



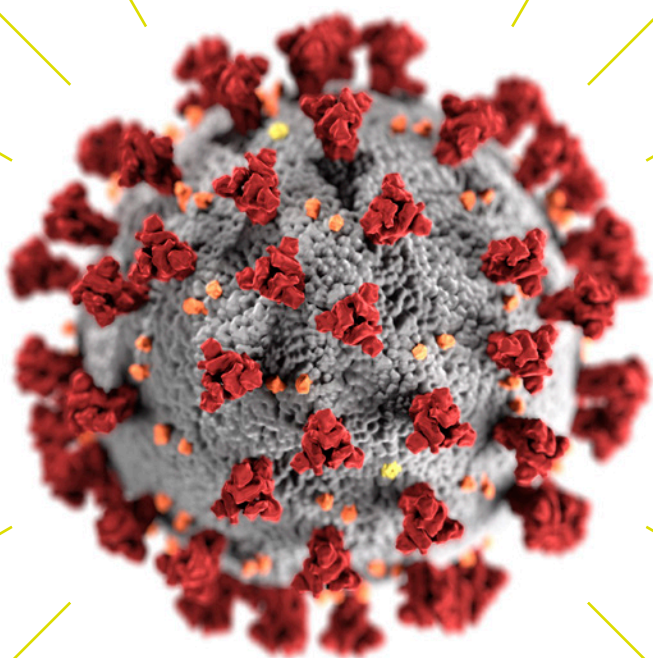
**Equity
& Justice**



Caribbean Natural Resources Institute

Technical Report

No. 406



**Planning for an inclusive, environmentally sustainable
and climate resilient COVID-19 recovery within the
Caribbean region: Progress and opportunities**



Planning for an inclusive, environmentally sustainable and climate resilient COVID-19 recovery within the Caribbean region:

Progress and opportunities



Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)

Technical Report No. 406

April 2023

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Acronyms

ADFD	Abu Dhabi Fund for Development
CANARI	Caribbean Natural Resources Institute
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CSIDS-SOILCARE Phase 1	The Caribbean Small Island Developing States Multi-Country Soil management initiative for integrated landscape restoration and climate resilient food systems project
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EnGenDER	Enabling Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery, Climate and Environmental Resilience in the Caribbean
ES	Environmental Sustainability
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
I	Inclusion
ICT	Information Communications Technology
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
R	Resilience
RED II	Second Rural Economic Development Initiative
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
TEG	Transformed Economic Governance
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN PAGE	United Nation Partnership for Action on Green Economy

Summary

Medium-term economic stimulus packages and longer-term investments for COVID-19 recovery present strategic opportunities to ‘rethink’ and ‘reimagine’ Caribbean development so that we ‘build back better’ and prioritise attention to delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and transformation to more environmentally sustainable, inclusive, fair and resilient economic development.

This report presents findings from desk research conducted by CANARI on 412¹ public sector COVID-19 recovery initiatives within the Caribbean region – covering initiatives within six countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago) as well as regional initiatives – and mapping where these initiatives align with four principles: (1) transforming economic governance; (2) supporting fairness, inclusion and justice in economic development; (3) supporting environmental sustainability while recognising and managing trade-offs; and (4) enabling a low-carbon transition and building resilience to address multiple risks. Together these four principles, and their 18 indicators, were used as an analytical framework to assess to what extent Caribbean COVID-19 recovery initiatives would contribute to transformation to more environmentally sustainable, inclusive, fair and resilient economic development in the Caribbean.

The research found that many initiatives were designed to address more than one principle. The highest number, 222 initiatives (39%), were designed to contribute to the principle of ‘Inclusion’ with most focusing on support for local Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Initiatives under this principle also supported just transition via the development and expansion of livelihoods and reskilling strategies in green economic sectors as well as strengthening social protection systems and redesigning education and social and health systems. The second most common area of focus was ‘Resilience’ with 142 initiatives (25%), with the majority supporting the development of and/or enhanced access to renewable energy/energy-efficient technologies. Very few initiatives looked at other aspects of ‘Resilience’ in terms of adapting and building resilience of communities and economic sectors, developing and/or enhancing access to climate resilient infrastructure or long-term measures to protect from disasters. ‘Transformed

Economic Governance’ was a focus of 106 initiatives (19%), with the majority of these looking at digitisation and technological innovation. Initiatives also supported Caribbean cooperation and knowledge sharing as well as creation of financial and fiscal mechanisms to support recovery. However, no initiatives were found supporting development and use of comprehensive wealth accounting systems. The area receiving the least attention was the ‘Environmental Sustainability’ principle with only 94 initiatives (17%), with the majority focused on enhanced efficiency in the use of resources and management of waste. Some initiatives also looked at nature-based solutions to deliver development and climate benefits. However, no initiative was found that addressed managing transboundary ecological systems utilising ecosystem-based approaches. Further, while most of the initiatives were strongly aligned to the indicators under the four principles, five percent were classified as ‘brown’ in that they would have a likely negative impact. These ‘brown’ initiatives included, for example, investments in expanding the oil and gas sector and mass tourism, as well as reducing funding for environmental conservation.

The mapping of COVID-19 recovery initiatives planned by the public sector revealed opportunities for contributing to transforming economic governance, ensuring more inclusive economic development, increasing focus on environmental sustainability and addressing threats from climate change. It also points to areas where more emphasis is needed, for example explicit focus on micro enterprises and building climate resilient infrastructure. Gaps were seen in the lack of attention to participatory, bottom-up and decentralised economic decision-making and national development planning; supporting development and use of comprehensive wealth accounting systems; and managing transboundary ecological systems using ecosystem-based approaches.

The study suggests the need for broader engagement of stakeholders in identifying the priorities and shaping initiatives that can contribute to transformation of our region’s development trajectory. CANARI hopes that this initial mapping exercise will stimulate deeper assessment on development, implementation and evaluation of COVID-19 recovery initiatives in the Caribbean. Informed, open and inclusive discussion and debate will be critical for Caribbean people to have a meaningful voice and to achieve a transition to more environmentally sustainable, inclusive, just and resilient economic development.

¹ The 412 initiatives identified are available at https://canari.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/COVID-19-Recovery-Initiatives-Database_collated_18.4.23.pdf

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic had a severe economic impact on Caribbean development, compounding existing challenges and vulnerabilities. Impacts were felt by businesses, households and especially vulnerable groups like women and those in the informal economy. The immediate focus was on health measures and immediate relief through support for businesses and social protection programmes. But early in the pandemic, international dialogue highlighted the importance of addressing the multiple inter-twined crises due to COVID-19 alongside other threats to development from rising inequalities, climate change and biodiversity loss. Indeed, Witter (2021) argued that COVID-19 intensified the existential threat to the Caribbean and revealed the inextricable links among the environment, economy, and public health. Many proposed that medium-term economic stimulus packages and longer-term investments for COVID-19 recovery present strategic opportunities to ‘rethink’ and ‘reimagine’ development so that we ‘build back better’ and prioritise attention to delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and transformation to more environmentally sustainable, inclusive, fair and resilient economic development (e.g., UN ECLAC n.d.; OECD 2020).

But do we know to what extent this thinking is being adopted in the Caribbean? What are the specific Caribbean development priorities for transformation given our unique contexts and needs? How can we facilitate open and informed engagement of Caribbean stakeholders in setting priorities and shaping how COVID-19 recovery can support inclusive, environmentally sustainable and climate resilient development in the Caribbean? How can there be transparency in assessing implementation and progress achieved? How can we assess whether Caribbean COVID-19 recovery initiatives will support the transformation needed?

As an initial step to exploring these questions, the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) undertook a regional study to identify what public sector COVID-initiatives were being planned. CANARI developed an analytical framework (CANARI, 2022) to map how these initiatives could contribute to ‘building back better’ and support green, inclusive and resilient development in four areas:

1. transforming economic governance;
2. supporting fairness, inclusion and justice in economic development;

3. supporting environmental sustainability while recognising and managing trade-offs; and
4. enabling a low-carbon transition and building resilience to address multiple risks.

The framework can be used to assess COVID-19 recovery initiatives which are part of medium-term economic stimulus packages, as well as longer-term economic transformation.

This report presents findings from desk research conducted by CANARI on 412 public sector COVID-19 recovery initiatives in the Caribbean region covering initiatives within six countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago) and regional initiatives. Interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders were conducted to inform the analysis. CANARI hopes that this initial research will help to stimulate and support open and informed national and regional dialogues on stakeholder priorities and assessment of how COVID-19 recovery can support inclusive, environmentally sustainable and climate resilient development in the Caribbean.



Citizen action beach clean-up, Trinidad. Credit: CANARI

2. Caribbean context

In general, Caribbean economies are vulnerable due to their small economies and their susceptibility to external shocks and natural disasters (Inter-American Development Bank, 2021a). Pre-pandemic, the Caribbean region was still recovering from the 2008-2009 global financial crisis, recording an average growth of 0.2% and debt to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ratio of 67.9% post financial crisis (2009-2019) (Alleyne et al. 2020). In 2019, the Caribbean region was one of the most highly indebted regions globally with an estimated public debt of 70% of GDP (Inter-American Development Bank, 2021a; McLean, 2021). The pandemic further decreased the region's growth given that the Caribbean was not able to recover from the pre-global financial crisis (2008-2009) (McLean, 2021). The Caribbean also faces ongoing threats hampering its economic development, including impacts from natural disasters (adverse weather, volcanoes, earthquakes), sargassum blooms affecting coastal and marine ecosystems, and impacts from climate change. For example, Hurricanes Irma and Maria cost the region US\$93 million in loss and damage in 2017 (Alleyne et al., 2020).

