



# 2023 UN Common Country Analysis

Feb 2024



**UNITED  
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## Table of Acronyms

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>CARICOM</b>	Caribbean Community
<b>CCA</b>	Common Country Analysis
<b>CEACR</b>	Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations
<b>COP</b>	Conference of the Parties
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease 2019
<b>CSE</b>	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
<b>EW4ALL</b>	Early Warning for All
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>GEWE</b>	Gender equality and women's empowerment
<b>HIES</b>	Household Income and Expenditure Surveys
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>LGBTI</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex
<b>MVI</b>	Multidimensional Vulnerability Index
<b>NEET</b>	Not in Employment, Education, or Training
<b>NCDs</b>	Non-Communicable Diseases
<b>OECS</b>	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
<b>PwD</b>	Persons with Disabilities
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SIDS</b>	Small Island Developing States
<b>SOGI</b>	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
<b>SRH</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health
<b>SVG</b>	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
<b>UNGA78</b>	United Nations General Assembly 78th session
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>US</b>	United States

# Update of Common Country Analysis for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean

## Summary

*The 2020 UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean provided a comprehensive picture of the emerging state of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It reached the conclusion that the reduction of poverty and inequality had slowed or stalled in the sub-region. Since the 2020 analysis, the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic and various geopolitical tensions have exacerbated many of the issues observed as well as increased concerns of the population. Dealing with these trends highlights the important role of Governments, the United Nations, development partners, the private sector and civil society in ensuring no one is left behind on the road to achieving the SDGs. Within this context, this updated analysis aims to capture key trends and developments that have occurred since 2021 with the objective of ensuring that the UN better responds to the situation and needs of people and planet in the subregion in 2024 and beyond.*

*The global triple crisis of food, energy and finance along with growing debt burdens across the region, compounded by climate events and external shocks, have triggered a call for the reform of the global financial architecture and reinvigorated efforts towards climate finance and action, as well as improving food security. While employment has recovered to pre-pandemic levels, labor markets in the region are currently facing significant challenges, including declining labor force participation, gender pay gaps, high youth unemployment, and a decline in the purchasing power of wages. Some progress has been made towards strengthening protections for women, children, older persons and other vulnerable groups but there remains some way to go, especially for LGBTI persons, persons with disabilities (PwD) and migrants. Crime and violence are rising at an alarming rate, including instances of sexual and gender-based violence. An acute lack and underutilization of data persists which continues to make it difficult to track and address the degree to which vulnerable groups have been negatively impacted by recent trends. The patchy progress towards universal social protection has also been complicated by demographic shifts which have multi-layered and complex implications for women, older persons and rule of law in the sub-region. Climate risks are becoming more commonplace through the increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events, with negative knock-on effects to inclusive, sustainable development.*

*Effectively tackling these issues will require responsive policy frameworks and increased support from multilateral partners. Several recently concluded and upcoming global processes will shape how and on what issues the sub-region will be supported on in the run-up to 2030, most notably the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States, where a new Programme of Action for SIDS will be adopted, and the Summit of the Future, both to be convened in 2024. The outcomes of these Conferences could strongly influence the available support and priorities driving interventions in the region and highlight the urgency of coordinated actions and partnerships via pathways that deliver measurable results.*

## Developments And Emerging Trends Arising from the Triple Crisis of Food, Energy and Finance

Since 2021, countries in the Eastern Caribbean have been recovering from the multiple crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and extreme weather events. In 2022, Barbados registered an impressive double-digit growth of 13.8 per cent, and is projected to grow by 4.0 per cent in 2024.<sup>1</sup> The overall GDP projections for the region in 2024 is equally optimistic, with Saint Lucia and Grenada expected to achieve economic growth of 2.3 and 3.8 per cent respectively.<sup>2</sup> Given the vulnerability of the sub-region arising from regional and climate shocks, most countries have implemented measures for macroeconomic stability and invested in strategic growth sectors, particularly tourism and manufacturing. For example, in 2022, Barbados launched the implementation of the Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation plan.

Though the employment rates in the sub-region have rebounded with the economic recovery, labor markets are still characterized by persistent gender pay gaps, high youth unemployment compared to their adult counterparts, rising informality and a declining purchasing power of wages. The limited degree of economic diversification hinders the expansion of domestic production, the creation of decent jobs, and trade. The falling labor force participation rate (61.8% for Barbados<sup>3</sup>) resulting from the contraction of the female labor force and the ageing population is a growing cause for concern. The skewed employment towards the public sector and the declining employment rate for youth and women equally present significant challenges to the inclusivity of development in the sub-region.

