

TOWARD A MORE INCLUSIVE  
**POST-COVID RECOVERY:**

A Tool to Further the Caribbean Policy Agenda

**(RE-) CONNECTING**

RESEARCH, POLICY & PRACTICE

---

Published in 2022 by the UNESCO Cluster Office for the Caribbean, United Nations House, 3rd Floor, 14-20 Port Royal Street, Kingston, Jamaica.

© UNESCO, 2022



KNG/SHS/2022/PI/1

This publication is available in Open Access under the Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO (CC-BY-SA 3.0 IGO) license. The present license applies exclusively to the text content of this publication and to images whose copyright belongs to UNESCO. By using the content of this publication, the users accept to be bound by the terms of use of the UNESCO Open Access Repository.

**Authors:** Dr. Anna Kasafi Perkins, Dr. Stacy Richards-Kennedy, Professor Don Marshall and Professor R. Clive Landis.

**Editors:** Paula Istúriz Caveró, Giuliana Neumann.

**Graphic Design and Layout:** Clementina Villarroel González.

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors; they are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.



TOWARD A MORE INCLUSIVE  
**POST-COVID RECOVERY:**

A Tool to Further the Caribbean Policy Agenda

# BACKGROUND

The Caribbean is a grouping of islands and low-lying coastal countries of sovereign nations and dependent territories that share a history of colonialism and coloniality,<sup>1</sup> which has shaped and continues to shape their “complex mix of political and administrative structures”.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Caribbean nations experience a “paradoxical, type of political sovereignty and experience of development”.<sup>3</sup> All Caribbean nations have been classified by the United Nations as Small Island Developing States (SIDS), taking account of “the peculiar social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities” they experience.<sup>4</sup> Caribbean SIDS are highly indebted and vulnerable to climate change, hurricanes and other natural hazards.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, theirs is a paradoxical existence as their vulnerabilities place them alongside least developed countries, in spite of some being designated by the World Bank as high or middle-income countries.<sup>6</sup> Such classification limits access to the international financing needed towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>7</sup>



The COVID-19 pandemic struck the Caribbean in a time of economic, social, and environmental vulnerability, just as the region was recovering from the 2007 global financial crisis.<sup>8</sup> “Unprecedented shocks to key sectors such as tourism and resource exports have resulted in some of the largest shocks to economic growth ever recorded across the region”.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the Caribbean is heavily dependent on tourism,<sup>10</sup> which was the sector most affected by the pandemic. On a positive note, Caribbean SIDS have actually experienced relatively lower per capita infections and deaths in comparison to other parts of Latin America.<sup>11</sup> While the health impacts of COVID-19 have been, arguably, relatively minimal, socio-economic impacts have been outsized.<sup>12</sup>

1. Levi Gahman, Gabrielle Thongs, and Aadaeze Greenidge, “Disaster, Debt, and ‘Underdevelopment’: The Cunning of Colonial-Capitalism in the Caribbean.” Development. (March 2021).

2. Clive Landis, “COVID-19 Among Caribbean SIDS: An effective public health response rooted in resilience”. *UNESCO Knowledge Series: Inclusive COVID-19 Recovery in Caribbean SIDS*. (June 2021).

3. Gahman et al. “Disaster, Debt, and ‘Underdevelopment’”.

4. Landis, “COVID-19 Among Caribbean SIDS”.

5. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). *Political and social compacts for equality and sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean in the post-COVID-19 recovery*. Special Report No. 9. (United Nations, 2020).

6. Landis, “COVID-19 Among Caribbean SIDS”.

7. Anna Kasafi Perkins. “A Closer Look at the Secondary Impacts of COVID in the Caribbean: Why Ethics Still Matter”. *UNESCO Knowledge Series: Inclusive COVID19 Recovery in Caribbean SIDS*. (June 2021).

8. ECLAC. *Political and social compacts for equality*.

9. International Development Bank (IDB). *Caribbean Quarterly Bulletin: The Fragile Path to Recovery* 10.2. (August 2021).