Due to the pandemic, regional GDP declined by 7.2% in 2020 following five years of average growth of 2.2% (Caribbean Development Bank, 2020; McLean, 2021). Guyana was the only country in the region that recorded growth due to development of its oil industry, with massive growth of 43.5% in 2020 (Caribbean Development Bank, 2020). A major contributing factor to the reduced regional GDP was the decline in the contribution of the travel and tourism sector by 58% in 2020, with a decline in employment of 700,000 persons within the sector (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2021). Additionally, average public sector debt increased from 66.4% of GDP in 2019 to 84.4% of GDP in 2020 (Caribbean Development Bank, 2021).

The pandemic impacted 90% of Caribbean businesses, disproportionately affecting small and micro enterprises (SMEs) and women-led businesses; 93% of women-led businesses reported reduced sales and 36% of SMEs experienced reduction in their workforce (Pereira and Yañez-Pagans, 2021). Average unemployment rates from eight Caribbean countries increased 2.3% from 2019 to 2020 (Padmore, 2021). The Eastern Caribbean region estimated a 27% decline in formal sector employment (Byron et al., 2021). Pre-COVID, 50-70% of the tourism workforce comprised of women. The decline in employment in the travel and tourism sector meant that women were more likely to experience job

losses and generally faced greater social, economic and physical insecurity than men due to the pandemic (Padmore, 2021).

The 2021/2022 Human Development Report (United Nations Development Programme, 2022) indicated that the Human Development Index scores declined for most countries within Central America and the Caribbean region in 2021/2022, with the exception of Guyana due to oil production (DeLisle Worrell and Associates, 2022). The regional economic impact of COVID-19 in May 2020 for the health sector was estimated at US\$260.2 million (estimates of cost accrued by government) with projected costs conservatively estimated at US\$484 million. Additionally, the cost of school cost closures was estimated at US\$92.5 million. Regionally, social protection measures amounted to US\$1.3 billion in the first quarter of 2020 and included measures such as payroll support, business support, household support, unemployment benefits and public assistance (Alleyne et al., 2020).

In 2021, the Caribbean's economy grew by an estimated 3.1% (still below pre-pandemic levels) and debt to GDP ratio declined from 82.5% in 2020 to 80.3% in 2021. This was attributed to stimulus programmes, increased vaccine roll outs, reduced or rolled back lockdown measures, reopening of national borders, and reopening of the tourism industry. Growth was recorded in the following sectors: mining, manufacturing and utilities (23.4%), trade (12.8%), agriculture (4.1%) and hotel and restaurants (3%) (CDB, 2021).

With the exception of Guyana, economic forecasts for Caribbean countries have suggested that GDP per capita may take a few years to return to pre-pandemic figures (IDB, 2021b). However, in the first half of 2022, it was estimated that the GDP of the Caribbean region surpassed 2021 estimates by 4.7% (excluding Guyana) (ECLAC, 2022). Per capita income for most of the Caribbean region is estimated to return to pre-pandemic levels by 2023 to 2024. Jamaica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines are expected to recover to pre-pandemic per capita income levels by 2022, whilst St. Kitts and Nevis and Suriname have longer projected timelines (2023-2024) (Inter-American Development Bank, 2021b). It is estimated that Caribbean countries will see recovery of the tourism sector to pre-pandemic levels between 2022-2024 (Inter-American Development Bank, 2021c). Although public debt remains high in the region, the average public debt-to-GDP ratio in the Caribbean fell



Local green enterprises' products, Trinidad. Credit: CANARI

to 84.1% in the first quarter of 2022 compared to 88.1% in 2021 (ECLAC, 2022).

Continued growth is predicted for the region, mainly for both service and commodity exporting countries (particularly those focused on hydrocarbons) (ECLAC, 2022). However, natural disasters, potential resurgence of infections and/or variants, global markets and international pressures leading to inflation increase the uncertainty of recovery (Caribbean Development Bank, 2021). External shocks such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 led to further increase in commodity prices which had varied impacts across the Caribbean depending on the trade specialisation of each country; it was noted that the purchasing power of households throughout the region has been impacted (Inter-American Development Bank, 2022). The annual inflation rate increased to 8% mid-year in 2022 (Inter-American Development Bank, 2022).

In this context, the design and implementation of COVID-19 recovery initiatives should aim to address the multiple inter-twined challenges facing the Caribbean and support transformation to inclusive, environmentally sustainable and climate resilient development.



*Community heritage tourism at Morne Coubaril
Saint Lucia.* Credit: Nicole Leotaud

3. Research methodology

In order to start to map the direction of COVID-19 recovery initiatives in the Caribbean, CANARI conducted online desk research on COVID-19 recovery initiatives from July 2021 to April 2022 in six Caribbean countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Jamaica, Guyana, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago) and at the regional level. The research identified and assessed 412² public sector COVID-19 recovery initiatives which were announced as part of medium-term economic stimulus packages, as well as longer-term economic transformation. The research did not examine initial rescue or relief measures. The research looked at the stated intention (focus, goal or objective) but did not probe the motivation or context behind the stated intention, nor did it examine the results of implementation of initiatives. Initiatives were mainly found in the national recovery plans, national budget statements and included the work of multilateral and regional organisations.

CANARI developed an analytical framework (CANARI, 2022) to assess COVID-19 recovery responses in the Caribbean, aiming to capture these key development and transition issues, but building on and inspired by existing frameworks. The analytical framework is focused around four broad principles and 18 associated indicators (see Table 1).

Public sector initiatives identified in the desk research were classified against the 18 indicators in this framework (classified as TEG 1-6, ES 7-10, I 11-15 and R 15-18). A subjective assessment was made on the strength of the linkage to the indicators (i.e., strong, medium, weak linkage) depending on the clarity and specificity of the alignment of the initiative to delivering against the indicator. Initiatives were classified as ‘ambiguous’ if there was lack of information and initiatives were listed as ‘brown’ if they were judged likely to have a negative impact based on previous experience (e.g., documented negative impacts of the oil and gas sector on climate change, documented negative environmental impacts of cruise ship tourism).

Initiatives were also classified by their focal areas and by their status (i.e., whether listed as in action, budget/investment, recommendation, plan/policy or part of an existing programme/project).

The monetary value of the investment in the initiatives

was not captured because values were only available for some of the initiatives, either because the information was not available, or values had not yet been assigned for initiatives that were recommendations, policies or plans. Future research assessing the monetary value of the various investments could be undertaken.

Stakeholder perspectives on the research findings were gathered through seven focus groups and eight key informant interviews, with mainly government, academia and civil society stakeholders, from July to November 2022.

Table 1 - CANARI's four principles and 18 indicators for 'building back better' from COVID-19 in the Caribbean

‘Transformed economic governance’ – transforming economic decision-making

1. Mechanisms are put in place for participatory, bottom-up and decentralised economic decision-making and monitoring, including development and monitoring of COVID-19 recovery plans and national development plans
2. Mechanisms are put in place for cross-sectoral collaboration and partnerships at the national level to mobilise knowledge and resources for recovery actions
3. Mechanisms are put in place for Caribbean cooperation (e.g., on intra-regional trade and investment, knowledge sharing) and joint actions to support a just and sustainable transition
4. Transition to green, inclusive and resilient economic development supported by financing and fiscal mechanisms (e.g., green public procurement, green trade, green investment, public expenditure reviews, tax reform, decentralised funding, debt for nature/climate swaps and other innovating financing instruments)
5. Digitisation and technological innovation used to support recovery
6. Development and use of comprehensive wealth accounting systems (incorporating human, social, natural, financial, and physical capitals)

² The 412 initiatives identified are available at https://canari.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/COVID-19-Recovery-Initiatives-Database_collated_18.4.23.pdf

‘Environmental sustainability’ – Supporting environmental sustainability while recognising and managing trade-offs

7. Enhanced efficiency in use of water, land and materials, and management of pollution and waste to protect environmental quality
8. Nature-based solutions used to deliver development and climate benefits through restoration, protection and/or sustainable use of natural ecosystems and biodiversity
9. Environmental sustainability concerns mainstreamed in key economic sectors
10. Ecosystem-based approaches used to manage multiple uses of ecological systems at the landscape/seascape/transboundary level

‘Inclusion’ – Supporting fairness, inclusion and justice in economic development

11. Support for development and strengthening of local small and micro enterprises (SMEs), including in the use of environmentally sustainable practices and access to basic services and resources
12. Support for development and expansion of livelihoods and reskilling strategies to engage in new and growing green economic sectors, with a focus on the income poor and informal workers for a just transition
13. Strengthened social protection systems to support informal workers and other at-risk groups, using a gender sensitive approach
14. Redesign of education, health and social development systems supports inclusion, equity, wellness and well-being of citizens

‘Resilience’ – Enabling a low-carbon transition and building resilience to address multiple risks

15. Development of and/or enhanced access to renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies for carbon reduction/ climate mitigation
16. Development of and/or enhanced access to climate resilient infrastructure (including via the use of building and transport standards) to support basic services, livelihoods and the wider economy
17. Measures taken to adapt and build resilience of communities and economic sectors to climate change and natural disasters, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups and SMEs
18. Measures taken to protect citizens from environmental, health and economic disasters are reaching all sectors of society including the most vulnerable



Awareness raising on permaculture, Trinidad.
Credit: Santa Cruz Green Market



Recreational sailing in Barbados. Credit: CANARI



Solar farm on Carriacou island, Grenada.
Credit: Natalie Boodram

4. Findings

4.1 Overall findings

For all six countries and the region CANARI identified a total of 412 recovery initiatives that addressed the four main principles. Jamaica accounted for 33% of initiatives found, followed by Trinidad and Tobago which accounted for 27% of initiatives (Figure 1).

Many initiatives were designed to address more than one principle and there was a good spread of initiatives, with most addressing Inclusion (39%) (Figure 2). The majority of initiatives (26%) were listed as being at the budget/investment stage and 21% of initiatives were in action, with 25% listed as only recommendations (Figure 3).