The Ukraine-Russia conflict which commenced in February 2022 had an undeniable impact on the world economy and the lives of those already left vulnerable by the COVID-19 pandemic the negative impacts of climate change, and the recurrent exposure to multiple hazards. A cost-of-living crisis, driven by economic impacts from the pandemic, global supply chain disruptions, surges in fuel and food prices, and tightening financial conditions has lingered among the Caribbean's net-importing countries. The impacts have been widespread, rapidly increasing the cost of living, and debt servicing costs further fueling economic uncertainty at a time when many countries are trying to accelerate their post-pandemic economic recovery.

The countries in the Eastern Caribbean, heavily reliant on imports of food, energy and fertilizer, with high debt-to-GDP ratios, and socio-economic stress due to the impacts of COVID-19, have been disproportionately affected by the crisis. Commodity prices account for 25 per cent of the average consumption basket across the Caribbean, and further increases have increased poverty and food insecurity across the region. As of August 2023, there are now an estimated 3.7 million moderately or severely food insecure people in the

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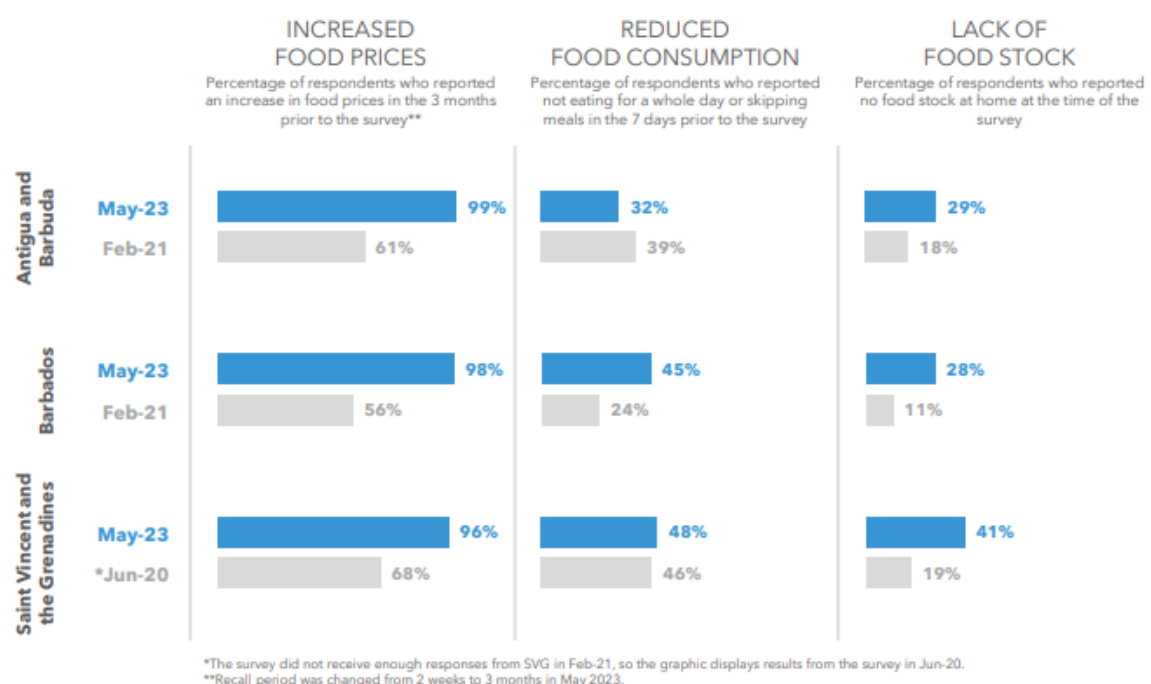
<sup>1</sup> Outlook for Barbados' Economy: <https://www.centralbank.org.bb/viewPDF/documents/2024-02-08-11-09-16-Central-Bank-of-Barbados-Review-of-Barbados-Economy-in-2023.pdf> and <https://www.centralbank.org.bb/viewPDF/documents/2024-02-08-11-09-16-Central-Bank-of-Barbados-Review-of-Barbados-Economy-in-2023.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>IMF DataMapper: <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/profile/LCA>; IMF Country Data (Grenada): <https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/GRD>

<sup>3</sup> Continuous Household Labor Force Survey (Q3 2023): [https://stats.gov.bb/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/LFS\\_3Q2023.pdf](https://stats.gov.bb/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/LFS_3Q2023.pdf)

English-speaking Caribbean, which equates to over half of the population.<sup>4</sup> In 2022 there were reports of sharp increases in the transportation costs for food and non-food items up to 300 per cent, as well as higher losses in public revenue as higher food and fuel subsidies remained protracted. Unfortunately, all these dynamics unfolded against a backdrop of unsustainable debt levels and rising public expenditures needs.

