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Research Report *on Trade Union engagement in* *UNSDCFs in Suriname, Barbados &* *Jamaica.*



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Research conducted by



Situation analysis of **trade union engagement in United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) in Suriname, Barbados & Jamaica**



Research Report

September 2023

Content

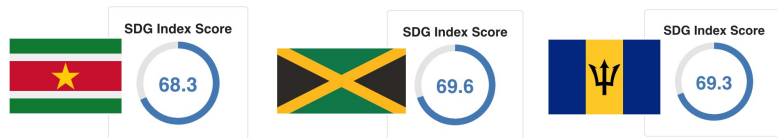
	Page
Introduction	4 – 5
Methodology	6 – 7
- Objective	
- Research timeline	
- In-depth interview participants	
- Research approach	
Desk Research Findings	8 - 13
Primary Research Findings	14 – 15
Research Findings:	
Suriname	16 – 19
Barbados	20 – 22
Jamaica	23 – 25
Summary	26
Conclusions & Recommendations	27
References & Appendix	28 – 30

Background

Among the 193 UN Member States the progress on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) varies between the different countries per region. Within Latin America and the Caribbean, countries face profound challenges in achieving the SDGs.

Against the backdrop of low growth in the world's major economies in conjunction with inflationary pressures, both stemming from the crisis caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic as well as the conflict in Ukraine, the region faces many challenges related to governance, policymaking and institutional partnerships ¹.

For three of the smaller Caribbean countries Suriname, Jamaica & Barbados the following SDG Index score to date has been realized:



The United Nations (UN) General Assembly resolution (A/RES/72/279) elevated the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) as “*the most important instrument for planning and implementation of the UN development activities at country level in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda).*” [UN development system reform 101 | United to Reform](#)

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) was established to support the achievement of the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals. This is an important instrument for planning and implementing UN development activities at a national level. But before the UNSDCF can be implemented, a Common Country Analysis is carried out with the help of national parties to describe the development situations of that country. Under national leadership and throughout its entire cycle, the Cooperation Framework is a vehicle for identifying development solutions through inclusive social dialogue.

¹ UN Report: Halfway to 2030 in Latin America and the Caribbean - *Progress and recommendations for acceleration*, UN publication 2023
https://caribbean.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/Halfway%20to%202030%20in%20Latin%20America%20and%20the%20Caribbean%20%E2%80%94%20Progress%20and%20recommendations%20for%20acceleration_o.pdf

Background

While the Cooperation Framework is first and foremost a partnership between the UN and the Government, it is a commitment to a broad range of stakeholders, including trade union organizations. The ILO Governing Body mandated the Director-General to take leadership in ensuring tripartism and the specific role of the social partners in the implementation of the UN resolution and related interagency coordination mechanisms, including on how to preserve the ILO's tripartite governance structure, normative mandate, and programmatic priorities.

The 2030 UN agenda is well into its fifth year of preparation and implementation and the time is opportune to take stock of emerging good practices at the national level in terms of **Trade Union (TU) engagement and influence**, as these stakeholders play a crucial part in tripartite structures that enable effective social dialogue.

This study will explore experiences, lessons learned and emerging good practices of TU's engagement in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks in selected small island states in the Caribbean: Suriname, Barbados & Jamaica.

The findings will form the basis of an "Interregional exchange on trade union engagement in UNSDCFs: a south-south cooperation initiative between small island states in Asia-Pacific and the Caribbean".

Objective

This study aims to support ILO ACTRAV in conducting a situation analysis on Trade Union engagement in United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCFs) in selected small island states in the Caribbean (Suriname, Barbados & Jamaica) to know more about TU's experiences, emerging good practices, lessons learned, and the challenges faced in engaging and influencing UN cooperation frameworks.

Research timeline

Desk research:	February 2023
Interviews conducted: <i>(with the use of virtual online platforms: Zoom – Teams – WhatsApp video calling)</i>	March 2023 – April 2023
Reporting:	May – June 2023

In-depth interviews with 7 participants

Trade Union (TU) representatives interviewed:

- A. Suriname:**
 - I. Foundation Training Institute for the Trade Union Movement – Chairman
 - II. The Progressive Labour Federation (Central - 47) – Chairman
 - III. Progressive Employee Organization – Chairman
- B. Barbados:**
 - IV. Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados – General Secretary
 - V. Barbados Workers' Union – General Secretary
- C. Jamaica:**
 - VI. Confederation of Trade Unions – Chairwomen
- D. UN-Resident Coordinator:**
 - VII. UN – RCO for Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten.

Research Approach

Desk research

This research will provide descriptive insights to outline the situation of union participation in the respected countries. This will encompass:

- 1. A description of the structures** which affect the union participation in each country
- 2. Identification of good practices and lessons learnt** from TU participation in the UN cooperation frameworks, highlighting what worked well and what facilitated this, what did not work well and why.
- 3. Identification of key persons** for more in-depth information provision.

With the realization that the Trade Unions did not have much information about the UNSDCF and the CCA, the open interview technique was used where their answers were acknowledged and further questioned accordingly to continue their valuable interview time.

