

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Sustainable Development Goals Unit (SDGU) in The Office of Prime Minister (OPM), is tasked with gathering and compiling the sourced information from various Ministries, Departments, Agencies, and Organizations within The Bahamas, to present to both local and international entities, as it relates to meeting the targets and objectives of each of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To this end, the SDGU would not have been able to present this year's 2021 Voluntary National Review (VNR) without the help of key stakeholders, including:

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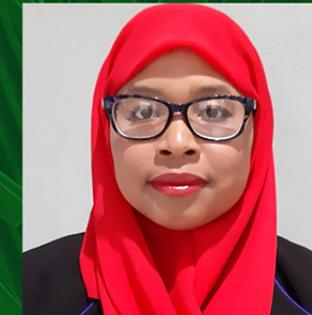


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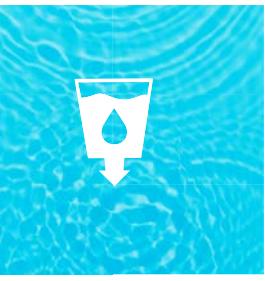
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ACRONYMS

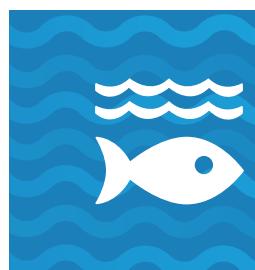
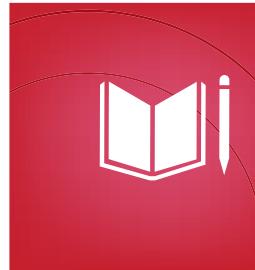
ACP - African Caribbean and Pacific
AHFS - Agriculture Health and Food Safety
AMI - Advanced Metering Infrastructure
BAHFSA - The Bahamas Agricultural Health & Food Safety Authority
BAHNORW - Bahamas Network of Rural Women Producers
BCCEC - Bahamas Chamber of Commerce and Employers Confederation
BDB - Bahamas Development Bank
BNGIS - Bahamas National Geographic Information Systems
BNT - The Bahamas National Trust
BPAF - Bahamas Protected Areas Fund
BPL - Bahamas Power and Light
BREEF - Bahamas Reef Environmental Educational Foundation
BTT - Bonefish and Tarpon Trust
BTVI - Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute
C2C - Click-to-Clear
CARDI - Caribbean Agricultural Research & Development Institute
CARPHA - Caribbean Public Health Agency
CBC - Caribbean Bee College
CBD - Convention on Biological Diversity
CBDC - Central Bank Digital Currency
CBOB - Central Bank of the Bahamas
CCI - Caribbean Challenge Institute
CCLIP - Contingent Credit Line for Investment Projects
CCT - Conditional Cash Transfer
CCTV - Closed-circuit Television
CDB - Caribbean Development Bank
CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CDEMA - Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
CEI - Cape Eleuthera Institute
CICI - Cat Island Conservation Institute
CIRT - Computer Incident Response Team
CIWIL - The Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership
COVID-19 - The Novel Corona-virus
CPA - Caribbean Philanthropic Alliance (CariPhilAlliance)
CPR - Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
CSA - Climate Smart Agriculture
CSO's - Civil Society Organizations
CSJP - Citizen Security and Justice Program
DARE - Digital Assets and Registered Exchange Act
DEHS - Department of Environmental Health Services
DEPP - Department of Environmental Protection & Planning
DGFA - Department of Gender & Family Affairs
DGP - Dignified Girls Project
DOCD - Department of Cooperatives Development
DRA - Disaster Reconstruction Authority
DTD - Department of Transformation & Digitization
DWCP - Decent Work Country Programme
ECMs - Energy Conservation Measures
EDF - European Development Fund
EDPU - Economic Development & Planning Unit
EHR - Electronic Health Record
EMIS - Education Management Information System
ePSR - Procurement and Supplier Registry
EPA - Economic Partnership Agreement



ACRONYMS

EU - European Union
FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization
FDI - Foreign Direct Investments
FOIA - Freedom of Information Act
FRA - Fiscal Responsibility Act
FY - Fiscal Year
GBBCS - Grand Bahama Beekeepers Cooperative Society
GBV - Gender Based Violence
GCF - Green Climate Fund
GDP - Gross Domestic Product
GEF - Global Environment Facility
GRAC - Gladstone Road Agricultural Centre
GII - Gender Inequality Index
GNI - Gross National Income
GOB - The Government of The Bahamas
GPA - Grade Point Average
HES - Household Expenditure Survey
HFH - Hands For Hunger
HLPF - High Level Political Forum
HOR - House of Rastafari
ICT - Information and Communications Technology
IDB - Inter-American Development Bank
IFMIS - Integrated Financial Management Information System
IICA - Inter American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
IIMS - Immigration Integrated Management System
ILO - International Labour Organization
IMEELS - Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea
IMF - International Monetary Fund
IOM - International Organization for Migration
IPPC - Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control
IPSAS - International Public Sector Accounting Standards
ITU - International Telecommunication Union
KPIs - Key Performance Indicators
LMS - Learning Management System
MIF - Multilateral Investment Fund
MIS - Management Information System
MNSS - Mental Neurological Substance use disorders and Self-harm
MOU - Memorandum of Understanding
MPAs - Marine Protected Areas
MSMEs - Micro Small and Medium sized Enterprises
MW - Megawatts
NCPD - National Commission for Persons with Disabilities
NDP - National Development Plan
NEMA - National Emergency Management Agency
NEP - National Energy Plan
NFDT - National Food Distribution Taskforce
NFI - National Forest Industry
NGOs - Non-Governmental Organisations
NHI - National Health Insurance
NHIA - National Health Insurance Agency
NIB - National Insurance Board
NPEP - New Providence Ecology Park Ltd.
NRW - Non-Revenue Water
NSS - National Statistics System
NTA - National Training Agency
NTC - National Tripartite Council
OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECS - Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
OIE - World Organization for Animal Health

Emergency Fund
USAID - United States Agency for International Development
VAT - Value Added Tax
VMS - Vessel Monitoring Systems
VNR - Voluntary National Review
WASH - Water Sanitation and Hygiene Services
WECAF - Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission
WHO - World Health Organization
WSC - Water and Sewerage Corporation
WTO - World Trade Organisation



1.0 OPENING STATEMENT



Figure 1. The Hon. Philip Davis Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas

The Bahamas is pleased to present its second Voluntary National Review (VNR) to the United Nations' 2021 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). This review highlights the progress made towards achieving sustainable and inclusive development for its citizens and residents, while also learning from the experiences of other jurisdictions.

The localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, has been prioritized by way of its strategic integration in The Bahamas' Draft National Development Framework – the "Vision 2040" which was established in 2014. Vision 2040 prioritizes four (4) pillars of development - Governance, Human Capital, Economy, Infrastructure and Environment, across 16 goals, which are in alignment with the United Nations' (UN) 17 SDGs. The SGDU was established in 2019 as the lead agency for promoting, coordinating, monitoring and reporting on the country's progress towards achieving the SDGs.

Progress since the 2018 VNR has been largely influenced by two major historic events. In September 2019, Hurricane Dorian, a catastrophic category 5 hurricane, devastated the islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama. The hurricane decimated entire communities, resulting in a considerable loss of life, livelihoods, and internal displacement, highlighting the increasingly negative implications of climate change to

development progress, and the unique vulnerabilities of small island states like The Bahamas.

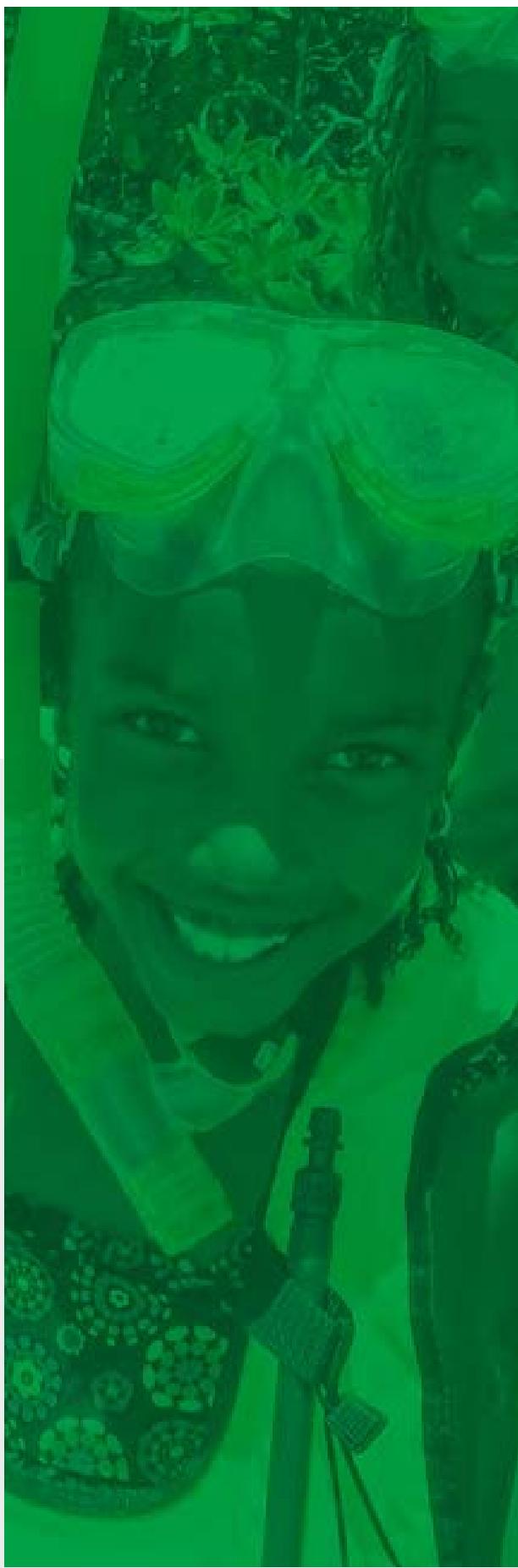
The Government of The Bahamas (GOB), in its prioritization of disaster preparedness and response, established the Ministry of Disaster Preparedness, Management and Reconstruction, comprising of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the Disaster Reconstruction Authority (DRA). In addition to investments made by the GOB, recovery efforts have been, and continue to be, bolstered through bilateral, multilateral, and institutional aid, including through the generosity expressed in partnership initiatives, with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), and various organs of the United Nations.

Amidst ongoing hurricane Dorian recovery efforts, the arrival of the COVID-19 Pandemic in March 2020, catalysed an indefinite period of economic contractions, precipitated by the halt of global travel and consequently, the abrupt disruption to tourism-related activities in The Bahamas. Nationwide health and safety protocols were adopted, aiming to mitigate the detrimental effects posed by the Pandemic, to the inclusion of Sanitation and Mask Protocols, Lockdowns, Curfews, and Social Distancing Strategies. These measures inevitably led to a



Figure 2. Hurricane Dorian, a Category 5 storm, which made landfall in September 2019

1.0 OPENING STATEMENT



The National Food Distribution Taskforce (NFDT) and the Access Accelerator, Small Business Development Centre (SBDC) have been two major vehicles utilized by the government to mitigate food poverty via an emergency food assistance initiative, and to stimulate business activity and development, respectively. The Pandemic has highlighted The Bahamas' vulnerability to global shocks, and has accelerated the government's prioritization and ongoing efforts to diversify the Bahamian Economy and enhance the capacity of the nation's Health System.

The challenges wrought by these two altering events have also coincided with marked progress in the areas of innovation, economic adaptation, reduced inequalities, and environmental resilience, which will remain at the forefront of the government's priorities. The response to the challenges presented over the 2018 – 2021 period, has also laid bare the resilience of The Bahamas and the holistic commitment to a better future across public, private, and civil society spheres. With the ongoing rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine, globally and nationally, The Bahamas remains optimistic that development progress, which was stagnated in the wake of recent events, will regain momentum, and further progress will be achieved. The Bahamas will continue to prioritize sustainable and inclusive human development, enhancing institutions and capacity to promote good governance, economic growth, innovation, and environmental sustainability for all.

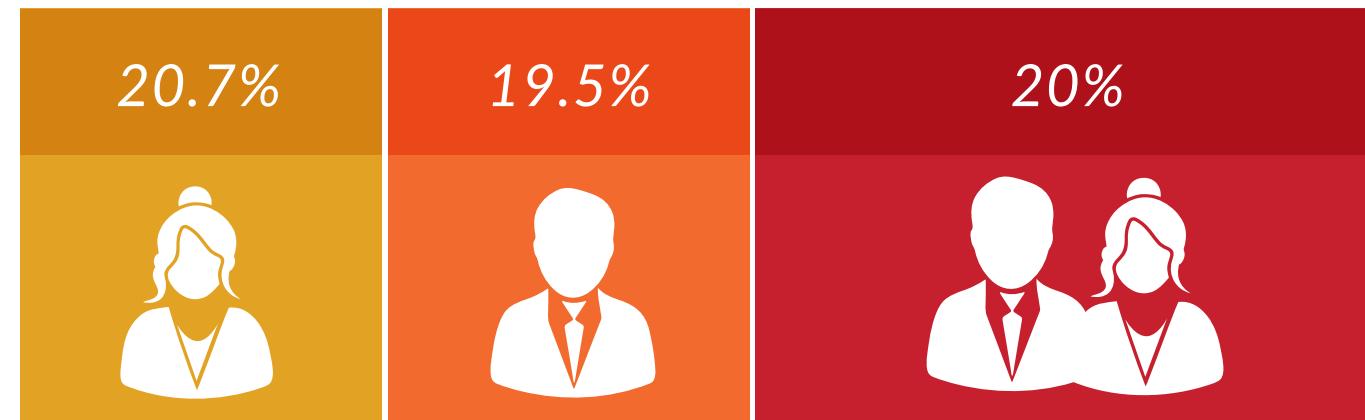
The Bahamas wishes to extend its gratitude to the Secretary-General, for the UN's continued support in its pursuit of the aims espoused in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and looks forward to continuing its partnership with the United Nations, towards achieving this end.

2.0 HIGHLIGHTS

Since the submission of its first VNR in July 2018, The Bahamas has faced two unprecedented setbacks to its development - Hurricane Dorian, a Category 5 storm, which made landfall in September 2019, and the COVID-19 pandemic, which made its first appearance in the country in March 2020. As a low-lying, archipelagic, small island developing state, ranking high on the Human Development Index, The Bahamas has maintained a relatively peaceful existence, while relying on financial services and tourism to uphold its economy.



