

Impact of climate change in the Caribbean



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Good afternoon. My name is Carol Infanti. I am the Assistant Programme Director for Prosperity.

In this section of the programme we are going to hear about how climate change is impacting in the Caribbean.

You are going to hear from 5 speakers, we hope you enjoy it.

Climate impact & action in the Caribbean

- Climate impact on children – Carol Infanti, APD
- Projects in Trinidad – Susan Roopnarinesingh PAC
Chair for the T & T National Association
- Caribbean Network – Debra Joseph, Acting PAO
- Projects in Barbados – Ayushi Kundu, APD
- How women contribute to climate change resilience
strategies - Dr Renata Ramsaywak-Lalla

In the first part, I will give an overview across the whole of the Caribbean, focussing on the impact on children,

then we will hear from Susan about what clubs have been doing in Trinidad to raise awareness of climate change.

Debra will speak about the Caribbean Network

Next we will hear from Ayushi who will showcase club projects from Barbados.

And finally we will hear from our guest speaker Renata who will talk about climate change resilience strategies.

Impact of climate change in the Caribbean - children are being uprooted

Six-fold increase in number of children uprooted as a result of climate change – UNICEF 2019

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean



The 29 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean are home to 43 million people, including 12.6 million children.

In recent years, these children and their families have become among the most vulnerable people in the world, to being driven from their homes by drought, storms and flooding – events that are increasing in intensity and frequency because of climate change and a warming planet.

Forced displacement from hurricanes can be relatively short term or last for years as communities rebuild homes, roads, bridges, power networks, agriculture, schools, hospitals, water and sanitation systems.

Children are particularly vulnerable during population displacements, especially if their parents are killed or they are separated from their families.

Displaced children are also at increased risk from diseases such as measles and respiratory infections, which can thrive in overcrowded conditions in emergency shelters.

Indigenous
women and rural
women play a
very important
role in addressing
climate change



Photo: UN Women. UN Women supported the group to bring farms back into production post-hurricane

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Climate change and global warming are challenges that place future resources, development and prosperity of citizens at risk.

Hazards such as rising sea levels, warming temperatures, deforestation, more frequent and extreme weather events, place the Caribbean at higher risk, to the point of coastal communities and entire islands potentially disappearing if the dangers of global warming are not addressed collectively and urgently.

For the Caribbean, the estimated annual cost of inaction could total \$10.7 billion by 2025, \$22 billion by 2050 and \$46 billion by 2100, representing 5 percent, 10 percent and 22 percent of the region's GDP, respectively (Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, 2012).

Without urgent action to mitigate the effects of climate change, the increasing proportion of severe storms would likely result in high levels of forced displacement in the coming decades.

Women play a very important role in addressing climate change, specifically in efforts to ensure food security in their households and their countries.

The impact of climate change affects everyone in different ways, but gender discrimination makes women especially vulnerable.

This is particularly true in the case of indigenous women and rural women, whose conditions of life and marginalization put them at greater risk.

In the past five years, the number of people internally displaced by storms and flooding increased in the Caribbean Small Island States.



Kevin, age 7, returns with his mother to find what was left of his home. (Nov 2020)

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In the 4 years 2014 to 2018, 3.4 million people, including 761,000 children, were internally displaced.

This is an increase approximately of 600,000 children who were displaced in the preceding five-year period from 2009 to 2013.

Photo - Kevin, aged 7, returned with his mother to his community and only found the rubble of what was once his home. The 475 families that inhabited the community were left without a home and livelihood. 25 November 2020.

Children returned with their mother to this community and only found the rubble of what was once home. (Nov 2020)



A Category 5 storm has winds of at least 157 miles per hour.
A Category 4 storm has winds of at least 130 miles per hour.

The primary cause of the dramatic increase in forced displacement was a series of catastrophic tropical cyclones or hurricanes that hit the region between 2016 and 2018 – including four Category 5 and two Category 4 storms.