**1. Desk
research**

**2. In-depth
interviews**

3. Reporting

In-depth interviews with key persons

This will provide explanatory insights regarding the situation and structures which effect the union participation in each country. With this method we will gain descriptive insights of how TU's have participated in the formulation of the respective Common Country Analysis (CCAs) and UNSDCF's at country level, highlighting opportunities and challenges that either facilitated or constrained participation.

Reporting

This report will serve as a qualitative reflection on how the TUs have participated in UNSDCF's and used the Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) to advance the decent work agenda in the UN cooperation frameworks. It will also provide main thematic conclusions and recommendations related to more effective TU engagement regarding their involvement in the UN agenda.

Desk Research Findings

UN Cooperation Frameworks – *How does it work?*

The Cooperation Framework (CF) guides the entire UN country team programme cycle, driving planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of collective UN support for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

The Cooperation Frameworks are rooted in **four key objectives**³:

1. They must clearly articulate the United Nations' collective response to help countries address national priorities and gaps in their pathway towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Cooperation Framework is a vehicle for supporting economic transformation, offering options to reframe economic policies and practices around sustainability for inclusive, diversified and job-intensive economic transformation that advances the rights and well-being of all citizens, strengthens economies and protects the planet.
2. The Cooperation Framework must embody the spirit of partnerships that are at the core of the 2030 Agenda. That means partnerships with host governments, but also partnerships with all stakeholders—civil society, academia, parliaments, the private sector, bilateral partners—to leverage everyone's strengths and drive transformative change.

3. The Cooperation Frameworks must help turn the collective promise of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind into tangible action for people on the ground, especially the most vulnerable. UN country teams will need, more than ever, to move beyond national averages to look at more specific data, with a strengthened focus on inclusion and tackling inequalities.
4. The Cooperation Frameworks must provide UN country teams with the tools to tailor responses to specific national needs and realities, ensuring that all UN entities, whether present on the ground or not, can effectively support national implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

³ Source: <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/cooperation-framework>

Desk Research Findings

Role of Trade Unions in the UN Cooperation Frameworks

Tripartism has been a defining feature in the fulfilment of the ILO's social mandate. The Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) cultivates productive and constructive relations between the ILO and workers' organizations by acting as a link between them. Workers' organizations are in this context encouraged to be more active in the UN sustainable development processes to emphasize their experiences, their perspectives in relation to the economy, employment and jobs, social protection, social dialogue and collective bargaining, occupational safety and health as well as on working conditions in general.

UN reforms, or rather the ongoing UN Cooperation Framework processes, are there to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 2030, ensuring that no one is left behind and that includes workers and their organizations. At the same time, TUs must be pro-active by arming themselves with the necessary knowledge and tools for influencing the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the UN Cooperation Frameworks.

The ILO will continue to support ongoing efforts of bringing the voice of workers to the centre of the SDG Agenda 2030.

ACTRAV commissioned a [baseline assessment based on the views of TU officials and technocrats from across the globe](#)²

The baseline findings offer a mixed picture of positive and negative prospects.

Overall, there is:

- + Consensus amongst TUs that progress towards SDG 8 was already lagging before the global COVID-19 outbreak.
- + Aspects such as securing safer working environments and stimulating employment creation will be prioritised.
- + Most TU leaders expect their organizations' SDG work to gain more prominence in the future.

³ Source: [Trade Union Movement: Trade Unions' engagement is key to implement the UN Reform and the Agenda 2030 \(ilo.org\)](#)

Desk Research Findings

UNSDCF in the Caribbean Region

The United Nations Sustainable Development Corporation Framework is a new approach where the government is included in the planning, implementation and reporting of the 2023 Agenda actions. This framework is beneficial for a country, because:

1. It represents a commitment to the most marginalized and vulnerable people in the country.
2. It involves a broader range of stakeholders, which leads to inclusive dialogue.
3. This framework leverages all sources of sustainable financing and investments towards reaching the 2030 goals.

In the Caribbean region a **Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (MSDCF)**⁴ included the coordinated plan of action for 22 UN Agencies in the English and Dutch speaking Caribbean for the period January 2022 to December 2026. The MSDCF brings together the work of five RC system offices, and relevant agencies with programmes in the Caribbean, to achieve a common goal for the region.

This MSDCF for the Caribbean focuses on **four priority areas** linked to 8 MSDCF Outcomes:

1. Shared prosperity and economic resilience (prosperity);
2. Equality, well-being and leaving no one behind (people);
3. Resilience to climate change and sustainable natural resource management (planet);
4. Peace, safety justice and rule of law (peace).

