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ILO CARIBBEAN HIGHLIGHTS REPORT 2017-2019
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ILO Caribbean Highlights Report
2017-2019

International Labour Organization
Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean
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The International Labour Organization (ILO) 2016 Resolution on Advancing Social Justice through Decent Work reiterates the importance of policy coherence in advancing the four inseparable interrelated and mutually supportive strategic objectives of employment; social protection; social dialogue and tripartism; and the fundamental principles and rights at work.

The Resolution emphasizes the role of Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) and states they should be focused, prioritized and grounded in the specific realities that are faced by member States. It also encourages that DWCPs are owned and determined by constituents and should include balanced strategies integrating all four strategic objectives as well as gender equality and non-discrimination.

Additionally, the guidelines featured in the Resolution call for increased coordination among United Nations (UN) agencies and other multilateral organizations in order to step-up development cooperation aimed at enhancing national statistical capabilities on labour matters.

The current UN reform process is highly focused on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the need for the UN System to effectively come together to support countries in this process. In the Caribbean, the United Nations Multi-country Sustainable Development Framework (UN MSDF), pools the comparative advantages of agencies, funds and programmes to assist governments in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
It was through this lens that the ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean developed the theme “Realizing Decent Work under the 2030 Agenda” for the 10th Caribbean Labour Ministers Meeting (CLMM), held in February 2017 in Kingston, Jamaica. The biannual event emphasized that Ministers of Labour, in consultation with social partners, should mainstream decent work into the development and monitoring of national policies aimed at achieving the SDGs.

During the Meeting, the Ministers concluded that DWCPs are relevant policy frameworks for cooperation with the ILO. They also recognized that member States will – where appropriate and possible – work with the ILO to establish DWCPs as tools for mainstreaming decent work in the national policy agendas.

Following the event, the ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean formulated an intervention strategy for the Caribbean which corresponded with the conclusions of the Labour Ministers Meeting while simultaneously positioning the Office to contribute to wider regional development objectives such as the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. The strategy was shaped around three broad areas of focus:

1. **Supporting constituents in the Caribbean in the promotion of decent work at the national level.**

   As we reflect on the future of work for men and women in the Caribbean, the need for integration of economic, social and environmental goals is clear and well reflected in the SDGs. “Decent work for all” is an ambitious goal which involves very complex processes. This report offers a snapshot of the work we undertake together to continue advancing toward this goal. Some countries, such as Guyana - and soon, Suriname and The Bahamas - have taken on the bold commitment to establish political and programmatic tripartite frameworks through DWCPs. While other countries, like Jamaica, have opted for more thematic approaches to the promotion of decent work and are focused on the establishment of a national plan for formalization; Belize is developing a national employment policy; and Saint Lucia is currently finalizing a tripartite agreement to build resilience through decent work. The first section of the report is an illustration of the Office’s national-level support through capacity building and knowledge development.

2. **Strengthening strategic partnerships with regional institutions for decent work.**

   Full and productive employment and decent work for all can only be realized through robust collective and collaborative approaches. The ILO has established strong alliances with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), both of which are guided by formal agreements. The past two years have deepened the partnerships with six UN Country Teams in the Caribbean and created more space to co-create innovative solutions to the region’s challenges. The ILO has positioned itself as a key strategic partner and continues to emphasize the importance of tripartism and social dialogue in shaping the development process, an element that will become ever more important as the UN reform takes further shape. Partnerships with Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the World Bank (WB) are in varying stages of development. The second section of the report sheds light on the results emanating from regional partnerships over the last two years.
3. Advancing opportunities for resource mobilization through thematic programming.

The Caribbean is comprised of mostly middle- to high-income countries and the space for Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding is limited. This increases, even further the key role of the team of specialists servicing the region through technical and strategic support. Resilience, transitioning to environmental sustainability, social protection and youth employment are among are highly-prioritized themes in the region. Several innovative collaborations are being pursued including south-south collaboration, domestic financing, internal non-earmarked funding (internally known as RBSA), and inter-agency funding opportunities. Highlights of the various stages of delivery will be presented in section three.

As we gather for the 11th CLMM on 14 and 15 May 2019 in Barbados, we recognize that this year’s event is event more special than our other biennial meetings.

We meet in a spirit of celebration as we mark the ILO’s centenary as well as the 50th anniversary of the ILO Office for the Caribbean. We celebrate the work we do together, as partners committed to the promotion of decent work in the Caribbean, and we are also keenly aware of the important responsibility that rests on our shoulders. This report is not an account of all the work that has been done in the past two years, but rather the highlights of the more meaningful advancements and results – the achievement of which are only possible through solid partnerships with our constituents, stakeholders, donors and UN System family and the dedication and commitment of a hard-working and dynamic ILO team.

There is still a lot to do, but I reflect on this with optimism as I celebrate all of the great work that has already been done!

Claudia Coenjaerts
Director
ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean
Decent Work Agenda mainstreamed

The UN Multi-country Sustainable Development Framework (UN MSDF) defines how the UN will jointly achieve development results in partnership with 18 English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean countries and overseas territories for the period 2017 to 2021. The framework aims to ensure that no one is left behind in national development efforts and exemplifies the commonly-shared belief that similar development challenges of the Caribbean countries require a coherent and coordinated response by the UN.

The framework has been operationalized and localized at the national level through country and sub-regional implementation plans (CIPs/SIPs) built around the four priority areas:

1. An inclusive, equitable, and prosperous Caribbean;
2. A healthy Caribbean;
3. A safe, cohesive and just Caribbean; and
4. A sustainable and resilient Caribbean each with two broad outcomes clearly aligned to the seventeen SDGs.

1 The countries that have signed the UN MSDF are: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Curaçao, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sint Maarten, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The ILO’s contribution to UN MSDF implementation is centred on providing strategic guidance to tripartite constituents (government, employers’ and workers’ organizations) through DWCPs and Country Programme Outcomes, both of which are aligned with the CIPs and SIPs of the framework. This is key to coherence as it ensures that progress on issues related to the decent work agenda is reflected and recorded as part of the wider UN contribution to the region. DWCPs function as SDG drivers within the UN multidisciplinary development framework. For the 2017 to 2019 period, the ILO’s work has contributed largely to two UN MSDF priority areas -- an inclusive, equitable and prosperous Caribbean; and a sustainable and resilient Caribbean.

DWCPs - the ILO’s expressions of constructive engagement within the UN Development Framework

A DWCP for Guyana was formally launched in December 2017 by the Honourable Moses Nagamootoo, Prime Minister of Guyana; the Honourable Keith Scott, Minister within the Ministry of Social Protection, on behalf of the Government of Guyana; Mr Dawchan Nagassar, General Secretary of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana; Mr Lincoln Lewis, General Secretary of the Guyana Trade Union Congress; and Mr Samuel Goolsarran, Executive Director of the Consultative Association of Guyanese Industry.

Prime Minister Nagamootoo congratulated the social partners for their work on tabling the DWCP and emphasized the importance of continued collaboration, asserting that “there is much more work to be done in Guyana to improve job creation, the investment climate and to build perfect partnerships”. The DWCP focuses on improving working conditions, nurturing a sustainable environment for enterprises and fostering cooperation among employers, workers and the Government. A tripartite committee, led by the Ministry of Social Protection, meets three times per year to review progress and to ensure effective implementation.

In Suriname, tripartite partners are working with the ILO on final preparations for the official launch of their DWCP which is carded to take place by mid-2019. This country programme seeks to achieve changes in three strategic areas that are directly linked to priorities outlined in the country’s National Development Plan for 2017 to 2021 and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals:

1. Economic diversification and social progress;
2. Strengthened rights and social agenda; and
3. Improved research, data and dialogue capacity.