Several negative trends highlight prevailing challenges to social, political, and economic development. Youth Unemployment has remained high – reaching 20.7% for women, 19.5% for men, and 20% for both sexes. Moreover, young women are more likely to be unemployed, despite higher education attainment.¹ Skill shortages



Youth Unemployment 20.7% for women, 19.5% for men & 20% for both sexes

¹ The Department of Statistics, Labour Force Report (Nassau, 2019) <https://www.bahamas.gov.bs/wps/wcm/connect/819a4a40-602b-47a3-9da7-c90eeae0f679/Labour+Force+Report+May+2019.pdf?MOD=AJPRES>

2.0 HIGHLIGHTS

Key industries are not producing enough growth to drive sufficient employment expansion, while the economic impact of the Pandemic has also underscored the urgent need for diversification across industries.

Progress has also been hampered by infrastructural gaps, as there is a need to invest in roads, bridges, schools, electricity generation, and solid waste management systems throughout the archipelago. While infrastructural needs have increased post-hurricane Dorian, investments in these areas have slowed in the wake of economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 economic environment.

The path to reopening The Bahamas relies heavily on effectively vaccinating the Bahamian populace; a task



among the Bahamian workforce threaten to keep unemployment numbers high. Greater investment is needed to improve retention rates in the educational system, particularly among boys, and closing the performance gap between public and private educational institutions.

Integration of the SDGs into the Policy Framework

In December 2019, following the submission of the first VNR in 2018, the Government of The Bahamas approved the update and review of the Draft National Development Plan (NDP). This revision takes into consideration: progress made with the achievement of goals contained in the document; the implications of Hurricane Dorian and the global Pandemic on priorities; and the development of action plans and a financial framework for implementation. The completion of the review and update of the document is intended to facilitate a pathway to the adoption of the plan by the GOB. Despite the delay in the adoption of the NDP, various entities have systematically incorporated the SDGs into their organizational strategies. The Ministry of Health,

that has proven to be challenging, as hesitation towards vaccinations prevail, influenced by both a lack of information, and the spread of disinformation. As a result, increased efforts to improve public health information campaigns have been of top priority to the GOB.

the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development, BDB, the Ministry of Environment and Housing, the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources, the Ministry of Education, and other key entities, have drawn upon the document, to guide institutional plans and programmes.

As it stands, the 25-year Draft NDP: Vision 2040, remains the single comprehensive national document that ensured that the 2030 Agenda, was localised into its national development planning process, thereby providing a roadmap for the implementation of the SDGs.

Institutional Arrangements

The national process for preparing this VNR is led by the SDGU (which assumed the responsibilities of the Economic Development and Planning Unit (EDPU) following restructuring and reprioritization efforts in the OPM. Since the last VNR, the National Sustainable Development Goals Technical Committee (SDGTC) was established. The SDGTC includes representatives from government ministries and agencies, the private sector, civil society, and academia.

Their roles are to ensure full ownership of the SDGs and integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in areas of economic, social, and environmental policy. While the representatives are invaluable contributors to the implementation of SDGs in The Bahamas, there remains a need to strengthen country implementation by, inter alia, establishing a strong, consistent and direct link to parliamentarians and the Cabinet of The Bahamas in this decade. Only then will these actions serve to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.

InSupport Areas for Finance, Capacity-building, Technology, Partnerships, etc.

The GOB continues to take steps to strengthen its public institutions. This includes the introduction of the National Statistics Bill, 2021, which is to commence on July 1st, 2021. This law establishes The Bahamas National Statistics Institute which will replace the Department of Statistics. Furthermore, the new law would establish a new National Statistical System that would create greater ease of collecting, compiling, retrieving, and analysing data.

The GOB has also made significant headway in digitizing services offered to the public and intends to put as many as 200 services online in 5 years. This increases efficiency and accessibility. These advancements are instrumental in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as it creates new possibilities across sectors.



Leaving No-One Behind

Recognizing the centrality of social inclusion in achieving Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, groups were identified and invitations were extended to members of under-represented and marginalized groups to serve on the SDGTC. Indeed, the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, followed by the impact of the national COVID-19 Pandemic, emergency response has sharply foregrounded extreme vulnerabilities among low-wage workers, informal workers, persons living in rural areas, irregular migrants, elderly persons, persons living in poverty, unhoused persons, as well as those living in a situation of violence. While the GOB, supported by local and international actors, introduced and modified processes to mitigate adverse effects of such, there are still some areas where improvements can be made.

During the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, many national and international organizations worked to reach those most at risk of being left behind. The GOB, local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and civil society, along with multilateral organizations, ensured that those affected by the hurricane, were provided with the necessities of medical assistance, food, shelter, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services. Similarly, during the most restrictive periods of the COVID-19 Pandemic, throughout 2020 and beyond, the response by the GOB, local NGOs, and civil society, resulted in the provision of unemployment assistance, emergency food assistance, rebuilding funds, and assistance that included the implementation of tax-free zones.



**LEAVE
NO ONE
BEHIND**

3.0 METHODOLOGY & PROCESS FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE REVIEW

The process for the preparation of The Bahamas' voluntary national review was initially coordinated by the SDGU in the OPM, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The SDGU which remains the focal point of contact for the NDP and is responsible for ensuring and monitoring the implementation of the SDGs at the national, local, and Ministerial level. Additionally, the SDGU collaborates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for continued monitoring of SDG related initiatives at the regional and international levels. Since the submission of the first VNR, the institutional arrangements have been complemented by the engagement of members of the inter-sectoral SDGT Committee whose first term came to an end in December 2020.

Several initiatives have been undertaken to ensure the sound preparation of this report. In September 2020, all government ministries received a request for information and a matrix to facilitate input. The requested information from the agencies included sector-specific data regarding the public policies and programmes which are contributing to the implementation of the SDGs. Additionally, Ministries were asked to provide information on the human rights element of their respective plans, programmes, and strategies to ensure that no one is left behind. Information from those submissions were incorporated in this report. This exercise also assisted with the identification of existing gaps in public policies and programmes in relation to the implementation of the SDGs. Additionally, trade-offs and emerging issues were highlighted. To ensure timely completion of the document, a deadline for compilation of information was set for April 2021.

To ensure the full inclusion of civil society in the preparation of this report, the SDG Unit engaged the umbrella civil society organization. This group then issued a call on behalf of civil society organizations to address the social, environmental, and economic dimensions of sustainable development. The SDG Unit also met with civil society representatives to facilitate the exchange of information regarding contributions to SDG-related programmes and initiatives that were made by civil society. The report is to be presented by the Prime Minister, at the High Level Political Forum of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, in July 2021.

4.0 POLICY & ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The Bahamas has a politically conscious and engaged population. Historically, labour unions have been extremely stable and active within the Country. There is an extremely high voter turnout rate of over 80%. Awareness of public policy is gained through widespread newspaper readership, traditional media, social media, and multiple "all talk" active radio stations which discussing topical issues of the day. There is a government information services agency called The Bahamas Information Services, and there is a GOB website that includes information on its programmes.

Creating Ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals: National Level Discussions

The effective implementation of the SDGs requires engagement at both the National and Community levels.

The communications strategy for the SDG implementation at the national level includes:

Further collaborative sessions with Government Agencies, Ministers, and Parliamentarians.

A National Civil Society Conclave.

A National Private Sector Conclave on the SDG's that has members from the Chambers of Commerce, Manufacturers Associations, Small Business Associations, Tourism, Maritime, and Financial Services Sectors in attendance.

A National Youth Conclave on the SDGs.

Nationally televised Town Meetings.

Traditional (i.e. Radio, Television, Newspapers) and Social Media communications on SDG activities and progress.²

The SDG communications strategy builds on previous awareness and community input campaigns that were utilized through the NDP implementation process. In 2019, the SDGU conducted several high-level engagements with various Ministries, Departments, and Agencies.

Creating Ownership of the SDGs: Community Discussions, Public, Private Sector and Civil Society Discussions

While the National level discussions are critical, it is also important to localize communications. This was a key lesson learned through the NDP process. In 2019, SDGU launched its, "Reimagine Series", a virtual engagement educational initiative, focused on sharing insights and implementation strategies, on

4.0 POLICY & ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

three dimensions of Sustainable Development - Social Inclusion, Economic Prosperity and Environmental Sustainability. The unit partnered with local activists, filmmakers, artists, entertainers, academia, civil society, and entrepreneurs, to promote their work and its alignment to the SDGs. The guiding pillars:

INSPIRE the audience with relatable 'SDG In Action' stories.

EDUCATE the audience with useful information related to the SDGs.

ENTERTAIN the audience by sharing comedic and artistic content, in collaboration with local social media influencers and artists.

In 2021, SDGU launched a 17-week SDG series in partnership with ZNS Radio to increase awareness of the 2030 Agenda, and advance overall SDG localisation efforts. These discussions provided opportunities for stakeholders to discuss mechanisms

to further advance the 2030 Agenda, and the realisation of the SDGs at the national level, through public policy and national-level action. This public education campaign consistently urges listeners to take ownership of the SDGs, as they affect every individual.

Incorporation of the SDGs in National Framework

The Draft NDP Vision 2040 fully incorporates the SDGs into its 4 pillars of Governance, Human Capital, Environment and The Economy. The plan is currently under consultation and review.

Pillars

GOVERNANCE

HUMAN CAPITAL

ENVIRONMENT

THE ECONOMY

SDG's



Figure 3. Mapping of NDP pillars with SDGs



The Bahamas is classified as a high-income economy, with a steadily increasing, per capita, gross domestic product (GDP), which rose from USD 31,562.64 in 2016, to USD 34,863.70 in 2019³ - maintaining its position as one of the Caribbean countries, with the highest per capita GDP in the region.

However, relying on per capita GDP as a primary metric for economic well-being, does not capture the national complexities which may render residents and citizens, susceptible to falling into, or remaining in, situations of poverty and other instances of vulnerability. Key insights on poverty in The Bahamas, are usually included in the Department of Statistics' Household Expenditure Survey (HES) – the latest of which has been postponed to 2022, thereby making the 2013 HES, the most current official report on poverty in the country.⁴

While the Department of Statistics has not produced key labour force data since 2019, and has postponed the date for the next HES, to the latter part of 2022, key proxies were used to provide some insight into the status of those living in poverty, or those at risk of falling into poverty because of lost employment, insufficient savings, illness, change in migration status, or other reasons.

Unemployment rates in The Bahamas were trending downward prior to Hurricane Dorian and the COVID-19 Pandemic (The Pandemic) crisis, with unemployment rates declining from 10% in May 2018, to 9.5% in May 2019, (10% for women and 10.1% for men in 2018; 9.9% for women and 9.2% for men in 2019, respectively). Youth unemployment (ages 15-24) declined from 24.1% in May 2018, to 20.0% in May 2019 – a significant decline from the approximate 30% reported in the first VNR.⁵ Reflecting the sex differences in the broader unemployment data for 2019, the unemployment rate for young women reached 20.7%, compared with 19.5% for young men, (2019 was the first year that youth unemployment data was disaggregated by sex). At the time of this writing, The Bahamas has no official statistics on 2020 unemployment levels. However, projections have been estimated to stand between 38% and 42%,⁶ with other sources citing an unemployment rate of 25.6%.⁷



SDG1 END POVERTY IN ALL ITS FORMS EVERWHERE

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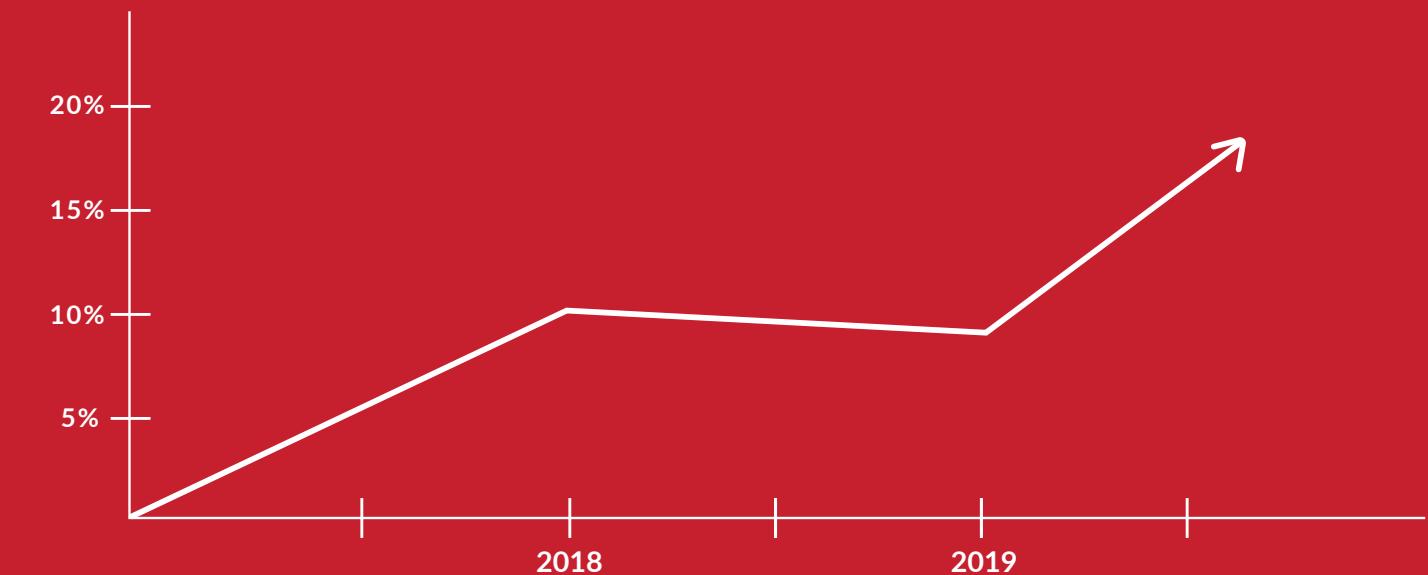
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TABLE 1: UNEMPLOYMENT RATES:
THE BAHAMAS



Compounding the sharp and sudden uptick in unemployment, following the national response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, was the absence of sufficient personal financial safety nets by many residents and citizens. Indeed, before Hurricane Dorian and the Pandemic, it was reported that 90% of the deposit accounts held by residents in The Bahamas contained less than \$5000 – and many have less than \$1000, with consumers opting to borrow, rather than save (perhaps due to low-wage work, trade-offs linked to meeting basic needs, a rising cost of living with no corresponding increase in wages, limited financial literacy, displacement, or a host of other factors).⁸

As indicated in the first VNR, challenges with land tenure security, also impacted poverty and included: the lack of a parcel-based cadastral map, uncertainty regarding ownership of land resulting from overlapping land claims, and the existence of generational and commonage land.⁹



[8] Noel, Genea, "Rolle: Bahamians continue to borrow instead of save," Eyewitness News, 29 July, 2019, <https://ewnews.com/rolle-bahamians-continue-to-borrow-instead-of-save>

[9] Inter-American Development Bank's Land Use, Policy and Administration Project 2005 p.1

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 1

Social Protection

The National Insurance Board (NIB), the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development, and the Ministry of Labour, oversee the country's social protection system, and the provision of social protection mechanisms. As a result of Hurricane Dorian and The Pandemic, social protection mechanisms were expanded and otherwise modified, to accommodate the needs of newly vulnerable categories of individuals – including unbanked, undocumented, and self-employed persons. In addition to the existing government entities, civil society organizations, the private sector, faith-based organizations, and international organizations, collaborated to meet emerging needs.