Approximately 83% of initiatives spanned nine main focal areas (see Figure 4) with most initiatives related to developing agriculture/fisheries (22% of initiatives) and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) (19% of initiatives). It should be emphasised that the number of initiatives is not an indication of the scale or focus on specific sectors. For example, only 10% of initiatives supported the tourism sector but these included multimillion-dollar investments and grants.

Overall, 41% of the initiatives were classified as having strong linkages to the indicators (see Figure 5). Five percent were classified as 'brown' where they would have a negative impact on moving to green, inclusive and resilient development.

Initiatives identified as 'brown' included projects related to mass tourism (e.g. cruise ship tourism) and the oil and gas industry, as well as those that led to decreased funding for environmental conservation. Mass tourism in the region is considered brown as it can hinder inclusivity, equity and sustainability by limiting the socio-economic benefits to Caribbean people, hindering integration of MSMEs into the tourism value chain and negatively impacting the surrounding environments (UNDP Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, 2021a).

In some cases where it was unclear, initiatives were classified as 'ambiguous' in terms of linkage to the indicators.

The next section provides details of findings under each of the four principles and their associated indicators. For each indicator, the initiatives with strong linkages were highlighted. Select initiatives are highlighted as boxed examples for each principle.

Figure 1: Number of initiatives categorised by country/regional

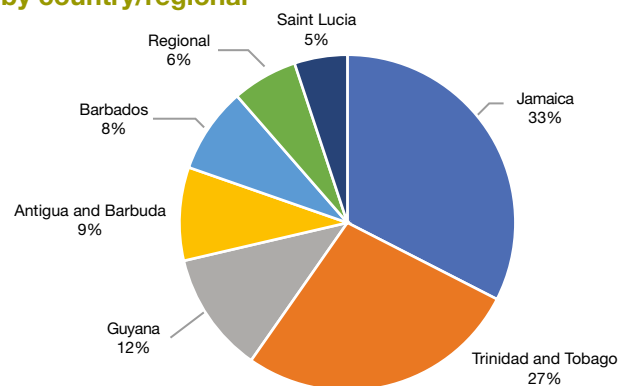


Figure 2: Initiatives categorised under the four principles

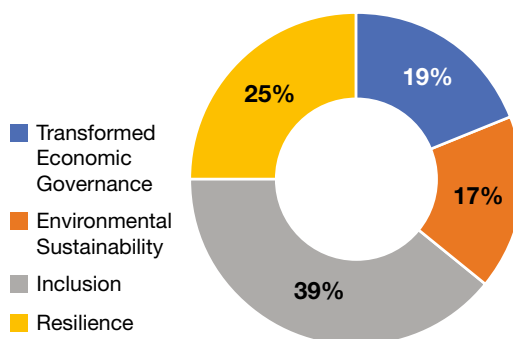


Figure 3: Status of initiatives

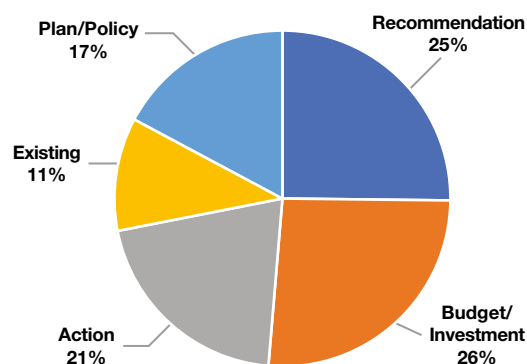


Figure 4: Focal areas for initiatives

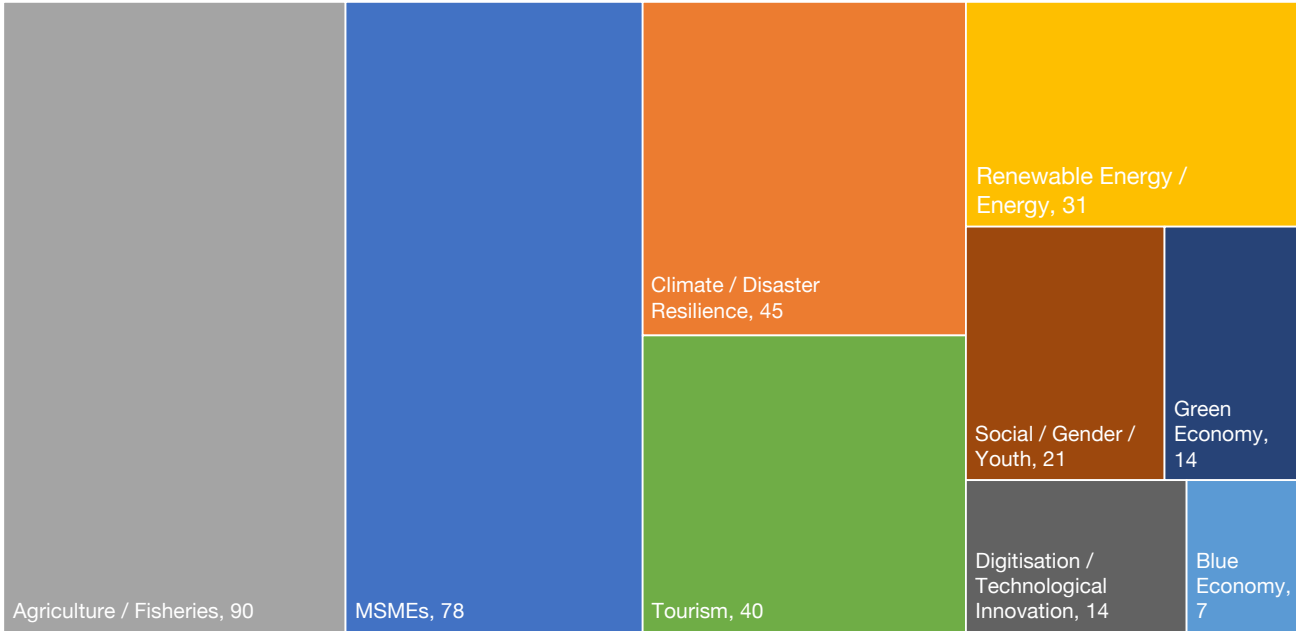
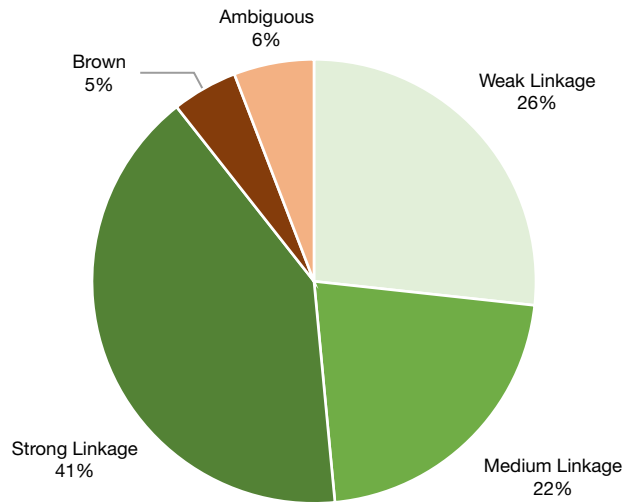


Figure 5: Strength of linkage to indicators



4.2 ‘Transformed Economic Governance’ principle

One hundred and six initiatives (19%) were designed to contribute to the principle of ‘Transformed Economic Governance’ (TEG) with the majority of initiatives related to the indicator on digitisation and technological innovation (TEG 5). In total, 60 out of 105 of these initiatives were strongly associated with the indicators (Figure 6).

Initiatives contributing to **participatory decision-making** (TEG 1) generally included national recovery reports and recovery committees. Initiatives with strong linkages included the National Economic Recovery and Resilience Plan of Saint Lucia which includes civil society as part of the participatory decision-making process (Government of Saint Lucia, 2020a), as well as Jamaica’s COVID-19 Recovery taskforce which allows for co-opting within subcommittees providing opportunity for increased participation in development of recovery strategies (Ministry of Finance and the Public Service, 2020).

Cross sectoral collaboration (TEG 2) was also seen in initiatives with multisectoral engagement within the high-level recovery committees, collaboration within recovery plans, multisectoral partnerships (public-private partnerships, partnerships with academia) to promote recovery, and engagement of community groups. Initiatives included the recovery committees/task forces and recovery reports in Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia and Jamaica. Community-led credit programmes,

public-private partnerships in the agribusiness sector, business clustering and collaboration with academia to support technology development in the manufacturing sector were also some strong initiatives within Trinidad and Tobago (Office of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, 2020b).



Capturing footage on coastal impacts using a digital camera, St Kitts and Nevis. Credit: CANARI

Caribbean cooperation and knowledge sharing (TEG 3) was exhibited through initiatives focused on trade cooperation mechanisms, regional training in various sectors (energy, construction and tourism), as well as regional research opportunities through the establishment of a Centre of Excellence of Oceanography and the Blue Economy in Antigua and Barbuda (Government of Antigua and Barbuda, 2020). Diaspora engagement/ investment to support public-private partnerships was highlighted for Jamaica. Regionally, initiatives included the FUT-Tourism: Rethinking Tourism and MSMEs in times of COVID-19 to support regional dialogue and policy solutions in the tourism MSME sector as well as CARICOM's COVID-19 Response Agriculture Food Plan (Box 1) (Nurse, 2020; UNDP Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, 2021b).