SDG TARGETS	1 SHARED PROSPERITY AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE	2 EQUALITY, WELL-BEING AND LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND	3 RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	4 PEACE, SAFETY, JUSTICE AND THE RULE OF LAW
SDG TARGETS	1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.a, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 9.2, 9.3, 17.1, 17.3, 17.4	1.a, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.7, 3.a, 4.1, 4.4, 5.1, 5.3, 5.4, 5.6, 10.2, 10.3, 10.4, 10.7, 16.b.1, 17.18	1.5, 2.1, 2.4, 6.5, 7.2, 7.a, 11.5, 11.b, 12.a, 12.2, 12.4, 12.7, 13.1, 13.2, 13.b, 14.2, 15.1, 15.3, 15.a, 17.9, 17.16	5.1, 5.2, 5.a, 5.b, 5.c, 5.5, 10.4, 10.7, 11.1, 11.2, 11.7, 16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.4, 16.5, 16.6, 16.7, 16.10, 16.a, 16.b
MSDCF OUTCOMES	OUTCOME 1 More productive and competitive business ecosystems designed to improve people's standards of living and well-being.	OUTCOME 3 National governments and regional institutions use relevant data to design and adopt laws and policies to eliminate discrimination, address structural inequalities and ensure the advancement of those left furthest behind.	OUTCOME 5 Caribbean people, communities, and institutions have enhanced their adaptive capacity or inclusive, gender responsive Disaster Risk Management and climate change adaptation and mitigation.	OUTCOME 7 Regional and national laws, policies, systems, and institutions improve access to justice and promote peace, social cohesion, and security.
	OUTCOME 2 The Caribbean has fully transitioned to a more diversified and sustainable economy that supports inclusive and resilient economic growth	OUTCOME 4 People in the Caribbean equitably access and utilize universal, quality and shock-responsive, social protection, education, health, and care services.	OUTCOME 6 Caribbean countries manage natural resources and ecosystems to strengthen their resilience and enhance the resilience and prosperity of the people and communities that depend on them.	OUTCOME 8 People in the Caribbean and communities actively contribute to and benefit from building and maintaining safer, fairer, more inclusive, and equitable societies

⁴ Results Report 2022 of the UN Barbados & Eastern Caribbean Office
<https://uninfo.org/location/197/unct-overview>

Desk Research Findings

UNSDCF in the Caribbean Region

Conducting a Common Country Analysis (CCA) is needed for effectively developing a country's Corporation Framework. In 2021 a **Caribbean Common Multi-Country Analysis (CMCA)** was developed and preceded the Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework (MSDF) 2022-2026 for the Caribbean region. This analysis also included Suriname, Barbados & Jamaica. Human rights standards and principles were integrated and articulated throughout the CMCA, which is evidence-based, data-driven, and participatory, centred on a consultative process that engaged stakeholders to reflect on regional and cross-border dimensions of national priorities. Regional information was also reviewed which included policies, strategies, reports, and other related documents from regional stakeholders, as well as data on important development indicators and progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from UN agencies, multilateral organizations, and International Financial Institutions ⁴. This country analysis study indicated that the SDGs are not on track in Caribbean countries. While progress has been achieved by some countries, for the region as a whole, only 5 per cent of SDGs have been reached and more than half of countries face 'stagnating' or 'decreasing' progress

The initial key issues highlighted as common between 13 of the 22 countries in the Dutch- and the English-speaking Caribbean can be summarized in the topics of *data, jobs/the economy, climate emergency, corruption, human capital development, food security; citizen security, inequality and clean and cheap energy.*



A Common Country Analysis for **Suriname** was drafted in 2011-2016 through desk research efforts. Suriname was afterwards included in the Caribbean Common Multi-Country Analysis of 2021.



Jamaica's Common Country Analysis was conducted in 2020. <https://uninfo.org/location/139/unct-overview>



Barbados' Common Country Analysis was conducted in 2020. <https://uninfo.org/location/197/unct-overview>

In Jamaica, the CCA was prepared by the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator for Jamaica, the Bahamas, Bermuda, Turks and Caicos & Cayman Islands. In Barbados the CCA was prepared by the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator of Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean.

⁴ Source: *Caribbean Common Multi-country Analysis (CMCA)* 2021

Desk Research Findings

UNSDCF in the Caribbean Region

Based on the most recent UN Annual Reports of Suriname, Jamaica and Barbados, there seems to be no specific mention of social dialogue mechanisms where for example Trade Union representatives played a major part in the SDG development processes.

A commonality in these reports was that Caribbean countries show major data gaps for evidence-based monitoring of the SDG and policy making to address the needs of the most vulnerable. Basic datasets (like civil registration and vital statistics [CVRS] and censuses) are missing which translates into a major governance issue, for governments, the UN and other development stakeholders.

Findings from the CMCA going forward to the next Cooperation Framework indicate that SDGs are not on track in Caribbean countries. While progress has been achieved by some countries, for the region as a whole, only 5 per cent of SDGs have been reached and more than half of countries face 'stagnating' or 'decreasing' progress ⁵.

⁵Source: *Caribbean Common Multi-country Analysis (CMCA) 2021*

Official signing of the MSDCF 2022 – 2026

- On December 17, 2021, as **Barbados** celebrated its 55th anniversary of UN membership, UN Resident Coordinator, Didier Trebucq and Prime Minister of Barbados The Hon. Mia Mottley, signed the MSDCF during an in-person ceremony, on behalf of the UN Development System and the Government of Barbados.
- In February 2022, **Suriname's** Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and International Business co-signed the Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (MSDCF) 2022 – 2026.
- In March 2022, **Jamaica's** Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson Smith and United Nations Resident Coordinator, Dr. Garry Conille signed the Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (MSDCF) 2022 – 2026 during an official signing ceremony.