The GOB has provided some \$90 million in direct cash assistance and income replacement, to nearly 38,000 unemployed Bahamians since March of 2020. These funds have been administered by the National Insurance Board, on behalf of the government, to eligible individuals. This \$90 million sum, does not include monies paid out by NIB as part of its 13-week earned unemployed benefits, that are funded as part of employee and employer contributions.¹⁰

The Central Bank of The Bahamas (CBOB) officially launched the "Sand Dollar" digital currency (CBDC), to all residents, in October 2020. The Sand Dollar will allow previously unbanked parts of the population, to participate in digital payments, and enhance the payment system's efficiency and resilience, considering The Bahamas' vulnerability to natural disasters. Some 13,500 "informal economy" workers may have missed out on the COVID-19 unemployment benefits, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) noted; adding that, "execution fell short" on some government assistance initiatives. The IMF, in its full Article IV report on The Bahamas, said several thousand persons (self-employed or otherwise), may not have had access to government-funded benefits, because they remain outside

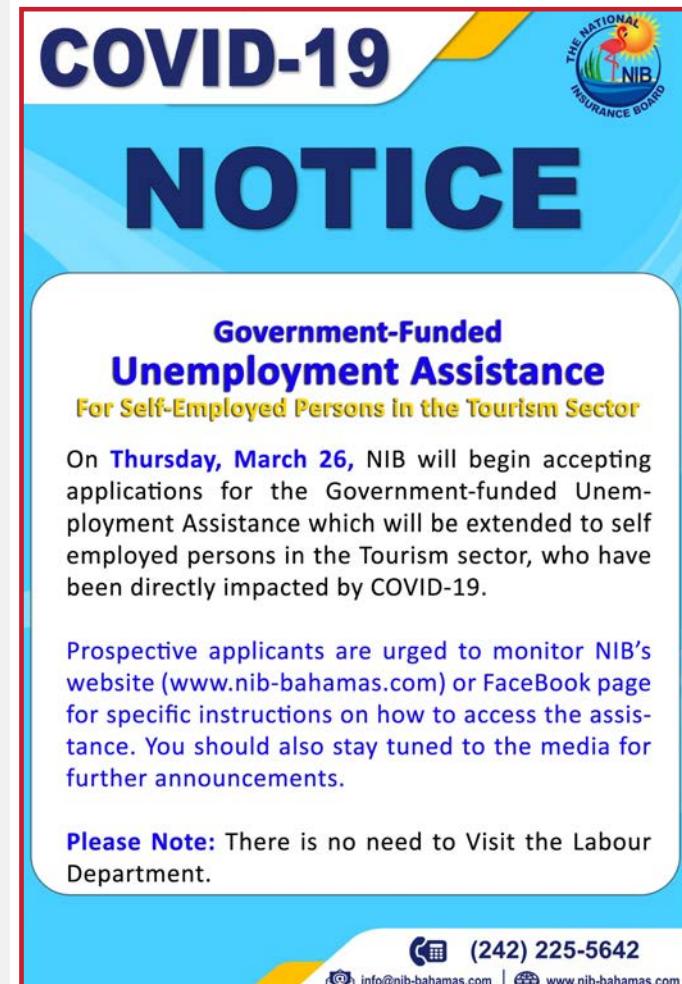
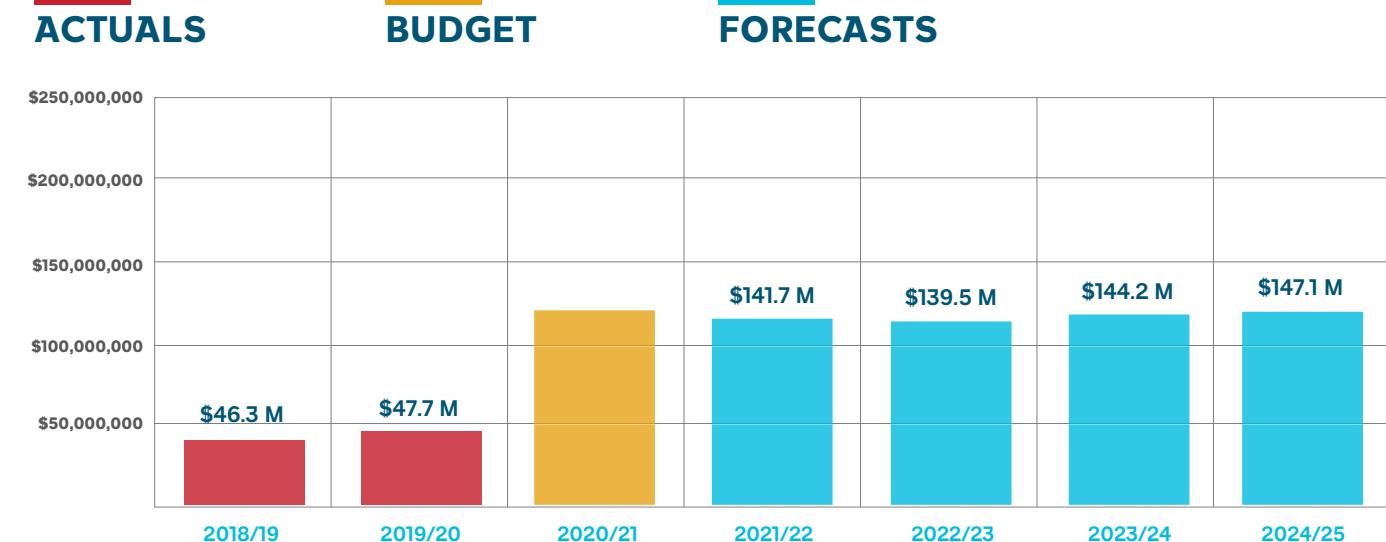


Figure 4. Covid-19 Unemployment Assistance Notice distributed by the Government

the formal economy, and make no social security contributions. "Only self-employed workers in tourism-related businesses, are covered by the unemployment benefits extension. This means that self-employed, informal workers for other industries (many indirectly linked to tourism), and informal employees, are not included among the unemployment beneficiaries. The GOB will have to register the citizen again, every time a benefit is granted. Since social assistance programmes are application-based, validating information is challenging because of limited digitalised information, and limited information exchange, across relevant stakeholders."¹¹

The authorities plan to pilot a means-tested social program, in New Providence, in 2021. Unemployment Benefit (UEB) payments were nearly 20 times higher in the first six months of 2020, compared to the same period last year. In March 2021, the government extended the UEB duration, and relaxed eligibility requirements for employees under the age of 35, or who were previously enrolled in the Hurricane Dorian UEB extension program.

TABLE 2: ACTUAL AND PROJECTED SOCIAL ASSISTANCE BENEFITS EXPENDITURE



Source: Fiscal Strategy Report 2020 12

Social Safety Net Reform Programme

The 2012 Social Safety Net Reform Programme, referred to as the RISE (Renewing, Inspiring, Sustaining, and Empowering) Programme, implemented by the GOB, through an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) loan, to modernise the delivery of social protection in the country, and accelerate efforts to reduce poverty, was reported to have been under review, at the time of the submission of the first VNR.

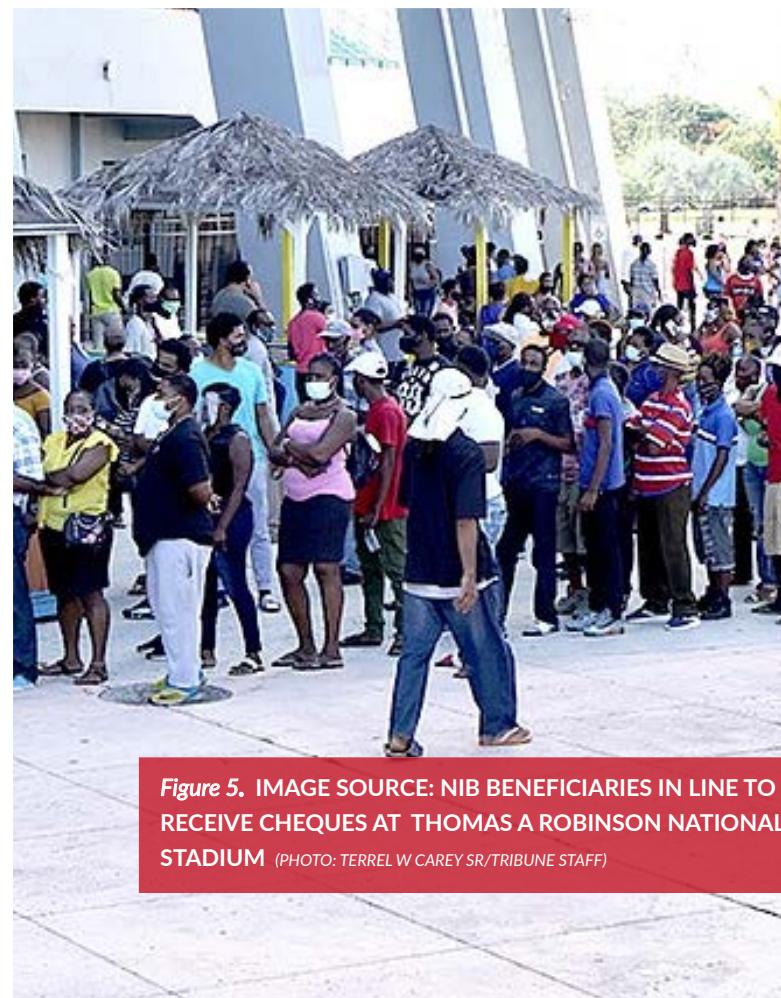


Figure 5. IMAGE SOURCE: NIB BENEFICIARIES IN LINE TO RECEIVE CHEQUES AT THOMAS A ROBINSON NATIONAL STADIUM (PHOTO: TERREL W CAREY SR/TRIBUNE STAFF)

[10] Ministry of Finance, "Over \$90 million in direct cash assistance paid out through Government subsidized unemployment assistance," The Government of The Bahamas, 9 December, 2020, <https://www.bahamas.gov.bs/wps/portal/public/gov/government/news/over%202490%20million%20in%20direct%20cash%20assistance%20paid%20out%20through%20government%20subsidized%20unemployment%20assistance>

[11] Hartnell, Neil. "IMF Fears 13,500 Missed Benefits." The Tribune, 29 January 2021, <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2021/jan/29/imf-fears-13500-missed-benefits/>

¹² Ministry of Finance, "2020 Fiscal Strategy Report" The Government of The Bahamas, December 2020, <https://www.bahamas.gov.bs/wps/wcm/con->tent/-/asset_publisher/130000000000000000/content/130000000000000000

¹³ Office of Evaluation and Oversight, "Inter-American Development Bank Country Program Evaluation: Bahamas 2010-2017," The Inter-American Development Bank, March 2018, <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Country-Program-Evaluation-Bahamas-2010-2017.pdf>

Despite the challenges, the report indicates that the loan achieved 5 of its 12 output targets, including: "(i) the mobilization of expert technical assistance, to support the design and targeting of the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) component; (ii) the implementation of a public information campaign, to promote the new program; (iii) the introduction of a new payment system, to enhance the flexibility of the CCT stipend; (iv) the completion of the HES; and (v) the design and installation of a Management Information System (MIS), to facilitate program management." These successes were unable to overshadow existing issues with the programme. As indicated in the first VNR, challenges with land tenure security, also impacted poverty and included: the lack of a parcel-based cadastral map, uncertainty regarding ownership of land resulting from overlapping land claims, and the existence of generational and commonage land. As such, in August 2017, the balance of US\$3.4 million in undispersed loan financing, was cancelled and the project was closed.¹⁴

However, elements of the Social Safety Net Programme were reintroduced, and expanded during the COVID-19 response. In 2016, Synergy International Systems, Inc. started the implementation of ProMIS, a web-based information management system. The ProMIS system aims to provide social workers with the tools to organize, evaluate and efficiently manage clients of the Department of Social Services, within their portfolios. Its objective is to increase the overall effectiveness of the Ministry's daily operations. The system was expanded in 2020, "to cover 13 social assistance programmes, including the COVID-19 assistance food programme."¹⁵

In addition to automation, targeting, enrolment, payment, case management, and appeals processes, ProMIS is "equipped with a crisis response module, to provide food coupon assistance, in case of an emergency and disaster, as well as advanced tools for

August 2017, the balance of US\$3.4 million in undispersed loan financing, was cancelled and the project was closed.

reporting and analysis; it is implemented for the beneficiaries to apply for social services online, without the need to visit social centres; and it can be used to track the application status, collect food coupons and submit complaints."¹⁶

The Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development's reintroduction and expansion of a previously suspended system, particularly during COVID-19, was a positive indication of the government's agility and ability to prioritize social protection.

Job Training

The Ministry of Public Service and National Insurance's 52-Week Skills Empowerment Programme, aimed at providing jobs for the unemployed youth, was launched in August 2018, as the "National Job Creation and Skills Enhancement Programme", to curb youth unemployment and reduce poverty. In June 2019, the programme was renewed for another year. The programme is designed to equip unemployed persons, between the ages of 19 and 30, with hands-on skills, aimed at enhancing their ability to find gainful employment. While the programme is led by the Ministry of Public Service and NIB, the programme has seen success, in part, because of its partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BVTI), the National Training Agency (NTA), other government entities, and the private sector. In addition to the soft skills training provided by the NTA, and on-the-job training in government entities, programme participants are afforded the opportunity to engage in paid internships in the areas of construction, plumbing, electrical installation, hospitality, fashion design, business, and information technology, as well as opportunities to attain professional certifications.

As a testament to the success of the programme, many participants have been offered full-time employment in the private sector, and government ministries and departments, including the Water and Sewerage Corporation (WSC), and NIB.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Synergy International Systems, "Synergy Helps Further Strengthen Capacity and Knowledge of Social Services Representatives in the Bahamas", Synergy International Systems, 15 January 2021, <https://www.synisys.com/synergy-bahamas-promis/>

¹⁶ Ibid.

