



Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean

LIMITED
LC/CAR/L.
19 July 2018
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MONTEVIDEO CONSENSUS ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN: A REVIEW OF THE PERIOD 2013 - 2018

This document has been reproduced without formal editing.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document provides a summary review and evaluation of the implementation of the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development five years on from its adoption in 2013. The Montevideo Consensus is the Latin America and Caribbean regional framework for the further implementation of the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (1994). It represents an ambitious commitment to address population and development issues through more than one hundred priority actions organized into nine thematic sections. This executive summary, and the document as a whole, is structured in line with these thematic sections.

A. FULL INTEGRATION OF POPULATION DYNAMICS INTO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WITH EQUALITY AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

In most Caribbean countries, there is no institution or unit specifically responsible for planning, coordination and monitoring of population and development matters. Jamaica is the country which has had the strongest institutional capacity dedicated to population and development issues. Where there is no single ministry or agency responsible for coordination of population and development matters, coordination depends on the cooperation of different ministries and other stakeholders. With respect to the integration of population dynamics into sustainable development planning, including sectoral policies, there is certainly an awareness and understanding of the most pressing population issues which require a public policy response: addressing population ageing and the burden of non-communicable diseases; achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health including the elimination of HIV; managing migration; urban and land-use planning among others issues. For example, 12 of 13 countries recognised that population ageing was a major concern and this was reflected in national development plans. Turning high-level development plans into sectoral plans, laws, regulations and programmes –and then implementing, administering and monitoring them– is a rather more challenging undertaking. It requires a capacity within government for evidence based policy making, statistics and public administration which small Caribbean governments find it relatively difficult to build and maintain. This lack of capacity is a serious constraint on the ability to governments to implement development plans, whether or not population concerns have been considered.

The eradication of poverty is a key commitment, in fact the first priority action, of the Montevideo Consensus. Relatively little is known about trends in poverty and inequality over the last five years since the Caribbean's country poverty assessment programme has been on hold during much of this period. It has now been relaunched as the Enhanced Country Poverty Assessment Programme although results are yet to be published. During the 1990s and 2000s, there was progress towards the eradication of extreme poverty (also referred to as indigence¹) across the Caribbean. Progress in the reduction of poverty² has been slower. This is not surprising since the calculation of national poverty lines generally³ takes account of increases in living standards in the respective countries, and so the poverty rates are a measure of relative poverty. With inequality remaining at a high level throughout the 1990s and 2000s, elevated levels of poverty were almost inevitable. The annual poverty estimates for Jamaica provide some indication of the impact of the Caribbean's poor economic performance over the last decade. Poverty in Jamaica in 2015 was 21 per cent compared to 10 per cent in 2007. The publication of data and analysis from the new round of Enhanced Country Poverty Assessments over the next few years should be used to inform poverty reduction strategies. Redistributive measures, human capital development, pro-poor growth and job creation all have a role to play.

¹ A household is deemed to be indigent if its expenditure is lower than the cost of the food that that would be necessary to satisfy minimum nutritional requirements. This is an indicator of extreme poverty with the calculation of the indigence line making no allowance for any expenditure on non-food items, for example on shelter, electricity, clothes or household goods.

² A household is deemed to be poor if its expenditure falls below the national poverty line. These poverty lines are calculated in such a way that the poverty estimates should be regarded as measures of relative rather than absolute poverty.

³ Jamaica, where unlike other countries poverty is measured annually, is an important exception in this regard. The poverty line for each year is obtained by uprating the estimated poverty line for 1989 using the Consumer Price Index.

B. RIGHTS, NEEDS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND REQUIREMENTS OF GIRLS, BOYS, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

The number of children aged 0-14 in the Caribbean has been declining since the early 1970s, and the number of youth aged 15-29 has been falling since the late 1980s. This is mainly due to falling fertility although migration also plays a role. Among 16 Caribbean countries, declines in the number of young people have been taking place, or are projected to take place, in all of them. This decline in the number of young people presents an opportunity to make real increases in investment per head in children and youth.