All three countries have also committed to developing Country Implementation Plans (CIP) through efforts of National Steering Committees.



Desk Research Findings

MSDCF Priorities in the Caribbean Region

<p>1</p> <p>SHARED PROSPERITY AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE</p> <p>1</p> <p>MORE PRODUCTIVE AND COMPETITIVE BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM DESIGNED TO IMPROVE PEOPLE'S STANDARDS OF LIVING AND WELL-BEING.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>EQUALITY, WELL-BEING & LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND</p> <p>3</p> <p>NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS & REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS USE RELEVANT DATA & INFORMATION TO DESIGN & ADOPT LAWS AND POLICIES TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION, ADDRESS STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES & ENSURE THE ADVANCEMENT OF THOSE AT RISK OF BEING LEFT FURTHEST BEHIND.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE / SHOCKS & SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</p> <p>5</p> <p>CARIBBEAN PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES, AND INSTITUTIONS HAVE ENHANCED ADAPTIVE CAPACITY FOR INCLUSIVE, GENDER RESPONSIVE DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>PEACE, SAFETY, JUSTICE AND RULE OF LAW</p> <p>7</p> <p>REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LAWS, POLICIES, SYSTEMS, AND INSTITUTIONS IMPROVE ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND PROMOTE PEACE, SOCIAL COHESION, AND SECURITY.</p>
<p>2</p> <p>THE CARIBBEAN HAS FULLY TRANSITIONED TO A MORE DIVERSIFIED & SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY THAT SUPPORTS INCLUSIVE & RESILIENT ECONOMIC GROWTH.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>PEOPLE IN THE CARIBBEAN EQUITABLY ACCESS AND UTILIZE UNIVERSAL, QUALITY AND SHOCK-RESPONSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION, EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND CARE SERVICE.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES MANAGE NATURAL RESOURCES & ECOSYSTEMS STRENGTHENING THEIR RESILIENCE & ENHANCING THE RESILIENCE & PROSPERITY OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES THAT DEPEND ON THEM.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>PEOPLE IN THE CARIBBEAN AND COMMUNITIES ACTIVELY CONTRIBUTE TO AND BENEFIT FROM BUILDING AND MAINTAINING SAFER, FAIRER, MORE INCLUSIVE, AND EQUITABLE SOCIETIES.</p>

ENABLERS – INNOVATION – DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION – DATA AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS – ADVOCACY FOR DEVELOPMENT FINANCING – YOUTH AND CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT – REGIONAL INTEGRATION – INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING – ADVOCACY FOR PEOPLE AT RISK OF BEING LEFT BEHIND

GROUPS OF PEOPLE AT RISK OF BEING LEFT BEHIND: WOMEN AND GIRLS - REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS AND DISPLACED PERSONS – LGBTQI PEOPLE – PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES – YOUNG MALES IN MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES – PEOPLE LIVING IN REMOTE, POOR, RURAL AREAS – PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV – CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS – ELDERLY – INDIGENOUS

Primary research results

General Findings for all 3 countries: *Suriname – Barbados - Jamaica*

In general, the interviewed representatives of **TUs** from Suriname, Barbados & Jamaica **are not too familiar with the concept of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)**, however they were all aware of the Sustainable Development Goals and the country's commitment towards achieving them.

Upon further questioning the **TUs did not fully know what the Common Country Analysis encompasses**. Some of the respondents did know of its existence, but don't use its content in their daily operations. The level of active participation in these processes did differ per country. These were minimal to non-existent.

Because TU's do not appear to have significant knowledge of the UNSDCF – *what it stands for and what it exactly entails* - the interviews with the different TU's seem to have sparked their doubts on whether they were actively involved in the CF's creation processes.

All Trade Unions are willing to participate towards the UN Agenda 2030, with emphasis on SDG 8, and are open for guidance from third parties how to incorporate .

"Not directly familiarized with UNSDCF through active engagement . Generally familiar with the framework as being important for the realization of the SDG Agenda 2030."
– TU Barbados

"We were asked to name a representative to a committee that would be involved in ensuring that the SDGs are being implemented but I don't know if the committee held meetings post-COVID. From a confederation perspective we haven't been actively involved."– TU Jamaica

"There were different sessions and meetings held where we as Trade Unions were involved in providing our opinion on SDG matters."
– TU Suriname

Primary research results

General Findings for all 3 countries: *Suriname – Barbados - Jamaica*

Trade Unions in the Caribbean are recognized as an official entity in the labor force, to fight for equal and just rights of workers across all sectors. They all are bound by statutes and are recognized by the law in their respective countries.

TUs believe they have a much broader focus compared to CSO's. They voice the concerns of all workers and therefore do not solely focus on a single (sub)group, as CSO's tend to do.