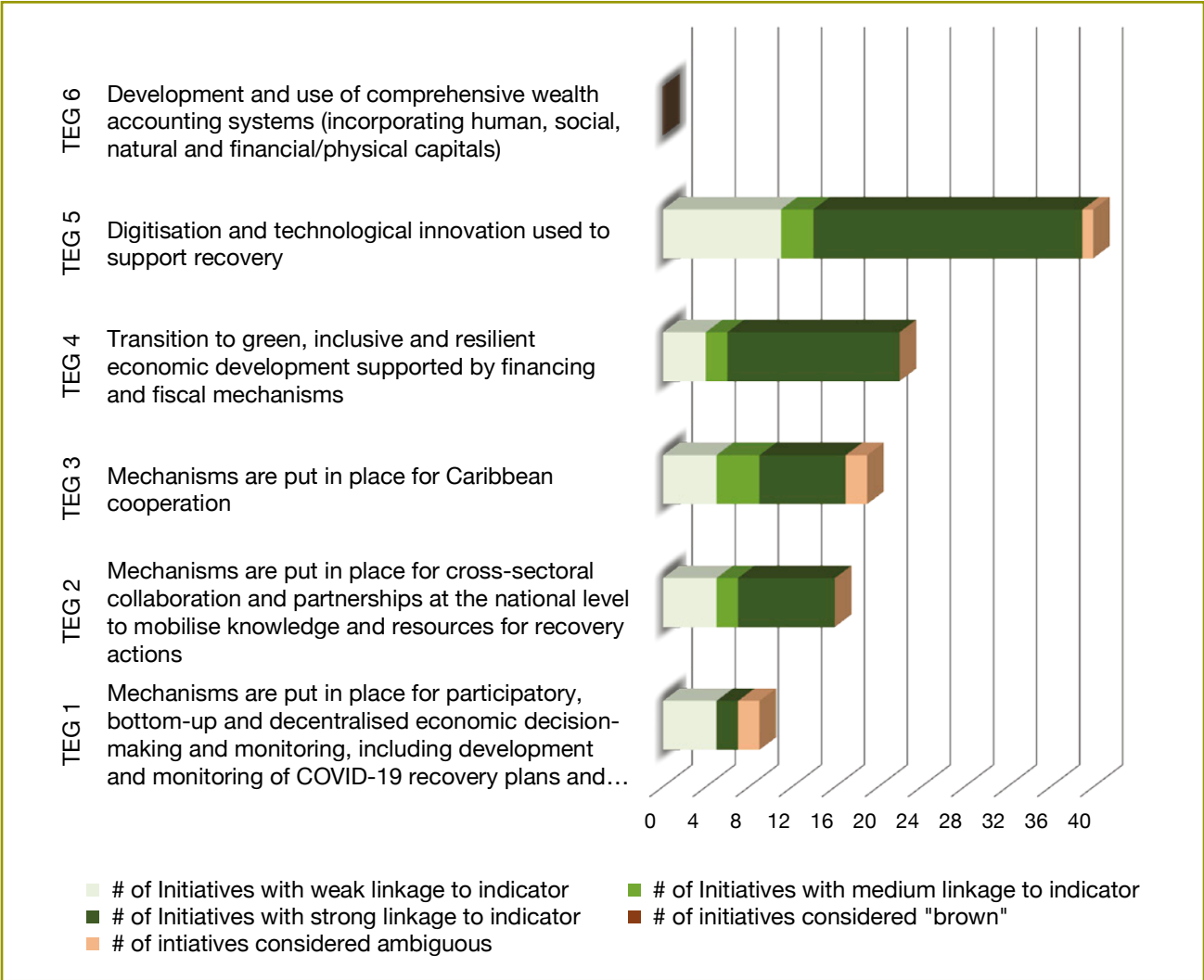
Initiatives which focused on **financial and fiscal mechanisms** (TEG 4) as part of recovery strategies included mechanisms to support green investments and disaster and climate resilience. Some examples included Antigua and Barbuda's consideration for a

debt-for-climate swap to support investments in local adaptation and mitigation projects (Box 2) (Government of Antigua and Barbuda, 2021b), support for disaster financing under the Saint Lucia COVID-19 Response, Recovery and Resilience Development Policy Credit, reform of Trinidad and Tobago's Green Fund (Office of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, 2020b; World Bank, 2020) and the Green and Digital Investment Fund under the Barbados Employment and Sustainable Transformation (BEST) Programme aimed to support greening and digitisations of small businesses, agri-enterprises and small businesses (Prime Minister's Office Barbados, 2020). Regionally, the Caribbean Economy Recovery and Transformation Plan supports resilience financing through the development of a Trust Fund (Comissiong, 2021).

In terms of **digitisation and technological innovation** to support recovery (TEG 5), initiatives included supporting digitisation of MSMEs, technological innovation within the agriculture sector and provision of training in digital skills and information communications technology (ICT). In Trinidad and Tobago, a Fintech Hub was recommended to support start-ups and the Digital Developer Hub to support local development of software/apps including online stores for small businesses (Office of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, 2020b). In Saint Lucia, one initiative aims to build competitiveness through digital transformation within the workforce, schools and businesses, including MSMEs (Government of Saint Lucia, 2020a). Barbados' National Tourism Programme focuses on marketing cultural and heritage products and use of digital marketing platforms (Forde-Craig, 2021). Antigua and Barbuda's MSME Transition Grant Programme supports e-commerce services for agriculture and tourism based MSMEs (United Nations Development Programme, 2020). Jamaica's income support grant to artisanal fishers includes the incorporation of Global Positioning System (GPS) trackers to support gathering of digital information and tracking within the sector (Northrop et al., 2020). Regionally, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Accelerator Lab developed BlueDigital as a pilot experiment that uses digital tools to improve blue economy value chains for fisherfolk, tourism partners, government and consumers within the Eastern Caribbean (UNDP Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, 2021b).

However, no initiatives were found supporting **development and use of comprehensive wealth accounting systems** (TEG 6).

Figure 6: 'Transformed Economic Governance' (TEG)



Box 1: CARICOM COVID-19 Agri-Food Action Plan and Risk Management Framework (TEG 3; R 17; I 11)

CARICOM has developed a Covid-19 Response Agriculture Food Plan which is supported by the CARICOM Agriculture Policy. This action plan focuses on food availability, utilisation and supply and aims to reduce regional food imports by 25% by the year 2025 (Morgan, 2021; Nurse, 2020). A regional task force has been established and is also supporting technological improvement in the agriculture sector through development of a CARICOM e-agriculture strategy. This will also support small producers. It will aim to use technology to improve competitiveness, the production process and regional trade, as well as increase access to climate smart technologies (Caribbean Export Development Agency, 2021).



Showcase of locally-grown agricultural produce, Trinidad. Credit: Santa Cruz Green Market

Box 2: Antigua and Barbuda's Debt-for-Climate Swap Initiative (TEG 4; R 17)

Antigua and Barbuda's Medium Term Fiscal Strategy (MTFS) 2021-2023 includes a focus on post-pandemic economic recovery and complements/supports the national Economic Recovery Strategy. The MTFS indicates that the Government is pursuing a debt-for-climate swap initiative, mainly as a mechanism to address national debt challenges (arrears to Paris Club bilateral creditors); this initiative has also been linked to supporting COVID-19 green recovery efforts (Green Climate Fund and Department of Environment, 2019; Government of Antigua and Barbuda, 2021b). The Government started negotiations with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Paris Club member creditors with GCF to partially finance redirecting US\$147M in debt towards investments in local climate change adaptation and mitigation projects (Government of Antigua and Barbuda, 2021b).

Deliverables under the GCF readiness proposal support the preparation activities for a debt-for-climate swap initiative including institutional strengthening, capacity building and knowledge sharing. The readiness proposal also aims to support micro financing for climate change related projects for local small businesses, non-governmental organisations and vulnerable groups through use of the Sustainable Island Resource Framework (SIRF) Fund and local financial institutions. The debt-for-climate swap project will be included in an Act of Parliament and is expected to be replicated in other Caribbean islands (Green Climate Fund and Department of Environment, 2019). Also, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), in partnership with the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), is implementing a US\$500,000 Finance for Acting on Climate in the Eastern Caribbean project with funding from the Open Society Foundations. This project is being piloted in Antigua and Barbuda and will support the debt-for-climate swap initiative (AOSIS, 2021).

4.3 'Environmental Sustainability' principle

Ninety-four initiatives (17%) were designed to contribute to the principle of 'Environmental Sustainability' with the majority of initiatives focusing on **enhanced efficiency in use of water, land and materials, and management of pollution and waste** to protect environmental quality (ES 7). Forty-one out of the 94 initiatives were classified as strongly linked to their respective indicators (Figure 7).

Initiatives for enhanced efficiency in use of resources and management of waste (ES 7) focused on conservation of water resources, waste management, recycling and reducing land/soil degradation. In Trinidad and Tobago, recommendations included community rainwater harvesting and a 10-year water security programme as part of spatial/infrastructure development (Office of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, 2020b). Barbados included the Roofs to Reefs Plan, a cross sectoral initiative that aims to address climate mitigation in multiple sectors including biodiversity, water resources and housing (Prime Minister's Office Barbados, 2020). Antigua and Barbuda included a focus on biodigesters for treating with sewerage and organic matter as well as to generate methane gas and to support waste reduction in landfills (Government of Antigua and Barbuda, 2020). Jamaica's Resource Efficiency programme includes a focus on environmental stewardship in the public sector through procurement of environmentally friendly products, recycling and efficient use of utilities (Ministry of Housing, Urban Renewal, Environment and Climate Change, 2021). Guyana set Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets to combat land degradation and aligned targets to the Green State Development Strategy (UN Guyana, 2021).