The DWCP for Suriname is part of a pilot programme designed by the ILO to improve tripartite capacity to contribute to SDG monitoring and implementation. It therefore places emphasis on stronger strategic, programmatic and more measurable alignment within the UN MSDF.
Employment for inclusive growth - reinforced Public Employment Services (PES)

A more comprehensive understanding of labour market needs and skills matching feature high on the policy agenda of many countries across the region. Intelligence on current and future skill needs has the potential to support better matching of training and jobs, which is of paramount importance to the reduction of unemployment and underemployment, particularly among young people, to build social mobility and inclusion.

In July 2018, the ILO supported the Ministry of Labour in Suriname to develop a work plan that would improve the services provided to jobseekers and employers to better match skills and competencies with existing job vacancies. The development of this work plan was preceded by a capacity building exercise from which participants emerged with a better understanding of the role and function of PES, labour market policies and best practices.

Capacity building support was also provided to the Ministries of Labour in Barbados, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Sint Maarten. For these interventions, specific emphasis was placed on the utility and interpretation of data in guiding employment service operations and designing labour market policies.
Skills to promote lifelong learning enhanced

The achievement of national employment and development goals is impacted by the capacity of skills development policies and systems to meet present and future labour market needs and to improve productivity and competitiveness in critical sectors. Mitigating imbalances between skills supply and demand is thus, one of the biggest challenges technical vocational education and training (TVET) policies and systems face. These systems and policies encompass technical and vocational training, workplace learning, informal learning, learning opportunities in the informal and rural economies, and education and training for lifelong learning. Sector skill advisory bodies are partnerships which provide platforms for systematic cooperation to support TVET policies within a lifelong learning perspective. They connect education and training to labour market needs to promote the development of relevant skills.

Over the past two years, Belize has made progress toward the establishment of a Tripartite Sector Skills Advisory Committee. Work on the establishment of this Committee followed the participation of officials of the Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture, Institute for Technical and Vocational Training (ITVET) and the Employment, Training and Education Services (ETES) in the ILO Academy on Skills Development delivered by the International Training Centre in Turin, Italy. Around this same time, the ILO met with the Ministry of Education, ETES, Belize Chamber of Commerce and the National Council on TVET to discuss the 2017 to 2020 TVET Strategic Plan. The ILO serves as technical advisor for constituting the committee and completed an evaluation of the National Youth Apprenticeship Programme with a view to improving overall quality.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the ILO, in collaboration with the National Training Agency (NTA), produced a national Study on the status of employability skills. This Study was a response to a call for an evaluation of the local workforce in order to ascertain the demand for and availability of employability competencies across economic sectors. The final Report proposed a number of recommendations which included the need and importance of continual skills enhancement and multi-sectoral assessment.
Improved statistical capacity in the region

A critical component of evidence-based policy making is not only the systematic collection of data and use of research findings to inform policy making but also the need for strong evidence from evaluations and assessments to support the effectiveness of policies in addressing the social problems they are designed to address. The availability of consistent, reliable data to monitor progress on sustainable development has been cited in the Partnerships for Small Island Development States (SIDS), 2018 analysis as a persistent challenge in the Caribbean. **To increase evidence-based policy-making in the Caribbean, the ILO has been working with several countries to improve the data collection, analysis and management capacity.**

In October 2017, the ILO partnered with the National Bureau of Statistics of Guyana and the Ministry of Social Protection to deliver a training on survey data for the production of key labour force indicators and their analysis via research papers, bulletins or overviews. The activity was part of a broader IDB-led exercise aimed at developing a new Guyana labour force survey (and collecting data for two initial quarters). The new survey itself would allow -- if regularly held -- to continuously collect data on labour market as currently done in a number of CARICOM countries (The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago).

The Guyana Labour Force Survey (LFS) was developed with the financial and technical assistance of the IADB and as a key contributor to design and testing, the ILO hosted a workshop to build capacity in computation of micro data and the interpretation of indicators.

Indicators covered in the training included the labour force participation rate; employment to population ratio; informal employment rate; time related underemployment; the unemployment rate; the proportion of the population covered by social protection; the proportion of women in managerial positions and the proportion of youth aged 15 to 24 not in education, work or training; and the labour related income. Users were coached on computation and interpretation of indicators and presented with templates of statistical bulletins with the overarching goal of improving Guyana’s capacity to develop high quality labour market data that would strengthen analysis and application for more precise, evidence-based, decision-making.

The March 2018 launch of the LFS Bulletin presented the results of the third quarter. This bulletin was prepared by the ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean (DWT-POS) in collaboration with Guyana’s Bureau of Statistics.

The ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean also began work on a revision of the LFS survey for the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), which covers Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as well as Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands and Montserrat. The questionnaire, which is being developed in collaboration with the OECS Secretariat, will incorporate relevant standards related to 19th and 20th International Conferences of Labour Statisticians (ICLS). The new survey questionnaire is expected to be finalized in 2019.
The launch of the Jamaica Youth Activity Survey (JYAS) Report in April 2018 was a key deliverable of the country level engagement and assistance to reduce child labour (CLEAR) Project, which was funded by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL). The Report is the product of a partnership between the Statistical Institute of Jamaica and the ILO. The JYAS Report provides quantitative, reliable and updated statistics on working children, child labour, and hazardous work performed by children in Jamaica. The Report is informed by the first stand-alone survey of children’s activities conducted nationally. The main objective of the survey was to collect comprehensive information on children’s engagement in economic activities. The estimates and classifications of working children and child labour provided in this Report are aligned to international statistical measurement standards and are therefore reliable and globally comparable.

Most importantly, the data will assist the monitoring of Jamaica’s progress toward the achievement of SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, and specifically target 8.7 which seeks to “end child labour in all its forms by 2025”. ILO support was provided to the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) to strengthen the Institute’s informal employment data analysis capacity. This allowed a review of Jamaica’s Labour Force Survey (LFS) with a particular focus on its informality module through which estimates of the informal sector employment and informal employment are derived. The work on informality data fits within the ambit of a larger national policy agenda, related to the implementation of ILO Recommendation No. 204 – Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy. The training provided an occasion to revise the current LFS and its suitability to calculate SDG indicators (notably 8.3.1 on informal employment) according to International Labour Statistical Standards and the latest globally approved developments and methodologies.

Labour administration application for better services rolled out

Streamlining data collection in labour administration leads to more efficient labour inspection processes and more proficient Ministries of Labour that are equipped to serve citizens more effectively and ensure decent working conditions.

From 2016 to 2019, the ILO developed an upgraded version of the data entry software, “Labour Administration Application”. The software standardizes the Departments of Labour major reporting procedures and is designed to collect data that would help relevant government bodies to catalogue and analyze records related to labour administration, social protection and labour market programmes. It has the potential to become a cornerstone for monitoring, policy making and results based management within the scope of activity of the intended users if fully and consistently adopted.

Between November and December 2018, the ILO carried out four web-based interactive training sessions to demonstrate the main features and functionality of the labour administration application (LAA) software application (LAA 2.0). Representatives from Anguilla, Antigua and
Barbuda, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago benefitted from insight on using the software to strengthen labour administration processes.

To avoid overlaps with the CARICOM Caribbean Labour Market Information System (CLMIS) System, the development of the LAA 2.0 focused on addressing needs and gaps identified through a Caribbean needs analysis which started in the summer of 2016. Amongst others, the new LAA features centralized and unique recording of individuals and employers, allows for the generation of a number of additional reports and includes new modules reflecting specific requests from users such as the ‘child labour’, ‘labour court decisions’ or ‘social assistance’ modules. It has been offered and installed free of charge to requesting member States. ILO DWT-POS continues to support beneficiary countries to further refine the experience and optimize available records to monitor labour administration activities to ultimately bolster efficiency, effectiveness and impact.

