



Digital Currency

THE OPPORTUNITIES
AND RISKS FOR THE
CARIBBEAN

Containing Zika

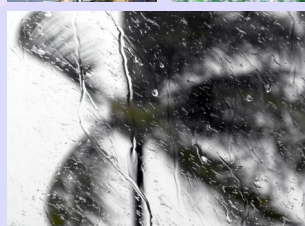
ECLAC REPORT
PRESENTS CHIKUNGUNYA
EXPERIENCE

Disaster Training

ECLAC CONTINUES TO
SPREAD BENEFITS OF
DISASTER ASSESSMENT
TRAINING



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2 April 2016

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Fourth Meeting of the Caribbean Development Round Table.
Basseterre, Saint Kitts and Nevis
21 April 2016

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XXVI Session of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) of ECLAC
Basseterre, Saint Kitts and Nevis
22 April 2016

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World Day for Safety and Health at Work
28 April 2016



ECLAC Caribbean

Posted Mar 17

As senior policymakers from the Caribbean prepare to discuss the region's debt obligations, ECLAC Caribbean launches the official website of this high-level meeting: <http://cdcc.cepal.org/26/en>



Twenty-sixth session Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC)

Basseterre, Saint Kitts and Nevis, 22 April 2016

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ECLAC Caribbean

Posted Mar 15

ECLAC Caribbean supports Saint Lucia as the country transitions to renewable energy: <http://vrb.al/energy-saintlucia>



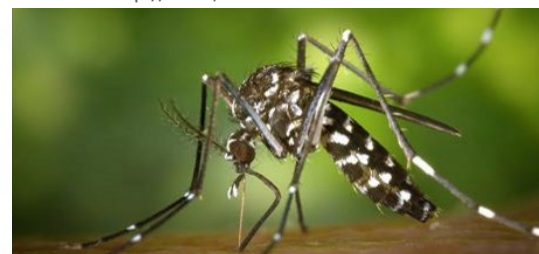
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ECLAC Caribbean

Posted Mar 4

Information generated from mobile phones can be used to contain the spread of non-communicable diseases in the Caribbean: <http://vrb.al/chick-v>



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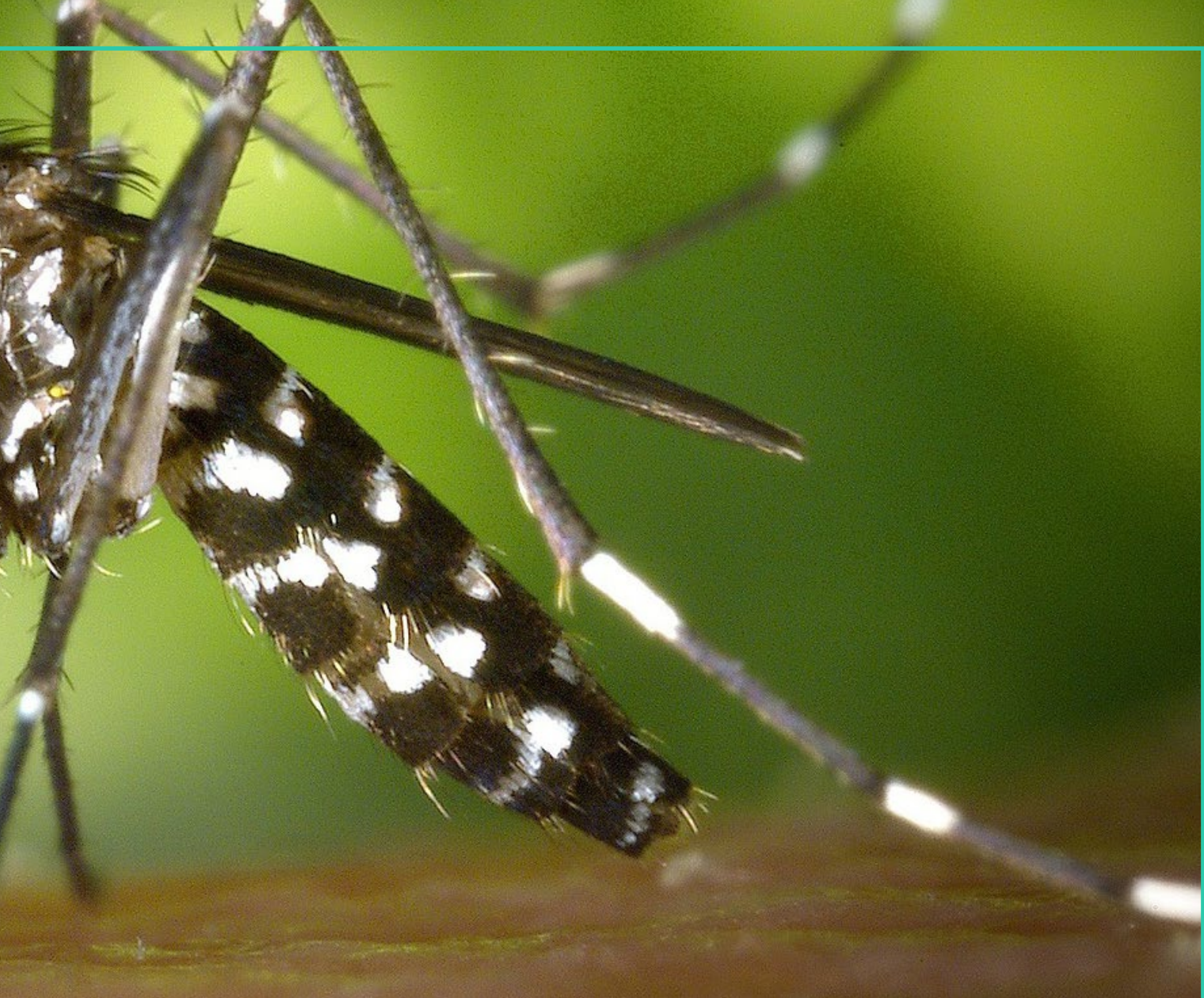