Nature-based solutions used to deliver development and climate benefits (ES 8) were included in initiatives related to coastal zone management, rehabilitation of green spaces to support carbon sequestration, water conservation projects, protection of waterways and coastal vegetation. In Trinidad and Tobago, large-scale planting of fruit trees and development of green spaces were recommendations considered (Office of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, 2020b). Saint Lucia's Sustainable Water Infrastructure approach focuses on water protection projects and vegetation restoration at the John Compton Dam (Government of Saint Lucia, 2020b). Barbados included The Institutional Frameworks for Integrated Coastal Zone Management, National Risk Information Planning Systems and Sustainable Climate-Resilient Coastal Infrastructure project which supports the Sustainable Climate Resilient Coastal

Infrastructure Programme (IDB, 2021a). Antigua and Barbuda's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) included targets for protecting waterways to mitigate flooding risks as well as existing wetlands, watersheds and seagrass areas due to their role in carbon sequestration (Government of Antigua and Barbuda, 2021c). The Blue Carbon Restoration in southern Clarendon, Jamaica mangrove restoration project aims to improve the carbon sequestration capacity in these coastal ecosystems to support climate resilience in Jamaica (Box 3) (Inter-American Development Bank, 2020). In Guyana, sea and river defence adaptation strategies aim to include natural interventions such as restoration of mangrove forest (Cooperative Republic of Guyana, 2021).

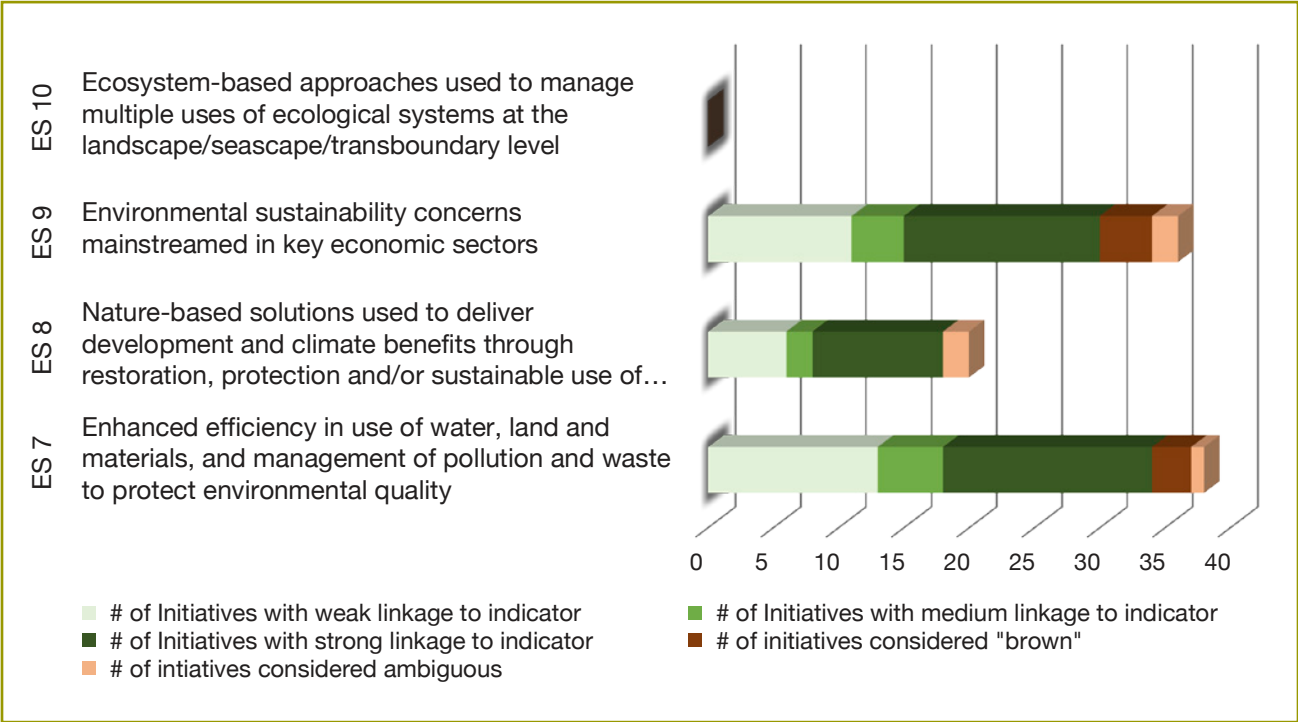
Mainstreaming environmental sustainability concerns in key economic sectors (ES 9) was considered in initiatives aimed at supporting green economy strategies, enhancement of natural resources policy and legislation, focusing on research and development, development of green industries in the manufacturing sector and consideration for environmental protection in local development plans. In Trinidad and Tobago, initiatives included institutional mechanisms to support green industries in the manufacturing sector and consideration for green packaging of export products under the National Export Booster Initiatives and 'shovel-worthy' construction projects (Office of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, 2020b; Ministry of

Trade and Industry, 2021). The Government of Barbados, with funding from the United Nation Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE), will support boosting the circular economy and promoting green consumption and production practices (PAGE, 2021). In Antigua and Barbuda, one initiative is the Memorandum of Understanding to establish a Centre of Excellence of Oceanography and the Blue Economy which focuses on research and development (Government of Antigua and Barbuda, 2021a). In Jamaica, there has been development of a Green Economy Investment strategy (Ministry of Housing, Urban Renewal, Environment and Climate Change, 2021). Regionally, UNDP Accelerator Lab's BlueDigital pilot experiment includes promoting sustainability practices in the private sector (Box 4) (UNDP Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, 2021c).

Brown initiatives identified that can negatively impact both environmental quality (ES 7) and mainstreaming of environmental sustainability concerns in economic sectors (ES 9) included mining in Jamaica and Guyana, as well as recommendations in Trinidad and Tobago to develop a 'green petrochemical' industry and a downstream market for natural gas and plastic production.

Also, no initiative was found that addressed **managing transboundary ecological systems utilising ecosystem-based approaches** (ES 10).

Figure 7: 'Environmental Sustainability' (ES)



Box 3: Blue Carbon Restoration in southern Clarendon, Jamaica project (ES 8; I 12)

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Solutions for Developing Countries, University of the West Indies signed an agreement to support mangrove restoration through the Blue Carbon Restoration in southern Clarendon, Jamaica project. The project is funded by IDB (through US\$2.45 million grant) and is being implemented by the University of the West Indies. The project is the first initiative in the region under the United Kingdom Blue Carbon Fund through the IDB Natural Capital Lab and Sustainable Islands programmes. The project objectives are to restore over 1,000 hectares of mangrove forest along the south coast of Jamaica in southern Clarendon, and to increase opportunities for ecosystem-based livelihoods, including through ecotourism and the development of a sustainable production plan for charcoal. The project interventions aim to improve the carbon sequestration capacity in these coastal ecosystems to support climate resilience. The project is expected to be completed by 2026 (Inter-American Development Bank, 2020; Serju, 2020; Phillips and Heilmanns, 2021).

Box 4: BlueDIGITAL (TEG 5; ES 9; I 11)

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Accelerator Lab for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean has developed a pilot project called BlueDigital as part of UNDP's Blue Economy for Green Islands strategy and as part of Phase 2 of the Multi-Country Office's COVID-19 Future Tourism response (UNDP Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, 2021c; 2021d). The project aims to reduce the digital divide and support blue economy industries and MSMEs by improving value chains for fisherfolk, tourism partners, government and consumers within the Eastern Caribbean. BlueDigital has different avenues to provide specific services to four stakeholder groups involved in the blue economy: BlueFish supports improved catch data and sales for fisherfolk; BlueData supports data driven decision-making by government stakeholders; BlueTrace provides a traceability system from catch to plate for customers; and BlueSeal: Blue Tourism Solutions aims to provide the private sector with a verification seal for supporting sustainability practices such as increasing access to sustainable fish products, and promoting awareness on conservation based tourism activities. An online platform has also been created for fisherfolk and farmers to digitally market their goods, ensuring traceability and sustainability (UNDP Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, 2021c).

4.4 'Inclusion' principle

Two hundred and twenty-two initiatives (39%) were designed to contribute to the principle of 'Inclusion', with the majority of initiatives focusing on developing and strengthening of local SMEs (I 11). Fifty-six of these initiatives were classified as strongly linked to the indicators (Figure 8).

Initiatives that aimed to provide **support for local SMEs** (I 11) focused on providing legislative support, financial support, support for digitisation of businesses and upgrades, opportunities for capacity building and business development hubs, with some initiatives focusing on young persons and female entrepreneurs as well as agriculture- and tourism-based SMEs. Overall, there was limited information to determine specific support being provided to micro enterprises within the larger MSME sector. In Trinidad and Tobago, the SheTrades Hub aims to support women-owned MSMEs (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2020; 2021). Saint Lucia's initiatives included providing funding for MSMEs and fast-tracking legislation to increase access to finance (Government of Saint Lucia, 2020a). Barbados' Cooperative Society Investment Fund has been expanded to provided funds to farmers and other agri-cooperatives to support purchasing of equipment and raw material; the Fund also supports local green enterprises (Box 5) (Prime Minister's Office Barbados, 2020). The MSME Transition Grant Programme in Antigua and Barbuda aims to support digitisation of MSMEs in the agriculture and tourism sector and women-owned enterprises (United Nations Development Programme, 2020). In Jamaica, The Second Rural Economic Development initiative (RED II) supports MSMEs in the tourism and agriculture sector inclusive of building climate resilience for beneficiaries (Green Recovery, 2021). In Guyana, support was provided in expanding the Youth Innovation Programme which provided grants to young persons involved in developing solutions in a low carbon economy (Cooperative Republic of Guyana, 2021). Regionally, one of the aims

under the United Nations Development Programme's Rapid Resource Facility is supporting MSME recovery through retooling and reskilling (Box 6) (United Nations Development Programme, 2021).