"The CSOs are mainly focused on 1 issue, while the TUs have a much broader scope. So, when we sit down at the table, we show it in our discussions. We understand the issues of the day and provide our input on how we define national development." – TU Barbados

TUs have all shown willingness and openness to further build their knowledge and capacity towards UNSDCF's. They all have mentioned their lack of capacity in terms of human resources as well as more dedication of the members for TU-related research and more technical knowledge and skills.

TUs will benefit from the following initiatives:

- Capacity strengthening in order to contribute fully towards achieving the SDG's and the UN agenda 2030.
- Onboarding & training of SDG topics is very important given the growing need for succession (younger generations) within the TUs.
- Workers' issues across various industries need to be understood by all the TUs members operating in those industries.

Overall, it was mentioned that the development of the capacity in knowledge and skills of TU leadership should be a number one priority.

"In terms of training, there is opportunity for more, we can have a broader context, at enterprise and country level" – TU Barbados

Suriname

Research findings

Country Overview

As the 144th member state of the United Nations, Suriname has received more than 60 years of support from the United Nations through developmental and technical aid ([The United Nations in Suriname | United Nations in Suriname](#)). Suriname is also a part of the Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (MSDCF) for the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, covering the period 2022-2026. The United Nations is supporting Suriname especially in achieving the sustainable development goal 17: which focuses on interconnectedness and partnerships for achieving the SDG goals.



Suriname - Research Findings



TU Participation & involvement

TUs in Suriname are not aware of the existence, workings and their involvement in the UNSDCF. According to the interviewed chairmen of the TUs they do not have direct contact with representatives of ILO, rather the communication with ILO occurs through the government of Suriname and specifically the Ministry of Labor.

Tripartite involvement- or Trade Union participation is mostly logistically organized by the Ministry of Labor, who then invites the unions. According to the TU's, there's no structural participation.

"The communication lines are more often with the Ministry of Labor. There is some contact with the ILO to get acquainted with the new treaties and they provide input based on the practical examples that we provide."
– SIVIS Suriname

However, the TUs are very much aware and involved with the Decent Work Country Program (DWCP). There have been regional meetings with ILO in the past (in Brasilia and Panama), which led to the DWCP in Suriname and ultimately its success in this country. The focus of TUs are mainly on the improvement of social laws regarding health care, minimum wages and pension provisions.

The Ministry of Labor and the ILO are the two main authorities in Suriname that ensure Trade Union participation in CCAs (Common Country Analysis) and UN cooperation frameworks at national level. The ILO functions more as the facilitator that is responsible for introductions to new treaties and provides theoretical inputs on practical situations and examples that we discuss.

The stakeholders for the TUs are the civil society, the employers, private sector, the government and the ILO. Also known as the tripartite structure.

There are regular tripartite meetings where they discuss agreements and laws on matters regarding minimum wages, maternity leave and collective employment contracts. The interviews have shown that the Trade Unions do have a collaborative involvement when it comes to making decisions for the betterment of workers and working environments.

The activities or projects for new treaties are organized by the ILO, with training provided by an expert. Everything generally goes through the Ministry of Labor; however, the Trade Unions are not always up to date about new projects or training opportunities.

Suriname - Research Findings



Internal & External Challenges

The Suriname TUs mentioned many internal and external challenges they encounter in realizing decent union participation in UNSDCFs at the national level.

The mentioned **internal challenges** are:

- Internal clashes / difference of opinions within the union itself, between TU leadership and its representatives.
- There is no strong alliance and bond between the different TUs within the country, so it's harder to incorporate worker solutions at national level.
- As TUs only operate on small subsidies and contributions, there's no payroll for dedicated staff to conduct in-depth work for the unions. Most TU-members also have a fulltime job, so they don't have enough room to do dedicated research for TU-related issues.
- TUs consist mostly of senior-aged members, resulting in a 'greying' trend within TUs. "More young people need to be attracted to union work, but young people prefer a salary if you want their commitment and dedication" one interviewee mentioned.

"The trade unions would function better if they had staffed a scientific office with scientists who can conduct research and who can make policy proposals for the top of the trade union movement... The issue of rejuvenation in the trade union movement must play a role in the trade union movement. The point is that trade union movement is relatively small and subsidies and contributions are of little help... There is no payroll to conduct scientific research.

– Progressive Employee Organization

Alongside the internal challenges, the TUs also identified some **external challenges**, such as:

- The way certain SDG-related topics are presented by the ILO may come across as very 'far-fetched' and highly technical to workers' representatives. A possible cause is that little attention is paid to the involvement of the unions and the language barrier during the sessions.
- Stakeholders (especially unwilling employers and government) are not always willing to engage in dialogue and collaborate. Employer and government groups might not always perceive the TUs as counterparts for some SDG-related topics (for example climate change) or other national issues.

Suriname - Research Findings



Internal & External strengths & opportunities

Surinamese TUs identified capacity strengthening as one of the biggest opportunities to improve TU involvement in UNSDCFs. They require a need for succession and rejuvenation of older leadership within TUs through onboarding training in effective advocacy and utilizing ILO structures. According to the TUs this will be very important for a smooth transition of future leadership.