Enterprise development and entrepreneurship promoted in Suriname

A national awareness-raising campaign was launched in 2017 to showcase successful young entrepreneurs through the print and electronic media.

The campaign was developed after an assessment of Suriname’s business environment. The assessment concluded that there was opportunity to increase awareness on business development and job creation throughout the private sector. An action plan focusing on key
priority areas to improve enabling conditions for business development was created and adopted based on the findings of the assessment.

Strengthening Suriname’s entrepreneurial culture was outlined in the plan as a priority area and to support this goal, a campaign was organized to select the country’s best young entrepreneurs. The process was led by the Suriname Trade and Industry Association (STIA/VSB) with assistance from the ILO.

Mr Raveen Ramtahalsingh, Director of Tuinbouwbedrijf Sporits Grun2 NV -- a Small and Medium Enterprise involved in vegetable production -- was named best young entrepreneur in March 2017. He was selected from among 13 finalists.

Productivity in enterprises promoted through SCORE Pilot Programme

The first Caribbean pilot of the Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises (SCORE) Productivity Programme was successfully implemented in Suriname from June – July 2017. The Programme was rolled out by the ILO, in collaboration with the VSB.

SCORE is a modular training Programme that focuses on developing cooperative relations at the workplace. The five SCORE modules cover workplace cooperation, quality management, clean production, human resource management, and occupational health and safety. The pilot Programme included both the training of trainers and enterprises (ToT/E) and emphasis was placed on a short version of SCORE where all five modules were introduced.

The decision to introduce SCORE to Suriname came after a series of workshops conducted by the ILO, VSB and Competitiveness Unit Suriname (CUS) in 2016 to raise awareness on productivity challenges in Suriname.

A proposal for a full version of the SCORE programme has been developed and a search for a development cooperation partner is ongoing.

Enabling environments for enterprises assessed in Guyana

Promoting job creation through enterprise development means that there must first be a conducive environment. Enterprises cannot grow where there are prevailing conditions of poor regulations, difficult access to credit, low legal protection and corruption. Reducing and eliminating these barriers enables increases in productivity, investment and innovation. The ILO has developed a comprehensive methodology called the Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises (EESE) ILO methodology to assess, advocate and reform the environment in which enterprises start up and grow.
The EESE methodology stems from the conclusions of the discussion on the Promotion of Sustainable Enterprises at the International Labour Conference in 2007 which provided detailed guidance on what constitutes a conducive environment for sustainable enterprises, noting that such an environment combines the legitimate quest for profit with the need for development which respects human dignity, environmental sustainability and decent work.

It underscores the principle that sustainable enterprises need sustainable societies and that business tends to thrive where societies thrive and vice versa. The conclusions identify 17 pillars of a conducive environment and provide guidance to go.

An assessment methodology to support the creation of enabling environments for sustainable enterprises (EESE) in Guyana was presented in April 2017 by the Consultative Association of Guyanese Industry (CAGI), with the support of the ILO.

Through the EESE assessment in Guyana, the secondary data was collected and inputs received from representatives of the business sector through focused interviews. Nine priority conditions which Guyana should address to contribute to improvements in the enabling environment were identified. Among the key recommendations was the need for a comprehensive Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Policy which is currently being pursued within the framework of the DWCP for Guyana.
Agricultural sector value chain analysis completed in Guyana

To achieve the goal of improving value-added production and exports articulated in the Strategic Action Plan, 2016 – 2020, the Ministry of Business requested ILO’s support to analyze its vegetable and fruit sectors in order to identify growth and export potential. The analysis addressed underlying constraints that could potentially hamper productivity enhancement and sector growth. Two value chains, mango and hot pepper, were identified for promotion. Both showed strong potential for export-led growth and diverse processed product lines with scope for expansion; good potential to support development objectives through the inclusion and formalization of SMEs and the creation of employment; and feasibility to intervene with interested and able private and public-sector actors.

Subsequently, a high-level dialogue was held with major stakeholders to identify areas of underperformance in the value chains. The dialogue led to the identification of three supporting systems for further analysis: finance, market research and product development. A final market analysis report focused on bottlenecks and constraints in the supporting functions and rules regarding the mango and hot pepper value chains. The report is informing the strategy and budget for Ministry of Business and will form a key part of the National Value-Added Export Strategy (NVAES) and the Export Competitive Plans (ECV), which are flagged for development within the Ministry of Business’ Strategic Plan 2016-2020. The recommendations of the analysis will also provide a basis for how Guyana can diversify its economy with inclusive value-added initiatives. This has been underscored as a strong priority in the Green State Development Strategy which is Guyana’s national plan for a green economy by 2040.

Caribbean cooperative capacity reinforced

In July 2018, the ILO published the Caribbean Cooperative Management Training Programmes: Step-by-Step Guide to Planning and Starting a Cooperative. The Manual is designed to help promoters and organizers of cooperatives eliminate mistakes and minimize risks that may occur during the formation stages of the cooperative and later on when it is fully operational. The Manual is supplemented by three supporting modules that will help users focus on defining cooperative enterprises, starting a cooperative and organizing and managing cooperatives.

In 2017, with assistance from the ILO, a domestic workers cooperative - Red Thread - was launched in Guyana. The Red Thread has been instrumental in advocating for the ratification of the ILO Domestic Workers’ Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and in 2013, Guyana was the first Caribbean country to ratify this Convention. In May 2017, the ILO worked with 29 women of Red Thread on the formation of a domestic workers’ cooperative. Guidance was also provided by the Department of Cooperative, Ministry of Social Protection. An Interim Management Committee was set up comprised of 12 women who developed a business plan and interim budget. The country’s first Domestic Workers’ Cooperative was registered in October 2017.
The ILO’s work in Trinidad and Tobago with the National Union for Domestic Employees (NUDE) and the Service Workers Centre Cooperative (SWCC) has led to several areas of progress:

- Entrepreneurship interventions, including those targeted at youth and / or women, which were designed and scaled up using ILO products for entrepreneurship promotion.
- A business plan developed by the SWCC in June 2017 to ensure its sustainability. The business plan includes financial and marketing strategies and was produced using ILO Community Based Enterprise Development (CBED). It also includes a strategy to attract new and young members. Furthermore, the SWCC is currently working on a model contract for domestic workers.
- Capacity training workshops were held in March, June and July 2017 to assist domestic workers who were members of the SWCC. The ILO provided the technical assistance for the development of the business plan, as well as the terms of reference for the development of a model contract to be used by cooperatives when providing services to clients.
Social protection strengthened in the Caribbean

As the Caribbean faces increased enterprise and sectoral restructuring, the spread of non-standard employment and vulnerability to extreme shocks, social protection has become key to achieving sustainable development in the region. The region faces the double challenge of ensuring sustainability of existing social security schemes and the development of a complete, comprehensive and integrated social protection system, include the social protection floor.

In March 2017, representatives of 15 jurisdictions of the Caribbean attended a training session in Trinidad and Tobago organized by the ILO on the Extension of Social Protection in the Context of Formalization Policies. The training focused on capacity building on the ILO’s strategies, policies and tools for the extension of social protection and formalization, knowledge sharing amongst participants, revision of success stories in different regions of the world that successfully increased social protection coverage in the formalization process and elaboration of proposal at national and regional level to increase social protection coverage in the context of formalization.

Guyana, in partnership with the ILO, is promoting the extension of social protection coverage to the self-employed. While it is mandatory for the self-employed to be covered by the national insurance scheme (NIS) of Guyana, most self-employed are not NIS members. In May 2017, the ILO met with key stakeholders to identify the core problems and to discuss possible policy and governance responses. As part of an integrated Programme to support the transition to formalization, the ILO conducted a Study on the extension of social security coverage to the self-employed in Guyana. The Report presented policy and governance proposals to the National Insurance Scheme, including the implementation of a simplified scheme for small contributors with a series of incentive measures. Belize has also requested support from the ILO to extend social security coverage to the self-employed and a proposal is currently being developed.