There are a number of critical social development challenges facing the Caribbean which impact especially hard on children and youth. Children and young people are more likely to be living in poverty than older adults. They are more likely to be victims of some form of violence, including sexual violence, than older adults. Youth are more likely to be unemployed than older adults while young women, particularly those living in poverty, are at greater risk of unintended pregnancies, HIV or other sexually transmitted infections.

The Montevideo Consensus calls for a 'guarantee' of 'a life free from poverty and violence' which, at present, is very far from being realized. Poverty reduction programmes need to address social protection for families with children, for example through child benefits, subsidized health care and other measures to enhance the wellbeing of children, such as investment in pre-school education. Child protection is an area that also needs further attention, and legislation related to corporal punishment should be reviewed.

In the area of adolescent sexual and reproductive health, while there is progress in the right direction, much remains to be done to further reduce unwanted teenage pregnancies, transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Special attention should also be given to the needs of LGBT youth, including repeal of discriminatory laws, strengthening laws to deal with homophobic and transphobic abuse and violence, training for service providers such as the police, educators and health service providers, and measures to address societal prejudices.

C. AGEING, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES

Population ageing affects all countries and overseas territories in the Caribbean although the process is more advanced in some countries than others. In territories such as Aruba, Curaçao, Guadeloupe, Martinique and the United States Virgin Islands, the ageing process is relatively advanced; in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago ageing is moderately advanced; while in Guyana, Belize, Suriname and Jamaica, ageing is less well advanced. However, all Caribbean countries will see their old age dependency ratios approximately double over the next thirty years, with important implications for public policy and households.

Since the adoption of the Montevideo Consensus in 2013, Caribbean member States have continued to develop and implement national policies on ageing and strengthen their programmes and services for older persons. Attention has focused to a large extent on income protection, health, and care services. These efforts have impacted positively on the wellbeing of older persons but more needs to be done to ensure that they are able to fully enjoy their human rights. Due to limited resources and capacity, implementation has been slow and significant gaps still exist between policy and practice.

The human rights-based approach has yet to be truly adopted. There is still a dispersion of measures to protect the rights of older persons at the national level, without considering the whole spectrum of human rights. Less attention has been paid, for example, to legal capacity, access to justice and rights to education and culture. Policies and programmes also need to consider more explicitly the heterogeneity of older persons: specific groups of older persons, including older women, older migrants, LGBT older persons, those belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, those living on the streets or those who are deprived of liberty. There is an absence of national mechanisms to enable older persons to seek redress when their rights have been violated.

D. UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES

There have been steady improvements in the sexual and reproductive health of the Caribbean population on most indicators although there is still much to do to achieve universal access to services. The adolescent birth rate in the Caribbean has declined faster than total fertility, falling by 34 per cent over the last two decades compared with the 22 per cent fall in total fertility. The promotion of family planning has made modern methods of contraception more easily available. However, there are large disparities in the rate of unintended pregnancies between different socioeconomic, educational, ethnic, age and racial groups in the Caribbean. With regard to HIV/AIDS, there has been significant progress over the last 10-15 years in reducing the number of AIDS-related deaths, mainly due to antiretroviral treatment. The elimination of vertical (mother to child) transmission of HIV is within sight. The record with regard to maternal mortality is a little more mixed with evidence of progress in some countries but not in others.

Further work is required to overcome institutional weaknesses as well as cultural and legal barriers which obstruct the provision of good-quality sexual and reproductive health services. Providers need to bear in mind the specific needs of men and women, adolescents and young people, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, migrants, older persons and persons with disabilities, and persons living in remote areas. Unsafe abortion should be eliminated and laws relating to the voluntary termination of pregnancy should be reconsidered in order to protect the lives and health of women and adolescent girls.

Achieving the 90–90–90 targets will depend on people being able to seek HIV testing and treatment without fear of being stigmatised either by their family, community, or by health service providers. Discrimination and discriminatory laws remain a more general problem restricting the free exercise of sexual rights, particularly the right to take decisions about sexual orientation and gender identity.