TUs also require insights on how to leverage funding opportunities and build human resource capacity. This can be achieved through technical assistance from foreign TUs and exchange of knowledge through seminars, workshops etc.

Investing in such events will have a positive impact on the capacity building of Suriname TUs in terms of gaining knowledge, sharing idea's and getting inspired and motivated as well.

"...various training related to international organization, trade unionism, strengthening of organization, issues that arise in the field of labor productivity, pensions, involvement of the trade union movement in government matters. Training for union leaders and employees. The quality of SIVIS can be increased because they have been idling for a while, partly due to the fact that funding is insufficient. If the funding were better, SIVIS would be much further along."

–SIVIS Suriname

Barbados

Research findings

Country Overview

The United Nations is supporting Barbados in the achievement of the Sustainable Development goals by developing a roadmap for governments ([Sustainable Development Goals | United Nations in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean](#)). Barbados its focus on achieving the SDG's lays in research, monitoring and more innovative structured approaches to national development. According to the SDG Mapping Report, Barbados made huge progress where 43 out of the 95 SDG targets have been met. It has been revealed that 92 % of the targets were either fully or partially aligned to the SDGs, with 48% aligned with gender and disability inclusion targets.

§ [Barbados Government Advancing on the SDGs | United Nations in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean](#)



Barbados - Research Findings



TU Participation & involvement

The TUs of Barbados are familiar with the UNSDCF, but not directly or actively engaged with the development of the framework. There's a general familiarity as it's part of the sustainable agenda for 2030 and important for the realization of the SDG's.

According to the TUs, they've not participated actively in the establishment of the Barbados UNSDCF and in the formulation of the CCA.

"Not active participation. We don't get invited. If invited, then it's last minute."
– Barbados Workers' Union

The TUs frequently request seats at the tables to ensure the involvement of all workers. Referencing to protocol 6, where the participation of the TUs are included. There is a Social Partnership Mechanism where it is intended to be measured in a tripartite context. However, in practise there are no clear agreements/work plans regarding union involvement. The often-late notice for providing information doesn't give the unions the opportunity to give input.

The TUs are not aware that agreements have been structured regarding the SDGs, nor of the existence of a committee for the CCA and UNSDF.

However, the Barbados TUs have a formal partnership and are recognized as official entities in the labor force. The TUs are also being recognized in their unique form as different from other citizen groups/Civil Society Organizations. In Barbados, trade unions are recognized as a unique entity, also given the fact that the structure of the Ministry of Labor has included the place of the trade unions in its portfolio. The tripartite structure consists of the Government, TUs and employers' organizations. There have been tripartite conferences and workshops which have resulted in improvement of the cost of living etc.

"They understand the role of trade unions. The CSOs are mainly focused on one issue, while the TUs have a much broader scope. So, when we sit around the table, we also make that clear in our discussions. We understand the issues of the day and we give our input on that and how we define national development."

– Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados

Barbados - Research Findings



Challenges, strengths and opportunities

The TUs in Barbados mentioned many internal and external challenges they encounter in realizing decent union participation in UNSDCFs at the national level.

The mentioned **challenges** are:

- The constituents undermine (pull down) the work of the union and there is sometimes lack of appreciation and acknowledgement of efforts.
- Lack of full-time staff to be able to deliver is a huge problem for getting things done and staying relevant.
- Collaboration within the tripartite structures is often missing. The TUs are either not getting invited or getting last minute invites, which leads to ineffective functioning of the tripartite structures.
- The UN Resident Country office based in Barbados used to be actively involved with the unions, but the interaction has been reduced down to minimal contact in the past years.

"The agenda item that needs attention is cooperation. Areas where cooperation is required, are left out to the government to send invites. The Government is not the only one that sets the agenda. The agenda is formed by the trade union and private sector."

– Barbados Workers' Union

The TUs have also placed emphasis on their strengths. One of the biggest strengths is **union solidarity** with 2 key agreed principles:

- (1) Being of the same mind and
- (2) Getting a seat at the table as a common body.

They also have the ability to reach- and communicate with the public by making themselves relevant.

In addition to converting the aforementioned challenges into opportunities, the TUs see even more opportunities in (online) training opportunities for example in financial capacity, new technologies, closing the gap workshops etc. Also granting funds for the TUs or enabling financial sources to provide for incomes for dedicated TU-members. Setting up a network of TUs from the region is also recognized as an opportunity for networking and exchanging information, as well as lessons learned.

Jamaica

Research findings

Country Overview

Jamaica, with its small open economy and robust political democracy and a population of approximately 2.8 million, has struggled to achieve sustained, inclusive economic growth and human development since its independence in 1962. Jamaica, similar to many countries globally, has had mixed progress on the SDGs and faces significant challenges in achieving the goals. Based on its current course, Jamaica is assessed to be on track to meet only two of the SDGs (SDG 8-Decent work and economic growth and SDG 5- Gender Equality), but with 'increased effort,' the country can achieve specific targets and potentially other SDGs (Sachs et al, 2021).