Access to Land and Housing

The GOB has further committed to offering concessionary rates, for regularizing long-term occupation of Crown Land, developed or cultivated by Bahamians. Since the submission of the previous VNR, under the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit's (PMDU) Land Reform Priority, the Government has expressed a commitment to addressing concerns of the Bahamian people, related to land matters, particularly regarding opportunities to own and develop ready-to-build serviced lots and Crown Land, for productive purposes. The stated objectives of the Priority are as follows:



Provide ready-to-build housing lots to Bahamians.



Clear the backlog Crown Land applications at the Department of Lands and Survey (which include, not only first-time applicants, but lessees and approved persons with pending decisions and transactions).



Ease the process and reduce the time it takes to apply for Crown Land.

The GOB included the following targets for 2021: 1) have 3000 ready-to-build housing lots, transferred to Bahamians [currently, only 96 lots have been transferred to Bahamians in the context of this initiative]; 2) an unknown number of leases and Crown grants transferred to Bahamians [73 have been reportedly transferred]; and 3) reduce the processing

time for Crown Land applications to 30 days [currently processing takes more than five months]. Challenges cited for falling behind targets involve, *inter alia*, the inability to conduct work as usual in the face of COVID-19 restrictions – particularly the work required to render the administrative systems more efficient and effective.¹⁷

The stakeholders responsible for delivering the work scope for Land Reform include, The Ministry of The Environment and Housing (on the ready-to-build serviced lots initiative), the Department of Lands and Surveys, OPM (on the other Land Reform targets), and a working group comprised of a cross-section of governmental agencies, including the Office of the Attorney General and Registrar General's Department.

Support for Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)

The GOB recognizes the important contribution of MSMEs to sustainable economic growth, promoting access to economic resources for all men and women, particularly the poor and vulnerable.

Over-The-Hill Community Development Partnership Initiative (OTHCDPI)

The economically depressed areas known as "Over the Hill" (OTH) in Nassau, have been characterized by high unemployment levels, high crime rates, low income, and infrastructure dilapidation. This area is home to many who have been left behind, and was identified as appropriate for this initiative, given the high concentration of poverty in the area.

A comprehensive intervention has been designed to alleviate these issues, by providing incentives for:

**SOCIAL
EMPOWERMENT**

**ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT**

**INFRASTRUCTURAL
AND ENVIRONMENTAL
REJUVENATION**

**SMART
TECHNOLOGY**

**GREEN
TECHNOLOGY**

**COMMUNITY
EMPOWERMENT
W/ A FOCUS ON
YOUTH AND THE
ELDERLY**

The OTHCDPI was highlighted in The Bahamas' first presentation to the HLPF, as an example of localizing the SDGs. Indeed, there have been some steps made concerning two of the aforementioned pillars (i.e. (1) Economic Empowerment and (2) Infrastructural and Environmental Rejuvenation), to the extent that legislation was enacted to recognize the area as an Economic Empowerment Zone. This initiative will enable residents to access concessions that are unavailable to the communities residing outside of the zone. Forty-two individuals were hired to serve as environmental monitors for a year, to increase waste collection frequency. However, in the context of the initiative, it is unclear whether sustainable projects have been developed. These projects include, addressing gender-based violence, given the exponential rise in reported cases, over the lifetime of the project.

The data collection, monitoring, and evaluation systems should be enhanced to reflect the multidimensional nature of poverty.

Greater efforts should be made to increase civic participation and community engagement.¹⁸

Effective systems established during the responses to Hurricane Dorian and COVID-19, must be institutionalized and generalized, throughout the social protection ecosystem in the country.

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG 1 Programmes

The Bahamas continues to face challenges as a small island developing state, particularly because of its location in the hurricane belt. It has an economy that is heavily reliant on international tourism, having been foregrounded in unprecedented ways, since the submission of the first VNR, in July 2018. The effects of Hurricane Dorian (September 2019) and the current global Pandemic, saw a reversal of key gains.

The following issues are likely to pose challenges to the implementation of SDG 1:

The application-based and increasingly digital nature of most of the aforementioned social protection programmes, may exclude those most in need of them (particularly persons with disabilities, persons living in extreme poverty, and irregular migrants).

Insufficient data regarding the landscape of persons living in extreme poverty.

Progress on SDG 1 continues to necessitate the following changes, largely unchanged since the initial VNR:

Screening to identify individuals in need of services should be improved, while efforts to educate the necessary populations on the availability of such services broadened.

The sustainability of social protection funds must be prioritized, and social protection guarantees strengthened, through legislation and policies.

18 Sustainable Development Goals Unit, "The Bahamas Voluntary National Review on the Sustainable Development Goals to the High Level Political Forum of the United Nations Economic and Social Council" The Government of The Bahamas, July 2018.



Under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, persons have the right to an adequate standard of living. This standard of living includes the right to having adequate food.¹⁹ Food security and access to nutritious foods are essential practices for the health and wellbeing of individuals. In The Bahamas, 1 out of every 3 persons faces some level of food insecurity.²⁰ Resolving and mitigating the lack of access to food, becomes particularly difficult in The Bahamas as the country imports 90% of its consumed food, worth \$1 million annually.²¹

Importation has an impact on the cost to the consumer; in particular, the consumer's choice to eat healthy and nutritious. As stated in the 2018 VNR, The Bahamas aims to reduce heavy reliance on imported food by increasing food security, reducing unemployment, and stimulating domestic economic growth. Efforts are being made by governmental, national, and international organizations, to achieve the country's targets for food security.

There are numerous agencies and governmental organisations that ensure access to food and food security. Government Ministries like the Ministry of Health, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Environmental Health, and the Ministry of Agriculture, are structured so that each sector may take on responsibilities to maintain food safety. These responsibilities include surveillance, reporting, and

analysis of food-borne disease trends, hazard analysis & critical control points training, and sanitary inspections. Government organisations also carry out initiatives to ensure residents have access to food, and there are sustainable food production systems; The Ministry of Agriculture, may specifically house these initiatives. Due to the impact of Hurricane Dorian and the COVID-19 Pandemic, government initiatives concerning SDG 2, have been centred on ensuring persons have access to food at reasonable costs. NGOs, in particular HFH, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), and the World Central Kitchen, among others, have carried out initiatives that aim to ensure access to food for Bahamians. NGOs engaged programs that are primarily centred on increasing and sustaining local agricultural production.



Figure 6. THE GOVERNMENT INJECTED \$1.4 MILLION INTO THE NATIONAL FOOD DISTRIBUTION TASK FORCE FOR BAHAMIANS DURING THE PANDEMIC.

[19] The United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", 10 December, 1948

[20] Hands For Hunger, "Hands For Hunger: Food Insecurity in The Bahamas", Hands for Hunger, 2019

[21] Ibid

SDG 2

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 2

Ensure Access to Food

The Bahamas has been seriously affected by the impact of Hurricane Dorian in 2019, and the COVID-19 Pandemic a year later, in 2020. Despite these challenges, initiatives were put in place to cushion the impact of these catastrophes on Bahamian residents, not having easy and affordable access to food. The following are key interventions carried out: Prime Minister, Dr. Hubert Minnis, established a National Food Distribution Task Force (NFDT), to work in tandem with The Ministry of Social Services and local NGOs, to coordinate food distribution to those in need in The Bahamas, during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The GOB supported the task force by donating \$1 million per week, to assist 110,000 people.²²

The GOB injected \$1.4 million into the NFDT for Bahamians, during the Pandemic. The NFDT was created by the government, using previous successful distribution models. Zones were used to facilitate coordinating the distribution of the food. New Providence was divided into four (4) zones; Grand Bahama was divided into five (5) zones; and Abaco, Eleuthera, Northern and Southern Bahamas, each had their zones respectively. The NGOs were assigned to each zone to provide for distribution. Examples of these NGOs were, the Lend a Hand Bahamas organization, Bahamas Feeding Network, Bahamas Red Cross, Hands for Hunger, IDEA Relief, the Grand Bahama Food Task Force, and the One Eleuthera Foundation.²³

The Department of Social Services continued to assist Bahamians in need of food coupons, during The Pandemic. Food coupons were first distributed in April 2020. By June 2020, 1,098 persons received coupons, valuing \$134,050. Separately, from June 2020, the Disability Affairs Unit in The

Department of Social Services, gave 120 clients emergency coupons. These valued a total of \$6,720.²⁴

NGOs and private businesses were also supplied with food. 137,350 people were given food in these sectors, at a cost of \$2.02 million. 41,014 units, parcels and vouchers were distributed among various groups and persons.²⁵

Several civil society organisations have emerged in The Bahamas, to tackle hunger. Many engage in surplus food rescue (particularly from the hospital industry), the storage of non-perishable goods and food distribution to communities. In 2019, the World Central Kitchen provided 3 million meals to those affected by Hurricane Dorian. They also established programs to help residents prepare food at home, and to reduce the residents' dependence on the World Central Kitchen's prepared meals. The World Central Kitchen, "was) subsidizing cook stoves for families who are building and have launched a voucher program for families to be able to shop at small businesses (and) launched a series of farmers' markets, to distribute free, fresh produce, for families to cook at home".²⁶

In April 2020, following Hurricane Dorian and The COVID-19 Pandemic, HFH provided support for hurricane victims and those in need of food. The organization spent \$615,000 assisting 400 families, over a period of 3 months. Five percent (5%) of persons were unable to collect food from food stores, because of disabilities and other various reasons. HFH delivered food items directly to the homes of these persons. HFH, along with CIBC First Caribbean, pledged to continually support persons and communities, past March 2021.²⁷

[22] Smith, Sloan, "COVID-19 forces thousands to food assistance lines - some for the first time", Eyewitness News, Accessed August 11, 2020

[23] Office of the Prime Minister, "National Food Distribution Task Force providing emergency food assistance to vulnerable Bahamians and residents", Government of The Bahamas Press Release 2020, <https://www.bahamas.gov.bs/wps/portal/public/gov/government/news/national%20food%20distribution%20task%20force%20providing%20emergency%20food%20assistance%20to%20vulnerable%20bahamians%20and%20residents>

[24] Ibid

[25] Ibid

[26] The World Central Kitchen, "Bahamas Update: Three million meals, looking to the future", World Central Kitchen, 6 February 2020, News Article, <https://wck.org/news/3-million-meals-bahamas>

[27] Eyewitness News, "CIBC First Caribbean aids Hands for Hunger's food security commitment", Eyewitness News, 19 February 2021, <https://ewnews.com/cibc-first-caribbean-aids-hands-for-hungers-food-security-commitment>

The Increase in Agricultural Productivity

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture is an organization that specializes in agriculture of the Inter-American System, for the Member States. The organization supports the Member States achieving agricultural development and rural well-being, by providing international technical support.²⁸ It has provided support to The Bahamas with the following initiatives:

To increase agricultural productivity and strengthen the sector, the IICA hosted workshops in 2018, on New Providence and Abaco. "Fostering Competitive Value Chains: Capacity Building in the Governance of Producer Organizations" workshop trained agricultural producers on value chain participation, and group governance capacity building by strategic planning and trade. The workshop highlighted Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA), by producing a CSA video, geared towards The Bahamas. Also, the institute organized an aquaponics workshop, to train twenty (20) agricultural producers, on methods to develop a system whereby waste produced by sea creatures, supplies nutrients for plants grown hydroponically.²⁹

The IICA, reported on The Bahamas' significant achievement of agricultural food production, in 2019. The Institute assisted The Bahamas' agriculture sub-sectors after Hurricane Dorian, by supporting rehabilitation efforts for crops, livestock, and bees. The project focused on climate-smart agriculture. The IICA delegation housed a series of capacity-building interventions for farmers and beekeepers. These interventions facilitated the rehabilitation of agriculture, and informed farmers of techniques to bolster resilience to agricultural risks and disasters in areas affected after Hurricane Dorian.³⁰

In 2020, the IICA conducted a governance assessment workshop, to provide technical assistance and inputs to the Bahamas Network of Rural Women Producers (BAHNORWP), and the Grand Bahamas Beekeepers Cooperative (GBBC), funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The IICA assisted the BAHNORWP with identifying gaps in their organizational structure, and in other areas where their capacity needed to be strengthened. The IICA also assisted the BAHNORWP with their promotional video, to help the group network with buyers throughout The Bahamas attract new members, and assisted them with hosting a webinar on, "Women Helping Women

Economically". The webinar showcased female leaders throughout five Caribbean countries, who highlighted agricultural work being carried out in the Caribbean, and collaborative efforts.³¹

Sustainable Food Production Systems and Implementing Resilient Agricultural Practices

There were combined efforts made between government, civil society organisations, and the IICA, from 2018 onward, to implement projects that would develop local food production systems and assist locals with producing home-grown foods.

In 2018, The Grand Bahama Youth Apiculture Development Project was established. The project trained Bahamians on apiculture (beekeeping), agri-business, agri-tourism, public speaking, customer service, capacity building, and institution strengthening. The BDB partnered with The OPM in Grand Bahama, and The Department of Cooperatives Development (DOCD), to institute the Grand Bahama Beekeepers Cooperative Society Ltd (GBBCS). The institute created ten (10) new agri-businesses that created commodities like honey, soaps, candles, and furniture polish.³²

The Bahamas Agricultural Health and Food Safety Authority (BAHFSA) and the IICA, organized webinars and online training sessions to provide information to farmers, agro-processors, public sector administrators, and private sector businesspersons, in celebration of the Global One Health Day.³³

In 2020, there were 20,000 backyard kits distributed to Grand Bahamians, as part of the revitalization of the Backyard Farming Programme. The Minister of Agriculture, Michael Pintard, stated that the programme aims to allow Bahamians to "produce more of what you are consuming locally...to help (families) shave off their food bill", to potentially "shave off \$200 million of the \$600 million spent on imports".³⁴ The Backyard Farming Initiative began in 2015; it also catered to economically depressed communities and behavioural schools like, The Simpson Penn Centre for Boys, and The Willie Mae Pratt Centre for Girls.³⁵ The Ministry also distributed hydroponic kits to grow leafy greens. The Minister claimed that The Government aims to launch Aquaponics at schools in The Bahamas.

