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Call for proposals: grants for research on labour market and resilience in the Caribbean

The International Labour Organization (ILO) Office for the Caribbean, in collaboration with Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies, UWI, St. Augustine Campus and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), is launching a call for research proposals on labour markets and resilience. The call intends to support research, investigating whether Caribbean labour markets are able to cope with external shocks stemming from changes in climate patterns (and related socio economic transformation) and/or natural disasters. The main goal is to determine suitable recommendations vis-à-vis those phenomena and to ensure that elements of the decent work agenda are fully ingrained into future policy making.

Background

Caribbean labour markets are highly vulnerable to climate shocks, coupled with high and rising unemployment, dependency on externally determined commodities prices, low productivity, large technological and digital gaps, a mismatch between the education system, training and the labour market, and emigration of skilled workers. In addition, an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events is being felt across the region. In September 2017 several Caribbean islands were battered by two category 5 hurricanes -- Irma and Maria -- just days apart with record-breaking wind speeds. Although these storms bring about widespread destruction and disruption to economic production and the displacement of workers, migration and even loss of life, labour demand could actually increase for recovery and reconstruction, and opportunities for the creation of new job, new skills and knowledge, may be brought about by creative destruction effects. Moreover, mitigation action, greening and resilience building could lead to the creation of jobs, upgraded skills and re-training.

While several Caribbean countries are involved in data collection on specific labour market and social protection dimensions through censuses, surveys of living conditions, labour force surveys and administrative data, the research production on the capacity of labour markets to adapt and respond to climate events is scarce and limited and their impact remain ambiguous. Timely or occasional labour market bulletins mostly produced by National Statistical Offices and Central Banks present key labour market indicators and, occasionally, some main trends, while further analysis of determinants, agents' behaviour, policies and future implications are weak or non-existent.

Consequently, the active inclusion of weather shocks and building labour market resilience is important to place on the Caribbean (employment and labour) policy agenda. It is against this background, this call was developed. It aims to address such gaps by considering not only trends in

labour market and social protection, but also how changing climate patterns and natural disasters (and related greening and resilience building processes) may impact countries and economic agents' decisions and the broader economic landscape and country and regional performance. By means of collaboration with selected partners, research is to be financed and published with the goal of expanding the analysis of past and present trends, and to determine actual or perceived impact of policies and institutions with the aim to guide policy making.

Objective of the research and areas of investigation

The main objective of the research to be financed is to expand the knowledge base on labour markets and resilience in the Caribbean with the aim of providing evidence-based policy recommendations for the promotion of the decent work agenda in the region. Specifically, the call is to support the production of research papers that present the result of socio-economic research, analyzing how changes in climate patterns, occurrence of natural disasters, crisis and the Caribbean countries' responses may affect:

1. Labour markets dynamics. Analysis of the latter may reflect:
 - a. Actual or potential changes in aggregate production or production per sector and related implications in terms of employment by industry, and/or occupation.
 - b. Human capital development trends and the potential impact of climate change and natural disaster shocks and resilience.
 - c. Implications in terms of labour market institutions, labour administration, and employment relationships from climate change and resilience.
 - d. General implications on demand, supply or intermediation.
 - e. Implications for social protection of changes in the labour markets.
 - f. Decent Work related to the Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs) targets and indicators.

2. Economic units. Analysis of the latter may reflect:
 - a. Changes in industrial organization affecting operations worldwide and, specifically, in the Caribbean with an emphasis on human resources and employment relationships.
 - b. Changes in business models affecting operations in the Caribbean with an emphasis on human resources and employment relationships

3. Public policies. Specifically, what is sought is an analysis of policies bearing direct and intended implications on business and labour market (private sector development, education, labour market, employment generation, and migration) in terms of their:
 - a. Shape and objectives;
 - b. Budgetary allocation; and
 - c. Expected or perceived impacts.

Each paper is expected to incorporate at least three sections: a literature review, analysis and conclusion including policy recommendations.