The Government of Belize has taken a step forward on the global commitment to leave no one behind and is leading the way in the Caribbean towards the development of a complete and coherent social protection system that would provide adequate protection to all Belizeans. The initiative is an extraordinary contribution towards the achievement of the SDGs and the implementation of the national Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy of Belize. It is also aligned with the ILO Declaration of Panama, 2018. Following a comprehensive review of the Social Protection System, the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation (MHDSTPA) launched a series of social protection conferences. Through support from the ILO, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the WB, Belize held the first conference in the series in December 2018 to address the Social Protection Floor as a key component of its Social Protection System. The event met the objectives of presenting the concepts of social protection and social protection floors, as well as the methodology to assess gaps for the implementation of the social protection floor in Belize. During the conference, participants reviewed the Social Protection Floor Assessment Matrix, which was drafted by the ILO to identify gaps in the existing protection mechanism, as well as gaps in policy and governance.
“As we have seen in other countries, we believe that Belize can progressively implement a Social Protection Floor. It doesn’t have to be all at once, or in its most perfect version, but it can start by recognizing what exists and what has to be done to provide social protection to all,” said Ms Claudia Coenjaerts, Director of the ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean.

Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of different ministries presented recommendations and sought consensus on a roadmap to strengthen the National Social Protection System. The initiative was welcomed and endorsed by CEOs, who invited the MHDSTPA to continue the discussion and analysis and present a concrete proposal at the end of the process. The ILO will continue as a key partner that will actively contribute to supporting the conference series as well as other MHDSTPA efforts, including the design of a National Employment Policy. As part of its ambition to establish coherent and comprehensive social protection, the Ministry of Labour requested support to expand labour market activation intervention as a key element of comprehensive social protection. The WB is supporting the diagnostic process while the ILO will guide the development of a tripartite National Employment Policy.
National workplace Policy on HIV and AIDS updated

In August 2017, the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (MOLSED) of Trinidad and Tobago launched an updated version of the National Workplace Policy on HIV and AIDS. The Policy was updated following in-depth consultations with workers, employers, trade unions, employers’ representatives, civil society, people living with HIV and other relevant stakeholders. The recommendations from these consultations helped to inform the drafting of the revised policy.

The Policy is in keeping with the UN SDGs which pave the way for post – 2015 development and the ILO Recommendation, 2010 (No. 200) concerning HIV and AIDS and the World of Work. It is also in line with country’s National Development Strategy for 2016 to 2030 and the role of the re-established National AIDS Coordinating Committee (NACC).

Through the implementation of the National Workplace Policy on HIV and AIDS, Trinidad and Tobago seeks to encourage the development of enterprise-level HIV and AIDS workplace policies and programmes. The policy promotes a number of benefits that result from workplace action on HIV and AIDS, including:

- Promoting a non-discriminatory environment;
- Providing HIV prevention education to all workers and reducing risk of infection;
- Keeping medical files and information confidential; and
- Ensuring that hiring and promotions are based on experience, qualifications and fitness to work rather than HIV status.

Overall, the National Workplace Policy on HIV and AIDS seeks to reduce the impact of HIV and AIDS on the workplace ultimately benefitting both employees and employers across Trinidad and Tobago.

“This National Workplace Policy will guide the standards to be adhered to by all employers, employees and key stakeholders to ensure all people living with or affected by HIV are not subjected to discrimination in the workplace,” said the Honourable Ayanna Webster-Roy, Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister, whose portfolio includes the NACC.

To support the implementation of the Policy, the HIV Workplace Advocacy Unit (HWAU) held sensitization and capacity building workshops. The trainings focused on the National Workplace Policy on HIV and AIDS; the ILO’s Ten Key Principles; and HIV and AIDS Policy Programming to build the skills needed for the development of workplace policies and programmes on HIV and AIDS in public and private institutions.
Safe and healthy workplaces promoted in the Caribbean

Over the past two years the ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean continued to provide support to revise national labour laws and regulations and to develop national policies related to occupational safety and health (OSH). ILO’s contribution is grounded in International Labour Standards particularly the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187).

In December 2017, the Government of Guyana adopted a National OSH Policy, which was launched in April 2019 by the Ministry of Social Protection (MSP), in collaboration with the ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean. The OSH Act of Guyana is being revised and OSH Regulations on Chemical Safety, Construction, Forestry, Joint Workplace Safety and Health Committees, Manufacturing, Mining and Noise have been developed and will soon become part of the national OSH System of Guyana. The ILO supported the MSP in implementing a campaign on OSH in the informal sector, particularly in the agriculture, construction and service sectors. The campaign included production of booklets on essential OSH information on each sector, a Trainer of Trainers’ workshop and a nationwide sensitization activities through workshops and announcements in mass media (newspapers, radio and TV).

The ILO has been supporting the Department of Labour (DoL) of Saint Lucia on the improvement of the National OSH System. The first deliverable of this project was the elaboration and validation of the national OSH Policy, which was drafted by the ILO and submitted to the DoL. Subsequently, the DoL held five national consultations with social partners and other stakeholders based on the draft policy. Their feedback provided guidance that contributed to the finalization of the draft policy. During World OSH Day 2017, the Honourable Stephenson King, Minister of Labour, launched Saint Lucia’s National OSH Policy and highlighted its importance in transforming the world of work through the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all. The National OSH Policy is now awaiting political validation, which will provide the basis for the development of a plan of action for its implementation.

In March 2017, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, held a tripartite consultation on principles, policies and issues to be considered in the development of legislation to amend its OSH Act. The event was organized by the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development and the Occupational Safety and Health Authority and Agency (OSHA). The consultation was fully aligned with the provisions of ILO Convention 187, and was an excellent opportunity to review Trinidad and Tobago’s National OSH System through an approach centred on social dialogue between the Government, employers’ and workers’ organizations with an emphasis on the development of a preventative safety and health culture. All inputs from stakeholders will allow the Ministry to continue the amendment process of the OSH Act with a view to address the needs and concerns of different sectors. The ILO also provided support to the draft National OSH Policy that was further discussed in April 2019.
Grenada is in the process of developing a National OSH Policy with support from the ILO. Advancing toward finalization, a draft policy was shared with key stakeholder for comments and amendments. During a tripartite workshop in September 2018, the OSH Policy was validated. The final draft, which includes recommendations of the stakeholders, was forwarded to the Ministry of Legal Affairs and thereafter sought political validation through Cabinet. The adoption of the OSH Policy will allow Grenada to upgrade the OSH legislative framework and develop an OSH Profile and Programme to implement the Policy and the new OSH Act. An OSH Bill has also been drafted. This will repeal the country's Accidents and Occupational Disease (Notification) Act Chapter 2, the Agricultural Workers’ Amenities Act Chapter 11, and the Factories Act Chapter 100.

A major milestone was achieved in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in 2017 with the adoption of the OSH Act following a successful process of social dialogue. The National OSH Policy and OSH Profile were also developed by the DoL with the support of the ILO. Both documents were discussed and validated by the social partners. The OSH Policy is awaiting political validation to become a building block of the OSH System of the country and allow for the elaboration of the OSH Programme.

Considerable progress has also been made in Belize, Jamaica and Suriname concerning the review of OSH legislation and the adoption of a modern and comprehensive OSH Act.
International labour standards and labour law advanced

The Caribbean has an excellent record of ratifications with nearly universal ratifications of all Eight Fundamental ILO Conventions. There are a number of reporting challenges however, due to small labour administrations and regular staff turnover. Resolving this is important as compliance and monitoring demonstrate the application of the principles laid down in International Labour Standards and reporting of member States to the ILO’s supervisory mechanism provides information needed for monitoring. In addition to ongoing direct support, the Office organized a three-day training “Caribbean Training Course on Reporting on ILO Conventions and Recommendations” in Guyana in September 2017. This Workshop resulted in increased awareness of ILO member State reporting obligations and improved capacity in planning and managing reporting work within respective labour ministries and departments.