We know that many women have agricultural or farming businesses. They are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and natural hazards such as hurricanes. For example, stronger storms cause floods, landslides and power outages.

Have you also thought about the fact that climate change and environmental degradation exacerbate the drivers of modern slavery, with out a home or food people are vulnerable, and are more likely to be caught up and exploited in slavery, and of course we know that many women are subjects of modern day slavery.



For children, climate-related forced displacement places their lives, health, education and well-being at risk.

9 year old Jacey, with her dog Sassy, after hurricane Maria tore her family's home apart on Dominica.



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Scientists agree that a changing climate means children and families who live in the Caribbean Small Island States can expect to experience an increase in the number of Category

4 and 5 hurricanes in the coming decades.

As a result, damage to infrastructure, agricultural land, essential services and livelihoods is expected to increase the level of population displacement within and across borders.

This forced displacement poses serious risks.



Not only are the storms becoming stronger, but there is increased precipitation

Mariah sweeps her 'front porch' following hurricane Irma in Sept 2017



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Supercharged hurricanes, linked to the effects of climate change, essentially “take heat” from the ocean, which results in heavy rainfall and a high risk of flooding.

The warming of oceans, is probably caused by “human-induced climate change.”

In 2017, Hurricane Maria had the highest total averaged rainfall of any storm to hit Puerto Rico since 1956.

It is likely that extreme precipitation will continue because of long-term trends being seen in increased atmospheric, sea and surface temperatures.

Photo - November 2019, Mariah sweeps the plastic sheet in front of the tent that is her temporary home, on the island of Barbuda, part of the country of Antigua and Barbuda. At that time approximately 40 people in Barbuda still live in tents as a result of damage caused by Hurricane Irma in September 2017.



This is what remains (Nov2019) of Gloria's home after the storm in 2017. She can't afford to rebuild her home for herself and 8 children aged 7 – 27 years old.



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In September 2017, Gloria's family was evacuated from Barbuda to its sister island, Antigua, during Hurricane Irma.

Gloria, a mother of eight children, recalled that a friend took the family in for their first night.

Gloria and her children have moved three more times* since, staying for a time in a hotel that served as a temporary shelter. The shelter closed in April 2019, leaving Gloria with no choice but to rent a house for the equivalent of more than US\$520 per month. Today, she lives from pay cheque to pay cheque.

*(The date of the report 2019)



Actions

- Put women and children at the heart of climate change strategies.
- Recognise women and children as agents of change.
- Take action to reduce inequality.
- Reduce emissions and pollution.

1. As those who have contributed the least to climate change, and yet will suffer its effects the most, women and children should receive the strongest protections from its effects.

Protecting them requires a holistic approach; departments of the environment must work together with public, private and civil society sectors to create partnerships, institutional arrangements and climate finance.

2. Children and young people have already taken the lead on advocating for better policies to mitigate climate change and its effects; it is time for us all to join in and work with them to identify solutions.

3. When a disaster hits, families from the poorest households are the most likely to be displaced for the longest time, and with the least access to vital financial and social resources.

4. We need ambitious commitments and actions from governments and businesses, to reduce global emissions and pollution, to levels that avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

Cutting emissions requires low carbon development, a robust legal framework and more sustainable energy solutions such as solar, wind and hydro.

We can all do something to help.

Tiquanisha 5, pushes her sister Tiquania, 2, on a swing tied to a tree outside their home in Anguilla, which was hard hit by Hurricane Irma.

“The kids have seen everything turned upside down,” said their mother.
“Somehow, the swing was pretty much the only thing left standing.”



We may not be able to prevent natural disasters from happening, but we can avoid the ripple effects of global warming and extreme weather events, if we address climate change and particular coastal challenges today.

Working towards a holistic climate-change agenda, not only means ensuring the survival of Small Island States (SIDS) in the Caribbean, but also means coordinating efforts to produce a more resilient, secure and prosperous world for the future.

I would now like hand over to Susan who is going to tell you about some of the projects that clubs in Trinidad have been doing to mitigate climate change.