Application from various disciplines as well as multidisciplinary investigation is encouraged. While a social sciences perspective is preferred (economics, sociology, political science, legal, etc), reference to natural science and its impact on the dimensions of interest can be considered.

Multi country analysis or analysis which will adopt a regional or sub regional perspective is encouraged.

ILO and the scientific committee being aware of the existing issues with access to data (from survey or administrative sources) within the Caribbean region, may consider providing any support necessary to researchers to access relevant datasets. Necessary and points awarding condition is to mention such difficulties in the research proposal, together with precise and detailed survey questions, data breakdowns, and reference to existing data of interest. Interested parties may find links to readily available datasets in Annex I.

Submission of proposals and selection process

Proposals must be submitted to the ILO by 15 September 2019 via email address: ilocarib@ilo.org.

Each proposal should consist of:

- Abstract of the research paper, 400 words.
- A 600 words presentation of the research objectives, questions and methodology. The latter shall outline contribution of the research proposal to the knowledge base (citing main existing literature and producing a preliminary bibliography), originality, and proposed investigative process.
- A detailed outline of the financial requirement for the research including the contribution of the researcher, of the institution of affiliation (if any), and of any available financial resource coming from other sources.
- Curriculum vitae and current affiliation of researchers.

The sum requested should not exceed USD10,000. Any proposal which will require a lower amount will be given additional scoring. Similarly, ceteris paribus, any proposal which will allow to combine more than one source of funding for the sake of delivering a better research outcome will be favoured. Finally, preference will be given to proposals stimulating collaborative research, particularly involving different academic institutions or any combination of academia and civil service.

Pre-selected researchers may be required to attend a second selection process combined with an orientation/peer review 1 day workshop during the fourth quarter of 2019 (location to be determined). Attendance to this workshop will be sponsored. Following such selection, the awarded research papers shall be completed by April 2020 and presented at the 2020 SALISES regional conference to be held 5-8 May 2020, in Trinidad and Tobago. Attendance to the SALISES conference may be sponsored. The final version of the papers, incorporating latest changes, is to be submitted by July 2020, and may be published as part of an edited ILO/IADB book.

Eligibility

The present call for proposals is open to all individuals ages 18 and above. Institutions as such may not apply. Reviewers will give special consideration to Caribbean born researchers and new and early stage investigators.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria (100 points maximum):

35 points: Proposal theme. Strength in terms of relevance to topics/themes of interest and originality of the research idea.

45 points: Research methodology and design. Adequacy with respect to scope of research and suitability of proposed tools.

10 points: Quality of the written proposal, i.e., clarity, organization, and utilization of sound wording.

10 points: Financial requirements (any amount <10,000 USD will be awarded points as well as proposal demonstrating combination of different funding opportunities).

Timeline for delivery of research products

- By 15 September 2019: Submission of proposals.
- October/November 2019: Attendance of one-day pre selection and peer review seminar.
- March 2020: Submission of advanced versions of the papers by grantees (should contain the main results but not necessarily all the finished paper).
- By end of April 2020: Answers to comments by grantees on advanced versions of the papers and submission of semi-final versions to be presented at SALISES Conference.
- May 2020: Presentation during panel at SALISES regional conference, Trinidad and Tobago.
- *May 2020-July 2020: Revision of papers in line with Panel discussion (if needed).

Annex I

Public datasets from Inter-American Development Bank sponsored surveys.

Barbados - Survey of Living Conditions:

<https://publications.iadb.org/en/publication/barbados-survey-living-conditions-2016>

Suriname - Survey of Living Conditions:

<https://publications.iadb.org/en/publication/suriname-survey-living-conditions-2016-2017>

Guyana - Labour Force Survey:

<https://publications.iadb.org/en/publication/guyana-labor-force-survey-third-quarter-2017>

<https://publications.iadb.org/en/publication/13007/guyana-labor-force-survey-fourth-quarter-2017>