10. Perkins, “A Closer Look at the Secondary Impacts”.

11. IDB, *Caribbean Quarterly Bulletin*.

12. Landis, “COVID-19 Among Caribbean SIDS”.

For Caribbean SIDS, GDP growth and public debt ratios reflect the objectives and constraints facing policymakers.<sup>13</sup> (This does not make other social variables such as poverty or employment any less important than the GDP and debt ratio.) The pandemic has affected the debt to GDP ratio with significant contractions in GDP in tandem with rising borrowing to cover expenditure. Most countries had contractions in growth, which translated into lower revenues even as they faced increased pandemic-related expenditures, such as health, welfare and security costs. This led to increases in the need for government financing, this resulted in a rise of the public debt ratio. Not to be ignored is the fact that the ability of many Caribbean SIDS to properly develop welfare and other social safety net programmes to lessen the socio-economic fallout is limited by debt-servicing obligations.<sup>14</sup> It will take years for these economies to return to pre-pandemic levels. This is, of course, compounded by the ever-present threat of extreme weather events, which also threaten recovery. In the meantime, what this means for the average Caribbean citizen is inequalities will continue to deepen, lives and livelihoods disrupted, already disadvantaged groups further disadvantaged, and life prospects diminished. This calls out for urgent action, including a re-imagining of the current socio-economic framework of the Caribbean.

13. IDB, Caribbean Quarterly Bulletin.

14. Carla Moore, "Leaving No One Behind: Assessing the Need of Vulnerable Groups in Jamaica," *UNESCO Knowledge Series: Inclusive COVID-19 Recovery in Caribbean SIDS*. (June 2021).



In order to rebalance the existing socio-economic paradigm in the Caribbean, it is essential to have those most negatively impacted represented when policies are framed in order to build back better and more inclusively. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in collaboration with the University of the West Indies (UWI) modelled this inclusive paradigm in three virtual Dialogue Sessions, held between August and November 2021, to discuss the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Caribbean SIDS. The sessions were organised around the theme "Amplifying the Voice of Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS): Towards an Inclusive Recovery from COVID-19"; they aimed to highlight the unique elements of Caribbean recovery and contribute to greater efforts at inclusivity and sustainability in policy making.

The Dialogue sessions were entitled:

- **Dialogue 1:** Youthful Exuberance: Reengaging Youth in an Inclusive Recovery;
- **Dialogue 2:** What a Way to Make a Living: Reimagining Work-Life Systems;
- **Dialogue 3:** Faring Well, Well Fare: Reimagining Socio-Economic Recovery.

The interchanges converged around the complex social and economic challenges impacting the pace of recovery, inclusivity of renewal and success at resilience. While each session was distinct, they all



intersected around amplifying the voice of populations in situations of vulnerability and analysing the complex, underlying systemic inequalities to be addressed. Each session offered the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the diverse contextual realities and lived experiences of populations in vulnerable circumstances, gleaning data and rendering insight into changes in livelihood and well-being. Unveiling fault lines and inequalities in regional social and economic structures and identifying the unforeseen impact on systems of health, education and social protection were central subjects of interrogation and exposition.



## **A TOOL FOR INCLUSIVE RECOVERY**

This knowledge product takes account of the rich discussion, quality research and recommendations from the Dialogue Sessions. As a contribution to shaping the long-term policy agenda in response to inequalities and inclusive recovery in the Caribbean, the specific remit of this knowledge product is to design an actionable tool that sheds light on an inclusive post-COVID-19 recovery strategy. In so doing, it presents a model policy analysis tool, the use of which can better promote social inclusion through more carefully specifying key groups that require particular attention.<sup>15</sup>

15. UWI-UNESCO. (Re-)Connecting Research, Policy and Practice. Dialogue Sessions on Equitable Recovery in Caribbean SIDS. (UNESCO, 2021).



# INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS

in Vulnerable Situations

Photo: Adobe Stock

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the exclusion of disadvantaged groups and widened the gap between the vulnerable and not-so vulnerable. Individuals and groups in vulnerable situations, most notably persons with disabilities, women, the elderly, those marginally or informally employed, LGBTQI+ persons, indigenous peoples, and youth, have been disproportionately affected. Some persons are doubly or triply impacted due to their multiple and intersecting identities. As economic, social and cultural systems continue to wobble under the unparalleled burdens created by the pandemic, Caribbean societies have had little to no chance to facilitate a truly inclusive recovery as these groups in vulnerable situations continue to bear the brunt of the socioeconomic impact. To develop and maintain inclusive recovery,

women especially need to be seen as an important part of the labour force. Unlike the informal economy which poses risks to their livelihoods and health, the formal sector should incorporate policies within their organisations that allow women, who disproportionately perform multiple roles, to smoothly transition from physical work to working remotely.<sup>16</sup>



Photo: Freepik

The burden of unpaid care work on Caribbean women and girls has always been a concern; with the pandemic, schools and day-care facilities faced abrupt closures and with the increase in the numbers of persons falling ill, women's unpaid domestic and care work increased significantly.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, with the protracted pandemic lockdowns across many countries, the notion of "the home as an un-safe space" became even more apparent, as women and girls, especially, were more subject to domestic violence and other

forms of abuse. Overall, women's autonomy and flourishing have been undermined significantly.<sup>18</sup> Persons with disabilities are one of the groups facing exclusion from modern day Caribbean society, which tends to disable persons with particular impairments.<sup>19</sup> Businesses and organisations are often ill-equipped to provide access to facilities; public infrastructure is not usually built taking into consideration the needs of persons with disabilities, leaving these individuals excluded and their human rights in jeopardy.

