

# UN WOMEN MCO CARIBBEAN

  
GENERATION EQUALITY



**STRATEGIC NOTE 2022-2026**

## UN Women Caribbean Multi-Country Office Strategic Note (2022 -2026)

### I. Context and Situational Analysis:

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face unique vulnerabilities that significantly challenge the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and hinder gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE). There are, however, still opportunities for resilience-building that can propel their progress and achievements. Caribbean SIDS are identified as middle-high income countries based on GDP considerations alone, while being heavily indebted. This often leads to a lack of adequate and appropriate financing options for the 22 SIDS that the MCO serves across 6 UNCTs. Seventy per cent of the MCO Caribbean's past programmes were in joint programmes covering 9 countries in the region and the 6 UNCTs.

The Common Multi-Country Analysis (CMCA) analysis identified challenges and opportunities for the development of innovative shared solutions for the MCO Caribbean's 22 English- and Dutch-speaking independent Caribbean countries and overseas territories (OT). These 22 SIDS will be included in the Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (MSDCF) 2022-2026. The CMCA identified long-term growth depressed for over a decade, limited fiscal space because of high debt service payments, regressive tax policies, lack of economic diversification, declining Official Development Assistance (ODA) and reduced foreign direct investment as key challenges faced by the region. These challenges were exacerbated by climate change (manifested in rising sea levels, increased temperatures, and persistent drought) and inadequate socio-economic policies which result in deficient food systems, high food import bills, insufficient health investment and a lack of strategic and quality investment in education to modernize the curricula and close the digital divide.

The region experiences significant levels of inequalities, typical of postcolonial spaces. The grounds for inequality and exclusion are linked to age (with children and elderly being most vulnerable to poverty), place of residence (people living in rural areas, living in remote/hinterland areas or persons living in underserved urban areas), health status (PLWHIV), a minority or marginalized status (PWD, migrants, indigenous, refugees, prisoners and ex-prisoners) sex and gender (women, adolescent girls, young boys, and the LGBTQI+ community). GEWE remain a challenge in the Caribbean region, with gender stereotypes prescribing women's role and place across the countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates Caribbean SIDS' vulnerability, due to their dependence on tourism, low resilience and limited financial reserves. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), across 12 countries in the Caribbean, tourism directly and indirectly accounts for 30.3% of GDP and 42.8% of employment. With the fall off in the industry due to COVID-19, SIDS have felt the full impact of the crisis, and limited access to vaccines means that impacts are projected to be felt for many years.

Global trends of vertical and horizontal labour force segregation see women overrepresented in lower-paying jobs (e.g. domestic workers or the care economy) and under-represented in higher growth sectors and public leadership positions. In SIDS, women are concentrated in tourism and tourism-related sectors, and represent the minority in decision-making spaces, resulting in the pandemic causing significant insecurity for women. Across seven Caribbean countries women comprise 61% of tourism workers; this sector accounts for an

average of 17% of women's total employment across nine Caribbean countries<sup>[1]</sup><sup>1</sup>. Given the small size of SIDS markets and their large external dependency this has made economic resilience, for entire countries and women specifically, a huge challenge. With COVID travel restrictions and the fall off in tourism, women therefore experienced greater job losses throughout the pandemic.

In addition, to a loss of sustainable livelihood opportunities women are bearing an increased burden of unpaid care work. Across the Caribbean, twice as many women than men reported increases in home schooling, cooking and cleaning, and almost twice as many women reported more time spent entertaining children than men (IDB, 2020). Women's disproportionate care burden (in and out of crises) poses significant obstacles to their economic empowerment and wellbeing; it contributes to the feminization of poverty in SIDS and hinders gender equality gains. Compounded by a lack of sufficient gender-and-shock-responsive social protections and safety nets, more women and their families are at risk of slipping through the cracks.