Figure 1: Selected results from the Caribbean Food Security and Livelihoods Survey 5



The cumulative effects of these economic trends are far reaching, impacting not only gains already made towards the SDGs (especially for SDGs 1-10) but also impeding the ability to make necessary investments towards improving resilience, halting environmental degradation, and boosting climate change adaptation measures (mainly SDGs 11-15). There is a growing concern that women are facing a disproportionately high burden of the cost-of-living increase as they are primarily head of households.

Responding to the growing global austerity measures and concerns of the rising number of countries approaching debt distress, there have been significant policy dialogues and breakthrough initiatives launched. In September 2023, the High-Level Panel for the [Multidimensional Vulnerability Index \(MVI\)](#),

<sup>4</sup> The Caribbean Food Security and Livelihoods Survey, conducted by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), in collaboration with the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP). August 2023. [6th CARICOM Caribbean Food Security and Livelihoods Survey Summary Report](#).

<sup>5</sup> Taken from Food Security & Livelihoods Survey Report Summaries, August 2023, for Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda; and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

### *Box 1: FOCUS on Bridgetown Initiative*

The Bridgetown Initiative advocated by the Government of Barbados contains five specific proposals that will collectively and meaningfully redraw the global financial system to better respond to the climate and development crises. The Initiative aims to (i) Draw in US\$5 trillion of private savings for climate mitigation; (ii) Widen access to concessional finance for the climate-vulnerable; (iii) Expand lending from Multilateral Development Banks for climate and SDGs by US\$1trillion; (iv) Fund the loss and damage caused by natural disasters for climate-vulnerable countries to finance disaster recoveries; and (v) reform the financial system to be better shock absorbent through disaster and pandemic clauses.

Source: <https://unclimatesummit.org/opinion-the-bridgetown-initiative/>

established to help improve access to concessional finance for SIDS, presented its work to UNGA78<sup>6</sup> with specific recommendations. Also, in response to the more recent crises, the Bridgetown Initiative was presented at the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact held in Paris on 22-23 June 2023. The Initiative proposes the creation of new instruments and a reform of existing institutions to finance climate resilience and the SDGs. The Summit also progressed negotiations on the Loss and Damage Fund (proposed to provide funding for vulnerable countries hit hard by climate disaster) and secured the suspension of debt payments for countries hit by climate disaster – although this will only apply to new loan agreements rather than existing loans.

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<sup>6</sup> 78<sup>TH</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly

# Key Developments and Trends Impacting the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) Agenda

**2.1 Developments in Gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE):** Although the pandemic had a devastating impact on progress towards GEWE, some countries have remained determined to get this progress back on track. In Saint Lucia the Domestic Violence Act 2022 was passed on 8th March 2022 – International Women's Day and is considered a model for inclusive Gender-based violence (GBV) laws and the most progressive GBV law in the region. Antigua and Barbuda, and Barbados ratified the Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190), which addressed gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work. With support from the Spotlight Initiative, and the World Bank, Gender Responsive Budgeting was mainstreamed by the Government of Grenada in 2023 for application in the 2024 budget with “all line ministries providing expenditure estimates that adequately reflect gender priorities and considerations”. The CARICOM Gender Equality Strategy has been developed and is currently under validation before finalization. The Strategy will provide much needed guidance on interventions by both the State and Civil Society to further the LNOB agenda. Overall, consultations held revealed that there remains an ongoing need for increased investments in women's empowerment, especially towards combatting GBV. Considering the success of the EU-UN Spotlight initiative (5 national programmes and 1 regional programme in CARICOM) and other investments in this area, this remains a high priority in the sub-region.