Suriname has been active in ratifying ILO Conventions, and has formulated various new labour laws. The ILO provided technical advice for the ratification of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) ratified in January 2018. Within the context of the soon-to-be launched DWCP, the ILO will continue to partner with constituents on international labour standards and labour law.

The Bahamas is strengthening its governance in maritime labour in collaboration with the ILO. The National Tripartite Council (NTC) is building its technical capacity on the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006. The Government is also determined to establish a National Maritime Academy in line with the National Maritime Policy. The planning for the Academy started in 2019.

In Saint Kitts and Nevis, a draft labour code is underway. The reform process started with consolidating existing laws, a milestone in the process that is considered by constituents to be an improvement in itself since it would increase legal certainty. This step is expected to be completed by the end of 2019. Once the consolidation is done, the constituents will continue working on improving various parts of the law. The ILO provided support during the consolidation process.

In Saint Lucia, the Labour Act of 2006 has been under review since 2017. The ILO supported a kick-off workshop which was held in March 2017. The process is being driven by the tripartite constituents who are carrying out the review. It is expected that this process will lead to clarity on the parts of the Act that should be amended and how it would be done.

Trinidad and Tobago is actively pursuing a reform agenda. Amendment polices for the Industrial Relations Act (IRA) and the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act (RSBA) are at an advanced stage before Cabinet. A tripartite technical working group is examining the Trade Unions Act. Consultations with various stakeholders are taking place with respect to the existing laws such as the Foreign Labour Contracts and the Employment Exchange Act. Consideration is being given also to a new basic terms and conditions of employment act which would deal with individual workers’ rights and duties. The ILO has supported these consultations.
Gender equality at work promoted

In November 2018 the ILO launched Gender at Work Reports for five Caribbean countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica and Saint Lucia. The Reports provide a basis on which to engage with constituents and stakeholders at a national level to further refine and enrich the analysis and fill information gaps, as well as foster explicit gender equality actions in the world of work over the years to come.

The ILO has been assisting Caribbean action for gender equality through a Project with Women in Maritime Association, Caribbean (WiMAC) that began in 2018. WiMAC is a group of female maritime professionals in the Caribbean that has been working to establish a mentorship programme. ILO is supporting this Project in collaboration with the International Maritime Organization (IMO). ILO provided technical support at the WiMAC’s annual conference in October 2018 in Belize.
Trinidad and Tobago launches workplace sexual harassment Policy

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago finalized a new National Workplace Policy on Sexual Harassment, which was laid before Parliament on 8 March 2019 by the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development.3

The Policy officially recognizes that every individual has a right to work in an environment free from harassment and in this regard, sexual harassment in the workplace can no longer be classified as a personal or interpersonal issue. It seeks to define and prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, identify and address relevant issues, and provide guidance on actions that may be taken by main stakeholders, namely: victims, observers, employers, workers and the Government. The Policy applies to all establishments, public and private, and covers all workers regardless of their residency status.

“One of the most important elements of the policy is that it clarifies the ambiguity of what is Sexual Harassment in Trinidad and Tobago by setting out definitions, identifying core values and aims, amongst other important concepts and identifying the actions we can all take, in our roles at the workplace, to address this issue,” said the Honourable Jennifer Baptiste Primus, Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development.

The Government developed this Policy through an intensive consultation process with stakeholders that took place towards the end of 2018. The ILO was substantially involved in this process, and contributed with detailed technical comments and suggestions prepared with expertise from ILO specialists based in Port of Spain and at its headquarters in Geneva.

Employers’ activities

- A Caribbean Employers’ Confederation (CEC) Position Paper on productivity was developed following 14 capacity building workshops that were conducted in 2017. The workshops focused on productivity improvement for SMEs in 14 CARIFORUM countries: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Haiti, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

- Business Continuity and Disaster Management workshops were held in The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Haiti, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname. Following the workshops some employers’ organizations facilitated assistance to members in developing their business continuity plans. Additionally, better collaboration with national disaster emergency management offices was established and clarity regarding compliance with the legislation before, during, and after a disaster, was provided.

• A Sub-regional Report for the Caribbean on Women in Business and Management was launched in October 2018.

• Antigua and Barbuda Employers’ Federation launched the National Study on Women in Business and Management in 2018 and signed a pledge with the Ministry of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development, Youth and Gender committing themselves to working together to promote gender equality and diversity.

• Thirteen employers’ organizations received assistance to improve their research capacity. They subsequently submitted advocacy plans on how to strengthen and sustain their research efforts. Beneficiary organizations included the Grenada Employers’ Federation, the Dominica Employers’ Federation, and the Jamaica Employers’ Federation, who later implemented some of their strategies.

• The Barbados Employers’ Confederation; the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry; the Suriname Trade and Industry Association; and the Employers Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago participated in the OSH ToTs Programme in Turin Center in 2017 and by 2018. The Programme helped to improve their capacity to provide OSH training to their members.

• In 2017, a customer relationship management software was installed for the Jamaica Employers’ Federation and the Employers Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago to help improve their management and governance structures and better track members and their policy needs.
• Sixteen trainers from The Bahamas Chamber of Commerce and Employers’ Conference participated in a ToTs programme in July 2017 as part of the ILO Improve Your Business training programme. The Chamber facilitated further training sessions to members as a way of a new service offered by its SME Helpdesk.

• In August 2017, the Suriname Trade and Industry Association (STIA) offered improved service to members through enhanced training workshops on the ISO 26000 guidance on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), where members were also introduced to a new CSR Roadmap, a web-based Programme companies can use to develop CSR action plans.

• The Bahamas Chamber of Commerce and Employers’ Confederation launched its first labour conference in September 2018 and distributed copies of the Employment Guide Book to over 100 participants aimed at simplifying implementation to promote compliance with the revised labour and employment legislation.

• In 2017, the Saint Kitts and Nevis Chamber of Commerce developed its advocacy strategy which assisted in its engagement at the Tripartite Committee on the Labour Code.

• Non-metropolitan territories including the Aruba Trade and Industry Association and the Anquilla Chamber of Industry and Commerce, provided their first training to members on productivity improvements in 2018.

• The Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry launched a report on gaps in ICT and agriculture curricula in October 2018.

• The Jamaica Employers’ Federation is the only Caribbean Organization to participate in a three-year European Union (EU)-funded Project called WIN-WIN: Gender Equality is Good Business which aims to promote EU- and internationally-shared principles and values of gender equality and women’s economic empowerment.

• In 2017, the ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean hosted the 5th Caribbean Academy for Management of Employers’ Organizations (CAMEO) which aimed to strengthen employers’ organizations capacity in understanding and applying macroeconomics concepts and tools. The 6th CAMEO meeting is planned for May 2019.

Cross-cutting dialogue on unions and the future of work

Forty-two trade union leaders and representatives from UN agencies, academia, governments and employers from across the Caribbean engaged in vivid exchanges on the future of work in a high-level sub-regional Conference organized by the ILO Bureau for Workers’ Activities (ACTRAV), in collaboration with the Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean.

Officially titled “The Future of Work We Want: Workers’ Perspectives from the Caribbean”, the Conference which was held on 14 and 15 February 2019 in Port of Spain, Trinidad, created a space for discussions focussed on finding a better way to promote a future of work based on inclusive growth, social justice and decent work for all – with a particular focus on the role of trade unions in this process.
Throughout the event, speakers and delegates engaged in dialogue on the current developments in the world of work. They also discussed how countries can better engage trade unions to develop strategies to face these expected changes.