16. Moore, "Leaving No One Behind".

17. Deborah McFee, "Inequality is Gendered: Reflecting on Caribbean Public Policy Realities," *UNESCO Knowledge Series: Inclusive COVID-19 Recovery in Caribbean SIDS*. (June 2021).

18. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *The recovery paradox in Latin America and the Caribbean Growth amid persisting structural problems: inequality, poverty and low investment and productivity*. Special Report No. 11. (United Nations, July 8, 2021).

19. UWI-UNESCO, *Training Manual for the Meaningful Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities*. (UNESCO, 2021a).



For any given policy, it is crucial to identify stakeholders who may be either unable or unwilling to participate in the policymaking process. Members of the LGBTQI+ community are too often subject to stigma and discrimination.<sup>20</sup> As a result, they may be either unable or unwilling to participate more fully in educational, employment, health and other opportunities. This places their flourishing at risk and violates their human rights.<sup>21</sup>

All groups are not fully or even equally protected by social safety nets; the informally employed, for example, are usually unable to access social security.<sup>22</sup> This highlights the larger economic constraints of Caribbean SIDS and their budgetary restrictions. It also highlights the shape of current welfare systems which are discriminatory against groups in vulnerable situations, for whom provisions for inclusion have not been effectively contemplated. Disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on the poor may accelerate the growth of income inequality, which is a scourge of the region. This gap has the potential to decrease if inclusive recovery is attained, however, it may take years to do so.

20. Moore, "Leaving No One Behind".

21. Anna Kasafi Perkins and R. Clive Landis, *Ethics Amidst COVID-19: A Brief Ethics Handbook for Caribbean Policymakers and Leaders*. (Smashwords Edition, 2020).

22. Perkins and Landis, *Ethics Amidst COVID-19*.



## ENGAGING THE SOCIAL & HUMAN SCIENCES

Engaging with the social and human sciences presents us with opportunities for response that place individual and communal human well-being at the centre of recovery efforts. This engages with the moral, socio-cultural and political perspectives that are at the heart of our human reality.<sup>23</sup> It centres matters of social justice that require participation of all groups, especially those more affected.<sup>24</sup> The pandemic is affecting the life decisions and the future of the upcoming generation; offering young people a role in the conversation about the future, their future, is the best hope for meaningful, long-term progress towards an inclusive recovery. Furthermore, such a response needs to be multifaceted and multilateral involving various and varying partnerships and collaborations, which build on and strengthen existing ones while opening up to new ones. It also needs to be creative, sustainable, inclusive and resilient (See Figure 1).

Sustainability plans towards a future by taking account of the present where current development paradigms, which are racialised and neo-colonial, continue to reproduce failure and inequality.<sup>25</sup> Outdated and ineffective definitions of important concepts such as work, wealth and poverty call for reworking.

23. Perkins and Landis, *Ethics Amidst COVID-19*.

24. Moore, "Leaving No One Behind".

25. Beverley Mullings, "Caliban, social reproduction and our future yet to come," *Geoforum* 118 (2021): 150–158.



Creativity has been on display among several groups, especially youth, some of whom effectively transition into the digital space and deploy their “native” experiences and skills to be more self-sufficient, even as some activities such as the cultural and creative industries, which have a strong youth presence, have been severely impacted. Creativity is needed also to engage in reimagining work-life systems, which are currently unbalanced and often reduce women’s autonomy. Digital tools can improve community engagement and assist in the collection, analysis and utilisation of data.<sup>26</sup>

26. Ans Irfan, Ankita Arora, Christopher Jackson, and Celina Valencia, “Inclusive Policymaking Tools: A COVID-19 Pandemic Case Study,” Journal of Science Policy & Governance. Policy Memo: Inclusive Policymaking Tools 17.1. (September 2020).