Environmental education at New Winthorpes Primary School, Antigua and Barbuda. Credit: Environmental Awareness Group

Just transition via the development and expansion of livelihoods and reskilling strategies in green economic sectors (I 12) was considered in reskilling of young persons and women (particularly in the agriculture and renewable energy sectors), training in climate resilient agriculture practices, community-based livelihood support in the tourism and agriculture sectors, and training of small and medium tourism enterprises. In Trinidad and Tobago, livelihood support was considered in community-based tourism events which support linkages to the agriculture sector; training was recommended to ensure compliance within the tourism sector as it related to the Green Key Initiative (Office of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, 2020a; 2020b). In Barbados, the Domestic Food and Security Programme aims to support livelihoods through agriculture (King, 2020; Prime Minister's Office Barbados, 2020). Antigua and Barbuda's Mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 through the supply of fresh food to rural households project supports training of small-scale farmers in climate resilient agriculture practices (Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, 2021). Guyana's Youth Entrepreneurship and Apprenticeship Programme supports community service officers to provide training to create employment opportunities for young persons in hinterland villages, including training in solar panel installation/maintenance (Cooperative Republic of Guyana, 2021). In Jamaica, the Alternative Livelihoods programme supports livelihoods

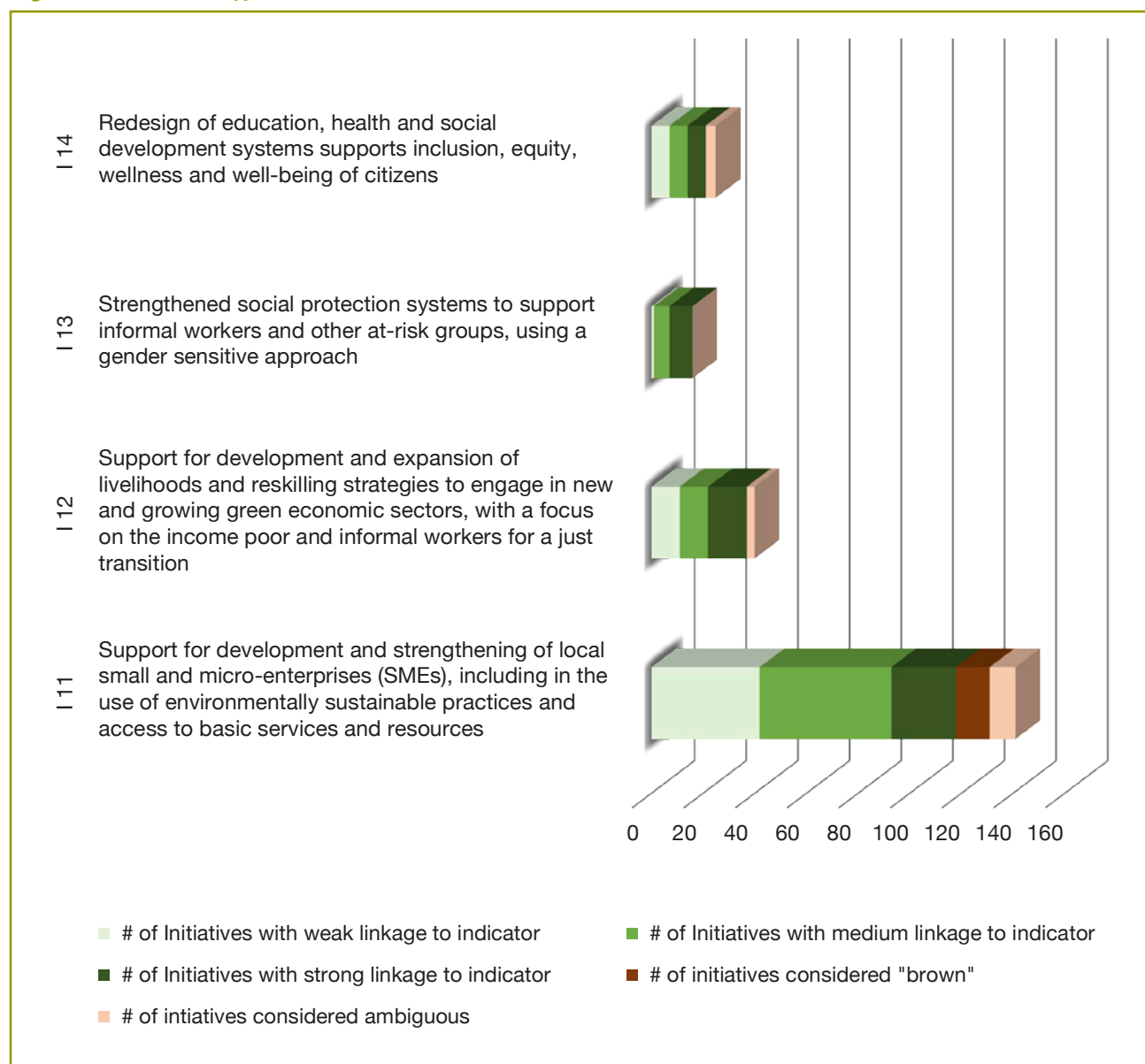
in forest-based communities and the development of self-sufficiency models in fish sanctuaries (Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, 2021). Regionally, the Caribbean Small Island Developing States Multi-Country Soil management initiative for integrated landscape restoration and climate resilient food systems project (CSIDS-SOILCARE Phase 1) includes guidelines to support transitioning farmers to climate smart agriculture production (Global Environment Facility, 2021).

Initiatives identified that supported **strengthening social protection systems** (I 13) included support provided to informal workers (including women), strengthening gender and social systems, and supporting persons with disabilities and victims of domestic violence. In Jamaica, the Support for the transition to formality in the household services, agriculture and fisheries sectors in Jamaica project aims to support informal female domestic workers and fishers/agriculture workers impacted by the pandemic; it supports increasing formal business units (Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce, 2021). In Guyana, the Spotlight programme aims to support government in working with community service officers to reduce gender-based violence (Cooperative Republic of Guyana, 2021). Regionally, the Enabling Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery, Climate and Environmental Resilience in the Caribbean (EnGenDER) programme aids victims of gender-based violence (United Nations Development Programme, 2021).

Initiatives that aimed at **redesigning education and social and health systems** (I 14) focused on addressing mental health, revision of labour legislation, reforming education systems and expanding vocational training. In Jamaica, there was review of the public education system under the report developed by the Jamaica Education Transformation Commission (The Jamaica Education Transformation Commission, 2021). Initiatives in Saint Lucia focused on enhancing resilience of health care services as well as increasing the population's access to healthcare, prioritising the poor and vulnerable (Government of Saint Lucia, 2020a). Barbados' Skills for the Future project involves the development of a plan to reform teacher training and professional development (IDB, 2021d). In Guyana, legislation was reviewed to address mental health issues (Cooperative Republic of Guyana, 2021).

The 'brown' initiatives identified which can negatively impact the potential support for MSMEs (I 11) were those focused on mass tourism development (which may exclude the MSME sector) as well as a tax exemption initiative reducing contributions to the Green Fund (which funds environmental conservation work) in Trinidad and Tobago.

Figure 8: 'Inclusion' (I)



Box 5: Barbados' Cooperative Society Investment Fund (I 11)

The Cooperative Society Investment Fund is an existing programme which has been expanded as part of Barbados' COVID-19 recovery. Through this initiative, funds are provided for farmers and other food producer cooperatives to assist in purchasing equipment and raw materials through low-rate financing (1.5-2.5% under special conditions) (Prime Minister's Office Barbados, 2020).

The project supports the development of local green enterprises and will target the development of priority sectors such as agribusiness, renewable energy, tourism-related businesses, manufacturing, creative industries and health and wellness. This programme is being funded by the Government of Barbados and implemented by the Ministry of Energy, Small Business and Entrepreneurship (Prime Minister's Office Barbados, 2020).

Box 6: United Nations Development Programme's Rapid Resource Facility (I 11; I 13)

United Nations Development Programme's Rapid Resource Facility targets Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean and has three pillars focusing on addressing health systems, socioeconomic impacts and multisectoral management and response. Pillar 2 (Inclusive and multi sectoral crisis) focuses on retooling/reskilling of MSMEs to support recovery and includes provision of coaching, financial assistance to help enterprises to re-strategise their business model and support transitioning to e-commerce services. The eFUTURE platform is listed as a resource under this pillar and aims to support digitisation of MSME operations as part of COVID-19 recovery. The Farmfinder e-commerce platform developed under eFuture supports marketing and delivery of farmers' and fisherfolk's produce (United Nations Development Programme, 2021).

4.5 'Resilience' principle

One hundred and forty-two initiatives (25%) were designed to contribute to the principle of 'Resilience', with the majority of the initiatives contributing to the development of and/or enhanced access to renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies for carbon reduction/ climate mitigation (R 15). Seventy-four of the initiatives were classified as strongly associated with the indicators (Figure 9).

Initiatives that support the **development of and/or enhanced access to renewable energy/energy-efficient technologies** (R 15) included consideration for the financial, infrastructural and regulatory frameworks to support the use of solar panels, installation of solar plants/farms, exploration of other renewable energy sources and enhanced access to electric vehicles. In Trinidad and Tobago, initiatives included removal of custom duties and tax on electric vehicles and development of two solar photo voltaic plants (Box 7) (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Finance, 2021). The Green Energy Park project in Barbados involves the development of a 30-megawatt green energy park to provide renewable energy to households from three different sources (Prime Minister's Office Barbados, 2020). In Antigua and Barbuda, the Abu Dhabi Fund for

Development (ADFD) 2 renewable energy project aims to support connection of renewable energy systems to the electric grid. In Guyana, support to Indigenous persons includes distribution of solar units (Ernst & Young Services Inc., 2020). Jamaica's National E-Mobility project aims to support infrastructure required for electric vehicles (Ministry of Housing, Urban Renewal, Environment and Climate Change, 2021).

