



THE JOINT PROGRAMME IN UNIVERSAL ADAPTIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION

Sharing Innovative Experiences



Social Protection is a human right. Yet, according to the ILO, 4 billion people worldwide live without the peace of mind and security that it offers. The socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted glaring inequalities and deficiencies in social protection systems globally and in the Caribbean region. On the other hand, the pandemic has provided an opportunity for countries to pivot; to quickly rethink and reshape their social protection policies to effectively respond to the needs of their citizens in times of shocks. While many countries have instituted emergency or temporary measures, others are reengineering their social protection infrastructure in more permanent ways, ensuring universality and adaptability to future shocks.

The SDG-funded Joint Programme on Universal Adaptive Social Protection in the Eastern Caribbean (Joint Programme) is supporting Barbados, Saint Lucia and the OECS Commission's Human and Social Development cluster in experimenting with social innovation as a means of addressing socio-economic issues and strengthening response and overall resilience to shocks. While the interventions under the Joint Programme are not novel to social protection, they are unprecedented for the Eastern Caribbean. This article explores advancements in social protection in the Eastern Caribbean, initiated with the technical and financial support of the Joint Programme.

PROMOTING RESILIENCE AND ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN SAINT LUCIA



The achievement of gender equality by 2030 requires the deconstruction of the many barriers that curtail the rights of women and girls. One such barrier is the disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work borne by women, due to gender norms that assign them as primarily responsible for these activities. Global evidence confirms that this poses a serious constraint to paid employment and overall income security. Other structural barriers include violence against women and occupational sex segregation which has led to women working in sectors that attract lower earnings when compared to men.

To address these barriers, UN Women, a Participating U.N. Organization in the Joint Programme, has been piloting a programme with 25 women (single mothers) - beneficiaries of the national public assistance programme in Saint Lucia. Participants are being provided with psychosocial support and counselling and opportunities for technical and vocational skills training. More specifically, they have benefited from Productivity Enhancement Training to equip them to participate in the economy as small entrepreneurs or to insert themselves into the world of work. Practical skills such as bookkeeping, gardening, culinary arts, computing, and office administration were imparted. Additionally, soft skills such as self-management, communication, conflict resolution, the labour code, parenting, and decision-making were addressed. To allow the women more time to participate in the job and skills training, the pilot also provided childcare support in the form of cash transfers.

Already the pilot programme is generating evidence and insight into the intersectionality of the multiple factors hindering women's socio-economic empowerment. For example, initial assessments revealed that over 50% of the beneficiaries had experienced or are currently experiencing intimate partner violence. While violence against women was not a criterion in selecting the participants, this revelation enhances the awareness of violence against women as a major constraint to their resilience. The pilot is providing support to the women through counselling sessions (group and individual) with trained, experienced and certified professionals as well as providing life skills sessions to help them manage their finances, make smart choices with regard to food and nutrition, and sexual reproductive health, among others.



"The Covid-19 pandemic is a double crisis for the world's poorest people"

*- Antonio Guterres
UN Secretary General*

MODELLING THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON MONETARY POVERTY AND CHILD POVERTY IN SAINT LUCIA

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, twenty-five percent of Saint Lucians lived below the poverty line. This number is expected to double post COVID-19, due in part to loss of livelihoods and income resulting from containment measures such as the closure of borders, businesses, schools and movement restrictions.

In response, the Joint Programme is providing assistance to the government of Saint Lucia to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on household and child monetary and non-monetary poverty. This has been made possible through the utilization of an interactive microsimulation model, the first of its kind for Saint Lucia. The model allows for simulation of the impact of COVID-19 on monetary and multidimensional household/child poverty and the impact of different cash transfer options to reduce poverty or to at least return to the previous poverty rate.

PILOTING SHOCK RESPONSIVENESS IN SAINT LUCIA

Saint Lucia is highly vulnerable to climate change, natural disasters, and economic shocks. As natural disasters continue to increase in incidence and intensity, the vulnerability of the island is also expected to increase with an estimated cost of 12.1% of GDP by 2025 and as much as 24.5% by 2050. The Joint Programme is prioritizing shock-responsive social protection in Saint Lucia by combining a multi-dimensional analysis of vulnerability, disaster risk management and social protection procedures and tools, to increase the capacity of vulnerable groups for preparing and responding to natural and other shocks.

The World Food Programme, another partner organization under the Joint Programme is working with the Government of Saint Lucia to undertake a pilot on shock-responsive social protection to inform the country's adaptivity and the scalability of national social protection programmes to strengthen communities' resilience to natural disasters. The pilot will test operational procedures and tools to support household preparedness and facilitate the temporary expansion of social assistance programmes including targeting and registration, communications, delivery mechanisms, and feedback mechanisms. As Saint Lucia does not yet have a social registry, a vulnerability analysis is being undertaken to improve targeting of the affection population. Standard Operating Procedures and protocols are also being developed to support the activation and implementation of emergency preparedness and response actions.

STRENGTHENING THE LINKAGES BETWEEN SOCIAL PROTECTION AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT IN BARBADOS

Barbados is situated in what has been described as the second most disaster-prone region in the world. The island is highly vulnerable to a wide range of natural and anthropogenic hazards coupled with a high level of socio-economic vulnerability. One in four people (19%) live in poverty, increasing their vulnerability to shocks and reducing their ability to prepare for, withstand and recover from such events. The recent impact of Hurricane Elsa, was a glaring reminder that the impact of shocks, disasters and climate change is increasing, renewing calls for urgent action and new approaches to mitigate their impacts and to respond more effectively to the needs of the vulnerable.

In response, UNDP is supporting the development of an implementation module for disaster risk management in Barbados to make social protection more adaptive to disaster risks and climate change. This social protection and disaster risk management diagnostic will:

- Examine the specific **risks and vulnerabilities** associated with gender, age, poverty and location, to understand shocks and how they develop into a disaster.
- Review the **policy, legal and institutional frameworks** relevant to social protection and disaster risk management to identify overlaps and opportunities for collaboration and joint approaches.
- Assess the **capacity of the social protection system**, including the ability of programmes and delivery mechanisms to withstand shocks, ensure the continuity of social assistance, and adapt and expand.
- Review existing **preparedness, response and recovery measures** and the overlaps in the social protection and disaster risk management programme cycles and delivery mechanisms to facilitate joint approaches and programming.

The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the need for innovative approaches to the development of social protection systems that are fit for purpose and has provided the political will for social protection reform. While there is still considerable ground to cover, these initiatives are positive steps in the right direction, paving the way for the engineering of more adaptive and robust social protection systems in the Eastern Caribbean.