Opportunities for containing spread of Zika: ECLAC report presents Chikungunya experience

Information generated from mobile phones can be successfully used to contain the spread of non-communicable diseases, as was recently done to stem the spread of the Chikungunya virus in the Caribbean. This opportunity is explained in ECLAC Caribbean's recently published report titled "An assessment of big data for official statistics in the Caribbean".

The report notes that the use of big data through geospatial (or location) information was used to support healthcare, and to design social intervention measures to address the outbreak of Chick-V across the region. These findings may suggest that – similarly to using big data to source the locations of Chikungunya patients – the same technology could be applied to contain the spread of other diseases transmitted through the bite of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, such as dengue, yellow fever and the Zika virus – which over the last several weeks and months has spread to an ever growing number of tropical countries and in increasing numbers.

Local health authorities in Brazil have observed an increase in Zika virus infections in the general public, as well as an increase in babies born with microcephaly



in northeast Brazil. Following the 2nd meeting of the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee (IHREC) on Zika, the World Health Organization (WHO) released a statement in early March, advising that “the clusters of microcephaly cases and other neurological disorders continue to constitute a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), and that there is increasing evidence that there is a causal relationship with Zika virus.”

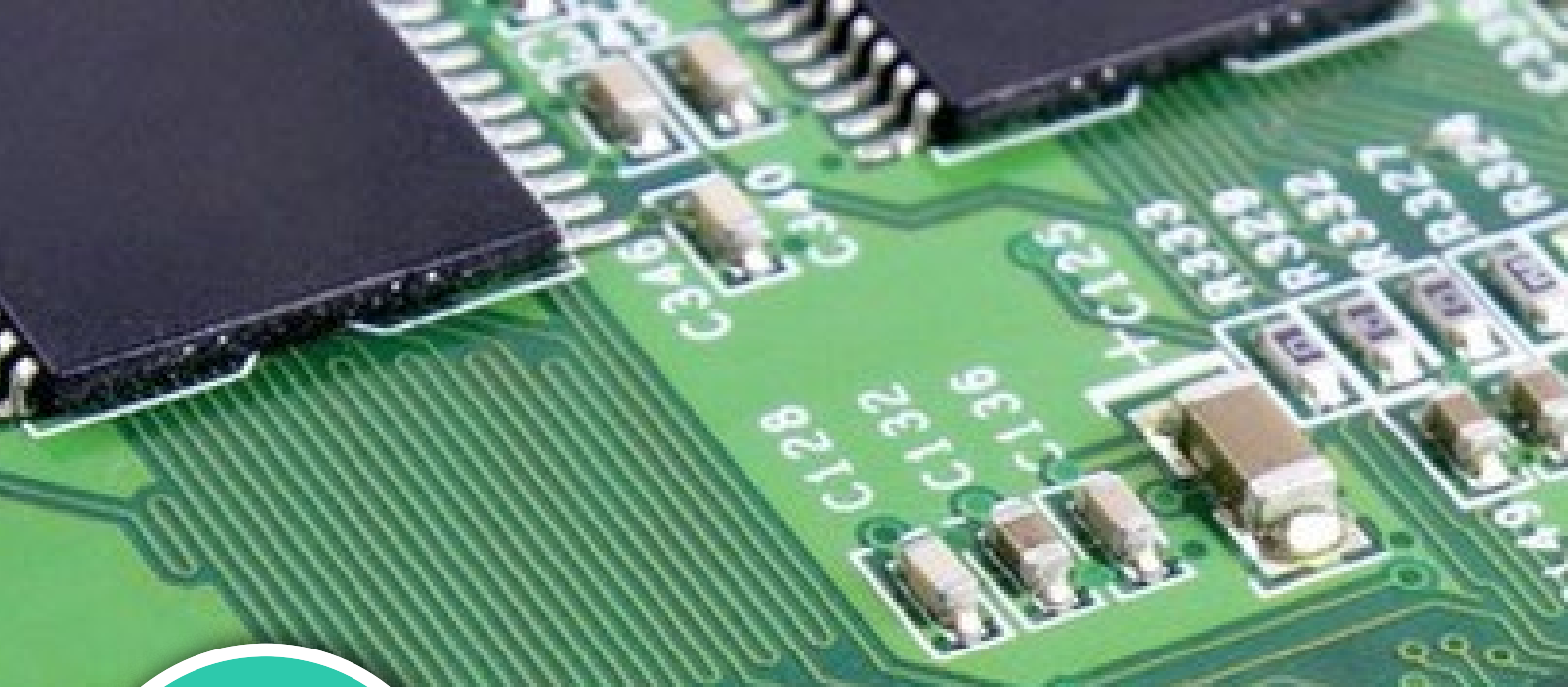
In addition to touching upon the use of big data for the generation of health-related data, such as those related to cases of Chick-V, ECLAC’s study also underscores that big data is a viable option for computing official statistics across several other areas in the Caribbean. However, at the same time, the report also highlights that concerns about the protection of privacy rank high among the challenges to big data exploration for official purposes.

