Public Policy and Innovation Governance in Addressing Climate-Related Disasters in Times of Covid-19

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Why do we need Public Policy and Innovation Governance?

- New challenges and opportunities have been brought about by COVID-19:
  - Public health has been brought to the forefront of public policy
  - Climate smart lifestyles (e.g. teleworking) and business models (e.g. digital education) have been accelerated
- Climate-related disasters during COVID-19 will further increase vulnerabilities (e.g. CNCDs), poverty and inequalities
- Therefore we need to firstly help countries and communities build resilient public policy as resilience is more cost-effective than recovery
- Coexisting with COVID-19 calls for inter-sectoral collaboration, solidarity and action on climate change, disaster risk reduction and public health
- The COVID-19 context requires economic and social innovation among public and private sectors
- Economic and trade diversification are an increased priority in the shift to sustainable/low-carbon and green/blue approaches
- Increased need for innovation governance, cooperation and sector-wide approaches among regional institutions
We already know that the Caribbean region has one of the highest disaster-risk profiles among SIDS!

Data on risk assessment in relation to natural disasters for selected SIDS in the Caribbean Subregion derived from metrics using the annual average loss (AAL) (low: 0 – high 100)

The Impact of Hurricane Irma (2017) on several Caribbean Territories illustrates the vulnerabilities and the costs.

- Hurricane David (1979) - Impact on Dominica 117% of GDP.
- Hurricane Ivan (2004) - Impact on Grenada 200% of GDP.
How do we cope when COVID-19 has worsened existing financial, economic and social vulnerabilities?

- Greater loss of GDP and increased indebtedness (Key sectors negatively impacted by reduction in human mobility and GVC disruptions)
- Collapse of tourism arrivals (Travel restrictions and border closures)
- Reduction in remittance (Diaspora impacted by loss of lives and livelihoods)
- Unemployment (loss of livelihoods)
- Increased poverty
- Increased inequalities
- Emerging issues (e.g. mental health)

The Caribbean region is projected to contract by 6.2 percent in 2020.

This would be the deepest recession in more than half a century (IMF Apr 29, 2020)
## What can we learn from the Experience of Vanuatu and Cyclone Harold April 06, 2020?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Challenges</th>
<th>Policy Innovations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❑ Response trade-offs and preparedness challenges</td>
<td>❑ Enhance multi-hazard disaster preparedness efforts, including revision of SOPs and contingency plans</td>
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<td>❑ Compounded vulnerabilities of most-at-risk groups</td>
<td>❑ Be proactive to reduce vulnerability to COVID-19 and from other hazards</td>
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<td>❑ Institutional coordination and collaboration with civil society</td>
<td>❑ Prioritise integrated disaster risk governance</td>
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<td>❑ Challenges to frontline workers</td>
<td>❑ Protect the first responders and frontline workers</td>
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<td>❑ Support local action to prevent and prepare for and respond to disasters</td>
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<td>❑ ‘Game-change’ the model of international assistance</td>
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Source: UNDRR Asia-Pacific Brief: Dual Challenges of Climate-related Disasters and COVID-19
How do we manage social distancing and good hygienic practices in a disaster context?

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<th>Pre-Hurricane</th>
<th>During Hurricane</th>
<th>Post-Hurricane</th>
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| • Hurricane preparedness at the household and community level | • In a context of extreme flooding.  
• In hurricane shelters.  
• In vulnerable and inaccessible communities | • In a context where major utilities and public services have been damaged.  
• Post-disaster public health crisis.  
• Managing disaster response and humanitarian relief. |
There is a compelling case for increased coordination and collaboration among regional agencies.

- An inter-agency framework for the implementation of the Sendai Approach
- A sector-wide approach to manage regional response and international assistance
- There needs to be a lead agency to coordinate
- Health and Climate Change institutional capacity deficit
Key recent developments show some promise

- **Disaster Resilience Centre** to be hosted in Jamaica that will be “tasked with creating, producing and generating toolkits, guidelines and policies to handle the recovery process from the minute a crisis takes place.”

- December 2017 charter of the **Caribbean Climate Smart Coalition** that has been established to promote the region as the first climate proof area.
What are some of the strategic opportunities for the Caribbean?

- Climate Change is a useful platform to promote an alternative development model:
  - Low-carbon competitiveness
  - The adoption of renewable energy
  - Green/blue economy
  - Food import-replacement
  - Creative digital economy.

- Need to facilitate trade in environmental goods and services and other trade policy mechanisms.
  - Increased investment in R&D in climate smart technologies that are scale appropriate
  - Tremendous scope and opportunities for strategic government procurement
What are some of the strategic opportunities for Caribbean Tourism?

Some Caribbean countries can create a new value-proposition and new business/economic models by marketing the region position as both a **Carbon Neutral** and **COVID-19 free** tourism zone.

- This can facilitate the development of non-traditional branches of tourism:
  - Shift to low-volume, high-value tourism.
  - Shift to pro-poor, eco-friendly tourism (e.g. community tourism).
  - Invest in health/medical tourism
  - Promote educational tourism
  - Facilitate heritage tourism
Thanks for your kind attention.

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