**2.2 Learning crisis among children and youth:** During the COVID 19 pandemic children in the Caribbean lost 1.5 years of learning, pushing back learning outcomes significantly. The region, including countries in the sub-region, experienced the longest interruption in face-to-face classes in the world, affecting more than 170 million students and their families. The youngest and the poorest have been the most affected. This loss of learning has negative long-term implications through fueling the cycle of poverty and crime, fracturing social cohesion and increasing the threat of violence all which work to intensify inequalities. Moreover, the learning loss can discourage youth from returning to school, impacting the already difficult transition to the labor market. Ultimately it can contribute to further increasing the NEET (not in employment, education or training) rates which according to the latest available data from the 2016 Household Income and Expenditure Surveys (HIES) accounted for 29 per cent of the youth and was higher among young male (32.2%) than among young female (25.9%)<sup>7</sup>. Learning interruptions also violate the right to education for affected children and in many cases deepened food insecurity where school feeding programmes were suspended or ended. Reversing the educational costs of the pandemic is a priority and needs to focus on the return to schooling and the accelerated recovery of learning, prioritizing essential contents and considering challenges such as the psychosocial well-being of children and the persistent digital divides.<sup>8</sup>

Progress in the area of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and adolescent sexual and reproductive health (SRH) has also suffered some setbacks. There has been opposition to CSE from different groups, primarily from religious organizations in the Caribbean and in Barbados who argue that some components of CSE go against cultural or religious views.

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<sup>7</sup> Barbados 2016 HIES: <https://www.ilo.org/surveyLib/index.php/catalog/7834/variable/VA180>

<sup>8</sup> [Latin America and the Caribbean reiterates its commitment to strengthening and recovering basic learning - World | ReliefWeb](#)



They also believe it endorses ideals at odds with their moral principles, and the CSE content is not age appropriate.

The pandemic disruptions were also particularly severe in the case adolescent SRH but reliable data on this issue is scarce. Consultations carried out as part of this analysis reveal a need to strengthen the collection and use of sex disaggregated data, including on teenage pregnancy dropout rates from formal education, and the adoption of laws to protect pregnant learners against the withdrawal from formal education and guarantee re-entry to schools.

### *Box 2: Focus on Caribbean Youth Mental Health Call to Action*

A 2022 research study covering 10 of the 12 UNICEF Eastern Caribbean countries and territories, investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the two years following the pandemic. The results revealed that 72 percent of the respondents identified that the pandemic affected their mental health significantly, with the three highest mental health challenges being: stress, depression, and anxiety.<sup>1</sup> Since 2012, the Healthy Caribbean Coalition has gathered evidence on the mental health of youth through numerous focus groups and engagement with pediatricians. The results reveal an emerging underserved mental health crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes an alarming rise in mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, disrupted sleeping and disordered eating behaviors heralding potential eating disorders among children and young people. Young persons of the female gender (55%) are more likely to feel the pandemic has affected them compared to males (35%).

Source: Second United Nations Survey on Latin American and Caribbean Youth within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic Report of results, 2022

### **2.3 Trends and developments on LGBTI people rights in the Eastern Caribbean:**

Important progress was achieved in 2022 in decriminalization of same-sex relations among adults, through Court challenges to harmful and discriminatory laws in Antigua and Barbuda<sup>9</sup>, Saint Kitts and Nevis<sup>10</sup> and Barbados. Some advances in legislative processes, which have broadened protections for LGBTI people, include references in domestic violence legislation in Saint Lucia, which expands legal protections to include persons in same-sex relationships<sup>11</sup> and through the Employment (Prevention of Discrimination) Act 2020 tackling discrimination within the workplace in Barbados. The ongoing process of reform of the Constitution in Barbados, and deliberations by the Constitutional Reform Commission, may also offer an opportunity to expand the provisions on equality and non-discrimination, to include sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) as grounds for non-discrimination.

Despite progress being made in some areas, more work still needs to be done to end all forms of discrimination, reduce inequalities and to ensure protection from violence for LGBTI people. A recent national survey of the LGBTI community in Barbados found that more than one in four respondents had adverse experiences when seeking healthcare while more half

<sup>9</sup> **Antigua and Barbuda** Orden David et al v. The Attorney General of Antigua and Barbuda <https://www.eccourts.org/judgment/orden-david-et-al-v-the-attorney-general-of-antigua-and-barbuda>.