Jamaica – Research Findings



Participation & involvement

The Confederation Trade Union received communication from a specific government department with regard to ensuring the achievement of the SDGs. They were asked to name a representative to a committee that will be involved in ensuring that the SDGs are being implemented. This had happened before or during the COVID-19 period. The TU didn't get a report from any government representative, so there's no clarity if there's a committee for the UNSDF and the CCA. There's also unclarity in which stage the CCA or the framework currently is in Jamaica.

However, having no information is not the norm in Jamaica. Several social dialogue mechanisms are employed to deal with national issues, including labor issues. Jamaica consist of a Labor Advice Council, that advises the Ministry of Labor, as well as a tripartite committee. The national partnership council consists of multi-stakeholders, unions, private sectors, employers and the government.

There is active participation of TUs at national level, for example regarding crime issues, economic recovery, pandemic taskforce etc. However, the interviewed TU had no information of clear agreements/work plans at national level to encourage trade union involvement in achieving the SDGs.

"The general approach is to recognize that unions are representing key stakeholders; trade unions have fought that there is a distinction to not be seen as part of civil society but as an entity. Because it has a particular role of representing workers' rights and issues. Although, Some problems aren't brought to the attention of the Trade Unions."

– Jamaica Confederation of Trade Unions

Jamaica - Research Findings



Challenges, strengths and opportunities

Some **internal and external challenges** in realizing decent union participation at the national level in Jamaica, are:

- There are no human resources to do research and lobby work. The trade union officer has to do this type of work alongside the formal trade union work.
- Also lack of other resources such as know-how, finances and dedication.
- Many stakeholders don't identify Trade Unions as an interested stakeholder party regarding certain national issues. For example, many employers and governments don't regularly identify TUs as a group interested in discussing climate change issues.
- The economic trend in the world pushes workers' issues mainly in the direction of financial negotiations that need their immediate attention and less focus is placed on SDG-related topics from a TU perspective.

Strengths:

- The ability to quickly mobilize and gain insights and views from the workers' movement and therefore act as a vehicle for information flow.
- Because the general public is aware of the main structures of tripartism, they may voice concerns if TUs are not involved in certain discussions.
- The general understanding that the role of TUs has grown and has gained appreciation based on their path of development.

Currently there is a transition from 1 generation of trade unions to another. Older members are being replaced by younger members. Onboarding training is very important for the proper succession of the TUs, also training in how to utilize ILO structures, better understand the rules, issues and how to effectively advocate.

Opportunities for maximizing TU collaboration

Trade Unions (TUs) serve as essential advocates for workers' rights and well-being. As the older leadership within Caribbean TUs approaches retirement, it becomes increasingly evident that there is a pressing need for succession and rejuvenation. Creating a culture of ownership and awareness among TU members is pivotal to the union's continued success. By investing in onboarding, leveraging global labor structures, securing sustainable funding, and developing human resource capacity, TUs can ensure a seamless transition of leadership and effectively champion the rights and interests of workers. Additionally, training in governance, organizational skills, and key focus areas will equip TU leaders with the tools they need to navigate the challenges of the modern labor landscape.

Most of the Trade Unions equip themselves with the needed training or knowledge to try to keep up with technology. They suggest to facilitate a (online) training platform to create more opportunity for development across the region. According to the respondents Trade Unions would function better if they had capacity to conduct better real-time and factual based research or if they had easy access to data. These insights can provide them with substantiated arguments for better social dialogue.

In recent years, a notable absence of frequent contact and interaction has characterized the relationship between Trade Unions (TUs) and their resident UN coordinators. In fact, the majority of unions are unaware of the identity of their current Resident Coordinator (RC). This disconnect highlights a significant opportunity for enhancing trust and engagement between TUs and the UN Agenda 2023.

Moreover, a compelling case for increased collaboration among Caribbean TUs has emerged. These unions share common challenges and valuable lessons, making it imperative to establish a Trade Union Platform for Caribbean countries. Such a platform could substantially elevate the capacity and effectiveness of TUs in the region. A crucial aspect of this endeavor involves a deep understanding of the diverse sectors encompassed by TUs. This understanding is pivotal in addressing the myriad issues faced by workers. Emulating the operational approach of certain international trade unions, which prioritize sector-specific solutions, may hold promise for TUs in the Caribbean. This approach could potentially serve as a model for addressing the unique challenges faced by Caribbean workers.

This research study sheds light on the experiences and levels of comprehension among Trade Unions operating in Suriname, Barbados, and Jamaica regarding the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs). While differences exist among these unions, a **common thread emerges**: a substantial gap in comprehensive knowledge of the framework and practical application of Common Country Analysis information is evident across all three countries.

Furthermore, the study highlights a significant disconnect between Trade Unions and the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) in their respective countries. In many cases, Trade Union representatives were not even cognizant of the existence of such offices, let alone engaging in active collaboration.