For this reason, ECLAC has called on Caribbean countries to develop a Big Data Strategy to ensure that they take full advantage of the data revolution for sustainable development.

ECLAC Caribbean’s Statistics and Social Development Unit Coordinator, Abdullahi Abdulkadri, made this call during a presentation he gave on Big Data at the Caribbean ICT Collaboration Forum held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Port of Spain from 18-19 February.

In his presentation, Abdulkadri called for wider big data collaboration in the Caribbean, especially with big data producers. While noting that ECLAC recognizes the challenges faced by National Statistical Offices (NSOs) in using big data for official statistics, he indicated ECLAC’s ongoing support to NSOs in improving data dissemination in the region.


Big Data for Official Statistics is a work programme of the United Nations Statistics Division with a Global Working Group (GWG) established to address the benefits and challenges of big data. Big data is the term used to describe large amounts of digital information generated during everyday activities, such as through internet transactions, from mobile phones, and from global positioning systems. ■



FEATURE ARTICLE

Digital Currency





In light of the increasing number of national and international financial transactions within the Caribbean region, it is acknowledged that there is a need for better electronic payment systems to be established. The region needs to lower the cost of transactions, including on-line bill payments and international remittance services. Digital currencies represent a potential option for improving services and reducing costs, but are challenged in receiving acceptance among consumers and regulators.

Many Caribbean countries have long endeavoured to increase national participation in the digital economy. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, for example, formal efforts to improve the legislative and technological infrastructure to facilitate e-commerce date back to 1999 (National Electronic Commerce Policy Committee, 2000).

[READ MORE](#)





Digital Currency

ECLAC Caribbean, in its work to support member States, recently published a report on the “Opportunities and Risks Associated with the use of Digital Currency in the Caribbean”. ECLAC Associate Knowledge Management Officer Robert Williams shared his views on this topic with *The Hummingbird*.



with Robert Crane Williams

Q What is ECLAC doing in the field of digital currencies?

A ECLAC is researching policy options for Caribbean countries to consider when addressing the increasing use of new digital payment technologies. These technologies include cryptocurrencies, such as Bitcoin, as well as mobile-phone-based payment systems, such as those that have been introduced in Haiti and Jamaica as a means of providing financial services to a population underserved by existing banking infrastructure. ECLAC’s recent report on this topic is aimed at educating regulators about the issues surrounding these technologies. ECLAC is also partnering with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) to organize a regional conference on this topic, to be held from 1 -3 June, 2016.

Q Why is ECLAC engaging in this field of work: what’s the big deal?

A These new payment systems bring new opportunities as well as new risks. On the one hand, opportunities include potential benefits to the e-commerce sector and to its customers, reduced cost of sending and receiving remittance money from overseas, and a broader general engagement by Caribbean citizens with the digital economy. On the other hand, national regulators are concerned with the possibility that digital currencies could be used for money laundering and to facilitate cybercrime, as well as with the potential effects on overall macroeconomic stability. ECLAC’s goal is to help policy makers become familiar with the issues surrounding digital currency, so that they can respond to its emergence in a proactive, not reactive, manner.