Initiatives supporting **development and/or enhanced access to climate resilient infrastructure** (R 16) included coastal infrastructure/shore stabilisation works, climate resilient housing, climate risk assessments, flood mitigation and water supply infrastructure. In Barbados, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago there was focus on shoreline stabilisation work to develop coastal resilience (Prime Minister's Office Barbados, 2020; Government of Saint Lucia, 2020b; Office of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, 2020b). Antigua and Barbuda and Jamaica's initiatives focused on climate resilient homes including considerations for climate resilient housing in the draft National Housing Policy and the national Housing Fund (Government of Antigua and Barbuda, 2020; Ministry of Housing, Urban Renewal, Environment and Climate Change, 2021). Guyana's Smart Health Care Facilities Project aims to retrofit health care facilities to be more resilient to natural disasters and climate change (Pan American Health Organisation, 2021).

Measures taken to adapt and build resilience of communities and economic sectors with a focus on the most vulnerable groups and SMEs (R 17) included initiatives which supported developing resilience of SMEs and developing community-based climate resilience for small-scale farmers and fisherfolk. In Saint Lucia, vulnerable farming communities were ensured water availability (Government of Saint Lucia, 2020a). The COVID-19 Response and Recovery Development Policy Loan in Barbados includes strengthening disaster risk financing and resilience policies and improving the insurance industry's disaster risk exposure (World Bank, 2021). In Antigua and Barbuda, the debt-for-climate swap initiative also aims to support resilience building of local small businesses and vulnerable groups through micro financing for climate change related projects (Government of Antigua and Barbuda, 2021a; 2021b). In Jamaica, the Production Incentive Programme supports capacity building of farmers and fisherfolk for climate change adaptation and mitigation, including via climate smart production practices and technologies (Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, 2021). In Guyana, one initiative aims to reduce flood risk vulnerability and promote climate resilience by supporting drainage and irrigation systems in the agriculture sector (Cooperative Republic of Guyana, 2021). In Trinidad and Tobago, attention was given to

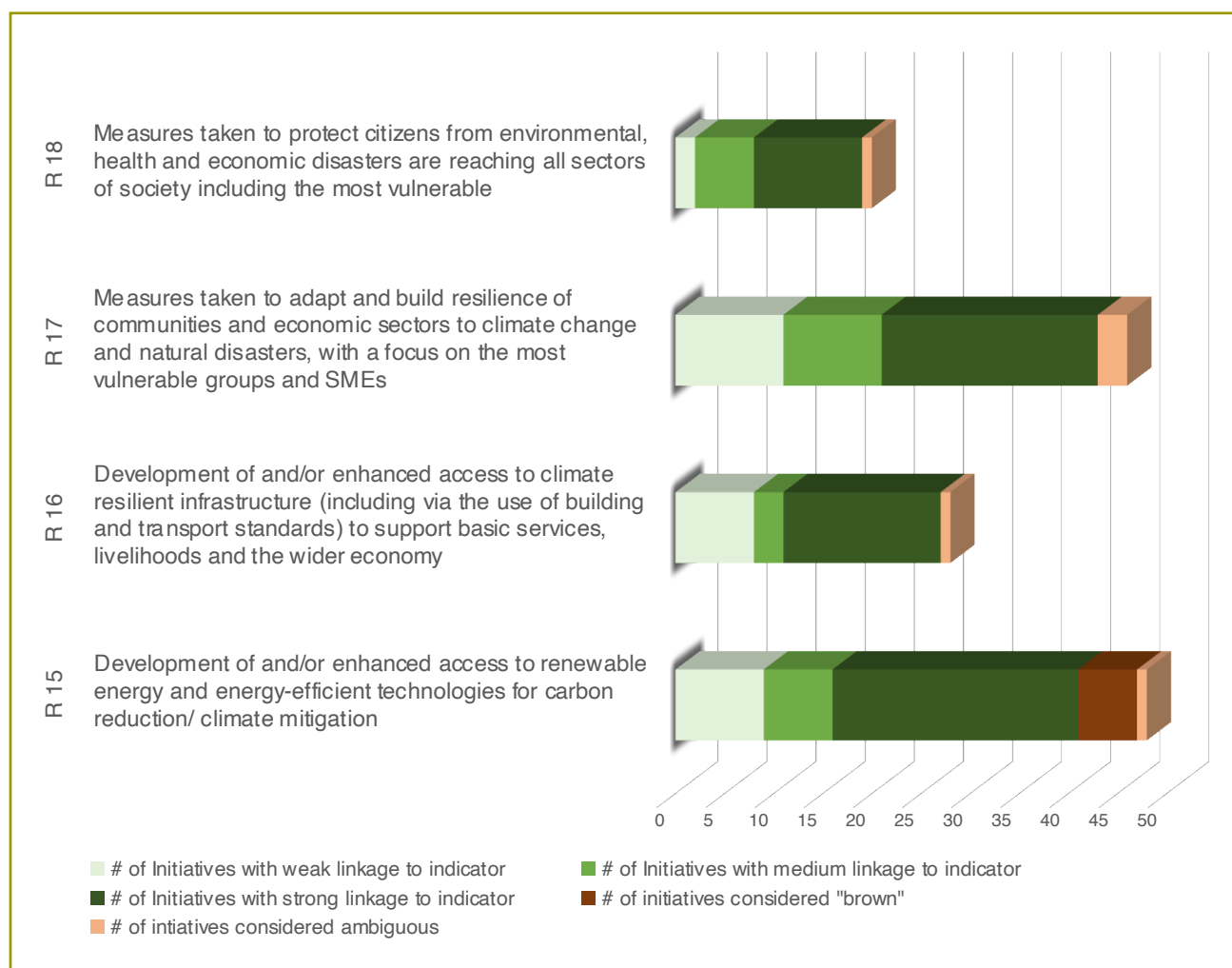
developing climate resilient agriculture systems, including recommendations for SMEs, small-scale fisheries, young persons and women (Office of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, 2020a; 2020b). Regionally, the Economic Inclusion and social protection to reduce poverty - Rural Social Protection Programme aims to support climate resilience in vulnerable rural households (Box 8) (FAO, 2021).

Initiatives which supported **long-term measures to protect from disasters** (R 18) focused on safeguarding vulnerable groups, strengthening institutional capacity, and developing support strategies. In Saint Lucia, the National Economic Recovery and Resilient Plan aims to safeguard livelihoods of Saint Lucian citizens using a multi-sectoral approach (Government of Saint Lucia, 2020a). For Antigua and Barbuda, support was provided

through strengthening of institutional capacity under the NDC (Government of Antigua and Barbuda, 2020). In Jamaica, one initiative included the development of a resilient tourism framework strategy under the Blue Ocean Strategy (Ministry of Tourism, 2021). In Guyana one initiative aims to support long-term measures related to the Low Carbon Development Strategy (Cooperative Republic of Guyana, 2021). Regionally, the Green Climate Fund aims to support green recovery through integration of COVID-19 and climate mitigation/adaptation strategies, increasing access to finance, development of finance mechanisms and aligning financing with sustainable development (Green Climate Fund, 2021).

'Brown' initiatives negatively impacting resilience (R 15) were mainly focused on initiatives related to the oil and gas sector.

Figure 9: 'Resilience' (R)



Box 7: Trinidad and Tobago's Solar Photo Voltaic Plants (R 15)

Trinidad and Tobago's national Budget Statement 2022 identifies the need for economic reform through the diversification of the energy sector. To do so, the Government aims to increase renewable energy output to support the local energy grid. One project identified is the development of two solar photo voltaic plants under a 'build-own-operate' scheme and is intended to supply 92.2 megawatts and 20 megawatts respectively. The US\$100 million project is expected to begin in 2023 with bpTT, Shell and Lightsource bpTT (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Finance, 2021).

Box 8: Economic Inclusion and social protection to reduce poverty - Rural Social Protection Programme (TEG 3, I 13, I 14, R 17)

This initiative is listed as part of the Food and Agriculture Organization's global COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme to support short and medium term recovery. This targets the Eastern Caribbean region, Dominican Republic and Haiti. It aims to improve resilience of rural/vulnerable communities (women, children, youths and Indigenous persons). The objectives of the programme, which targets vulnerable and poor households, include:

- developing rural social protection programme structures;
- scaling of nutrition sensitive social protection;
- strengthening response of systems to risk and shock through supporting contingency funds, early warning programming and climate adaptation;
- supporting resilience of rural households to COVID-19 and climate change threats; and
- strengthening linkages with economic inclusion processes (FAO, 2021).



Local green enterprise on display in Guyana.
Credit: CANARI



Small and Micro Enterprise Training in Kernahan Community, Nariva, Trinidad and Tobago. Credit: CANARI



Cleaning fish at Dennery fishing port, Saint Lucia.
Credit: CANARI



Rural woman collecting wood for charcoal production in Makote Mangrove, Saint Lucia. Credit: CANARI

5. Stakeholder perspectives

Feedback from Caribbean stakeholders engaged in interviews and focus groups is presented below.

5.1 Recovery priorities

Despite the stated intentions and in some cases definitions of ‘building back better’ in public sector COVID-19 recovery initiatives, there was a perception by stakeholders that the focus has been on returning to the status quo pre-COVID. Stakeholders suggested that short-term relief priorities are still being focused on, which detracts from recovery priorities. Concerns were expressed with labelling existing or previously conceptualised initiatives as COVID-19 recovery.

Stakeholders gave specific recommendations on priorities regarding the need to focus on ‘nano enterprises’ (i.e., smaller than micro enterprises) and monitoring and evaluation of MSMEs recovery. The tourism sector was highlighted as one of the main priorities for recovery. Here stakeholders identified the importance of a sustainable cross-sectoral approach rather than development of the traditional mass tourism product. Stakeholders also noted the importance of community-based agriculture to develop local food security and to support resilience building. Economic recovery through using nature-based solutions in community-based agriculture and eco-tourism activities was also highlighted.