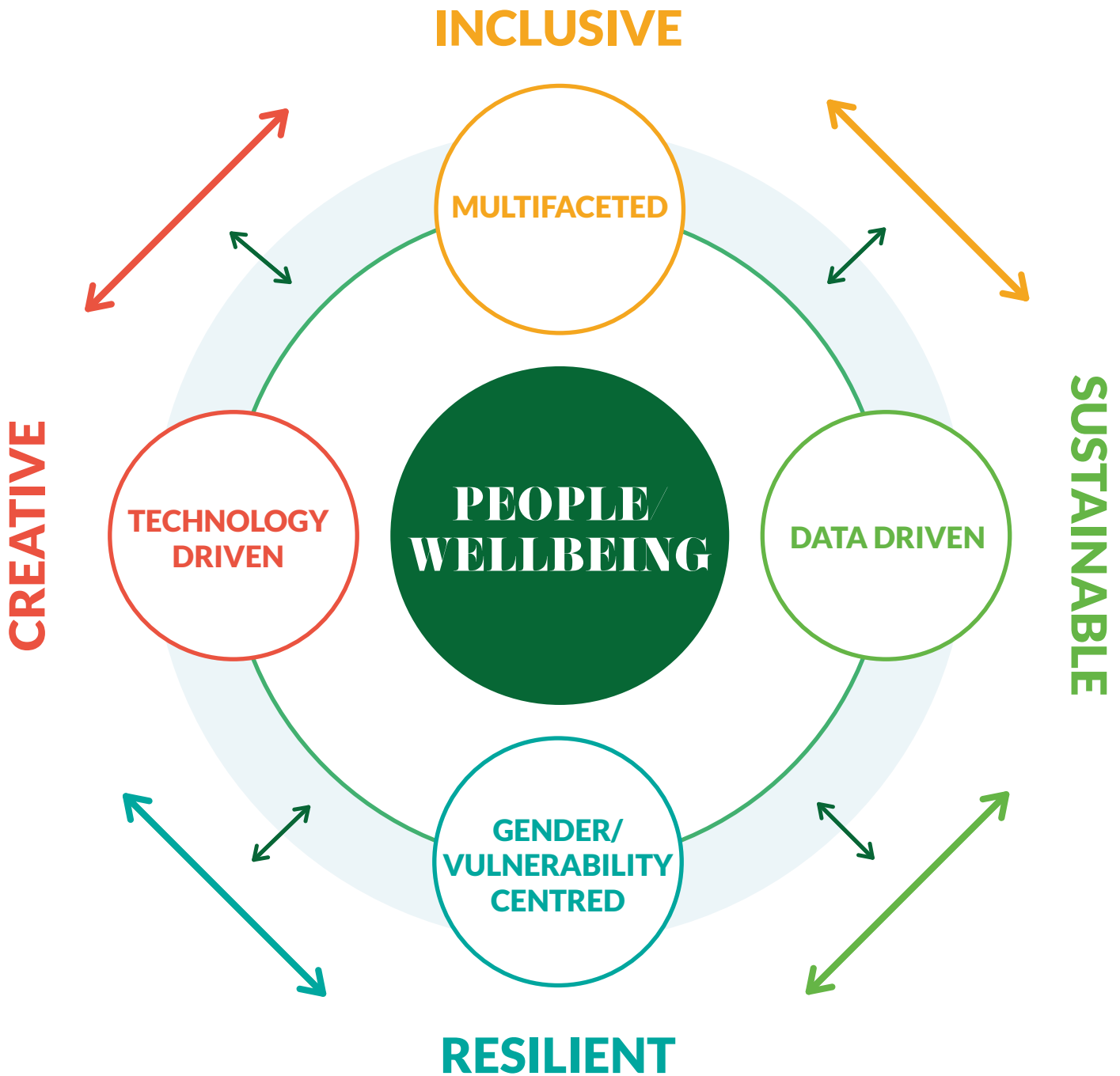


Figure 1: Engaging the Social and Human Sciences in an Equitable Recovery  
(Design: Kay Hinds-Thompson)



Caribbean Small Island Developing States are presented with opportunities engendered by the COVID-19 pandemic to re-engineer current ways of living. Caribbean futures can be reimagined in order to build a more peaceful, more resilient and inclusive environment than existed before the pandemic. Doing so would prevent a widening of the distance between some citizens and the state and among various citizens. This requires swift and effective public policy action, undergirded by the social and human sciences, as noted above, building on the best of who Caribbean people are, including Critical Caribbean Development Thought. Central to this is partnership with the universities as leading knowledge producers, particularly The UWI with its regional mandate covering 16 Commonwealth countries, which continues to bring the voices of young people, who are their main stakeholders, into conversations. Additionally, as this UNESCO-UWI engagement demonstrates, The UWI “is a nexus for inclusive, intergenerational dialogue, collaboration among government and civil society, while conducting cutting-edge research to respond to challenges posed by global pandemics”.<sup>27</sup>