<sup>10</sup> **St. Kitts and Nevis** Jamal Jeffers et al v. The Attorney General of St. Kitts and Nevis <https://www.eccourts.org/judgment/jamal-jeffers-et-al-v-the-attorney-general-of-st-christopher-and-nevis-2>

<sup>11</sup> See reference to St Lucia's Domestic Violence Act 2022 at section 2.1 above.

of them did not believe government officials supported or protected LGBTI people.<sup>12</sup> Unsurprisingly, nearly all of those surveyed believed that including protections against SOGI-related discrimination ought to be reflected in the Constitution.

**2.4 Disability inclusion in Barbados and Eastern Caribbean:** Inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities (PwD) and their organizations, enhanced accessibility to public buildings, data collection, and improvement of services have become areas of special attention in recent years at regional and national levels. For illustration during the year 2023 Barbados held public consultations on the 2023-2030 Draft National Policy for Improving the Lives of Persons with Disabilities, while Saint Kitts & Nevis established a Disabilities Services Unit - aimed at increasing outreach to persons with disabilities. Saint Lucia's 2022 updated National Social Protection Policy includes more support for people with disabilities in the country, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines announced the launch of a pilot programme to establish a more inclusive school system with funds from the World Bank.

At the regional level, CARICOM announced in 2021 a five-year timeframe for all countries within the Caribbean sub-region to develop specific legislation to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities; a three-year timeframe for countries to amend laws; and the use of the Regional Disability Index to monitor the implementation of inclusive policies and disability legislation in the region. In November 2023, a joint consultation for and with PwD organized by the UN system in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean identified various areas requiring attention in the region, notably the need to tackle stigma, prejudice and discrimination against PwD; lack of inclusive employment policies and entrepreneurship opportunities; implementation and enforcement of legislation and policy where it exists; and lack of comprehensive and standardized data collection methodologies which poses a barrier to understanding the demographics and specific needs of PwD.

**2.5 Migrant vulnerabilities in the Eastern Caribbean:** Intra-Caribbean mobility is reported to be increasing in the Eastern Caribbean under the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States' (OECS) Free Movement protocol and also within the CARICOM space, following the 5th of July 2023 decision by CARICOM Heads of State to provide freedom of movement to CARICOM citizens. The Caribbean region as a whole is seeking to attract migrants to address labor shortages in key sectors, including construction, tourism, agriculture and health, usually at the initiative of the private sector. At the same time, smuggling activities in the Eastern Caribbean have been on the rise, intertwined with organized crime networks operating between the islands. Incidents of death at sea have also been reported, including a tragic incident off the coast of St Kitts and Nevis on 27th March 2023.

While migration brings significant economic and social benefits to the sub-region, its governance and protection posit great challenges. Many migrants are engaged in low-skilled work, often without legal protections, making them susceptible to labor exploitation and unfair wages. Some vulnerable migrants also encounter discrimination, labor informality and marginalization, as they navigate unfamiliar cultures and societies. The lack of recognition of foreign competences and qualifications in addition to access to adequate information on skills demand hinders their opportunities for education and entrepreneurship ventures, keeps

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.undp.org/latin-america/publications/national-lgbti-survey-barbados>

them trapped in a cycle of poverty and inequality. Language barriers and cultural differences can contribute to their vulnerability, hindering their access to essential services and creating social isolation. Additionally, it has been reported that some vulnerable migrants lack access to quality healthcare and face health risks, as well as limited access to social protection benefits.

Recognizing the need for safe, regular and orderly migration in the region and the need for policy coherence, CARICOM institutions, with the support of the UN, have engaged in a process to develop a regional approach to migration policy. Initial needs have been identified in three key areas: border management and protection of vulnerable migrants; climate change and adverse drivers of migration; and labor migration and social and economic development. In addition, ILO's Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), a body of independent legal experts, encouraged the government of Grenada to ensure that workers who migrate to foreign countries as well as those who emigrate to Grenada are provided with accurate information prior to departure.<sup>13</sup>

Migration in the sub-region requires constant monitoring as wider regional trends and policies evolve. For example, in late 2023, the UN Security Council authorized deployment of a Multinational Security Support Mission, led by Kenya, in close cooperation and coordination with the Government of Haiti, for an initial period of 12 months.<sup>14</sup> The deployment could trigger significant movements of persons from Haiti to Dominican Republic, the Cayman Islands, Bahamas, and Jamaica but is unlikely to cause irregular flows to the Eastern Caribbean. Nonetheless, there should be Caribbean-wide attention of potential movements of Haitians, including by air, with an eye towards the identification of vulnerable migrants.