This research underscores an overarching disparity between the focus of Trade Unions on SDG-related subjects and their primary day-to-day objectives. Bridging this gap is imperative for Trade Unions to effectively contribute to and leverage the opportunities presented by the SDGs, ultimately aligning their efforts with the broader global sustainability agenda.

Recommendations

1. A practical recommendation for better equipping Trade Unions in matters of the UN Agenda is to create an easy-accessible (online) platform and provide joined training in the different topics regarding UNSDCFs.
2. It might also be beneficial to create more customized training programs for Trade Unions on SDG topics, where they can easily experience the benefits and practical link to the day-to-day issues of their members.
3. The frequent and timely communication with Trade Unions can overall be improved, an active role of the RCO will certainly aid in that respect.
4. The selection of channels to communicate effectively must also be reviewed as many TU offices are not fully equipped with modern technology tools.
5. Sharing of best practices and lessons learned of TU experiences within the Caribbean region will be conducive to expanding their scope of understanding and appreciation towards the importance of UNSDCFs.

1. United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework – Internal Guidance. 3 June 2019.
2. [UN development system reform 101 | United to Reform](#)
3. [Trade Union Movement: Trade Unions' engagement is key to implement the UN Reform and the Agenda 2030 \(ilo.org\)](#)
4. United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation and Decent Work Agenda – A Trade Union Reference Manual. 2020
5. United Nations Common Country Analysis: Jamaica. December 2020
6. United Nations Common Country Analysis 2020 – Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean.
7. United Nations Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework - The English- And Dutch-speaking Caribbean 2022-2026
8. Caribbean Common Multi-Country Analysis (CMCA) 2021.

In-depth Survey Questionnaire

General

1. To what extent are you familiar with the principle of the UNSDCF?
2. To what extent are you familiar with the CCA (Common Country Analysis)?

Level of union involvement

3. In your opinion, to what extent did unions actively participate in the creation of Jamaica's/ Barbados UNSDCF (cooperation framework) and in the formulation of the Common Country Analysis (CCA)? (Formulation, implementation, monitoring)
4. What government structures are there in order to ensure union participation in CCAs (Common Country Analysis) and UN cooperation frameworks at the national level?
 - a. Which stakeholders?
 - b. How often are there meetings/activities?
 - c. What is your experience with these? (*Ask about effectiveness and areas for improvement*)
5. What clear agreements/work plans are there at the national level to encourage union involvement?

Stakeholders mapping

6. To what extent are unions in their unique form recognized as different from other citizen groups/Civil Society Organizations (CSO)?

Opportunities and challenges

7. What internal factors (among unions themselves) hinder or encourage union participation in UNSDCFs at the national level?
 - a) Internal strengths
 - b) Internal weaknesses
8. What external factors influence effective union participation in UNSCDFs at the national level?
 - a) What stimulates effective union participation?
 - b) What discourages effective union participation?
9. With regard to union involvement in UNSDCF, could you name some best practices?
 - a) If yes, what examples do you have and what were the success factors in these?
 - b) What works well and what could be improved?
 - c) What needs immediate change within the collaborative structures?
 - d) Is the Decent Country Work Program a best practice for union involvement?

Appendix

In-depth Survey Questionnaire (continued)

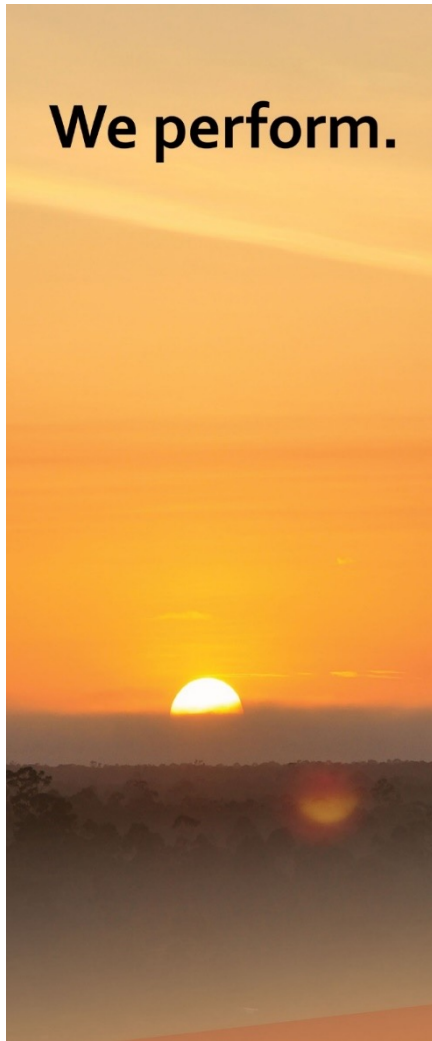
10. What type of capacity building is needed to support effective union engagement in their contribution to the CCA, UNSDCFs and other partnerships?
11. How are trade unions collaborating with the UN Resident coordinator of Suriname/Jamaica/Barbados?
12. Based on your experience, what would you recommend trade unions from other countries do in the context of the UNSDCF?

Note: *all questions were open-ended, and the questionnaire was semi-structured which left room for drilling-down on certain topics per interview.*

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