In 2018, the IICA trained eighty (80) persons on livestock management and nutrition, poultry production, and devel-

oping proposals related hereto. The seminar also included training for the GBBCS and BAHNORWP, in providing technical assistance and logistical support, through grant writing and agro-processing.³⁶

In 2018, The IICA and the BAHFSA, supported the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) system, by providing it with technical assistance on prioritizing, preventing, and managing pathogens, that affect agriculture, food safety, and public health.³⁷

In 2019, the IICA trained BAHFSA, veterinarians, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Environmental Health Services, and the Ministry of Tourism, on biosecurity surveillance and the "One Health" approach. The "One Health" approach addresses sustainable solutions to health issues of people, animals, and the environment.³⁸

Other initiatives supported by the IICA include, The University of Florida's Caribbean Bee College (CBC) event, that trained 40 persons on how to utilize beehive resources and offered both theoretical and practical instructions on the training.³⁹

As part of the IICA's Significant Achievements of 2020, the organization instituted training workshops and webinars on agro-tourism and composting. The workshops entitled, "Agro-tourism Opportunities in the time of COVID-19",

"Composting as a Business", "Introduction to Beekeeping" and "Good Agricultural Practices for Producers", were conducted as webinars, because of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

In 2020, the IICA supported the advancement of the "Green Climate Fund Readiness Proposal (GCF). The project purposed to strengthen the foundation for a climate-responsive agricultural sector in The Caribbean. Nine (9) Caribbean countries are partaking in the project, with The Bahamas as the lead and Dominica, Haiti, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Belize, Suriname, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago, as other participating countries. The IICA will be supporting the Ministry of Environment and Housing, to implement the project, by providing logistical support and assistance.

The IICA has also provided technical support to the Department of Environmental Planning and Protection (DEPP). The DEPP committed to the "Integrated landscape management for addressing land degradation, food security and climate resilience challenges in The Bahamas" project. The IICA's assistance enabled the department to complete the Global Environment Facility (GEF) – 7 Project Identification Form (PIF). The IICA's technical support included, assisting with the development of the grant proposal for the project in 2021, and with the implementation of the project.⁴⁰



[28] Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture "About Us: Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture" Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, April 2021, www.iica.int/en/about-us/main

[29] IICA Nassau Bahamas, "The Bahamas Significant achievements: 2018 Annual Report", Nassau, 2018

[30] IICA Nassau Bahamas, "The Bahamas Significant achievements: 2019 Annual Report", Nassau, 2019

[31] IICA Nassau Bahamas, "The Bahamas Significant achievements: 2020 Annual Report", Nassau, 2020

[32] IICA Nassau Bahamas, "The Bahamas Significant achievements: 2018 Annual Report", Nassau, 2018

[33] IICA Nassau Bahamas, "The Bahamas Significant achievements: 2020 Annual Report", Nassau, 2020

[34] Maycock, Denise, "20,000 Backyard Farming Kits for Grand Bahama." The Tribune, 28 August, 2020, <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2020/aug/28/20000-backyard-farming-kits-grand-bahama/>

[35] Ibid

[36] IICA Nassau Bahamas, "The Bahamas Significant achievements: 2018 Annual Report", Nassau, 2018

[37] Ibid

[38] IICA Nassau Bahamas, "The Bahamas Significant achievements: 2019 Annual Report", Nassau, 2019

[39] IICA Nassau Bahamas, "The Bahamas Significant achievements: 2018 Annual Report", Nassau, 2018

[40] IICA Nassau Bahamas, "The Bahamas Significant achievements: 2020 Annual Report", Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, Nassau, 2020

The Maintenance of Genetically Diverse Seeds and Plants

The Bahamas had signed on to the Nagoya Protocol. This protocol allows for the GOB to access genetic food resources and aim for a fair and equitable sharing of these resources.⁴¹

Food Affordability Measures

In 2016, the GOB passed a series of legislation, regarding agricultural regulation. The Food Safety and Quality Act, Plant Protection Act, and the Animal Health and Production Act, were passed to strengthen agricultural practices, to be in line with international best practices. To be in line with these practices, ⁴²BAHFSA, introduced groundwater testing and sanitation procedures to North Andros, to reduce water contamination. BAHFSA also strengthened the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Authority by designing a '10-year conceptual framework document', for a "Cross-sectional Multidisciplinary Approach to Surveillance, Detection, Identification, Neutralization and Prevention of Zoonotic Pathogens, along the Food Chain in The Bahamas".⁴³

In 2017, The Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources, launched a "National Security Policy and Agenda for Action" policy. The policy aims to provide persons economic and physical access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food, to meet their dietary needs and food preferences, for an active and healthy lifestyle.⁴⁴ The GOB's immediate initiatives under the policy include:

The continuation of the Backyard Gardening Programme – This programme would provide support to people interested in growing their food.

The increase of food production through technology and innovation – The partnership of Gladstone Road Agricultural Centre (GRAC) and the Caribbean Research and Development Institute (CARDI), aims to develop production practices to increase sweet potato production.

The sustainable use of resources in the fisheries sector – The government partnered with NGOs and the private sector, to support managing marine resources like lobster and conch.

Strengthening the enforcement of fisheries legislative provisions, to protect marine resources from illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.

In 2018, The GOB increased Value-Added Tax (VAT) from 7.5% to 12%.⁴⁵ to combat the increase in food rates. The Government implemented a policy under the VAT Act, for breadbasket foods to have 0% VAT (Zero Rated) added.⁴⁶

In 2019, The IICA collaborated with the GOB to improve its capacity to manage policies, plans and strategies, and strengthen its institutional framework. The IICA assisted with the development of the Agricultural Health and Food Safety Regulations. The organization also supported The Bahamas' participation in Codex, World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC), WTO and compliance with their agreed measures. The Bahamas ultimately benefited from the IICA by being provided with training and networking opportunities, in the agricultural sector.⁴⁷

Tribune Radio Limited

In 2020, Tribune Radio Limited, partnered with Showman E Bistro, a local eatery, for a thanksgiving promotion, which provided twelve families in-need, with all the necessary ingredients to prepare a full thanksgiving meal for seven persons.⁴⁸ This initiative targeted those persons who were most vulnerable, to ensure that they were not left out or left behind on a day celebrated with sharing food.

Tribune Radio Limited, supports HFH's Paradise Plates fundraiser, with on-air articles, radio commercials, and remote broadcasts and appearances to promote and spread the word about the NGO, its work, and how to get involved.⁴⁹



[41] Sustainable Development Goals Unit, "The Bahamas Voluntary National Review on the Sustainable Development Goals to the High Level Political Forum of the United Nations Economic and Social Council" The Government of The Bahamas, July 2018.
[42] Ibid, 50.
[43] IICA Nassau Bahamas, "The Bahamas Significant achievements: 2019 Annual Report", Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, 2019.
[44] The Ministry of Health, and The Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources, "The National Food & Nutrition Security Policy and Agenda for Action for the Commonwealth of The Bahamas", The Ministry of Health, and The Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources, 2017.
[45] The Tribune, "Budget: Vat to Rise From 7.5 Percent To 12 Percent", The Tribune, 30 May 2018, <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2018/may/30/budget-vat-rise-7.5-percent-12-percent/>
[46] Turnquest, Ava, "Breadbasket Items List to Include Healthier Goods", The Tribune, 6 June 2018, <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2018/jun/06/breadbasket-items-list-to-include-healthier-goods/>
[47] IICA Nassau Bahamas, "The Bahamas Significant achievements: 2019 Annual Report", Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, 2019.
[48] Tribune Media Group SDG Report 2021
[49] Tribune Media Group SDG Report 2021=

SDG 2

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 2 PROGRAMMES

THE FOLLOWING ISSUES ARE LIKELY TO IMPACT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SDG 2:

The country must strengthen its food security programmes, to better guarantee access to nutritious food regularly.

Farming is not yet seen as an attractive industry, to many Bahamians.

Because of its small size (leading to scale diseconomies), and the high cost of inputs, including labour, The Bahamas relies heavily on food imports.

Logistics networks to move agricultural products across the archipelago in a time-effective manner are not well developed.

For agricultural development, it is necessary to provide educational and technical support to small and larger-scale farmers.



Figure 7. THE INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR COOPERATION ON AGRICULTURE



Hurricane Dorian

Hurricane Dorian placed significant stress on the healthcare system in The Bahamas. The primary hospital in Grand Bahama, The Rand Memorial Hospital, was completely submerged during the storm. Ambulances, operating room equipment, and intensive care unit equipment were all lost.⁵⁰ There was little to no access to potable or drinking water, and several healthcare workers from New Providence, were flown into Abaco and Grand Bahama, to offer relief.

This spreading of human resources created a strain across all islands.⁵¹ Rapid assessments were carried out by the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), in tandem with the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), and other international organizations, so that appropriate assistance could be offered.⁵² The Ministry of Health produced printed guidelines on handwashing, water safety and chronic disease care, while Public Service Announcements (PSAs) were distributed on social media and the radio, to ensure widespread reach. Additionally, the Ministry of Health's Syndromic Surveillance Guidelines were updated and distributed to healthcare first responders, and Vector Surveillance Training was given by PAHO personnel, specifically for rodents and mosquitoes,



which are known to be disease-carrying.⁵³

The Samaritan's Purse, in collaboration with PAHO and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), provided emergency healthcare services by way of a field hospital in Grand Bahama, to offset the strain from the damages to the Rand Memorial Hospital in Grand Bahama, and healthcare services in Abaco. The facilities consisted of a lab, a pharmacy, an operating theatre, an emergency room, a male ward, an intensive care unit, a female ward, and 36 beds in total.⁵⁴

Many agencies and organizations assisted with the rebuilding efforts of the Rand Memorial Hospital in Grand Bahama,

SDG 3

ENSURE HEALTHY LIVES AND PROMOTE WELL-BEING FOR ALL AT ALL AGES

⁵⁰ Scott, Rachel, "Damage to healthcare system in the millions of dollars", The Nassau Guardian, 17 September 2019 <https://thenassauguardian.com/damage-to-healthcare-system-in-the-millions-of-dollars/>.
⁵¹ Scott, Rachel, "Sands: We have to assume water on GB and Abaco is contaminated", The Nassau Guardian, 5 September 2019, <https://thenassauguardian.com/sands-we-have-to-assume-water-on-gb-and-abaco-is-contaminated/>.
⁵² The United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", 10 December, 1948.
⁵³ Pan American Health Organization, "Bahamas Health Officials Respond to Hurricane Dorian with PAHO's support", Pan American Health Organization, 3 September 2019, <https://www.paho.org/en/news/3-9-2019-bahamas-health-officials-respond-hurricane-dorian-pahos-support>.
⁵⁴ Pan American Health Organization, "HURRICANE DORIAN Situation Report No. 19", Pan American Health Organization, 3 October 2019, <https://www.paho.org/disasters/dm/documents/Situation%20Report%20Hurricane%20Dorian%20-%20October%203rd,%202019.pdf>.
⁵⁵ Ward, Jasper, "We're here to serve", The Nassau Guardian, 9 October 2019, <https://thenassauguardian.com/were-here-to-serve/>.

including Scotiabank Bahamas⁵⁵ and Carnival Cooperation.⁵⁶ The GOB allocated \$21 million, to the rebuilding efforts. The Rand was able to welcome patients back into its facilities, in April 2021 for the first time since Hurricane Dorian.⁵⁷

In March 2020, the first reported case of COVID-19 was recorded in The Bahamas. Shortly after, the country was placed under lockdown by the Prime Minister. These restrictions came in the form of emergency orders, which implemented a curfew and outlined essential workers and essential services. The COVID-19 Pandemic placed further significant strain on the health sector, as healthcare workers became infected, and the system neared capacity, numerous times. To increase the health system's capacity, the government partnered with SuperClubs Breezes in August 2020, to create a low-risk healthcare facility that offered beds and resources, for low medical care. The SuperClubs Breezes Resort was also used as a quarantine facility, during the early stages of the Pandemic.⁵⁸

In June 2020, the Department of Environmental Health Services (DEHS) issued cleaning guidelines for workplaces, schools, other buildings, and other public and private spaces. The Department also offered training on how to properly sanitize for the staff of the affected spaces, and emphasized the protocols set by the Ministry of Health, which included,



⁵⁵ Scotiabank Bahamas, "Scotiabank Donates \$30,000 To Rand Memorial Hospital To Aid Restoration Efforts", Scotiabank Bahamas, 23 February 2021, <https://bs.scotiabank.com/about-scotiabank/media-centre/news-releases/30000-donation-to-rand-memorial-hospital>.
⁵⁶ Scott, Rachel, "Carnival signs MOU to help fund repairs to Rand", The Nassau Guardian, 8 November, 2019, <https://thenassauguardian.com/carnival-signs-mou-to-help-fund-repairs-to-rand/>.
⁵⁷ Scott, Rachel, "Newly renovated wards at Rand Memorial Hospital recommissioned", The Nassau Guardian, 26 April 2021, <https://thenassauguardian.com/newly-renovated-wards-at-rand-memorial-hospital-recommissioned/>.
⁵⁸ Turnquest, Ava, "SuperClubs Breezes to transform into low-risk healthcare facility", Eyewitness News, 10 August 2020, <https://ewnews.com/superclub-breezes-is-new-facility>.
⁵⁹ Eyewitness News, "Dept. of Environmental Health Issues New Workplace Guidelines", Eyewitness News, 8 June 2020, <https://ewnews.com/dept-of-environmental-health-issues-new-workplace-guidelines>.
⁶⁰ The Government of The Bahamas, "Combined Nine Month Fiscal Snapshot & Report on Budgetary Performance", The Ministry of Finance, The Bahamas, April 2021, https://bahamas.gov.bs/wps/wcm/connect/0f5cebb1-3007-427e-81bc-dc6cd936b1b4/Combined+FY2020_21_9+Month+Report+on+Budgetary+Performance_optimized.pdf?MOD=AJPERES.
⁶¹ Smith, Sloan, "Govt. spend over \$177 million on pandemic response", Eyewitness News, 13 January 2021, <https://ewnews.com/govt-spend-over-177-million-on-pandemic-response>.

hospitality workers, persons with physical disabilities, students and athletes studying or competing abroad.⁶² However, on islands with smaller populations, a prioritized rollout was not necessary.

The GOB, through an initiative led by PAHO, received the first batch of 33,600 AstraZeneca vaccines, through COVAX on 30 March 2021.⁶³ Additional vaccines are expected to arrive until the count reaches 100,800 vaccines received. The Right Honourable Prime Minister and the First Lady (wife), along with the Minister of Health, were among the first to receive the vaccine.⁶⁴

The Ministry of Health launched a website, "vax.gov.bs", to create greater ease for making appointments, cancelling, rescheduling, and downloading certificates, once vaccinated. Additionally, the OPM launched a portal on its website, where frequently asked questions and myths about the vaccine are addressed; a vaccine schedule is provided as well as a calculator, to estimate when a second dose of the vaccine would be needed, from the administration of the day, of any first dose.⁶⁵ The website also provides a link to the Ministry of Health's healthytogether.gov.bs website, for additional resources.