Q What has ECLAC and/or its sister UN agencies and government counterparts done so far to address issues related to digital currencies in the Caribbean?

A At a global level, work has been done by the UN Office of Drugs and Crime to examine how digital currencies can be used to facilitate money laundering and cybercrime. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has looked into the topic of mobile money as part of its Focus Group on Digital Financial Services. However, this is an emerging issue, and, prior to ECLAC’s engagement on the topic, very little policy research had been carried out on how it will affect the Caribbean region. This is why ECLAC Caribbean has convened Expert Group Meetings, released a report on the topic, and is supporting the upcoming regional conference on Exploring Innovation in Transactions and Financing in the Caribbean. The goal of these efforts is to help policy makers make informed choices that balance consideration of the opportunities provided by innovative payment technologies with the need to mitigate the potential risks entailed by the ongoing adoption of digital currencies.

Q What is or will be new about the work that ECLAC Caribbean will carry out, compared to what has been done in the past? How will it make a difference?

A ECLAC's study on digital currencies in the Caribbean is the first formal effort by the UN Secretariat to engage with this issue from the perspective of how it will affect the countries in a region of the world. ECLAC hopes to encourage countries to engage with opportunities made possible by the development of this technology, while they prepare themselves to make use of existing banking regulations and law-enforcement tools that can mitigate potential negative impacts from the misapplication of digital currencies.

Q Which countries are most in need of ECLAC's support? Who will benefit from ECLAC's work?

A ECLAC has noted positive engagement on this issue from officials in Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). ECLAC hopes to work with those officials to help drive the adoption of formalized policies. However, it is the countries that have not yet engaged with the topic of digital currency that have perhaps the most to gain from ECLAC's effort to increase the understanding of how digital currencies will impact the national economies of the Caribbean region.

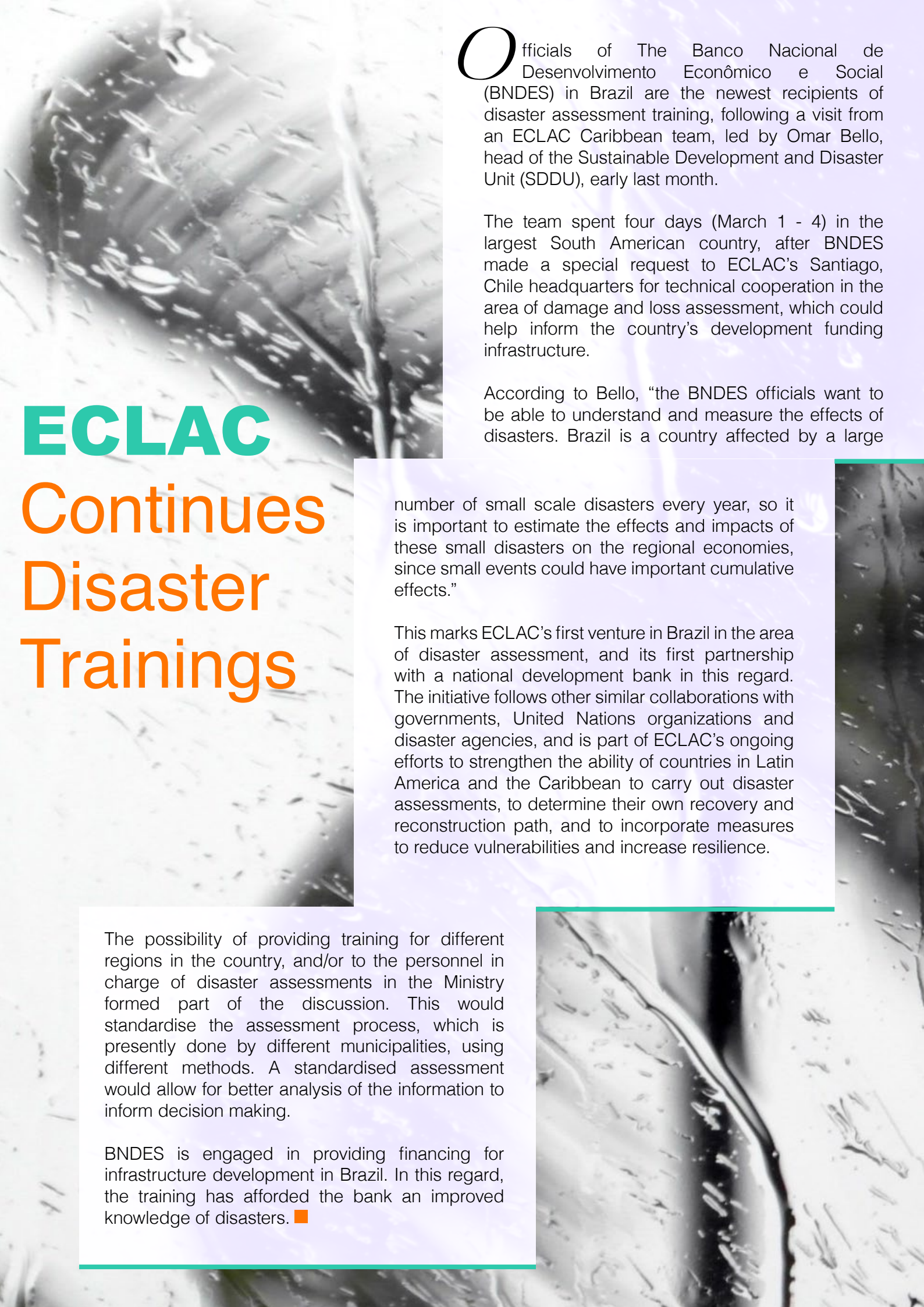
Q What will countries and individual beneficiaries get out of the work that ECLAC will carry out?