Most countries in the region struggle with high levels of violent crime; an increasing number of countries are passing legislation strengthening state powers of arrest and detention. The Caribbean region has been noted to be one of the most violent globally. Across the region, the justice system faces significant case backlogs that hinder judicial due process and there are reports of improper police conduct during investigations. Prisons and detention centres fall below international standards, with poor rehabilitation opportunities and many incarcerated women are unable to access essential reproductive health products. Also, while all CARICOM countries have ratified the key human rights frameworks the CMCA found that most CMCA countries do not have legislation that sufficiently reflects the social, cultural, and economic rights espoused in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights nor the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Though direct links are not yet clearly understood, high levels of social violence and the proliferation of small arms exacerbate the climate in which women and girls are even more vulnerable to violence and sexual assault. Violence against women and girls has been a stubborn barrier to achieving the SDGs globally, and the Caribbean has been no exception. Data is not reliable across all manifestations of gender inequality, but where data exists it paints a troubling picture. Three Caribbean countries experience some of the highest global rates of sexual assaults. Around 39% of partnered women have experienced Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in Jamaica and Grenada. The pandemic, with increased financial and psycho-social strains and movement restrictions that trapped women at home with their abusers, worsened these trends. Trinidad and Tobago saw a 149% increase in domestic violence police reports in June 2020 and Anguilla saw a 125% increase in reports for March 2020. VAWG has direct economic costs and data from the prevalence surveys demonstrates the impact intimate partner violence has on the normalisation of violence in the lives of children who experience it and their probability of becoming victims and/or perpetrators of intimate partner violence themselves. Trinidad and Tobago saw a 149% increase in domestic violence police reports in June 2020 and Anguilla saw a 125% increase in reports for March 2020. The EU-UN Spotlight Initiative has built on work UN Women has implemented for the past two decades to strengthen state accountability and community response to gender-based violence. The Spotlight Initiative focuses on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) within the context of family violence and is contributing to increased knowledge on the lifecycle of violence and strategies

that work within the SIDS context. The Spotlight Initiative also addresses legislative and policy frameworks, based on evidence and in line with international human rights standard.

Achieving gender equality in SIDS demands a strategic, gender-responsive and SIDS-appropriate approach that transforms their vulnerabilities into tools of resilience, innovation, and equality. Achieving gender equality is a prerequisite and catalyst for achieving all the SDGs. The CMCA notes that all Caribbean countries need to take urgent action to get back on track to achieving the SDGs. The initial key issues highlighted as common are lack of data and statistics, the economy, climate emergency; corruption; human capital development; food security; citizen security; inequality; and clean and cheap energy. Opportunities from the regional assessment for the CMCA to tackle these development challenges include the identification of financial resources to support SDG progress including finance for development and partnerships; data collection and statistics and knowledge production to inform policy and monitoring the SDGs; development of human capital and institutional capacity building; climate change adaptation and natural hazards resilience; economic integration and diversification, including green, blue and orange economies' initiatives and mainstreaming of vulnerable groups at risk of being left behind. These initiatives are important, as highlighted in the MSDCF, People-centred SDGs (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) are likely to have taken a particular hit from COVID-19 and require recalibration. Additionally, throughout the Caribbean, the SDGs related to Planet (12, 13, 14, 15) remain under serious threat and are generally not improving.

As the UN entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women, UN Women has a triple mandate of normative, operational/programmatic and coordination to ensure the UN, governments, and civil society effectively mainstream gender to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. For over 20 years, UN Women has supported Caribbean SIDS by creating opportunities for women to contribute to the development of standards at the global, regional and local levels. UN Women has worked with civil society, regional bodies, and governments, to inform and strengthen laws, policies, programmes, and services to protect, respect and fulfil state obligations to global gender equality norms and commitments specified in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), CEDAW, and the SDGs. The UN Women MCO supports the Human Rights Based Approach and LNOB framework through continued capacity building of various stakeholders, including gender machineries, CSOs and parliamentarians. The MCO also supports members in the implementation of intergovernmental agreements and instruments such as the SAMOA Pathway, and the CARICOM Strategic Plan for e.g.. As it relates to the SDGS, the CMCA notes that data collection, statistics, and knowledge production for monitoring the SDGs is one of main challenges faced. The MSDCF also illustrates that data gaps within the region are extensive and investment in research limited. UN Women MCO Caribbean has collaborated with the CARICOM Secretariat to develop standards on Gender Statistics and support capacity strengthening across national statistics offices on VAWG statistics and on measuring unpaid care and domestic work. UN Women MCO has also led gender social protection programming for over ten years piloting ways to enhance services of VAW survivors through the social protection framework; the MCO provided direct support to MSMEs in rural communities owned by the most marginalized women. The MCO Caribbean has also worked with UNDP, WFP and CDEMA to strengthen government and CSOs systems to deliver on gender responsive climate change and disaster resilience. A recent evaluation of the MCO Caribbean 2017 -2021 Strategic Note highlighted the efficacy of UN Women's work on the normative agenda, work to end violence against women and girls, economic empowerment and data and statistics.