On 26 April 2021, the GOB along with the U.S. Embassy, embarked on a joint mission, to distribute vaccines to eight Family Islands, namely, Mayaguana, Acklins Island, Crooked Island, Cat Island, Long Island, Inagua, Bimini, and Eleuthera.⁶⁶ This targeted effort was to ensure that no one was left

behind, as The Bahamas continued to tackle COVID-19. The Family Islands are among the most vulnerable, due to their distance from the capital, and the additional time and resources it takes to contact them. The United States also committed \$750,000 of healthcare funding to The Bahamas, for assistance with COVID-19 response efforts.⁶⁷

The GOB had also secured a \$20 million loan from the IDB, to assist with the procurement and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine, over two years. The project had four components that will tackle, strengthening response leader-

AS OF MAY 2021, OVER 39,000 VACCINE DOSES WERE ADMINISTERED.

CORONAVIRUS

⁶² Office of the Prime Minister, "More priority groups and vaccination centers added to COVID-19 vaccine roll-out", The Government of The Bahamas, 7 April 2021, <https://www.bahamas.gov.bs/wps/portal/public/gov/government/news/more%20priority%20groups%20and%20vaccination%20centers%20added%20to%20covid-19%20vaccine%20roll-out>

⁶³ Pan American Health Organization, "The Bahamas receives 33,600 AstraZeneca vaccines from PAHO-WHO's COVAX facility", Pan American Health Organization, 30 March 2021, <https://www.paho.org/en/news/30-3-2021-bahamas-receives-33600-astrazeneca-vaccines-paho-whos-covax-facility>

⁶⁴ Office of the Prime Minister, "Rollout of COVID-19 vaccination campaign to begin on Wednesday", The Government of The Bahamas, 14 March 2021, <https://www.bahamas.gov.bs/wps/portal/public/gov/government/news/rollout%20of%20covid-19%20vaccination%20campaign%20to%20begin%20on%20wednesday>

⁶⁵ The Office of the Prime Minister, The Government of The Bahamas, 2021, <https://opm.gov.bs/vaccine/>

⁶⁶ U.S. Embassy Nassau, "U.S. Helps Bahamas Distribute COVID-19 Vaccines to Eight Family Islands", U.S. Embassy in The Bahamas, 16 April 2021, <https://usembassy.gov/u-s-helps-bahamas-distribute-covid-19-vaccines-to-eight-family-islands/>

⁶⁷ Eyewitness News, "United States commits 750k in health assistance", Eyewitness News, 21 May 2020, <https://ewnews.com/united-states-commits-750k-in-health-assistance>

SDG 3

national COVID-19 strategic plan, and strengthening the COVID-19 case management capacity.⁶⁸

The GOB launched the Healthy Together Bahamas initiative, to make government information related to COVID-19, more accessible to the public. The website features an overview of the 5-phase system which was drafted by the COVID-19 Coordinating Committee, and introduced in March 2020, by the Prime Minister. The system was later amended in August, to three levels, to better manage recovery efforts. The 3-level system allowed the government to navigate the management of COVID-19, given the archipelagic nature of The Bahamas, with Level 3 indicating the most restriction of movement, and Level 1 indicating the most ease of movement.⁷⁰

The website also includes resources for family, sexual, and mental health, such as tips and information on where to seek assistance. COVID-19 data is updated regularly and there are also resources for travelling during the Pandemic. Links to the Ministry of Health's social media pages, where they share updates and information, are also available.

For travel into The Bahamas, all adults are required to have a Bahamas Travel Health Visa, whether vaccinated or not. Travellers may also opt for COVID-19 health insurance, which is covered in the Bahamas Travel Health Visa application fee. The processing time for the visa is 48 hours, and the price varies depending on the duration of stay. Vaccinated travellers are not subject to the same testing requirements as unvaccinated travellers. The Bahamas Health Visa application process is available online.⁷¹

Healthcare Partnerships

In January 2021, Doctors Hospital Health System (DHHS), partnered with Cleveland Clinic to form a strategic advisory council. The aim is to expand and improve healthcare services in The Bahamas, with a focus on outpatient services and centres of excellence. This two-year agreement has the potential to make critical services more accessible to citizens and residents of The Bahamas, through access to the Cleveland Clinic's experts in leadership development, strategic

⁶⁸ McKenzie, Natario, "IDB approves \$20 million Bahamas loan to acquire COVID-19 vaccine and aid in distribution", Eyewitness News, 18 December 2020, <https://ewnews.com/idb-approves-us-20-million-bahamas-loan-to-acquire-and-distribute-covid-19-vaccine-by-end-of-first-quarter-2021>

⁶⁹ Healthy Together Bahamas, The Bahamas Ministry of Health, 2020, <https://healthytogether.gov.bs/combatting-covid-19/government-actions/>

⁷⁰ Healthy Together Bahamas, The Bahamas Ministry of Health, 2020, <https://healthytogether.gov.bs/combatting-covid-19/restrictions/>

⁷¹ Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, <https://www.bahamas.com/travelupdates>

⁷² Eyewitness News, "Cleveland Clinic, Doctors Hospital partner to expand healthcare services in The Bahamas", Eyewitness News, 27 January 2021, <https://ewnews.com/cleveland-clinic-doctors-hospital-partner-to-expand-healthcare-services-in-the-bahamas/>

⁷³ Eyewitness News, "Cleveland Clinic Florida to host free "Healthy Habits" webinar with local professionals", 18 January 2021, Eyewitness News, <https://ewnews.com/cleveland-clinic-florida-to-host-free-healthy-habits-webinar-with-local-professionals>

⁷⁴ The Ministry of Health, "Ministry of Health Announces 2019 Steps Survey Initial Results: Survey to assess health habits and risk factors for Non-Communicable Diseases", The Government of The Bahamas, 27 August 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/5n8xskm>

planning, and clinical education.⁷² The Cleveland Clinic also held a "Healthy Habits" webinar, in January 2021, with local healthcare personnel and professionals. The webinar, which was free of charge, focused on the relationship between diet and certain non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes and high blood pressure, which are prevalent in Bahamian society.⁷³

Non-Communicable Diseases

In 2019, the Ministry of Health administered a STEPS 2019 survey, which aimed to assess "health habits and risk factors for Non-Communicable Diseases". The survey found that though levels of physical activity have improved; eating, drinking, and lifestyle habits among Bahamians, contribute to the country's population having significant health challenges.



Notably, the survey results found that the average Bahamian consumes more than double the daily recommended dose of salt,



consumes 64 pounds of added sugar a year,



drinks less than the daily recommended amount of water,



eats less than the recommended number of fruits and vegetables a day,



and is overweight.

Further, there has been an increase in the number of Bahamians who smoke and drink, and 65% of the surveyed population, was reported as not using condoms. Rape and/or Sexual Assault were surveyed at 13.1%. The findings from the STEPS 2019 survey, are to be used to shape and inform initiatives found in the Wellness in the Nation 2017-2022 Plan.⁷⁴

The Healthy Bahamas Coalition

The Healthy Bahamas Coalition adopted the regional campaign for front-of-package labelling, led by the Healthy Caribbean Coalition, PAHO, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission. The campaign titled, "Now More than Ever: Better Labels, Better Choices, Better Health", calls for easily noticeable, octagon-shaped warning labels, to identify food products that are high in fats, sugars, and salts. These labels aim to help consumers make healthier choices, when making dietary decisions. The multimedia campaign which included PSAs, videos and flyers, ran from March 2021 to April 2021.⁷⁵

55%

55% said that people should not be allowed to grow their medicinal marijuana,

40%

while 40% support the personal growth of medicinal marijuana.⁷⁷

The Bahamas National Commission on Marijuana has been reappointed to run until June 2021, to fulfil its mandate.

National Health Insurance

The National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) has enrolled over 100,000 Bahamian citizens and residents in the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bahamas Program, since it was launched in 2017. This milestone achievement, accomplished in April 2021, represents over a quarter of the Bahamian population. The program grants those enrolled, affordable, quality healthcare, with a primary care physician of their choice. A survey that was conducted, revealed that beneficiaries of the program, reported 95% patient satisfaction.⁷⁸ Another significant achievement made by the NHIA was the introduction of the Electronic Health Record (EHR), using Telehealth. The EHR provided by eClinicalWorks (etc.), allows healthcare providers to keep digital records of their patients' health information, to allow comprehensive information to be available to care teams. This can also allow healthcare providers, labs, and specialists to share health information, to enhance the quality and precision of care.⁷⁹

84%

84% of respondents believed that marijuana should be legalized for medicinal use,

80%

with 80% of respondents indicating that they would use marijuana, if instructed to by a doctor.

25%

However, 25% of respondents believed that marijuana legalised for medicinal purposes, would be abused in some way,

⁷⁵ Healthy Caribbean Coalition, "Now More Than Ever Regional Campaign Promoting Front-of-Package Warning Labelling", Healthy Caribbean Coalition, 12 March 2021, https://www.healthycaribbean.org/now-more-than-ever-regional-campaign-promoting-front-of-package-warning-labelling/?fbclid=IwARlozACFuP2k502PxQcfWZIBSqB6WrGuzmDqrM01CqQUmmMF6xELtHSc_c

⁷⁶ Smith, Sloan, "Marijuana commission reactivated until June 2021", Eyewitness News, 15 August 2021, <https://ewnews.com/marijuana-commission-reactivated-until-june-2021>

⁷⁷ Smith, Sloan, "YES AND NO: Bahamians largely support medical marijuana but oppose recreational use", Eyewitness News, 13 April 2021, <https://ewnews.com/yes-and-no-bahamians-largely-support-medical-marijuana-but-oppose-recreational-use>

⁷⁸ National Health Insurance Authority, "The National Health Insurance Authority announces appointment of new CEO", The National Health Insurance Authority, February 22nd, 2021, <https://www.nhibahamas.gov.bs/the-national-health-insurance-authority-announces-appointment-of-new-ceo/#:~:text=Nation>

⁷⁹ National Health Insurance Authority, "NHI has launched the Electronic Health Record", National Health Insurance Authority, November 18th, 2019, <https://www.nhibahamas.gov.bs/nhi-launch-ehr/#:~:text=Nation>



At the time of writing this report, there are no specific taxes that earmarks funding for NHI Bahamas. However, in its 2019 Response to Consultation report, the NHIA outlined its intention to make the NHI program more affordable, accessible, and effective. To do this, the NHIA was recommending options to support financing and expansion of program benefits via the implementation of an employee contribution to 1.5% of income, removing a 50% cap on employee premium contributions, and adding all paediatric cancers to the standard health benefit. Before establishing NHI, approximately 70% of Bahamian citizens and residents did not have health insurance.⁸⁰

Mental Health

A study done by PAHO in 2020, found that mental, neurological, substance use disorders, and self-harm (MNSS), account for between a fourth and a fifth of the disease burden of non-communicable diseases, in 5-year-olds. Up until age 5, these MNSS diseases, which account for the disease burden, are mostly epilepsy (44%) and autism (48%). After age 5, between ages 5 and 15, anxiety disorders, conduct disorders, and headaches, become more prominent, each comprising about 18% of the MNSS disease burden. The report finds that around age 20, throughout adulthood, disorders such as depression, anxiety, somatic system disorder, and self-harm, are responsible for 37% of the MNSS disease burden, while headaches account for 21%, substance abuse for 20%, and severe mental disorders, for about 9%. Elderly persons most often suffer from a neurocognitive disorder associated with Alzheimer's disease, which is responsible for more than 50% of the MNSS disease burden at age 80, and more than 70% at age 85 and above. The study also found that men were most affected by headaches, alcohol disorders, dementia, and Alzheimer's disease, while women were most affected by depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, and headaches.⁸¹

In October 2019, Minister of Health, Dr Duane Sands, expressed concerns about the mental health of citizens and residents of The Bahamas, post-Hurricane Dorian.⁸² Earlier that year, Dr. Sands had also expressed concerns about the "gaming addiction" in The Bahamas.⁸³

In April 2020, The Bahamas Psychological Association, repurposed its help-lines to those who may be experiencing psychological stress during the Pandemic, and the changes it brought to individuals and communities. It was able to achieve this initiative through collaboration with PAHO Caribbean, The Ministry of Health, and the Public Hospitals Authority (PHA).⁸⁴

Americares, an NGO, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), with the GOB, which outlined that Amecares would provide an array of health services, including mental health and psychological support, as well as primary care for those recovering from Hurricane Dorian.⁸⁵

PAHO donated tablets to help with mental health support, amid the COVID-19 Pandemic, in January 2021. The tablets were donated to the Ministry of Public Health and the Public Hospital's Authority. Complete with memory cards, the tablets can keep track of the demographic information and number of persons who use the English and Creole hotlines. The tablets will also be used to track what kind of mental health conditions are experienced, and harmonize services from various healthcare providers, carry out virtual psychology sessions, and measure the effectiveness of conduction sessions, virtually.⁸⁶



⁸⁰ National Health Insurance Authority, "National Health Insurance- A Shared Responsibility: response to Public Consultation", National Health Insurance Authority, 31 January, 2019, https://www.nhibahamas.gov.bs/wp-content/uploads/NHI_Public-Consultation-Paper.pdf

⁸¹ https://www.paho.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/MentalHealth-profile-2020%20Bahamas_Country_Report_Final.pdf

⁸² <https://ewnews.com/ministry-of-health-addresses-mental-illnesses-due-to-gaming-addiction>

⁸³ <https://ewnews.com/ministry-of-health-addresses-mental-illnesses-due-to-gaming-addiction>

⁸⁴ https://www.bahamaslocal.com/newsitem/241317/The-Bahamas_Psychological-Association-help_lines_to_covid19_Mental_Health_and_Psychological_Services.html

⁸⁵ <https://ewnews.com/amecaries-mou-to-provide-critical-health-support-to-dorian-survivors>

⁸⁶ <https://www.paho.org/en/news/26-1-2021-paho-bahamas-turks-and-caicos-islands-office-makes-donation-strengthen-mental-health>

Tribune Radio Limited

Tribune Radio Limited held their fourth annual “Dunkin for Boobies” fundraiser, in 2019. The event gave the public an opportunity to dunk The Tribune Radio’s, radio personalities, in dunk tanks, for a small fee. The proceeds were donated to the Cancer Society. Corporate sponsors donated about \$6,000, while the total amount raised was \$9,000.

Tribune Radio Limited also held a fitness challenge for its employees, to encourage wellness. They partnered with The Sports Centre, Cooperative Credit Union, and Evolve Functional Fitness. Evolve Functional Fitness offered the participants free membership and classes.