There has been a great deal of work to improve the provision of comprehensive sexuality education although more needs to be done to strengthen implementation. Similarly, there are initiatives to encourage pregnant girls and young mothers to remain in school but entrenched attitudes and written or unwritten rules still combine to result in a high number of drop outs or exclusions.

E. GENDER EQUALITY

There was some progress with regard strengthening the autonomy of women in decision-making and access to power in electoral systems. In May 2018, Mia Mottley became the first female Prime Minister of Barbados. The Government of Guyana has introduced a revised Local Government Act which requires candidate lists to contain a minimum number of women.⁴ However, the proportion of ministerial cabinet positions held by women is still less than 20 per cent in 11 out of 12 Caribbean countries and women represent less than 30 per cent of representatives elected in all national parliaments except those in Grenada, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. More countries should adopt temporary special measures, quotas or a parity system for political appointments.

Regarding the priority actions on promoting equality in the labour market and the recognition of the productive value of unpaid domestic work and care work as well as the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men in the care economy, relatively little progress has occurred in the Caribbean subregion with respect to the recognition of women's contribution to national economies and, gender stereotyping in the distribution of domestic tasks remains a cause of concern. Gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices, often reinforced by the lack of recognition of the value of their domestic and care work, still characterize the labour market. Policies for childcare and parental leave could encourage more men to share domestic work but only three countries in the Caribbean—the Bahamas, Dominica and the Cayman Islands— have policies on parental leave for both parents. Another trend in the region is the constant high levels of unemployment among women, in particular young women.

In relation to the priority measures of the Montevideo Consensus to eliminate violence against women, gender-based violence and promote new masculinities, Caribbean countries are in the process of

⁴ Guyana, CEDAW/C/GUY/9 (17 April 2018), para.69.

strengthening their normative and institutional frameworks, since the current ones are mainly focused on domestic violence without addressing all other forms of gender-based violence. There was a landmark achievement for girls in Trinidad and Tobago with the passing of an amendment to the Marriage Act which ended all forms of child marriage in the country.

Legal gaps still persist in terms of the definition of discrimination against women, including direct and indirect forms of discrimination, intersecting forms of discrimination, and effective enforcement mechanisms and sanctions. Caribbean countries must continue their efforts to address deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes and discriminatory stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men at all levels of society.

F. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND PROTECTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ALL MIGRANTS

Over the last five years, there has been significant progress in the level of international cooperation in migration in the Caribbean. The participation of Caribbean States in the adoption of the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action in 2014 led to the creation of the Caribbean Migration Consultations. These, together with the anticipated agreement of a United Nations Global Compact for Migration later this year, are welcome developments which will provide frameworks for dialogue and international cooperation on the issue of international migration.

The protection of refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants has been a focus of attention in the Caribbean Migration Consultations. Most countries have introduced legislation to address trafficking against persons although further work is required regionally and nationally to address the issue. Legislation on refugee protection and asylum is absent in many countries and matters relating to refugees and asylum seekers are handled with reference to policies or operational procedures which do not provide sufficient protection for the rights of migrants. Countries should consider the introduction of new legislation on the protection of refugees and asylum seekers. There is inadequate protection for the rights of migrants more generally, for example access to basic services in education and health is not generally guaranteed regardless of migration status.

There has been some decline in emigration over the last decade although outflows of migrants from the Caribbean remain at high levels. Based on World Bank estimates, remittances received by Caribbean countries were equivalent to 5.6 per cent of GDP in 2015 and have been at a roughly similar level since 2000. Remittances as a proportion of GDP vary from 17 per cent in Jamaica to 1 per cent in Trinidad and Tobago.

The management of skilled migration is an ongoing challenge with the continual loss of skills undermining progress in education, health and many other sectors. In addition to measures designed to offer more attractive careers to Caribbean nationals, consideration should also be given to the extent to which skilled immigration can mitigate to challenges posed by skilled emigration. In addition, several countries have implemented measures to begin to take advantage of the benefits of relations with diaspora communities, and these need to be further pursued.