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<sup>13</sup> CEACR. Direct Request adopted in 2021 on the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97).

<sup>14</sup> <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15432.doc.htm>

## 2. 6 Important demographic shifts: Ageing population and the situation of older persons<sup>15</sup>:

The Caribbean is facing a significant demographic transition, marked by the decline in birth rates, decline in population aged under 19, and overall ageing. Countries such as Barbados, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, are already started to experience a decrease in the working age population (aged 20 to 64). The Caribbean's old age dependency ratio<sup>16</sup> will increase from 16 in 2023 to 22 in 2030 and 28 in 2040, faster than in other parts of the world. Such an increase in the ageing population, with a corresponding decline in the working population, can be costly for public finances (due to costs associated with social assistance and social insurance programs) and bring serious implications for inclusive development and for human rights. Such dynamics will require targeted responses and public policies to address the protection of specific vulnerable populations, and avoid neglect or leaving them behind, especially for women who are more likely to not have pensions due to high rates of informal employment. There are also sizeable differences in pension amounts due to lower earnings by women during their working lives and the increased likelihood of interruptions to pension contributions.<sup>17</sup> Public expenditure on pensions as a percentage of GDP has increased in recent years and these demographic trends mean that expenditure will most likely continue to grow. For example, considering population forecasts and without major reform, public pension expenditures could cost Barbados up to 15.2 percent of GDP.<sup>18</sup>

Although other factors contribute to these high-cost projections, including the growth of the informal sector, the central factor is the demographic transition. In recognition of this cost driver, and the potential burden on future generations, countries in the sub region are taking measures to address these demographic shifts, for example by reforming their social security system. In July 2023, Barbados, with 16 percent of its population already 65 years or older, announced plans to substantially reform its social security programmes. The pensionable age would increase incrementally from 67 to 67 ½ years in 2028 and to 68 years in 2034. Key policies required to address the situation of older persons will include comprehensive policies to address Non-Communicable Diseases, age-related disabilities, as well as substantive reform to infrastructure, building codes and accessibility to services and facilities for older persons. Another aspect that requires substantive discussion is the creation of capacities for caregivers and for public services that cater to the older community.

Given outward migration from the region to higher income countries is contributing to the shrinking workforce, some governments have started to explore how labor migration, diaspora engagement and other human capital-related strategies could help mitigate the

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<sup>15</sup> All statistics for this note come from ECLAC, Francis Jones. Population and Development in the Caribbean, 2018-2023, Accelerating Implementation of the Montevideo Consensus, 30 August 2023.

<sup>16</sup> Old age dependency ratios measure this change in the size of the old age population relative to the size of the working age population.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*

<sup>18</sup> <https://blogs.iadb.org/caribbean-dev-trends/en/seven-considerations-in-reforming-pension-systems-in-the-caribbean/>



ongoing demographic trends. In countries with high levels of informality, structural changes in labor market dynamics can increase the coverage of pension systems which will help guarantee a higher quality of life for older persons, especially those without access to social insurance.<sup>19</sup> There is also an urgent need to continue to promote universal access to sexual and reproductive health; and encourage and support teenager mothers to return to formal education to ensure they can maximize their potential, productivity and independence.

## Climate Change and Climate Finance

Recent research estimates that the funds needed to address the impacts of climate change in the region amount to US\$4 billion by 2030 but is likely to be significantly higher. This equates to an estimated US\$757 million for adaptation, US\$1.5 billion for mitigation and US\$1 billion for cross-cutting areas.<sup>20</sup> With other sources indicating that adaptation costs are currently between five and ten times higher than international adaptation finance flows, it is expected that the ongoing acceleration of climate risks will drive these costs higher, further widening the financing gap in developing countries.