Figure 8. “DUNKIN FOR BOOBIES” FUNDRAISER,

SDG 3

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 3 PROGRAMMES

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS COVID-19 VACCINE

PUBLIC FATIGUE SURROUNDING MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS

EATING HABITS

ECONOMIC STRAIN ON THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

HEALTHCARE WORKER BURNOUT

THE STIGMA SURROUNDING MENTAL HEALTH

SUSTAINABLE FINANCING OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES

5.0 PROGRESS ON GOALS & TARGETS



Enhancing capacity for research and innovation has positive implications for improving education quality and educational attainment, contributing to increased productivity and subsequent economic activity. There is a heightened need for programmes that focus on both hard and soft skills, as employers often cite a lack of well-qualified workers as one of their primary business challenges. Investment in education and training has been a key priority for the government, during the period under review.

The Ministry of Education has ventured beyond merely using the 'SDG' language, to actualize its goals. The Ministry aims to provide Pre-primary Education on the SDGs, to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development. The Ministry of Education's policy statements and budgetary priorities, suggest its official position on having a keen awareness of the importance of achieving an internationally agreed agenda, whilst simultaneously contributing to sustainable national development.

In accordance with the government's growth and fiscal austerity measures, cuts were made across national budgets. However, there was a significant increase in the Ministry of Education's recurring and capital budgets; 10% and 20% respectively. Twenty percent of the government's total 2019/20 national budget was allocated to the Ministry of Education's capital works.⁸⁷



SDG 4

ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

⁸⁷ https://www.bahamasbudget.gov.bs/media/filer_public/e8/04/e804023c-c76d-4018-afb9-a3cd002b43b8/supplemental_hurricane_dorian_budget_book_jan_29_2020-compressed.pdf

lack of accommodations, is not a barrier to accessing tertiary-level educational opportunities at UB.

Although children generally have equitable access to quality education, the education system grapples with low levels of student attainment. Only 50% of graduating high school students achieve a diploma, in any given year. The other half are awarded a "certificate of attendance"; that is, although

they attended classes, they did not achieve the standard required for graduation. Additionally, the national examinations at the third⁸⁸, sixth⁸⁹, ninth⁹⁰, and twelfth-grade levels, reveal widening performance gaps between private and public schools, and between boys and girls.⁹¹ Private schools tend to perform better than public schools and girls tend to perform better than boys.⁹²

ADDITIONALLY, THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT CONCERNS ABOUT THE EDUCATION SYSTEM. THESE CONCERN INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:



The education system is not producing graduates with the skills required by the business sector.



There is a significant gap in identifying key skills needed.



There is a significant gap in the process to ensure that the education system delivers those key skills.⁹³

Many of these young people join the labour force but do not have the skills necessary for employment – both soft skills (punctuality and attendance) and hard skills (appropriate literacy and numeracy level). A 2014 study by the World Bank on Youth Unemployment in the Caribbean,⁹⁴ noted that 34.5% of employers in The Bahamas, cite the need for experience as a critical determinant of employment. Additionally, the inadequacy of the workforce's education was seen as the single largest obstacle to doing business in The Bahamas. These inadequacies are seen in both public and private sectors, and large and small businesses.

⁸⁸ Grade Level Assessment Test (GLAT)

⁸⁹ Grade Level Assessment Test (GLAT)

⁹⁰ Bahamas Junior Certificate (BjCs)

⁹¹ Ministry of Education, Educational Statistical Digest, 2012-13 (Ministry of Education, The Commonwealth of The Bahamas 2012 Ministry of Education Annual Report 2010-2011, Nassau: Research and Planning Unit)

⁹² Ministry of Education, Educational Statistical Digest, 2012-13 (Ministry of Education, The Commonwealth of The Bahamas 2012 Ministry of Education Annual Report 2010-2011) Nassau: Research and Planning Unit

⁹³ Working Paper State of the Nation Working Paper on Human Capital p. 63

⁹⁴ Torrado Monica, Youth Unemployment in the Caribbean, 2014 World Bank LAC Report: http://www.dzbchild.org/uploads/docs/youth_unemployment_in_the_caribbean_2014.pdf

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 4

Interventions explained in the previous VNR will not be elaborated upon here, as there has been no evidence of significant changes thereto. Such interventions include the Student Achievement Unit, Providing Access to Continued Education (PACE), Success Ultimately Reassures Everyone (SURE), and Transitional Alternative Programme for Students (TAPS) programmes. It is worth mentioning that since the last VNR, no known progress has been made on the Multi-Service Centre for Adults with Developmental Disabilities – i.e., a facility intended

to provide a safe, nurturing, learning, living and supportive environment for such adults. One of the facility's goals is, to provide opportunities for the training and development of persons residing in the facility.⁹⁵

That said, improvements to the educational system and outcomes have been listed among the eight (8) priorities monitored by the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit. The five (5) areas of focus and its current status are highlighted in the image below.

TABLE 3: PRIORITIES MONITORED BY THE PRIME MINISTER'S DELIVERY UNIT

TARGET:				
UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL	THIRD GRADE LITERACY	BHSD / GRADUATION	DIGITAL EVOLUTION	SCHOOL MODERNIZATION
				
4,612 - 3 and 4 year-olds enrolled in a pre-primary program	65% of 3rd graders achieving grades A-D on GLAT in Language Arts	% public school students meeting BJC requirements (TBD)	100% of schools with fiber and Wi-Fi connectivity	7 new schools built; 5 schools amalgamated
PERFORMANCE				
3,044	% NOT AVAILABLE	TBD	61% W/FIBER	1 NEW SCHOOL BUILT 13 SCHOOLS AMALGAMATED
■ ON TARGET	■ IN PROGRESS	■ NOT STARTED		

The Ministry of Education's Virtual Learning Portal

The demand for accessible learning technologies skyrocketed in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, and has continued through the COVID-19 response. As such, the Ministry of Education has had to adjust its learning portal, to accommodate the needs of its users. The following are key components of the learning portal's functions:

Learning Management System (LMS)

- Houses Educational Resources inclusive of Digital Resources designed for subjects and levels.
- Analysis of Student Assessment and Student Support.
- Allows for Teaching across Districts and Schools.
- Allows for Life-long Learning even under Emergency /Crisis situations.

Education Management Information System (EMIS)

A Centralized System for School Management and Data Collection using the information on Students and Staff.

Data is housed in the EMIS relevant to Demographics, School Programs, Performance, Attendance, and Behaviour, etc.

Contributes to, and allows for, effective School Management and Decision-making, at policy and operational levels, as well as meeting reporting obligations.

Notwithstanding the digital divide that manifested in the early months following the GOB's response to COVID-19, the following graphs show that the login activity of students, as of October 2020, was rather robust – equalling a total number of 46,834 students, using the Ministry of Education's virtual learning platform.

⁹⁵ Bahamas Local February 2016. Sign unveiled for Multi-Service Centre for Adults with Developmental Disabilities. Accessed at: https://www.bahamaslocal.com/newsitem/145635/Sign_unveiled_for_Multi_Service_Centre_for_Adults_with_Developmental_Disabilities_Gladstone_Road.html

The Ministry of Education's Virtual Learning Portal

Notwithstanding the digital divide that manifested in the early months following the GOB's response to COVID-19, the following graphs show that the login activity of students, as of October 2020, was rather robust – equalling a total number of

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TABLE 4: ISLANDS WHERE STUDENTS LOGINS TO THE PLATFORM ARE >1000

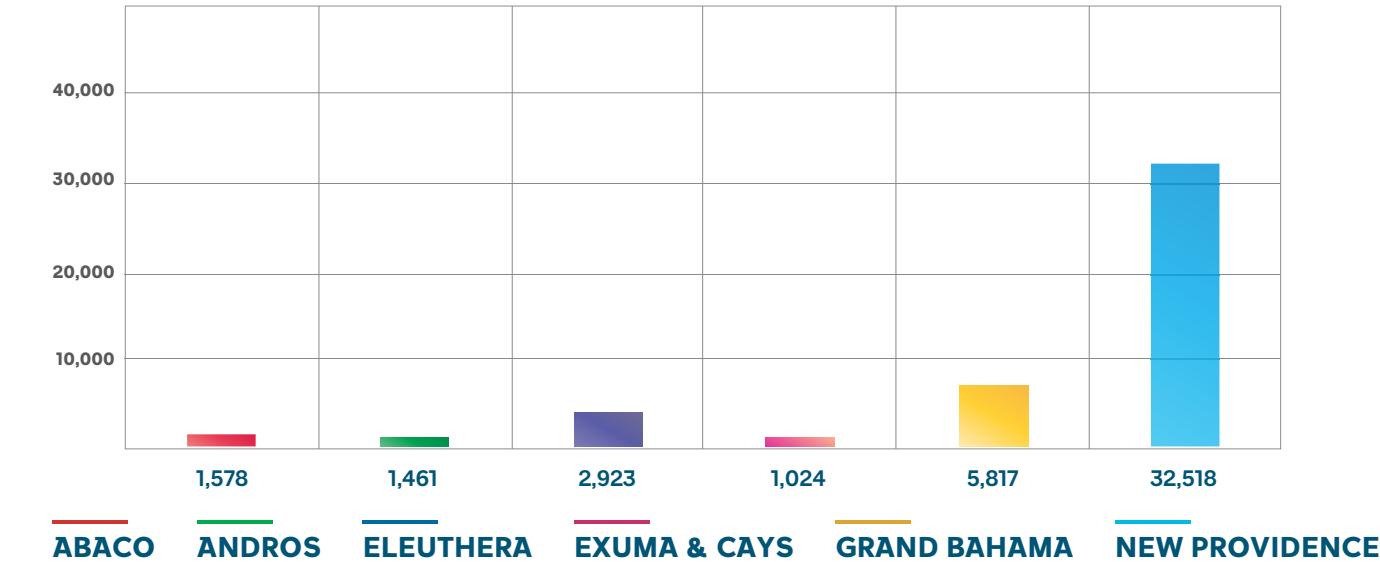
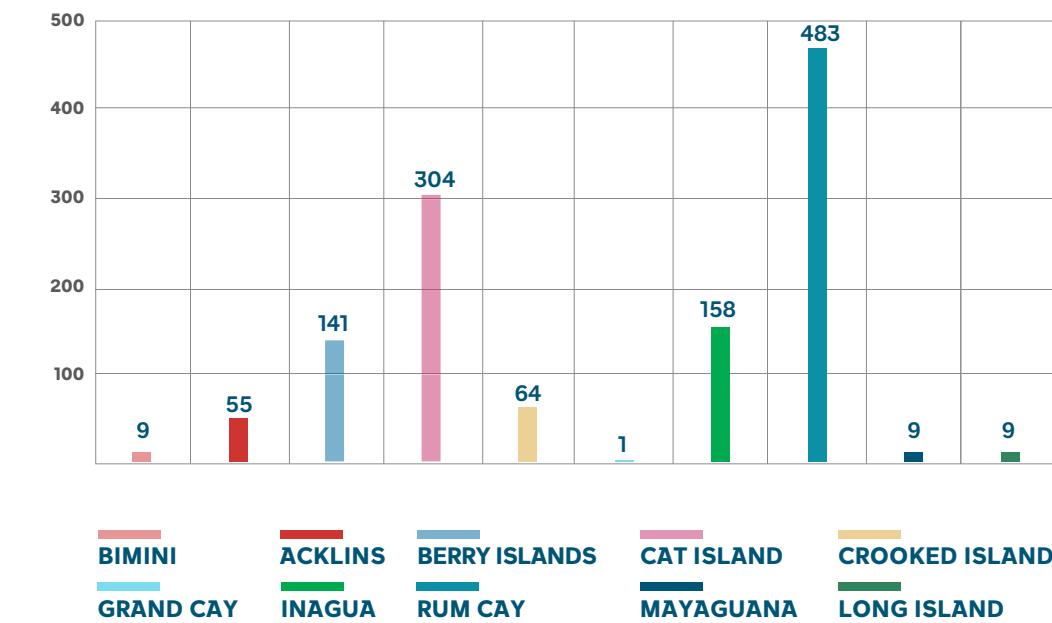


TABLE 5: ISLANDS WHERE VALID STUDENT LOGINS ARE <1000



Environmental Stewardship Education

The Bahamas National Trust (BNT) continues to collaborate with the GOB and partners, to ensure that relevant biodiversity information is integrated into formal and informal educational programmes. These programmes include the inclusion of Conservation Issues into the National Curriculum, and Teacher Training Workshops to help support this; the development of the National Park System throughout the archipelago, to work as outdoor classrooms; implementing After-school Environmental Clubs, "Discovery Club" in over 60 schools, and Environmental Education Camps on several Family Islands.⁹⁶

SDG 4 Partnerships during Hurricane Dorian &COVID-19 Responses

In addition to government initiatives, other entities are working to ensure that no one is left behind. Financing for most of the Ministry of Education's efforts is sourced mainly from the consolidated fund. However, in 2019, the recent Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics "STEM for Oceans Education Initiative" by the Pan-American Development Foundation and Royal Caribbean Ltd., is of particular significance to small island-big ocean states and demonstrates ways in which partnerships can address the specific needs of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Other NGOs provide essential services in raising awareness of the SDGs through experiential learning activities. Notable organizations in this regard include, BREEF, CICI, and CEI, to name a few.⁹⁷

The IOM, following its Objective 4.2, supported 200 children (100 Female, 100 Male) with remote education, via the distribution of tablet computers and internet access. In coordination with the Ministry of Education, IOM prioritized students with a migration background, while others supported the core groups of students. The organization plans to continue to advocate, and conduct training for, migrants and marginalized groups. One of the entity's ideas is to provide English language courses for adults.

Indeed, one of the key challenges to SDG 4 implementation was the limited progress on retaining boys in the educational system, as well as limited progress on closing the performance gaps between public and private schools. To contribute to levelling the playing field in this regard, the Lyford Cay Foundation spearheads an educational enhancement programme (FOCUS), for public school students.⁹⁸



Tribune Radio Limited

Tribune Radio Limited engages work study students each year, from St Anne's High School. They have also engaged students from other schools and learning institutions such as, C. R. Walker Senior High School, Queens College, and The Learning Resources Section. In addition to work study, Tribune Radio Limited has also engaged college interns to allow those pursuing an education in related disciplines, an opportunity for on-the-job experience. This experience helps to shape candidates of quality, for employment and entrepreneurship.⁹⁹

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 4 PROGRAMMES

Achieving SDG 4 will depend on the following:

- Increased and sustained funding for education and training at all levels, with specific emphasis on Early Childhood Education and Vocational Training.
- Investment in Research and efforts to reduce the gap in School Enrolment between girls and boys.

98 <https://lyfordcayfoundations.org/our-programmes-focus/>
99 Tribune Media Group SDG Report 2021



5.0 PROGRESS ON GOALS & TARGETS



A 2019 UB study titled, "Learning Gender-based Attitudes in The Bahamas", found that among mostly university students between the ages of 18-24, heavily stereotyped gender attitudes were prominent. These attitudes included, that a man should be the head of the household and that a woman should submit to her husband; however, findings also revealed that respondents disagreed that a woman's place is in the home and that a man expresses his love to his partner by hitting her.