A Countries will be able to make more informed policy decisions, and will be better poised to adapt their national regulatory frameworks to engage with this technology. Individuals will benefit if they are able to take advantage of these technologies knowing that appropriate legal and consumer protections are in place.

Q With whom will ECLAC partner in the region to achieve the proposed objectives of its activities?

A ECLAC hopes that it can be an effective partner to both public sector regulators and companies in the private sector hoping to implement digital currency solutions. ECLAC has learned that there is a lot of value to facilitating interaction between these two groups, so that regulators can understand the needs of the private sector, while the private sector can recognize its responsibility in helping regulators protect the public interest. ■





ECLAC Continues Disaster Trainings

Officials of The Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social (BNDES) in Brazil are the newest recipients of disaster assessment training, following a visit from an ECLAC Caribbean team, led by Omar Bello, head of the Sustainable Development and Disaster Unit (SDDU), early last month.

The team spent four days (March 1 - 4) in the largest South American country, after BNDES made a special request to ECLAC's Santiago, Chile headquarters for technical cooperation in the area of damage and loss assessment, which could help inform the country's development funding infrastructure.

According to Bello, "the BNDES officials want to be able to understand and measure the effects of disasters. Brazil is a country affected by a large

number of small scale disasters every year, so it is important to estimate the effects and impacts of these small disasters on the regional economies, since small events could have important cumulative effects."

This marks ECLAC's first venture in Brazil in the area of disaster assessment, and its first partnership with a national development bank in this regard. The initiative follows other similar collaborations with governments, United Nations organizations and disaster agencies, and is part of ECLAC's ongoing efforts to strengthen the ability of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to carry out disaster assessments, to determine their own recovery and reconstruction path, and to incorporate measures to reduce vulnerabilities and increase resilience.

The possibility of providing training for different regions in the country, and/or to the personnel in charge of disaster assessments in the Ministry formed part of the discussion. This would standardise the assessment process, which is presently done by different municipalities, using different methods. A standardised assessment would allow for better analysis of the information to inform decision making.

BNDES is engaged in providing financing for infrastructure development in Brazil. In this regard, the training has afforded the bank an improved knowledge of disasters. ■

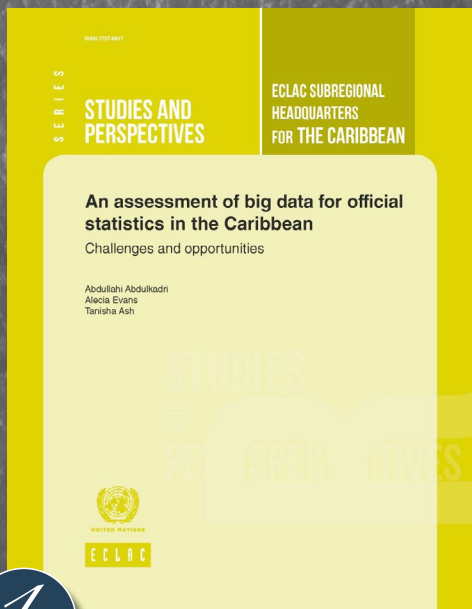


UNITED NATIONS

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ECLAC CARIBBEAN'S

Recent Publications



1.

The data revolution for sustainable development has triggered interest in the use of big data for official statistics such that the United Nations Economic and Social Council considers it to be almost an obligation for statistical organizations to explore big data.