The serious negative impact of the pandemic on the education sector was noted. The transitioning of the education system was also identified as a recovery priority area in terms of reskilling in ICTs to support young persons in a post-COVID economy. Linked with this, the importance of social justice to support empowerment of citizens was highlighted.

5.2 Role of civil society

Whilst there was agreement that civil society should play a role in recovery planning, there was uncertainty on the level of engagement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in development of the initiatives identified, given the understandably reactive approach to developing national recovery plans. Whilst there were some instances of diverse stakeholder involvement and participation, the overall consensus was that there was a lack of inclusion of CSOs in decision-making processes. Stakeholders felt that the expectation of CSOs, as outlined by national plans/discussions, was to implement policies and the role of CSOs was perceived as being narrowly in the roll out of social services.

Although some stakeholders highlighted that the nature of the pandemic deterred direct stakeholder engagement, it was felt that there is a need to strengthen the capacity of CSOs to support better collaboration (amongst CSOs themselves and also with the public sector) to contribute to national priorities and to support transformed economic governance. It was suggested that initiatives led by CSOs and the private sector should be included in further research so as to have a comprehensive sense of national responses.

5.3 Communication

Stakeholders felt there was inadequate communication to the general public about public sector COVID-19 initiatives and the status of these initiatives. They recommended that communication should be improved to allow for better public tracking of initiatives, engagement in roll out of initiatives, as well as for the public to take advantage of support provided. Stakeholders agreed with the need for better communication and education related to green, sustainable, resilient recovery policies and to also highlight benefits related to economic growth and jobs. They felt that wider stakeholder engagement could be conducted as restrictions were lifted.

5.4 Implementation

Implementation of recovery initiatives was viewed differently amongst the various stakeholders. Government stakeholders identified progress with implementation of initiatives and indicated that initiatives were aligned to stated intentions, particularly in the tourism sector. However, it was flagged that data was needed to support long-term monitoring and to track the impact of initiatives, and results will not be immediately seen for larger scale long-term projects. Other stakeholders noted challenges faced in implementation and opined that various commitments and crises have diverted attention away from COVID-19 recovery. It was also recommended that recovery needed to be more systematic, rather than ad hoc; there was a perceived lack of cohesion in implementing initiatives amongst government ministries/agencies. Stakeholders also felt that recovery may be reverting to the status quo pre-COVID.

Barriers and challenges experienced in delivering an inclusive, environmentally sustainable and climate resilient COVID-19 recovery included: lack of information provided on initiatives; lack of education on the benefits of recovery initiatives; inadequate baseline data/research

(particularly environmental data) to inform implementation and assess the impact of recovery initiatives; limited CSO capacity to engage in online recovery discussions; little involvement of diverse and community-based groups in decision-making processes; changes in national priorities; public perception of political bias in shaping recovery initiatives; lack of political will to action initiatives focused on climate resilience and environmental sustainability; limited access to technology affecting access to recovery benefits; limited financing of recovery initiatives; and funding reallocations due to shifting national priorities to support immediate economic growth.

Stakeholders perceived that national budgets were mostly allocated to support welfare or relief efforts and also that subsequent budget investments may not be aligned to intended recovery initiatives. Stakeholders expressed concern that there is the possibility that allocated recovery finances may be diverted to manage the impacts of unforeseen circumstances such as natural disasters and economic impacts due to the war in Ukraine.

The constrained access to international funding based on the income status of a country was highlighted as a major challenge in accessing resources, as many Caribbean countries are considered high or middle income and ineligible for overseas development assistance. Government stakeholders highlighted that access to other sources of financing (e.g., climate financing) can drive economic growth and transformation post-pandemic.

5.5 Monitoring and evaluation

Overall stakeholders felt that there was a lack of monitoring and evaluation of COVID-19 recovery initiatives given the lack of clarity on both the status of initiatives and the metrics used to measure implementation (e.g., it was uncertain whether recovery initiatives will be tracked in future budget statements). Stakeholders identified the need for clear monitoring indicators.

National tracking of recovery initiatives, when highlighted by government stakeholders, was often done through individual ministries' work plans and were sector specific; often the information was solely for internal use. Stakeholders recommended that socio-economic statistics and other data can support tracking and assessment of the impact of recovery initiatives, but weak capacity of agencies to collect recovery data was flagged as an issue. The importance of accessing data from the private sector was noted; it was suggested that the private sector should be encouraged to publish and share their data. Stakeholders also suggested engaging academia to support with data collection and research,

as well as gathering data directly from citizens related to access to and impact of recovery initiatives. It was noted that the media needs to play a greater role in reporting on monitoring and evaluation, though limited capacity in this type of investigative journalism was highlighted. It was noted that CSOs may also be able to support with monitoring and evaluation.

Stakeholders highlighted the need to leverage existing databases and recommended aggressive digitisation to capture, analyse and share data more easily and efficiently to inform processes.

Stakeholders noted that the research did not look at allocation of funding for initiatives (as comprehensive information was not available) so the number of sectoral initiatives did not reflect budgetary allocations for that sector. This was identified as a limiting factor in the research and as a potential subject for future research. This could be used as a monitoring and evaluation tool by tracking budget allocated versus budget spent. Stakeholders called for accountability in the use of funds for recovery at the local level.

5.6 Reflection and learning

Stakeholders felt that by late 2022, governments were no longer in reactive or relief mode; recovery plans could therefore be revisited and reassessed to ensure long-term recovery and resilience in response to another potential crisis. Lessons learnt from development of the COVID-19 recovery strategies and plans could be assessed using a cross-sectoral perspective and engaging key stakeholders. Regional sharing of experiences and lessons learnt would help to inform the region's response to other crises.



Tourism on Pigeon Island, Saint Lucia. Credit: Nicole Leotaud

6. Conclusion

This mapping of Caribbean COVID-19 recovery initiatives planned by the public sector reveals opportunities for ‘building back better’ through contributing to transforming economic governance, ensuring more inclusive economic development, increasing focus on environmental sustainability and addressing threats from climate change in the Caribbean. The highest priorities emerging in public sector initiatives were around enhancing support for MSMEs, development of and/or enhanced access to renewable energy/energy-efficient technologies, digitisation and technological innovation and enhanced efficiency in the use of resources and management of waste.

But the mapping also points to areas where more emphasis is needed, for example explicit focus on micro enterprises and building climate resilient infrastructure. Significant gaps in priorities for long-term transformation will also need to be addressed, including shifting to participatory, bottom-up and decentralised economic decision-making and national development planning; supporting development and use of comprehensive wealth accounting systems; and managing transboundary ecological systems using ecosystem-based approaches.

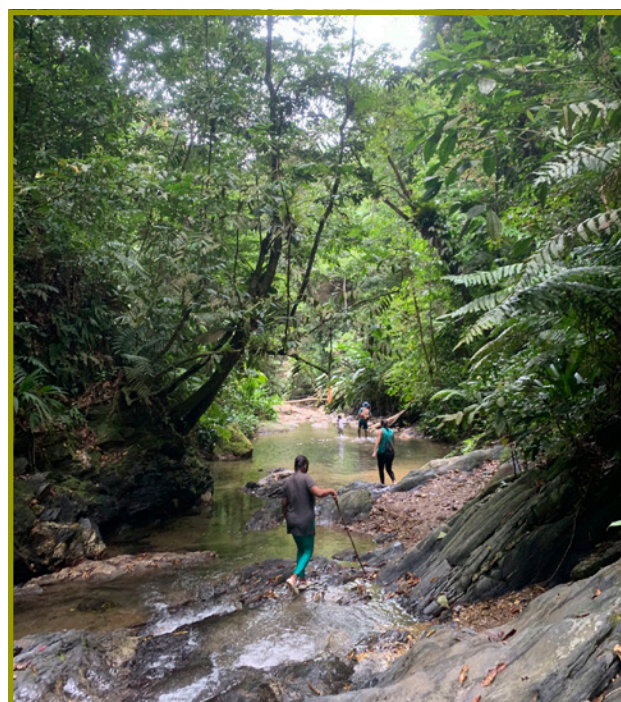
But even where the stated aims of initiatives aligned with indicators for ‘building back better,’ Caribbean stakeholders questioned the degree to which these initiatives and the stated aims reflected a real commitment to transformation in the region. Certainly, the real development priorities for Caribbean governments will only be clear when we move beyond recommendations and policy statements to development of concrete plans and programmes, allocation of finance and other resources, and implementation. Moving forward, transparent monitoring, evaluation and reporting on these initiatives will reveal the extent to which they can actually contribute to transforming development in the Caribbean. This will help to build trust, stimulate collaboration and attract resources.

Engagement of stakeholders in shaping these medium- and long-term recovery priorities was generally limited, although a number of governments established multi-stakeholder advisory committees or otherwise engaged key stakeholders. As the region moves forward to further develop, implement and evaluate COVID-19 recovery initiatives as part of national and regional development, open dialogue and effective engagement of stakeholders will be important to identify or refine priorities, design initiatives and foster partnerships.



Local enterprise, Twigs Naturals, displaying its products at UpMarket, Trinidad. Credit: CANARI.

Honest and open reflection on the lessons learnt from developing these COVID-19 recovery initiatives can help to inform a more collaborative approach moving forward with ongoing recovery from the pandemic, as well as a Caribbean strategy for a more inclusive and strategic response to other risks faced by the region.



Nature recreation in Matura Forest, Trinidad. Credit: Nicole Leotaud

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Caribbean Natural Resources Institute

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) is a regional technical institute which has been working in the islands of the Caribbean for over 30 years. Our mission is to promote and facilitate stakeholder participation in the stewardship of natural resources in the Caribbean.

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