Mr Michael Annisette, General Secretary of the National Trade Union Centre (NATUC), called on trade union representatives to address current social issues affecting the workers that are likely to escalate even more in the future if not addressed.

During a special session, participants engaged in a discussion on the recently-released Report by the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work to consider how the publication can be used to promote decent work and social justice in the Caribbean. They also identified the ILO’s work to support the United Nations 2030 SDGs Agenda with an emphasis on how trade unions are helping to achieve inclusive growth and decent work to meet SDG targets.

Other sessions were organized around four broad topics that included:

1. Economic, social and sustainable development in a globalized world;
2. The role of work in society;
3. Challenges of effective governance in an increasingly globalized world: the role of the state; and
“This Conference is part of a set of activities that the ILO’s Bureau for Workers’ Activities is promoting in the different regions across the world to stress the importance of workers’ organizations in the discussions on the future of work. We hope that this Conference will be an occasion for the unions to find changes to be made for their internal organizations to implement the future of work we all want,” explained Ms Maria Helena André, Director of ACTRAV.

Workers’ activities

Through collaboration with the ILO and the Hugh Lawson Shearer Trade Union Education Institute (HLSTUEI), the Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL) hosted a five-day training Programme on “Strengthening Trade Unions’ Understanding and Application of Research Methodology” in May 2017.

Fifteen CARIFORUM countries strengthened their research and analytical capabilities. The sessions specifically promoted trade unions’ use of research to enhance policy formulation, reinforce the positions developed, and generate data to address institutional issues. The training was designed so that trade unions across the Caribbean would be better positioned to play meaningful roles in advocating for evidence-based policy-making as well as contributing to the development of sound economic policy positions at the national and regional levels.

Participants included trade union representatives involved in research and policy development. After the Workshop, participants were expected to go back to their unions ready to build their research and policy formulation capacity, having gained a better understanding of the research process, quantitative and qualitative data, as well as how to conduct research using different methods and tools. The sessions also prepared them to include a gender dimension in their research and to ensure that gender disaggregated data was collected.
UN partnerships for Decent Work strengthened

Since the beginning of 2017, the UN has embarked on a reform to improve the delivery of its mandate through approaches that are more focused on people and delivery than process and bureaucracy. Having already established a joint multi-country development framework for the Caribbean, the UN has been working fastidiously to improve its delivery and efficiency through better coordinated partnerships and programmes. In addition to active participation in six UN Country Teams and Programme Coordinating Mechanisms, the ILO has joined forces with agencies across the region to address challenges related to green and blue economies, social protection, child labour, disaster recovery and resilience.

Social protection partnership reinforced

Since 2018, the ILO has worked in partnership with UNICEF and the Secretariat of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) to convene a high-level sub-regional Conference which will focus on the importance of building a social protection floor to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the OECS. This Conference will be convened in the second half of 2019.
Apart from achieving the goal of strengthening strategic partnerships, the Conference will be a direct contribution to the SDG 1 that calls for ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including eradicating extreme poverty by 2030. Target 1.3 calls countries to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable. To achieve this target, a Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection (USP2030) was launched in September 2016 by the ILO and the WB with the support of UNICEF and other key development institutions.

Social protection systems, when well-designed and implemented, are a critical part of the foundation for sustained social and economic development. In a context of economic, social, and environmental shocks, social protection, and more precisely the social protection floor, is the most effective policy to provide livelihood recovery, stabilize economies, and make countries and populations more resilient. A complete and coherent social protection system provides adequate
coverage to all and guarantees that all protection mechanisms function in a coordinated and effective manner. A well-established social protection floor is a preventive measure that could yield return of long-term social and economic investments. It also provides the right incentives for societies to embark in a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies and effectively addresses cross-cutting issues including non-discrimination, gender and migration.

Social protection floors are a core element of social protection systems and provide a set of essential guarantees, transfers and services across the life-cycle, which should be defined at the national level and in the framework of social dialogue. The progressive implementation of the social protection floor in OECS member countries will make them more resilient to natural disaster and provide a tool for immediate response to assist their population’s in need. National social protection floors should comprise at least the following four social security guarantees, as defined at the national level:

1. Access to essential health care, including maternity care;
2. Basic income security for children, providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services;
3. Basic income security for persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, particularly in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability; and
4. Basic income security for older persons.

This is extremely pertinent to the OECS where the role of the social protection floor, as a tool for resilience and climate change management, is currently being analyzed in the context of the recent shocks such as Hurricanes Maria and Irma in 2017.
Alliances built to help Caribbean countries to improve their social dialogue process

Between 2017 and 2018, funding from the European Union (EU) continued to facilitate the participation of CARIFORUM civil society in the regional development and integration process between 2017 and 2018. The Project, which started in February 2015 and ended April 2018, sought to address challenges faced by CARIFORUM labour, private sector and employers’ organizations in order to fulfil their Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) obligations.

The Project’s overall development objective was to allow employers and workers to engage effectively in social dialogue processes through their national and regional organizations.

As the implementing Agency, the ILO partnered with the Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL) and the Caribbean Employers’ Confederation (CEC), to establish pathways through which employers and workers could contribute to the design and implementation of social and economic development policies for Caribbean regional integration. By taking this approach, the Project sought to drive the monitoring process of the social aspects of the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

More specifically, the Project operated through the following three objectives:

1. Enhanced technical and organizational capacity of the regional organizations of employers and workers to participate meaningfully in harmonization of labour laws and practices to support the free movement of a skilled and competitive workforce; the development of an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises across the region; and the promotion of the Caribbean single market intra- and extra-regional trade and development.

2. Processes and programmes are in place to assist the regional and national employers’ and workers’ organizations in building and maintaining the institutional capacity required to promote and implement internationally recognized core labour standards, according to Article 191 of the EPA and the Decent Work Agenda.

3. Mechanisms established to facilitate the promotion of, and participation in dialogue by CEC and CCL within the CARIFORUM-EU Consultative Committee, and to enable them to fulfil their roles in the implementation and governance of the EPA, including monitoring its effect as described in the Social Aspects Chapter.

The Project covered 15 CARIFORUM countries: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.
“This Project was extremely helpful in capacity building and bringing the region’s National Employers’ Organizations together around important issues that have created lasting bonds which augur well for future cooperation and more meaningful participation in our countries’ and region’s development,” said Mr Wayne Chen, President of the Caribbean Employers’ Confederation.

An independent evaluation of the Project was conducted in 2018. From this evaluation a number of key findings emerged:

- The CEC and CCL are both strategically positioned to influence CARICOM’s social and economic policies as a result of the Project. Both CEC and CCL have been integrated within the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD);
- Mutual trust increased through the collaboration between the CEC and the CCL on shared priorities which enabled more impactful advocacy;
- Beneficiaries viewed the Project as highly relevant for both men and women because it responded to national employers’ organizations and trade unions’ needs;
- Full alignment with CARICOM’s priorities and, most notably, to its Charter of Civil Society and Strategic Plan (2015 - 2019). It was also found to be fully aligned with ILO’s Decent Work Agenda and the UN MSDF (2017 - 2021 ) for the Caribbean and advancing regional progress toward the achievement of SDG 8;
- The Project design was coherent and complemented by a participatory process which considered the needs and perspectives of the CEC and CCL and their membership;
- Greater regional visibility of the CEC and the CCL and improved communication capacity through a greater online presence and the development of communication plans;
- A revitalized relationship between the CEC and CCL and their members materialized through increased bipartite dialogue; and
- A stronger orientation toward sustainability through the development of key communication and information tools.

While the Project achieved the results highlighted above, there remains room for improvement in CEC and CCL representation at other regional mechanisms including the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED). The Project also identified a need for both Organizations to increase their participation in the EU EPA, as well as a need for each to enhance their institutional sustainability.

The ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean looks forward to continuing to collaborate with CEC and CCL towards making these improvements by building on the momentum developed over the course of the Project.
Child labour issues tackled through south-south cooperation across the Caribbean

Dynamic south-south cooperation resulted in an increase in the number of Caribbean countries that are members of the Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour (Regional Initiative) from six to 11. These countries include: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

Using dedicated funding from the ILO-Brazil South-South Cooperation Programme, sponsored by the Government of Brazil since 2016, the ILO has been closely working with Caribbean countries at the national and regional levels to build capacity for the fight against child labour, with initial focus on preventative strategies that seek enhanced youth employment.

With a renewed goal to eliminate child labour in all its forms by 2025, the ILO’s Regional Initiative is an innovative, inter-governmental alliance comprising representatives of Ministries responsible for labour as well as delegates from the global employers’ and workers’ organizations. Its original priority and mandate to accelerate the rate of reduction of child labour in the hemisphere towards complete elimination by 2020 was revised and further validated in the SDG 8 (Target 8.7) and SDG 17 (Target 17.9) on international cooperation and south-south and triangular cooperation.

Within the context of the UN MSDF for the Caribbean, the ILO has contributed to generating concrete results as it relates to the following areas:

- **Research and data collection.** In 2017, rapid assessments on child labour were published for three countries – Guyana, the Bahamas and Saint Lucia. In addition, the national Youth Activity Survey in Jamaica was the first stand-alone national survey in Jamaica on children’s engagement in economic activities and has become a fundamental input to subsequent national actions to establish effective legal and policy frameworks to address child labour. Similar support for in-depth statistical research was also provided to Suriname in the context of the ILO’s Country Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labour (CLEAR) Project. The 2017 Suriname Child Labour Survey was published and launched at the start of 2019.

- **Support to legal and policy instruments for national development and SDG implementation.** In keeping with the Regional Strategy on child labour agreed by the members of the Regional initiative, and the recommendations of the aforementioned Rapid Assessment, the Government of Guyana with financial and technical support from UNICEF, developed its National Child Labour Policy in 2018. In addition to providing technical advice to that process, the ILO is currently working with Guyana’s Ministry of Social Protection to build national capacity for implementation by training labour inspectors and social workers in child labour inspections, and by piloting the Child Labour Risk Identification Model -- a statistical tool created by the Regional Initiative and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN ECLAC).
• Institutional capacity strengthening. Over the course of 2017-2018, through the Regional Initiative, there were several engagements focused on knowledge exchange between and among Caribbean child labour focal points and national stakeholders, and their counterparts/peers in Brazil, aimed at improving sub-regional capacity to develop effective apprenticeship programmes and to craft responsive school-to-work transition policies. Caribbean labour and education officials participated in site visits to Brazilian companies and educational institutions, and Brazilian labour inspectors journeyed to five Caribbean countries to conduct seminars and have meetings with national officials, workers’ and employers’ representatives and civil society stakeholders sharing the good practices and lessons learnt from Brazil’s own experiences. Additionally, in response to the direct request of Jamaica, the Regional Initiative facilitated the training of labour officials in child labour inspection at a Workshop in Brazil in 2017. This led to Jamaica’s decision to organize and host a national Training of Trainers on Child labour and OSH in 2018. The Regional Initiative and Brazil, at Jamaica’s invitation, provided technical expertise and financial assistance for the event, including facilitating the participation of officials from The Bahamas and Guyana, with the result that thirty-five labour officers in the sub-region were trained.

• Information communication technology (ICT). The ILO, by leveraging modern ICTs for better communication and providing dedicated administrative support, has been able to ensure better integration of the Caribbean members and more active participation in the Focal Points Network of the Regional Initiative. As important contributors to this innovative virtual space, Caribbean countries and professionals have been sharing information with each other and with Latin American counterparts on their national challenges, good practices and initiatives to combat child labour. National ownership of the issues are reflected in actions by Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago to re-establish national commissions or steering committees on child labour, and The Bahamas’ pledge at the IV Global Conference on Child Labour to develop a national child labour policy to guide national efforts, as well as in the provision and increase of national budgetary allocations for the fight against child labour in Barbados and the other countries.

• Advocacy and knowledge products. The advocacy of the ILO’s Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean, as well as the dynamism of Caribbean participation in the Regional Initiative can also be credited with contributing the reinvigoration of Caribbean political awareness and prioritization of action to end child labour and secure protected, decent work for teens and youths. This was marked by the adhesion between 2016 and 2019 of Grenada, Saint Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, and Saint Kitts and Nevis, to the Regional Initiative. Annually, the ILO also provides financial and communication support to the Caribbean members for national observances of World Day Against Child Labour (WDACL). Caribbean interventions and actions are also more visible, amplified through dissemination of their messages on the social media platforms and websites of the Regional Initiative and ILO Caribbean Office.
Ensuring the stability of public social security funds in the Caribbean

Over the past two years in the Caribbean, actuarial reviews have been undertaken in four Caribbean countries. The results of these three projects make an important contribution to ensuring the financial sustainability of social security schemes and their ability to continue providing support to a large part of the population.

**Actuarial evaluations were conducted in Dominica, Guyana, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago and proposals for reform of social security provisions were developed.** In view of the tripartite nature of the ILO and the importance of the cohesion and participation of workers and employers, the actuarial reviews consider their opinions before recommendations are finalized. Actuarial services provided by the ILO are uniquely positioned as they are anchored in International Labour Standards and respect tripartite consultation principles. They also serve to anchor financial sustainability of public social security funds – a critical component of ensure social protection for all. Additionally, they count on the technical support of the Actuarial Service Unit at the ILO headquarters in Geneva.

The ILO proposes integrated support to social security institutions by addressing policy, governance and legal issues. **This approach has been implemented in Guyana and Dominica where an analysis of the legal framework alignment with Convention No. 102 (Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention) was included in the actuarial reviews.**
The conclusion of the assessment for Dominica is that it fulfilled the requirements to ratify Convention No. 102 and the Government has taken the decision to proceed with ratification. A tripartite Workshop was conducted in February 2019 and the Dominica Social Security Board is undertaking internal procedures for ratification.

The commitment of ILO’s constituents and the allocation of domestic financial resources are key to achieving national decent work goals. Domestic Trust Funds (DTF) facilitate cooperation between the ILO and member States who entrust the ILO with financial resources to deliver technical assistance under mutually agreed conditions, over and above the regular support that the ILO can provide from its budget.

Based on the needs expressed by ILO constituents and the challenges of the future of work posed to social security institutions, a training on pension reform is scheduled for the end of 2019, in collaboration with the International Training Centre of the ILO.

Climate adaptation capacity enhanced for the labour market

Comprised of several SIDS that are regularly confronted with natural disasters (hurricanes, drought and flooding), the Caribbean is highly vulnerable to environmental hazards and challenges related to the impact of climate change.

This vulnerability as well as approaches to preparedness and resilience are increasingly at the forefront of the regional political agenda.

In addition to severe structural damage and economic burdens, natural disasters have a devastating impact on the labour force and social sector. Disaster preparedness must happen at all levels and requires that (national and local) institutions and individuals have the capacities and knowledge to minimize their impact. Preparedness is also an essential component of recovery because it anticipates the impact and identifies approaches to mitigation. While a number of long-standing response mechanisms do exist, the focus of attention is often restricted to life saving matters and the lack of contingency and continuity planning in livelihood and employment areas leaves important gaps in overall recovery endeavours.

In 2017, the Caribbean was impacted by two powerful storms, Hurricanes Irma and Maria, which brought massive damage to the region. One key learning lesson was that ILO constituents did not have the necessary tools to mainstream decent work in the recovery process and to run, or actively participate in Post Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNAs).