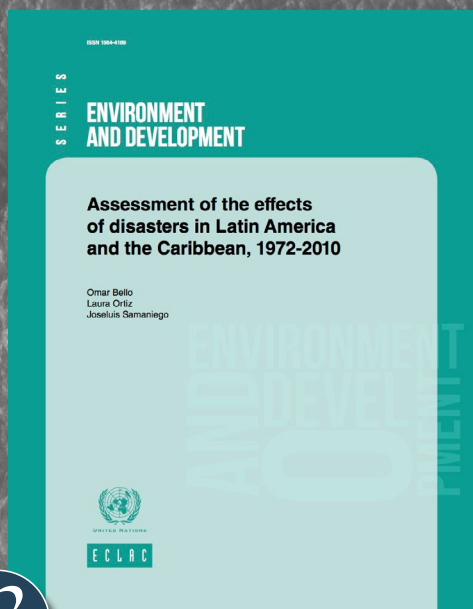
3.

This paper examines the potential benefits and challenges of regionally managed e-government development initiatives. It examines the current state of e-government in four Caribbean countries – Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago – in order to establish a broader understanding of the challenges that face e-government initiatives in the region.

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The purpose of this work is to review ECLAC's experience in assessing the economic and social impact of disasters. Toward that end, the database established according to assessment reports is described and the patterns of sectoral damage and losses from different types of events are defined.

2.

DIANE'S CORNER

The Director's views and thoughts on the occasion of international observances:



DIANE QUARLESS
Director of ECLAC Caribbean

22/3



World Day for Water

"More than 840,000 people die from a water-related disease each year while within our region of the Caribbean we experience ongoing degradation of watersheds, and pollution of our coastal areas. Today provides us an opportunity to redouble our commitment to wise and responsible water use, and to conserve this precious resource for both our current and future sustenance."

#DirectorsTake

<http://vrb.al/directors-take>





FAST FACTS

RCM/TAC Meeting

What:

Meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism of the Technical Advisory Committee (RCM/TAC) for Implementing the SAMOA Pathway/SDGs in the Caribbean.

When:

Tuesday 05 April, 2016

Where:

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

Why:

The Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) for supporting the implementation of sustainable development agenda of Caribbean SIDS was mandated by the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CCDC) in 2006, at the request of Caribbean governments. The purpose of the RCM is to facilitate a coordinated approach among Caribbean countries towards achieving the development goals as enunciated in the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. As part of the proposed mechanism, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was also established to lend support to the RCM, with respect to the analysis and interpretation of technical matters pertinent to the achievement of the SIDS development goals.



The Jamaican euphonia (*Euphonia jamaica*) is a species of bird in the Fringillidae family. It is found in Cayman Islands and Jamaica.

STATE *of* AFFAIRS

Cuba



US PRESIDENT VISITS CUBA

Mar 22nd - President Barack Obama made a historic three-day visit to Cuba. President Obama met with President Raul Castro, but not retired revolutionary leader Fidel Castro, and the pair discussed trade and political reform. Obama is the first sitting US president to visit Havana since the 1959 revolution, which heralded decades of hostility between the two countries.



OBAMA CALLS FOR END OF EMBARGO

Mar 22nd - Crowning a remarkable visit to Cuba, U.S. President Barack Obama declared an end to the “last remnant of the Cold War in the Americas” and openly urged the Cuban people to pursue a more democratic future for their nation. Obama also reiterated his call for the U.S. Congress to lift the economic embargo on Cuba, calling it an “outdated burden on the Cuban people” — a condemnation that was enthusiastically cheered by the crowd at Havana’s Grand Theater.

Haiti



PRIME MINISTER REJECTED BY PARLIAMENT

Mar 22nd - Haitian Prime Minister, Fritz Jean, an economist and former governor of Haiti’s central bank, failed to get the support required for his work plan in a vote in the Chamber of Deputies. Jean needed at least 60 votes in the 119-member Chamber, but of the 66 who were present, only 38 voted in his favour. Mr. Enex Jean-Charles was then selected to be the next country’s Prime Minister after meetings between the President and parliamentarians.



HAITI’S PRESIDENT APPOINTS PRIME MINISTER

Mar 28th - Haiti’s provisional president, Jocelerme Privert, has sworn in his cabinet. The President’s main job will be to steer the country’s electoral process back on track and hold a runoff vote that has been long postponed. The 15-member cabinet proposed by newly selected Prime Minister Jean-Charles was approved in both the Senate and the Lower Chamber.

Trinidad and Tobago



MINISTERS REASSIGNED

Mar 18th - The Prime Minister has advised the President to reassign Mr. Randall Mitchell from Minister with responsibility for Public Administration to Minister with responsibility for Housing and Urban Development; to reassign Mr. Maxie Cuffie from Minister with responsibility for Communication to Minister with responsibility for Public Administration and Communication; and to assign Mr. Stuart Young as Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister in addition to his current portfolio as Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General.