The UN Climate Ambition Summit, September 2023, increased political and financial commitment to the Secretary-General's US\$3.1 billion initiative to ensure that everyone on Earth is protected by life-saving multi-hazard early warning systems (EW4ALL) in the face of increasingly more extreme and dangerous weather, and the cascade and compounding effects that they can have and trigger to other latent hazards.<sup>21</sup> The Summit also called for the operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund at COP28 and a request that developed countries must meet the US\$100 billion commitment, replenish the Green Climate Fund, and double adaptation funding. The Loss & Damage Fund was approved at COP28 with pledges amounting to US\$792 million, while the other climate funds were replenished by pledges amounting to about US\$13 billion.<sup>22</sup>

The devastating impacts from the 2017 Atlantic Hurricane Season demonstrated the influence of climate change on displacement in Eastern Caribbean countries. Planned relocation is becoming a priority in the Caribbean for communities exposed to recurrent hazards<sup>23</sup> and much remains to be done to ensure that the needs of at-risk populations are being met and that no one is left behind. The OECS Governments have recently signed off on the Eastern Caribbean Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment and Climate Change which speaks directly to engaging with partners to fund solutions to address environmental and climate mobility. The "Escazu Agreement", a regional agreement on access to information, public participation and justice in Environmental matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, has been ratified by a few countries in the sub-region and

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Climate Finance Access and Mobilization Strategy 2023-2030. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement; and OECS.

[https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/UNFCCC\\_NBF\\_SD\\_OECS\\_final.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/UNFCCC_NBF_SD_OECS_final.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> The UN Global Early Warning Initiative for the Implementation of Climate Adaptation, "Early Warnings for All - Executive Action Plan 2023-2027x" (World Meteorological Organization (WMO), 2023).

<sup>22</sup> <https://unfccc.int/news/cop28-agreement-signals-beginning-of-the-end-of-the-fossil-fuel-era>

<sup>23</sup> See IOM publication-Finding Safer Ground: Planned Relocation Policies and Processes in the Caribbean detailing case studies of 7 Caribbean countries. Available at: [https://kmhub.iom.int/sites/default/files/2022-02/oim-relocation\\_report\\_6.pdf](https://kmhub.iom.int/sites/default/files/2022-02/oim-relocation_report_6.pdf)

support in its implementation is expected in the coming years.<sup>24</sup> Efforts should continue to strengthen areas relating to the development and implementation of adequate policies to prevent displacement, enable safe pathways and orderly evacuations and planned relocation and protect the rights of climate, and more widely, disaster migrants.

## Emerging Risks

**4.1 Compounding hazards:** Due to its geographical position and geomorphology, the Eastern Caribbean is becoming more exposed to multiple hazards, ranging from hydrometeorological, geological, environmental, technological, and biological, with socio-economic impacts at all levels and sectors of the society. At the same time the sub-region is also becoming more vulnerable, as public debt is increasing and development, climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction are lagging. Medium-sized businesses, the backbone of Eastern Caribbean economies, making up 70 to 85 per cent of companies and 50 per cent of employment; and vulnerable population groups including elderly, women and girls, indigenous and undocumented migrants will be hardest hit as compounding hazards turn into humanitarian disasters.<sup>25</sup> Displacement within and beyond the region is likely to increase burdening host communities and essential services, whereas rising debt in many countries has made it increasingly difficult to meet adaptation costs and to finance the energy transition.

A recent example was the multi-dimensional crisis faced by St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) where biological, geological and meteorological hazards compounded. In 2020, during a dengue epidemic (1,600 cases) and the COVID-19 Pandemic, the eruption of La Soufriere Volcano from December 2020 to April 2021, forced more than 20,000 people from their homes, damaged crops and disrupted livelihood, exacerbating poverty and food insecurity already jeopardized by the health emergency. The IMF<sup>26</sup> estimated the economic impact to be 30 percent of GDP in St. Vincent & the Grenadines. With limited recovery time, the country was further weakened by Hurricane Elsa the following year, with households impacted and services overstretched.<sup>27</sup>

Due to a coordinated approach, that went beyond the traditional siloed management of hazards, and a better understanding of the systemic nature of risk, its potential cascading effects, and the probabilities of compounding impacts, prevented this multi-dimensional crisis becoming a humanitarian situation. Barbados was also blanketed by thick ashfall, with disruptions to business and economic activity estimated at US\$87 million.<sup>28</sup> As the threat from multiple natural, socio-natural and social hazards become more commonplace, a siloed approach for disaster risk management and an overreliance on emergency response rather than a pro-active reduction of vulnerabilities and exposure, could have a significant impact on the achievement of the SDGs in the years to come.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.cepal.org/en/escazuagreement>. List of countries which have ratified can be found at: [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsq\\_no=XXVII-18&chapter=27&clang=en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsq_no=XXVII-18&chapter=27&clang=en)

<sup>25</sup> Situational Awareness Overview (SAO) : <https://shorturl.at/alEW6>

<sup>26</sup> [IMF Assessment report of July 2021](#).