The MCO Caribbean Strategic Note 2022 -2026 builds on these experiences and is in direct alignment with the MSDCF.

## **II. Lessons Learned**

The MCO Caribbean Strategic Note 2017 -2021 Evaluation identified clear lessons learned across UN Women's triple mandate. The interconnection of the triple mandate priorities are unique for MCOs. MCOs are expected to support sub-regional institution coordination as well as operationalisation of programmes in multiple countries. While the MCO was found to be very effective at the normative (over 80% respondents agree and strongly agree) work at the sub-regional or regional level, reduced presence and capacities hinder effective operationalisation and thus impact of this work. The challenge of effective presence is a concern for the MCO Caribbean and the MCO Fiji. As a result, both offices supported the drafting of the agency SIDS strategy which addresses structure and programming. The MCO Caribbean has made no-cost shifts to IB and raised sufficient funds to ensure the required presence and capacities are in place for consistent tailored support to countries.

While almost 80% of all stakeholders surveyed found the MCO Caribbean to have a clear vision on the overall GEWE work, the work on EVAW was by far considered the most relevant area of work, followed by its normative work and work on data and statistics. The MCO Caribbean will continue to build on the EVAW work especially the results from the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, expanding the focus from responses to and prevention of violence experienced in private spaces and intimate relationships, to include violence experienced in public spaces such as sexual assault and trafficking in persons. Addressing VAW and economic inequality (unpaid care work as well as lack of formal economic opportunities) within the COVID-19 context will also be critical for countries to build forward equal. Evidence is indicating that this will require mainstreaming of climate and disaster resilience and digitization across all programme areas to ensure sustainability.

The benefits of interagency work have been undeniable. A key lesson for the MCO Caribbean in coordination has been leading where relevant in joint programming and providing general support in others. The MCO will continue to work with UN partners, regional intergovernmental institutions, governments and civil society partners to ensure efficacy and sustainability of initiatives. This will include supporting the strengthening of NGMs, without which the viability of GEWE is jeopardized. Building on the *'impressive and catalytic results'* related to the production of relevant data and statistics, UN Women will continue to support duty bearers in the analysis and application and advocacy for gender statistics. The MCO will continue to integrate work on gender statistics and Leadership and Governance across all programme areas given the high level of appreciation stakeholders have of the work; with evidence suggesting results achieved were not only valued, but also proved to be sustainable.

Financial sustainability has affected results and so the MCO Caribbean has also developed a programme of work on innovative financing for gender equality.

The MCO has also noted the importance of leveraging communications and M&E for advocacy. The recommendations from the communications strategy review have been adopted and will continue to be implemented to support country-level engagement where possible.

### **III. Proposed Programme**

The 2022 -2026 programme was developed in consultation with government, CSO and development partners. Consultations were held with NGMs and CSOs and joint consultations presenting the SN were held with UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA across the region. The new programme builds on the work of the 2017-2021 SN and will thus continue to be implemented using a Human Rights Based Approach, and ensure that no one is left behind. The programme will focus on the Normative Framework (Proposed Outcome 1), Women's Economic Empowerment (Proposed Outcomes 2 and 3), Ending Violence against Women and Girls (Proposed Outcome 4) and Climate Change and Disaster Risk Resilience (Proposed Outcome 5). All the Outcomes like the SDGs are interconnected and interrelated. The MCO will focus on *Governance and Participation in Public Life* across all Outcome Areas and *Peace and Security* within the context of Outcomes 4 and 5.

