policy actions to facilitate upgrading of the agricultural sector in Trinidad and Tobago





The Magazine of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee
ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean

PO Box 1113, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

Tel: 868-224-8000

E-mail: spou-pos@eclac.org

vrb.al/eclaccaribbean