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*

<sup>28</sup> Loop News article on [Soufriere volcanic ashfall in Barbados, 2021](#).

**4.2 Insecurity, rule of law and human rights:** Inequality, violation of rights, delegitimizing of state institutions, lack of trust, impunity and crime and violence are aggravated by structural situations of socioeconomic exclusion and affect groups in a differentiated way, for

**Box 3: Focus on Security and Rule of Law**

*Increase in violent crime has continued to be a major challenge in the sub-region, both at the national level and through transborder crimes like human trafficking. Countries have made some progress in responding to trafficking in persons, though outcomes have been mixed. In 2023, countries including Barbados and Antigua and Barbuda have been removed from the US State Department's Trafficking in Persons Tier 2 Watchlist following improved efforts to respond and reduce trafficking and support victims.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, Saint Lucia is on the Tier 2 Watch List, due to not fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, though they are making significant efforts to do so. Growing youth delinquency has highlighted the urgent need to address high levels of youth unemployment, declining social cohesion and targeted policies. Although there are numerous programmes and initiatives to boost the skills of the youth and increase their economic opportunities, the data shows that the issue remains unresolved. The quality of education and vocational training needs to be improved to better prepare young people for the knowledge economy and offer alternatives to organized crime.*

Sources: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/>; Population and Development in the Caribbean (2018-2023). Accelerating implementation of the Montevideo Consensus. Francis Jones, August 2023. ECLAC: Santiago (internal document).

example youth or lower-income communities. Latin America and the Caribbean continue to be affected by high rates of violence and homicides, which are often linked to gangs, becoming a major problem in many countries of the region. The Caribbean is the region's hotspot. Both Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have particularly high rates of violent crime at approx. 42 and 50 homicides per 100,000 respectively.<sup>29</sup> Many deaths are attributable to organized crime in the form of gangs, which are criminal structures that take advantage of relatively weak institutions, instances of impunity, and informal economies with high rates of unemployment, poverty, and inequality, especially among youth (predominantly males). Other factors like the presence and availability of firearms help to explain why the high levels of lethal violence persist in some areas of the region. The cross-regional dimension of organized crime along smuggling routes is amplifying this phenomenon by bringing light weapons along with drugs and the smuggling and trafficking of migrants.

**4.3 Israel-Gaza Crisis<sup>30</sup>:** The Israel-Gaza crisis which flared up on 7 October 2023 has already raised concerns about the impact of a wider Middle East conflict on global economic growth. Similar to the trends seen in the early stages of the Ukraine-Russia crisis, if such conflicts disrupt the production and trade of oil exporting countries and drive-up fuel prices the sub-region (as net food and energy importers) may see a return of the cost-of-living crisis and higher food and energy insecurity.

<sup>29</sup> [InSight Crime's 2022 Homicide Round-Up](#)

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/situation-in-occupied-palestine-and-israel>

## On The Horizon

**5.1 The 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States:** The fourth International Conference on SIDS will be hosted by Antigua and Barbuda and it will bring world leaders together to agree on a bold new programme of action for SIDS. This new ten-year plan will focus on practical and impactful solutions to keep SIDS afloat and give their citizens a sustainable and safe future. The conference will seek to deliver specific initiatives and concrete deliverables to address SIDS-specific challenges including ensuring a resilient, prosperous economy, climate crisis, biodiversity and spiraling debt. In August 2023 Representatives of the Caribbean SIDS convened for the Preparatory Meeting for the Caribbean and committed to several priorities such as seeking solutions for debt vulnerability in the immediate term and debt sustainability in the long term; the full implementation of the multidimensional vulnerability index; accelerating the energy transition; and improving regional resilience and risk reduction.<sup>31</sup>

**5.2 Summit of the Future, 2024:** The Summit of the Future is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build upon the SDG Summit and breathe new life into the multilateral system so that it can deliver on the promises of the United Nations Charter and the 2030 Agenda. Coupled with the outcomes from the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States in May 2024, it is expected that commitments will be made in a number of critical areas for the sub-region such as science, technology and innovations and digital cooperation, social protection systems, youth empowerment and climate change.

**END**

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<sup>31</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/Caribbean%20regional%20SIDS%20Outcome%20Doc%20Sept23rvd.pdf>