Specific programme areas will be implemented with the MCO in the Pacific, Country offices in Latin America and globally where relevant. The programme on Race and Gender Based Discrimination will for example, be implemented with the South Africa Country Programme.

85% of the MCO Caribbean programmes will be implemented via joint programmes with sister UN agencies. The programmes will be implemented both at the regional and multi-country level.

TOC: The Strategic Notes seeks to address the constraints that limits women's empowerment and gender equality in the Caribbean, especially for those most left behind.

Causes: There are at least four binding constraints impacting the region's capacity to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment: 1. Stubborn harmful cultural and behavioural norms and practices, 2. Lack of equal access to resources and economic opportunities for women and those in lower socio-economic classes 3. Increasing levels of violence including GBV and lack of effective management of these cases and 4. Lack of effective and resourced coordination mechanisms (NGMs and CSOs), sex disaggregated data and gender analysis to make the case for, develop and implement gender responsive policies.

IF the MCO Caribbean has the staffing and resources required to effectively deliver on and demonstrate its comparative advantage within the UN system, to development partners, governments and CSOs THEN the MCO will be able to have additional resources and the credibility to:

- Strengthen capacity within the UN System, NGMs, CSOs and the private sector to collect and use gender statistics to develop, implement and monitor gender responsive policy and legislation in citizen security, economic resilience and climate and disaster risk resilience;
- Strengthen the capacity of regional and national duty bearers, especially those within parliament, the justice system and private sector to contribute to an enabling environment for gender equality and women's empowerment;
- Engage the creative and cultural industries to effectively challenge harmful gender stereotypes, cultural and behavioural norms; and
- Increase financing for gender equality and women's empowerment in the region.

IF this is achieved, THEN there will be legislation and policy in line with international standards to promote gender equality, a gender responsive business ecosystem in which women-owned MSMEs are well positioned

to access capital and increase the scale of their business, women and men in the region reporting improved management of GBV cases and a shift in harmful behaviours and practices, and governments prioritizing and financing gender responsive social protection measures such as subsidized childcare.

**Proposed Outcome 1:** Regional institutions, national governments and civil society in CARICOM generate, analyse, publicise and utilise gender statistics to design and adopt laws, systems and policies to eliminate discrimination, address structural inequalities and promote the adoption of attitudes, norms and practices that advance gender equality and women's empowerment in the Caribbean.

Theory of Change for Outcome 1: IF Caribbean Governments and civil society have increased skills and access to reliable gender statistics to develop, advocate for, implement and monitor gender responsive programmes and policies, THEN Caribbean countries will experience economic resilience, safety and social cohesion in order to build forward equally.

(For full list of indicators per output and outcome, please see Annexes.)

**Proposed Output 1.1.** Improved capacity of the UN, regional and national systems to produce and analyse gender statistics to measure progress on the SDGs.

**Proposed Output 1.2.** Strengthened capacity of and collaboration between NGMs and CSOs (including FBOs) to mainstream gender throughout regional and national policies and programmes.

**Proposed Output 1.3.** Enhanced capacities among the media, sports and members of the creative and cultural industries and the women's movement in CARICOM to report and promote positive social norms, that promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

Projects implemented under Outcome 1 will include co-programming with UNESCO on the Race and Gender Based discrimination project for example. A proposed flagship project of this Outcome will be the development of a creative programme such as the Suga programme in the African region, to promote positive social norms and gender relations. This would be a narrative content programme that would be shared on radio, television and online (YouTube and via clips on other social media channels).

Flagship outputs will include at least one gender machinery being elevated from a bureau to an agency, VAW prevalence data available for at least 9 Caribbean countries [\[1\]](#)<sup>2</sup> in total (aligned to initiatives under outcome 3), unpaid care data available (aligned to initiatives under outcome 2.2) for at least 4 CARICOM countries [\[2\]](#)<sup>3</sup>.

**Outcome 1 is aligned to the MSDF and UN Women Strategic Plan Outcomes:**

MSDCF Outcome 3: National governments and regional institutions use relevant data to design and adopt laws and policies to eliminate discrimination, address structural inequalities and ensure the advancement of those at risk of being left furthest behind.