The opportunity to implement an employment and livelihood-centred recovery response in the aftermath of the widespread devastation caused by the hurricanes was missed. The interventions from the ILO after the crisis demonstrated that there is an urgent need to support capacity strengthening and institutional reform if resilience goals are to be fully realized.
In view of this, the ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean Office successfully mobilized resources to extend support to tripartite constituents through a strategy which outlined measurable actions in three countries: Guyana, Saint Lucia and Dominica.

Support will be focused primarily on institutional capacity strengthening in six broad areas:

1. Labour market institutions and job creation
2. Planning and assessment
3. Skills development
4. Social protection
5. Enterprise recovery
6. Social dialogue
Transitioning to green economies

The ILO has supported work on the green economy in both Barbados and Guyana through the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE), a multi-agency UN Programme that aims to bring sustainability at the heart of economic policies and practices to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Programme supports nations and regions in reframing economic policies and practices around sustainability to foster economic growth, create income and jobs, reduce poverty and inequality, and strengthen the ecological foundations of their economies.

In Guyana, ILO’s support through the PAGE initiative is fully aligned with the broader work on the Green State Development Strategy (GSDS). The Office is developing an analytical econometric tool - a green jobs assessment model - based on international statistical standards which will support national development planning and policy making on sustainable development policies relating to the SDGs. It also provides an assessment of the impact of alternative scenarios on conventional and green jobs as well as economic, social and environmental outcomes.

The ILO is working with the Bureau of Statistics, the University of Guyana (Economics Department), the Labour Market Unit of the Ministry of Social Protection and other key stakeholders in national development planning and the GSDS to build capacity to populate and use the model to assess the green jobs creation potential in selected growth oriented sectors of the Guyanese economy. These assessments will then provide evidence to support the formulation and implementation of policies that promote the creation of green jobs.

Support has also been provided for sensitization to tripartite constituents to support their voices in the development of the GSDS. A key outcome was the production of an ILO Think Piece on the inclusion of Decent Work in the GSDS following a series of workshops held between April and May 2018 in Guyana. The workshops addressed issues related to labour, in particular, skills and just transition guidelines in the GSDS, and gathered important input from the Government, employers’ and workers’ organizations that was integral to the development of the Report. The Think Piece – which is available online – puts the global guidelines into local context and articulates concrete recommendations for a just transition in Guyana.

In addition to technical support and capacity building, the ILO’s contribution to the GSDS is also included the development of knowledge products on greening of the economy. In December 2017, the ILO produced a Skills for Green Jobs Study for Guyana, which examines environmental and climate change impacts on key sectors such as mining, forestry and agriculture. The publication study also provides guidance on investing in skills for new green occupations in priority areas such as renewable energy, nature and eco-tourism and ecosystem services.
The ILO supported the Guyana Council for TVET in reviewing its curricula to incorporate green skills in some of its programmes. In May 2018, principals of TVET institutions discussed green skills, the drivers and barriers to green skills and jobs, the opportunities and challenges for green occupations. They received information on programme and curricula development in addition to the ILO guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies.

A Skills for Green Jobs Study was also developed for Barbados and published in March 2018. The Report provides an initial assessment of the status of green jobs and aims to create a baseline to support further policy dialogue with stakeholders on the green economy. More specifically, it examines green jobs and their related skills in relation to education and labour market adaptation, and concrete action to facilitate the economic and social transition for sustainability.

This work was further developed in the framework of support to the ILO’s input into PAGE following meetings held in Barbados in November 2018 during which the Government of Barbados reaffirmed its commitment to a green economy and its enthusiasm for developing the blue economy.

PAGE’s objectives for Barbados include:

- Integrating inclusive green economy goals and targets into SDG-aligned national economic and development planning;
- Implementing evidence-based sectoral and thematic reforms in line with inclusive green economy priorities;
- Strengthening capacities at the national level; and
- Improving the inclusive green economy knowledge base.

During the meetings, the Honourable Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados, confirmed her support to PAGE and highlighted its alignment with Barbados’ green and blue economy priorities. She expressed the need for technical support, training and skills development for all people at all levels and committed her Government’s support to PAGE by establishing an inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral committee as well as providing participation at the national level. Going forward, PAGE’s work in Barbados will support policies and economic incentives to drive sustainable entrepreneurship jobs in the green and blue economy as well as leverage access to new resources for implementation. As a result of these productive discussions, PAGE will develop a work plan in collaboration with the Barbadian Government.
Youth employment boosted through optimized technology

To advance youth employment issues and position them centrally within Caribbean policy discourse, the ILO has been leading, in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), on the implementation of the Caribbean Virtual Policy Network on Youth Education and Employment (VPNYEE). This Project is the result of a successful joint proposal that was submitted to the UN Development Operations Coordination Office within the Delivering Together Facility.

The VPNYEE which is also co-convened by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Caribbean Employers’ Confederation (CEC), was launched in 2017. Governments in the Caribbean, keenly aware of the need to get more and better jobs for young people, have launched many variations of interventions and programmes to generate better opportunities for their young citizens. To successfully address youth under employment however, such initiatives have to be a broader function of labour market issues and development and growth dynamics. A preliminary diagnostic carried out by the ILO indicates the lack of results may depend on issues such as poor integration, limited size and faulty design and/or implementation. The VPNYEE aims to promote better integrated, scaled up and evidence based interventions to get young people into productive and decent employment.

So far the network has focused on providing a digital platform where countries and stakeholders can discuss and develop strategies that improve public policy interventions to promote youth employment. Its members and contributors span the gamut of national stakeholders including governments, civil society and social actors, business/private sector, international and regional development partners.

In addition to providing a virtual community of practice and database of written and audio-visual information resources, the VPNYEE serves as the framework for action on:

- **Research and data collection**: In 2017 the ILO undertook a mapping of youth employment interventions in nine Caribbean countries – Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago and published the draft report in 2018.

- **Advocacy and knowledge products**: Since the launch, the ILO and UNESCO have facilitated six webinars on issues with particular relevance for youth and their employment opportunities. Topics included “Designing effective programmes to promote youth entrepreneurship”, “Preventative and restorative interventions for labour market re-integration of youth in the juvenile justice system/ and at-risk youth”, and “Stimulating demand for youth labour- incentives, sectoral policies and diversification in the Caribbean”. Recordings of these webinars, which feature presentations by regional and international experts in the field, as well as stakeholder discussions, are included in the database of materials available on the digital platform.
Innovation: In 2018, the ILO, working in collaboration with UN-system partner UNICEF, through the UN Caribbean Innovation Project, embarked on piloting ‘participatory evaluations’ of public youth employment and education programmes, commencing in Trinidad and Tobago. In this exercise, the participatory approach seeks to leverage mobile and digital technology innovations to collect the ‘voice’ of Caribbean youth. Using the UNICEF U-Report Survey tool which is currently available in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Belize, the aim is to ascertain what levels of knowledge young persons have of country-specific youth employment and education programmes, and obtain youth’s inputs on how these programmes can be better designed or upgraded.

The Trinidad and Tobago pilot focuses on evaluation of the Government’s On-the-job Training Programme (OJTP), within the portfolio of the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (MOLSED). In addition to carrying out specific polls on the OJTP using U-report, the ILO undertook five hackathons country-wide. These intense, simultaneous focus group sessions provided rich qualitative feedback to complement the quantitative data gathered, as well as allowed for closer engagement with the youth beneficiaries and the private and public sector employers and trainers involved with the Programme. The deliverable to the Government will include not only the data collected but also initial recommendations of reasonable and feasible actions to improve the quality and delivery of the Programme, for increased benefit to stakeholders. The ultimate goal of this innovation is that increasingly decision-makers and leaders will use participatory evaluation methods to improve the quality of information available to them, as well as to embed principles of feedback, transparency and accountability that youth stakeholders see as vital for their active participation in shaping their future and securing sustainable decent work.