NEW US AMBASSADOR

Mar 24th - The US Senate recently confirmed the appointment of Mr. John Learie Estrada as the new Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. According to the US Embassy to Trinidad and Tobago, Ambassador Estrada and his family arrived in Trinidad on 22 March. He will assume duties after the presentation of his Letters of Credence to President Anthony Carmona.

Tobago Jazz Experience ... much more than music

Grammy award winner Lauryn Hill will headline the main stage at Pigeon Point Heritage Park for the 2016 Tobago Jazz Experience (TJE), with events also taking place at other venues on the island, from April 16-24.

(TJE) 2016 is a celebration of jazz, along with the indigenous music of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean. Staying true to its promise of offering “much more than music”, the Experience incorporates the cultural and historical practices that define the island of Tobago as an ideal tourist destination. It is the island’s biggest annual music event.

Joining Hill will be fellow Grammy winner Maxwell, saxophonist Arturo Tappin and band, composer/arranger Etienne Charles, Third World, 3 Canal, Dil E Nadan, and Roy Cape featuring Blaxx, among a host of other local and regional singers at the festival.

On the release of her first solo album, “The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill”, the singer/songwriter/actress/rapper created musical history by becoming the first woman or hip-hop artiste to win five Grammy Awards, for album of the year, best new artist, best female R&B performance, best R&B song (“Doo Wop (That Thing)”) and best R&B album. She had previously been a member of the Fugees.

Singer Maxwell is famous for classics such as “Sumthin’ Sumthin’,” “Ascension (Don’t Ever Wonder)” and “Lifetime,” as well as a cover of Kate Bush’s “This Woman’s Work.” In 2010, he won two Grammy Awards for R&B album of the year, “BLACKSummers’Night,” and best R&B vocal performance with the single “Pretty Wings.”

Roots Reggae band, Third World, formed in 1973 in Jamaica. Their sound is also influenced by soul, funk and disco. Although they have undergone several line-up changes, Stephen “Cat” Coore and Richard Daley have been constant members. In 2008, the band received a lifetime achievement award from Charles Drew University in California, United States. In January 2013, the group was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Jamaica Jazz and Blues festival in Montego Bay Jamaica as the celebrated their 40th year in music. With all this and more on its musical menu, TJE offers a great opportunity for visitors to have a unique experience of jazz, cultural heritage, culinary delights and historic perspective offering music, landscape, ambience, food, good company and excellent vibes. ■



SAINT LUCIA'S STRIDES TOWARDS RENEWABLE ENERGY

Is Saint Lucia on the verge of a green revolution? The Eastern Caribbean island's government says "yes", with several major new investments currently being pursued.

The biggest is a new 12-megawatt wind farm project, according to Prime Minister Dr Kenny Anthony. That project, which is already "on the horizon," according to Prime Minister Anthony, could produce as much as 20 percent of the island's electricity.

That would make it one of the largest single green energy production facilities in the region, as a percentage of total energy needs.

In keeping with its promise to transition to 35% renewable energy for electricity generation by 2020 and reduce electricity consumption in the Public Sector by 20% by 2020, Dr James Fletcher, Saint Lucia's Minister for Sustainable Development, Energy, Science and Technology, recently announced the installation of a 10kW grid-connected solar photovoltaic system on Saint Lucia's Government House, which will save the government thousands of dollars in energy expenditures over the system's lifetime.

He said, "The renewable energy revolution is essential and exciting. It allows vulnerable Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like ours to reduce public expenditure, stimulate and transform our economies, generate new jobs, while at the same time protecting our environment."

In 2014 Saint Lucia joined the Ten Island Challenge, a program to accelerate the renewable energy transition in the Caribbean. This is an initiative of Sir Richard Branson's Carbon War Room, a global incubator for clean energy entrepreneurship and the Rocky Mountain Institute, the world's original clean energy transition think-and-do tank.

Meanwhile, ECLAC Caribbean is actively supporting the Government of Saint Lucia as the country transitions from the use of fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, including solar and geothermal. Economic Affairs Officer, Willard Phillips, recently participated in a consultation process on February 25, on the development of a legal framework for the establishment of a National Utilities Regulatory Commission (NURC), which draws on the technical work carried out by ECLAC in Saint Lucia over the past few years.

The consultation process was aimed at establishing guidelines for ensuring minimum energy performance standards for energy-using products and services. These include compulsory labelling of products, establishing energy efficient building schemes, ensuring energy audits and energy management systems, encouraging the purchase of high energy efficiency products by the public sector, promoting energy conservation, reducing the use of fossil fuels, providing customer information and empowerment, and creating a penalty mechanism for non-compliance.