MSDCF Outcome 8: People in the Caribbean and communities are engaged in building and maintaining safer, fairer, more inclusive, and equitable societies.

UN Women systemic outcome: A comprehensive and dynamic set of global norms and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is strengthened and translated into gender-responsive laws, policies, and institutions.

UN Women systemic outcome: More women and girls exercise their voice, agency and leadership, including through an enabling environment that supports women's and youth organizations.

UN Women systemic outcome: The UN System coherently and systematically contributes to progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

UN Women Desired systemic outcome: Gender statistics, sex-disaggregated data, and knowledge are produced, analysed and used to inform policymaking, advocacy and accountability for delivering gender equality and women's empowerment results.

UN Women systemic outcome: More men and boys, and women and girls, adopt attitudes, norms and practices that advance gender equality and women's empowerment, including those that promote positive social norms.

**Proposed Outcome 2:** More productive and competitive business ecosystems designed to improve people's standards of living (MSDCF Outcome 1)

Theory of Change for Outcome 2: IF Caribbean governments, private sector organizations and civil society benefit from increased financing for gender equality, THEN Caribbean countries will experience economic resilience, safety and social cohesion in order to build forward equally.

**Proposed Output 2.1.1** Strengthened competitiveness and resilience among MSMEs owned by marginalised groups (especially those in the agri-business, energy, care, orange and silver economies).

**Proposed Output 2.1.2.** Increased funds and capacities among FIs to contribute to gender-responsive innovative financing.

**Proposed Output 2.1.3.** Enhanced capacities across the private sector and governments to create an enabling environment for gender equality and women's empowerment, including but not limited to gender responsive procurement policies.

Flagship outputs will include increased opportunities for financing through a Private Public Regional Fund for Gender Equality which will benefit businesses owned by women or businesses engaging in work to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as result in more competitive women owned MSMEs as demonstrated by their successful engagement in innovative financing options. Additional outputs will include a mentorship and internship programme established with regional Universities and Funds to increase the number of women Fund Managers and Business Case programmes in schools. A final key output will include gender responsive procurement policies being adopted by at least one CARICOM government (Jamaica).

### **Aligned MSDCF and UN Women Strategic Plan Outcomes:**

MSDCF Outcome 2: The Caribbean has fully transitioned to a more diversified and sustainable economy that supports inclusive and resilient economic growth.

UN Women Desired systemic outcome: Public and private financing advance gender equality through gender-responsive financing policies, strategies and instruments.

**Proposed Outcome 2.2:** People in the Caribbean equitably access and utilize universal, quality and shock-responsive, social protection, education, health and care services. (Outcome 4)

**Theory of Change for Outcome 2.2:** IF people in the Caribbean enjoy equitable access to universal, quality, gender-responsive and shock-responsive social protection, education, health and care services, THEN Caribbean countries will experience economic resilience, safety and social cohesion in order to build forward equally.

**Proposed Output 2.2.1.** Improved and integrated government and CSO programmes to address unpaid care work including subsidized child and elder-care systems among CARICOM countries.

**Proposed Output 2.2.2.** Increased integration of social protection programmes into referral pathways for VAW survivors/victims.

**Proposed Output 2.2.3.** Improved protection systems for workers in the paid care economy [i.e., domestic workers, day care and elder care workers]

The key project implemented to achieve Outcome 3 will be the Government of Canada proposed CAD 10million project to Build Back Equal from COVID 19 in four countries. Flagship outputs will include improved policies and programming for subsidized childcare and increased affordable housing for survivors/victims of GBV.

### **Aligned MSDCF and UN Women Strategic Plan Outcomes:**

UN Women Desired systemic outcome: More women and girls have equitable access to high-quality public goods, services, and resources that are responsive to their needs.

The initiatives implemented under Outcome 3.2 will build on the foundational work of the *Strengthening State Accountability and Community Action to End GBV* project as well as the Spotlight Initiative. The key project implemented to achieve Outcomes 3 and 4 will be the *Resilient, Inclusive, Smart and Safe SIDS* Programme.

Through this output the MCO will contribute to strengthened knowledge and evidence-based responses on the ways in which gender-based violence is interlinked with other forms of violence. Additionally, the MCO Caribbean will build on the better practices of the last strategic note to work across programmatic silos, noting economic disempowerment can be a significant contributing factor in EAW cases.