Policy mandates are a clear sign of government commitment to improve the lives and livelihoods of people. However, too often policy tools deployed are insufficient<sup>28</sup> or ineffective, for several reasons. Too often policies are framed but never implemented or even assessed. Notably, “the level and nature of visibility to the public policy process is an important determinant of who are able to capitalize on the gains of public policy decisions”.<sup>29</sup> Top down approaches to policy design and implementation that prescribe but do not engage stakeholders meaningfully fail time and again. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the existing inconsistencies within data gathering, analysis, policy making and the implementation of said policy in Caribbean SIDS. Policy needs to encompass the tenets of sustainability, resilience, creativity and inclusion for development. To enhance the livelihoods of individuals, policy needs to be multifaceted, data and technology-driven and gender and vulnerability-centred. Caribbean SIDS have the potential to accurately collect, assess and analyse data, however, their processes to do so must change. With new or updated processes, Caribbean SIDS have the ability to bridge the gap and leave no individual behind.

27. UWI-UNESCO, *(Re-)Connecting Research, Policy and Practice*.

28. Irfan et al., “Inclusive Policymaking Tools”.

29. ECLAC, *Political and social compacts for equality*.

# AN ETHICAL POLICY TOOL TO FURTHER AN INCLUSIVE RECOVERY

The model for assessment of social protection using the Core Diagnostic Instrument (CDI) from Inter-agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA) points to potential elements for the framing of a model for policy design and implementation towards an inclusive recovery for the Caribbean. Henry-Lee (2021) amplifies the ten-point CDI by including climate responsiveness to take account of the peculiarities of the vulnerabilities of Caribbean SIDS (See Figure 2 below).

DESIGN CRITERIA <sup>1</sup>	IMPLEMENTATION STATUS	ASSESSMENT STATUS
<p><b><i>Inclusiveness/Intersectionality</i></b> (Leaves no one behind while having a particular focus on persons in vulnerable circumstances who often experience intersecting vulnerabilities.)</p>		
<p><b><i>Adequacy of benefits</i></b> (Provides regular and predictable benefits and high quality services that meet the needs of the population by contributing to poverty reduction, income security, access to health services, etc.)</p>		
<p><b><i>Appropriateness</i></b> (Ensures that the social protection needs of the population are fulfilled optimally overtime, based on policy with clear and realistic targets and timeframe taking account relevant institutional and financing capacity.)</p>		
<p><b><i>Respect for rights and dignity</i></b> (Ensures design, delivery and monitoring of programmes and benefits are in line with human rights of beneficiaries while protecting their personal data.)</p>		
<p><b><i>Governance &amp; institutional capacity</i></b> (Displays clear internal rules, regulations, reporting mechanisms, and operating procedures which specify the relationships, roles, and responsibilities of bodies and actors involved in programmes.)</p>		
<p><b><i>Financial and fiscal stability</i></b> (Allocates financial resources aligned with programme outcomes, demographics, and development capacity such that contributions reflect beneficiaries' ability.)</p>		
<p><b><i>Coherence and integration</i></b> (Ensures existing programmes and benefits complement each other with institutional arrangements that promote coordination and integrated frameworks across entities designing, delivering and monitoring programmes.)</p>		
<p><b><i>Responsiveness</i></b> (Displays flexibility to grow and adapt programmes in light of changing needs.)</p>		
<p><b><i>Cost effectiveness</i></b> (Implements programmes with the minimum resources required to achieve the desired impact and reduce the cost of access.)</p>		
<p><b><i>Incentive compatibility</i></b> (Creates incentives that promote positive changes in the behaviour of households, individuals, employers, etc. which offset disincentives to work, save and contribute.)</p>		
<p><b><i>Climate responsiveness</i></b> (Ensures that the impact of climate change and efforts at building resilience are built into the programme and benefits.)</p>		

\*Figure 2: A Model for Ethical Policy Design, Implementation and Assessment (MEPDIA) Source: Henry-Lee 2021 based on <https://ispatools.org/tools/ispa-codi-brochure.pdf>

\* Inter Agency Social Protection Assessment. CODI: Core Diagnostic Instrument: "What Matters" Guidance Note (ND). <https://ispatools.org/core-diagnostic-instrument/> for a deeper description of each criterion.