ECLAC Caribbean offered technical insight on energy efficiency and renewable energy, with a view to enhancing Saint Lucia's capacity to create improved financing products in order to attract investment that will encourage the development of the energy sector in the country. ■

The Caribbean's *Happiest* Island.



*T*he Caribbean's happiest island may also be its most resilient. The latest edition of the United Nations' World Happiness Report has been released, and one Caribbean island is near the top: Puerto Rico.

Yes, Puerto Rico: despite its crippling economic crisis, the island was the top-ranked place on the list from the Caribbean. Puerto Rico was ranked 15th in the world, just ahead of Germany and just behind Costa Rica.

The second-highest-ranked place in the Caribbean was Trinidad and Tobago, which came in at 43, followed by Belize at 52. Jamaica was next at 62nd in the world, followed by the Dominican Republic at 89 and Haiti at 136. Only larger Caribbean countries seem to have been included and/or polled.

The rankings come from the Gallup World Poll. The poll asks respondents to think of a ladder, with the "best possible life for them" being a 10, and the "worst possible life" being a 0. They are then asked to rate their lives on a scale of 0 to 10. This year's update combined the data from 2013-2015.

The first-ever World Happiness report was released in 2012; this is the fourth edition.

10 Fun Facts about Puerto Rico.

- 1** The capital of Puerto Rico is San Juan which is also the busiest cruise-ship ports in the world.
- 2** Puerto Ricans are a blend of Spanish, Taino Indian, African and European cultures.
- 3** Official languages are Spanish and English.
- 4** The unofficial mascot of the island is a tiny tree frog called "Coqui" that measures an inch in length.
- 5** The Constitution guarantees freedom for all faiths. The major religions are Catholic (85%), Protestants (8%) and others.
- 6** Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory and the currency used is the USD (United States dollar). U.S. citizens do not need a passport or a currency converter.
- 7** More than 70% of the rum sold in the U.S. comes from Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico is also famous for its coffee made from the Arabica cherry.
- 8** Puerto Rico imports chemicals, clothing, machinery and equipment, fish, food and petroleum products. Wood from the native tree "El Guayacan" is so strong that it suffers less wear than steel.
- 9** Puerto Rico houses the world's largest single-dish radio telescope, spanning almost 20 acres. Visitors can tour this incredible facility at Arecibo. Every year 200 scientists visit the Observatory facilities to pursue their research project.
- 10** El Yunque is the only subtropical rainforest in the U.S. National Forest Service and is a must- visit destination for tourists.

A historic lighthouse located on the northeastern part of the highest point of Cape San Juan in Fajardo, Puerto Rico.





Sheila Stuart
- Senior Social
Affairs Officer at
ECLAC Caribbean

Gardening with Sheila

*H*aving a love for gardens and gardening is a feeling that is as ancient as time itself. For many, tending a garden is an activity that expresses life. Such it is for ECLAC Caribbean's Social Development Officer Sheila Stuart, a Barbados national who regularly and willingly shares the fruits of her labour with colleagues in Port of Spain.

For Sheila, the nice thing about gardens is that they are forever loving. "No matter how much time and effort you put into your garden, it will always be there for you," she said to Hummingbird.

She even shared a couple of excerpts from a gardening blog that she created, one on rosemary and the other on Brussels sprouts. She wrote: "Rosemary is a well-known culinary herb. Its extract has a long history of medicinal uses, and has been used to treat a wide range of ailments, including stomach upsets, digestive disorders and headaches. Recent research is now revealing even more benefits attached to this remarkable herb which flourishes in well-drained, alkaline soil. It prefers sunny conditions. It has narrow, needle-like aromatic leaves; dark green above and is grayish underneath. The leaves are pungently aromatic. Fresh and dried rosemary leaves are a popular seasoning for food, adding flavour to soups, stews, meat and fish."

The blog describes Brussels sprouts as a hardy, slow-growing, long-season vegetable belonging to the cabbage family.

On a trip to the United Kingdom, Sheila purchased some seeds and casually (not really expecting them to grow), threw them in her garden in Saint Ann's, Port of Spain. "To my amazement I now have four healthy plants. Most of the literature I have read suggests that Brussels sprouts do not do well in hot climates, therefore the fact that I have sprouts needs some further exploration in terms of varieties that can survive the heat," she stated.

"The 'sprouts' (small heads that resemble miniature cabbages) are produced in the leaf axils, starting at the base of the stem and working upward. Sprouts improve in quality and grow best during cool weather. Brussels sprouts require a long growing period. I planted my seeds in March 2010, and they started to show signs of budding in early January 2011."

In her tiny garden in addition to rosemary and Brussels sprouts, Sheila also grows spinach, ochro, turmeric, parsley, bodi and occasionally thyme. ■



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