Flagship outputs will include improved public spaces (refurbished spaces, increased lighting, and beautified

spaces e.g. Water Lane in Downtown Kingston) to prevent GBV in public spaces in hot spot areas in at least three CARICOM countries (The Bahamas, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago), standardised digitised referral pathways for survivors/victims of GBV and sustained uptake of Partnership for Peace (Rehabilitation programme for men who are first time batterers) across the region. A key flagship output will also include standardised training for duty bearers regarding Trafficking in Persons (TIPs) and enhanced results on TIPs in at least 2 CARICOM countries (T&T and Jamaica).

**Proposed Outcome 3.2-** Regional and national laws, policies, systems and institutions improve access to justice and promote peace, social cohesion and security (MSDCF Outcome 7).

**Theory of Change for Outcome 3.2:** IF Caribbean women and men enjoy safe, accessible and secure public and private spaces, THEN Caribbean countries will experience economic resilience, safety and social cohesion in order to build forward equally.

**Proposed Output 3.2.1** Spotlight OUTCOME 1: Legislative and policy frameworks, based on evidence and in line with international human rights standards, on all forms of violence against women and girls and harmful practices are in place and translated into plans.

**Proposed Output 3.2.2** Spotlight OUTCOME 2: National and sub-national systems and institutions plan, fund and deliver evidence-based programmes that prevent and respond to violence against women and girls and harmful practices, including in other sectors.

**Proposed Output 3.2.3:** Gender inequitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours change at community and individual levels to prevent violence against women and girls and harmful practices (Merged with MCO Caribbean Output 3.1.1.- More communities, civil society organisations and state institutions use tools and community education and psycho-social support methodologies to prevent all forms of violence against women and girls).

**Proposed Output 3.2.4:** Spotlight OUTCOME 4: Women and girls who experience violence and harmful practices use available, accessible, acceptable, and quality essential services including for long term recovery from violence.

**Proposed Output 3.2.5:** Spotlight OUTCOME 5: Quality, disaggregated and globally comparable data on different forms of violence against women and girls and harmful practices, collected, analysed and used in line with international standards to inform laws, policies and programmes.

**Proposed Output 3.2.6** Spotlight OUTCOME 6: Women's rights groups, autonomous social movements and relevant CSOs, including those representing youth and groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination/marginalization, more effectively influence and advance progress on GEWE and ending VAW.

**Proposed Output 3.2.9:** Increased capacity among duty bearers (Justice, CSOs) to manage GBV (sexual abuse, IPV and Trafficking) cases [including cybercrimes] and promote women's empowerment.

**Proposed Output 3.2.10:** Improved accessibility and safety of public spaces for women and girls.

**Proposed Output 3.2.11** Strengthened skills among policymakers to develop GBV legislation and policy in line with international standards

**Proposed Output 3.2.12:** Increased efficiency of the VAW referral pathways in CARICOM countries.

**Aligned MSDCF and UN Women Strategic Plan Outcomes:**

MSDCF Outcome 6: Caribbean countries manage natural resources and ecosystems strengthening resilience and enhancing the prosperity of the people and communities that depend on them.

MSDCF Outcome 8: People in the Caribbean and communities are engaged in building and maintaining safer, fairer, more inclusive, and equitable societies.

**Proposed Outcome 4:** Caribbean people, communities, and institutions have enhanced their adaptive capacity for inclusive, gender-responsive Disaster Risk Management and climate change adaptation and mitigation. (MSDCF Outcome 5)

**Theory of Change for Outcome 4:** IF Caribbean people, communities and institutions enhance their adaptive capacity for inclusive, gender-responsive DRR and climate change adaptation and mitigation, THEN Caribbean countries will experience economic resilience, safety and social cohesion in order to build forward equally.

**Proposed Output 4.1.** Strengthened capacities among women-owned MSMEs to implement climate resilient and DRR better business practices.

**Proposed Output 4.2.** Enhanced capacities among NGMs, key sector agencies and CSOs to prepare, respond to and recover from natural hazards.