Historically, public policy in our region has been a persistent driver of inequity and inequality, being products of colonial and postcolonial blind spots and erasures”.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, to maximize positive policy outcomes across all social groups and timeframes, the evidence-based underpinning of public policies must be expanded and incorporate an inclusiveness/intersectionality framework in the policymaking process. “To achieve transformative social change and eliminate social inequities, it is equally important to ensure that policies are inclusive and represent the communities’ views, values, and needs in an equitable way”.<sup>31</sup> This requires targeted and sustained efforts to reach out to groups and individuals whose experiences, expectations and needs are not sufficiently incorporated in the process. Incentivizing participation may be necessary “to ensure their views, unique set of needs, and challenges are reflected in the final policy”.<sup>32</sup>

Such an inclusive and intersectional process also benefits policymaking and implementing entities, leading to better decisions, policy outcomes, and a more just society.<sup>33</sup> The flipside of this is to ensure that policy proposals include processes for deliberate efforts to assess and account for their impacts and unintended consequences on the persons and communities who experience vulnerabilities, particularly those with intersecting vulnerabilities.

The Model for Ethical Policy Design, Implementation and Assessment (MEPDIA) can serve as a means of bridging the existing divide between academia/research and policy. It takes account of the interface between current research in policy design and assessment, and stakeholders. A basic template, it can be usefully deployed by policy makers at each stage of policy-making – problem identification, design, implementation and monitoring, and assessment of effectiveness. Central to its effectiveness is accountability to stakeholders.

30. McFee, “Inequality is Gendered”.

31. Irfan et al., “Inclusive Policymaking Tools”.

32. Irfan et al., “Inclusive Policymaking Tools”.

33. Irfan et al., “Inclusive Policymaking Tools”.





The COVID-19 pandemic has had and continues to have a profound effect on life in the Caribbean. The pandemic has been disruptive, diminishing, disproportionate and deepening, giving these societies little to no chance to facilitate a truly inclusive recovery. Lives and livelihoods have been disrupted. Existing gaps among individuals, groups, and nations have been deepened. Indeed, the commitment made by Caribbean SIDS to reduce inequalities, namely by adapting Agenda 2030 to national policy, has been significantly derailed by the pandemic.

Nonetheless, the pandemic presents an opportunity to rebuild Caribbean societies in a more inclusive fashion. The critical role to be played by universities in the Caribbean, working in partnership with governments, multilateral development agencies, the private sector and civil society, to drive this process cannot be over-emphasized.

**As the future of global universities unfolds, Caribbean universities that were established primarily as developmental universities to contribute to strengthening democracy in the post-independent period, shall remain true to their mission, carrying forward the ethos of Caribbean society. No doubt this will entail reinventing the academe as a more agile and effective institution to better serve the evolving needs of the workforce and wider society. It will also involve harnessing the university's collective disruptive thinking to produce a shift in regional and global development paradigms for a more just and sustainable future for all.<sup>34</sup>**

34. Hilary Beckles and Stacy Richards-Kennedy, "Accelerating the Future into the Present: Re-imagining Higher Education in the Caribbean". In *The Promise of Higher Education: Essays in Honour of 70 Years of IAU*, edited by Hilligje van't Land, Andreas Corcoran and Diana-Camelia Iancu. (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2021).

Furthermore, policy design, implementation and assessment must be operationalized in ways that do not deepen existing social inequities. The proposed model (Figure 2, above) is a tool that supports the design, operationalizing and assessment of policy while providing data on the outcomes of the current policy response and generating evidence to inform future pandemics.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This tool is the result of extensive discussions and was made possible thanks to the invaluable collaboration of experts, who have shared their knowledge during the Dialogue Sessions on Equitable Recovery from COVID-19, which were organized by UNESCO and The University of the West Indies throughout 2021.

The team would like to express their gratitude to Saadia Sanchez-Vegas, PhD, Director and Representative of the UNESCO Cluster Office for the Caribbean and Prof. Landis, Pro Vice Chancellor and Principal of The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus in Barbados for their outstanding commitment and leadership to equitable recovery in Caribbean Small Island Developing States grounded on human rights. The team would also like to thank the following people whose contributions were highly relevant in shaping the tool: Sandra Mclean, Melanie Callender-Forde, Kenisha Chase, Dale James and Kevin Manning.



**unesco**