G. TERRITORIAL INEQUALITY, SPATIAL MOBILITY AND VULNERABILITY

The Caribbean urban population is growing two to three times faster than the current average in the Latin America and Caribbean region as a whole although the situation in the subregion is very heterogeneous. Partly due to recognised challenges in the statistical definition of ‘urban’⁵ sectors and partly due to geographical and socioeconomic constraints, the Caribbean urban population varies widely from 100 percent in the Cayman Islands or Sint Maarten to less than 10 percent in Montserrat. Growth patterns are also diverse: new, more polycentric urban forms are expected in the Caribbean, different from the traditional mono-centric design of Caribbean cities and towns. The Caribbean urban shift is seeing the

⁵ See ECLAC (2017), *Subregional Action Plan for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda in the Caribbean: Prioritizing regional challenges and opportunities (2016-2036)*, ECLAC, MINURVI, UN-Habitat, p. 17.

emergence of new “city-regions” and “urban corridors”. Urban sprawl in the Caribbean will entail a doubling to a quintupling of total urban land area.⁶

If managed well, the Caribbean urban transition can bring important benefits; however, it will also increase public responsibilities in dealing with the pressures on already stressed urban infrastructure and public services. As Caribbean urban population and urban areas grow, unprepared and unplanned territories pose a threat to Caribbean development patterns. A new focus on land governance will be critical, including measures to address tenure security, public land management, housing policy, transportation, waste management, water safety and security, and an integrated coherent approach to urban services.

During the period under review, countries of the subregion instituted various measures to achieve the objectives associated with territorial inequality. They have made important achievements in terms of access to basic services. However, there is considerable weakness and institutional fragmentation both in policies and regulations, and in the provision of services.

Climate change impacts pose threats to countries’ resilience in respect of biodiversity, coastal protection, water and energy security, and food security among other areas. Hurricanes, like Irma, Jose and Maria in 2017, and tropical storms threaten the Caribbean with growing intensity. With high percentages of Caribbean populations living near the coast, many of them in low-lying areas, coastal floods, storm surges and inland flooding can also drive migration and displacement. Some countries have begun to consider the issue of internal migration and population location in the context of natural disaster prevention and mitigating the effects of climate change.

H. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES: INTERCULTURALISM AND RIGHTS

There are around 160,000 people that identify themselves as indigenous in the Caribbean which represents two per cent of the total population. The country with the highest proportion of indigenous peoples is Belize (17.4 per cent) with two main groups, the Garifuna and the Maya. Around half of the indigenous people of the Caribbean live in Guyana where they represent 10.5 per cent of the population. There are smaller proportions of indigenous peoples in Suriname, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Dominica, Saint Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Where data is available, it strongly suggests that indigenous peoples are much more likely to be living in poverty, suffering from material deprivation, a lack of basic services, or affected by other social inequalities. There is an urgent need to target poverty alleviation, education, health and employment programmes towards indigenous peoples and eliminate the social inequalities by which they are systematically disadvantaged.

Comparing the arrangements of the respective governments for governance of indigenous affairs, there is a notable contrast between Guyana and Dominica on the one hand and Belize and Suriname on the other. In the case of Guyana and Dominica, there are Ministries responsible for indigenous affairs which work with the representative institutions of indigenous peoples. In Belize and Suriname, there is no single ministry responsible for indigenous peoples’ affairs. In the case of both Belize and Suriname, indigenous peoples have had some success through recourse to either the Caribbean Court of Justice or the Inter-American Court of Human Rights but these court decisions need to be implemented in full.

The only a legally binding international instrument which is addressed directly to indigenous peoples is International Labour Organization Convention No. 169 on indigenous and tribal peoples (1989). Its various articles provide wide-ranging protections for indigenous peoples, their communities, institutions, practices, territory and the right of indigenous and tribal peoples to exercise control over their own development. Of the Caribbean countries with indigenous populations, only Dominica has ratified the convention (in 2002). Other countries should also ratify this convention.

⁶ McHardy and Donovan’s research has concluded that by 2050, the urban area of the Caribbean will include somewhere between three times the size of Barbados and the entire surface area of Trinidad and Tobago. McHardy, Pauline and Michael G. Donovan (2016), *The state of housing in six Caribbean countries*, Inter-American Development Bank.