The study found that attitudes about gender roles are formed at a young age in the home. A significant majority (82.3%) of all respondents came from a home that had a mother figure present, while less than half (48.6%) of all respondents came from a home that had a father figure present. These findings support the idea that the Bahamian society is matrifocal in nature, as other scholars have also found. The study also found that respondents were typically more receptive to messages received from their own sex. Conclusions of the study noted that, to promote gender equality in The Bahamas, faith-based groups may have to structure their teachings in a way to reflect that outcome.¹⁰⁰

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) Background Note on Gender Equality, Nationality Laws and Statelessness, 2020, notes that The Bahamas has still not successfully reformed the constitution to grant Bahamian

women and men equal rights, when passing on their nationality to their children. A child born to a Bahamian mother and foreign father, still does not automatically inherit Bahamian citizenship. However, a child born to a Bahamian father and foreign mother, does.¹⁰¹

During COVID-19, the IDB acknowledged that domestic violence was on the rise in the region and beyond, due to lockdowns and restraints placed on movement, to slow down the spread of the virus.¹⁰² A separate IDB study conducted in April 2020, surveyed 910 people from The Bahamas and revealed that 11.3% of women surveyed, expressed a rise in domestic violence in their homes, since the start of the Pandemic. The study also noted that there may be an instance of under-reporting, and the actual numbers may be higher. Overall, the burden of unpaid-care work such as home-schooling, entertaining children, caring for elders in the family, and cooking and



SDG 5 ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

100 file:///C:/Users/aliciarolle/Downloads/339-1461-1-PB1.pdf

101 <https://www.refworld.org/country,BHS,5fd769340.html>

102 <https://blogs.iadb.org/caribbean-dev-trends/en/home-not-so-sweet-in-times-of-covid19/>

cleaning, is performed by women. The Department of Gender and Family Affairs (DGFA) in the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development, along with UB, administered a survey in 2020, to gather information about family safety and the prevalence of Domestic Violence, during COVID-19. Initial findings from the survey found that Domestic Violence was up 2%.¹⁰³ The Bahamas Crisis Centre also reported a 30% uptick in domestic violence related calls¹⁰⁴, and The Bahamas Christian Council also noted the rise in domestic violence, while calling for planned relief measures.

There is a thirty-three percent (33%) gender pay gap between women and men, and most persons living below the poverty line are women. Further, poverty is more prevalent in homes headed by women, as opposed to those headed by men. Rural households experience the highest rates of poverty, making rural women among the most vulnerable in the population.¹⁰⁵

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) measures the disparities between women and men in empowerment, reproductive health, and the labour market. A score of zero (0) would reflect no disparities in equality between men and women, and a score of one (1) would indicate strong disparities. The 2019 GII data reflects The Bahamas as having a GII of 0.341.¹⁰⁶

The Department of Gender and Family Affairs (DGFA)

The DGFA within the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development, maintains a relationship with NGOs and regularly hosts monthly meetings where NGOs receive updates, network, and may access additional resources through the DGFA. The DGFA allocated over \$150,000 to NGOs in 2018, to support their ongoing work and programmes in various communities, particularly those communities that are most vulnerable and are at risk of being left behind.

In September 2018, The DGFA, using information gathered earlier that year via survey, hosted a Jam Preservative-making Workshop for women in the rural community of South Andros, focusing on local fruits such as guavas, mangos, sapodillas, and seagrapes. The Department also hosted straw plaiting workshops for women, men, and school students, in the rural islands of Acklins and Crooked Island. Both workshops provided skills that can be used to make

goods for sale, thus enhancing economic empowerment. Women farmers in Cat Island were presented with eight generators and eight water tanks in 2018, to support farming activities and to ensure the opportunity for continuous production, during periods of drought.

A program officer from the DGFA attended the "10th European Development Regional Crime and Violence Prevention and Social Development Capacity-Building Train the Trainers Workshop, for Persons Working with the victims and perpetrators of Domestic Violence Trinidad"¹⁰⁷ in January 2019. The program officer conducted training sessions, with the knowledge gained at the Train-the-Trainer Workshop, for the staff of The Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development.

The National Women's Advisory Council, along with the DGFA, held an Economic Empowerment Expo for NGOs and interested individuals, in November 2018. Over 50 NGO's and 200 people benefitted.

The DGFA is on the steering committee for NEMA, to ensure that a gender dimension is built into the formulation of plans, strategies, programmes, and policies, on matters of national emergencies. In 2019, The Department was a participant in the National Disaster Baseline Assessment, after Hurricane Dorian. This was the first exercise of its kind. The launch of the assessment included a year-long workshop in which data, disaster management experiences, and best practices are shared.

In April 2020, the DGFA launched a survey online, titled "Family Safety Survey – COVID-19 Bahamas", to collect data on households to indicate how the Pandemic affected the prevalence of violence in homes.¹⁰⁸

103 <https://thenassauguardian.com/reports-of-domestic-violence-increase-by-two-percent-during-pandemic/>

104 <https://ewnews.com/women-shouldering-greater-domestic-burden-during-covid-19>

105 https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/publication/files/46737/S200092_en.pdf

106 <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BHS>

107 https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/informe_beijing25_bahamas_final.pdf

108 <https://ewnews.com/gender-and-family-affairs-dept-launches-online-family-safety-survey>

Hurricane Dorian

Women and girls are among the most vulnerable groups affected by natural disasters. Following Hurricane Dorian, an NGO CARE, conducted a Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) using secondary information which predicted that:

40,238 women and girls (51.4%) and 38,047 men and boys (48.6%) were directly affected.

Re: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) - 21,407 women and girls require support with menstruation

Re: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) - 3,131 women and adolescent girls will be pregnant (4%) while 470 will face life-threatening complications in pregnancy

Re: Gender Based Violence (GBV) - 40,238 women and girls are at risk of gender-based violence¹⁰⁹

It was also found that 9.7% of households that were headed by women, were living in or experiencing poverty, compared to 7.9% of the households headed by men. This made households led by women, 1.8% more likely to be experiencing poverty.

As a response to this, The DGFA in The Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development, partnered with the United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA) to provide dignity kits to women and girls in shelters. The dignity kits included menstrual management products, soap, towels, essential toiletries, a comb, and a mirror. The kits were provided in durable buckets that could also be repurposed. The DGFA with UNFPA, also conducted focus groups in the main shelter in New Providence. These focus groups were to assess the needs and concerns of women and girls living in the shelter. Outcomes from the focus group informed the Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) strategies and recommendations given to other key organizations, at regularly held GBV working group meetings. The DGFA staff were trained by UNFPA personnel in PSEA, and a referral pathway for GBV was co-created and made available in both English and Creole.

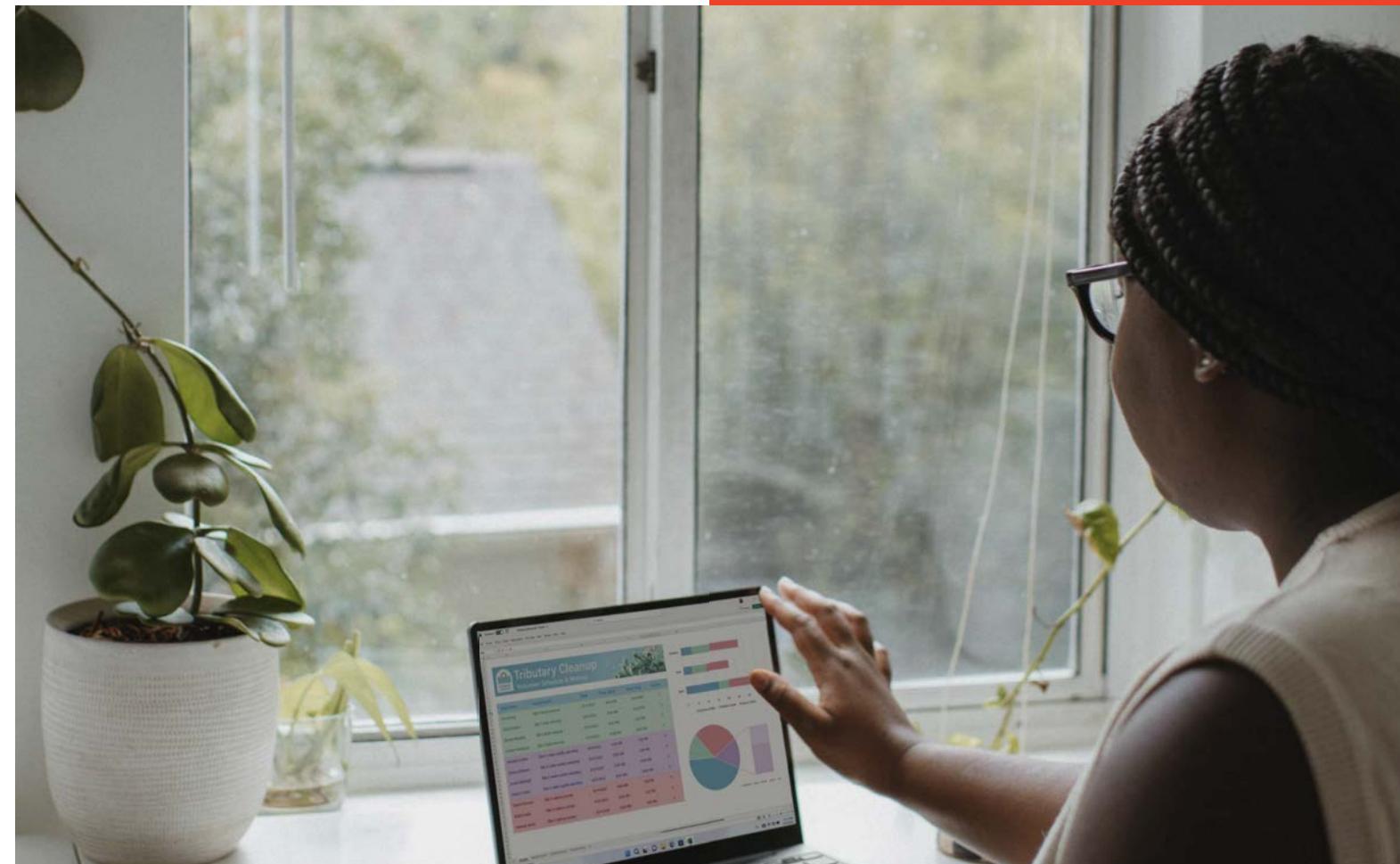
The devastation of Hurricane Dorian resulted in more women being displaced than men, on both the islands of Grand Bahama and Abaco. Women were also more restricted in their access to the tools needed to build back their homes, and the resources needed to return to their communities. Security risks were also higher for women compared to men, in the relevant communities. In the case of Abaco, many women have relocated as reconstruction is making slow, yet steady progress.¹¹⁰

Despite women being more vulnerable than men to the devastating effects of Dorian, they were essential in the community when it came to childcare and care of the elderly. Women were also instrumental in managing their households post Dorian.¹¹¹ The almost exclusive burden of care work, serves as yet another barrier to women's ability to be mobile, and access rebuilding resources.

Women and girls served as important actors in recovery and relief efforts, even during the storm, through community organizations and utilizing their social networks.

World Bank Gender Equality Report

According to a 2019 World Bank study titled "Women, Business, and the Law 2019: A Decade of Reform", The Bahamas was ranked 62 out of 187 countries and fourth in the region of Latin



¹⁰⁹ https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CARE%20Hurricane%20Dorian%20Bahamas%20Rapid%20Gender%20Analysis_Sept2019.pdf
¹¹⁰ https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/publication/files/46737/S2000992_en.pdf
¹¹¹ https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/publication/files/46737/S2000992_en.pdf
¹¹² https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/publication/files/46737/S2000992_en.pdf

SDG 5

America and the Caribbean. The report sought to shed light on the ways legal discrimination affects women, in areas of employment and entrepreneurship. The Bahamas scored 100 in five of eight categories. Those categories being, going places, getting married, getting a pension, managing assets, and starting a job; The Bahamas scored 75 in running a business and getting paid, and 20 in having children. The category "going places", speaks to the ease of mobility of a woman's free will, while the category of "starting a job", measures how laws played a role in women becoming entrepreneurs. The section "getting paid", seeks to measure how laws affect the gap in wages between women and men, and the types of jobs they hold employment at, while the category "managing assets", seeks to measure the way laws affect the difference in how property is, in men and women. The section on "getting a pension", looks at laws that influence the amount of pension a woman receives while "having children", and zones in on laws that influence the way women can work,

after being pregnant. Finally, the section on "running a business", focused on measuring those things that serve as barriers to women successfully running a business, as opposed to men successfully running a business.¹¹³

The Sexual Offenders Registry

In 2021, the Minister of National Security announced that the sex offender's registry would be fully established, complete with resources, personnel, and infrastructure, by July 2021.

¹¹⁴ The registry is to keep a list of all sexual offenders, including their places of residence. The offender has three days to report to the registry, after being released from prison, and must also provide identification so that a report can be made in the register.¹¹⁵

CEDAW

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), is also often called the International Bill of Human Rights for Women. The convention explains what is considered discrimination against women and provides an agenda for how countries can end those forms of discrimination.¹¹⁶ In October 2018, The Bahamas presented at the 71st session of CEDAW, with a delegation led by the Minister of Social Services and Urban Development. The delegation consisted of persons from the DGFA, The Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, and The Ministry of Education and Foreign Affairs. The Bahamas appeared for the constructive dialogue and consideration of the country's 6th periodic report. The Minister of Social Services and Urban Development invited the UN to partner with the Ministry, to provide technical assistance to better protect women and girls. The Minister also affirmed The Bahamas' commitment to the journey to achieve Gender Equality.¹¹⁷

Equality Bahamas, an NGO that advocates for the rights of women through public education, community engagement and advocacy, presented a shadow report in response to the CEDAW report prepared by DGFA. Shadow reports allow the voices of civil society to be heard, while allowing them to offer critiques and recommendations on record to the government. Oral submissions were also given by NGO advocates.¹¹⁸

The Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership (CIWiL) chapter in The Bahamas, was established on 22 November 2019. CIWiL is an NGO that monitors, increases, and strengthens women's political participation and leadership in the Caribbean region.¹¹⁹ Since its establishment, the organization has held numerous trainings, symposiums, workshops, and meetings, to engage and educate the Bahamian population and grow its membership. CIWiL consistently works across all political party lines with politicians, other NGOs, civil society, and the GOB, to fulfil its mandate.

The Sustainable Development Goals Unit (SDGU)

The SDGU hosted an interactive webinar by Gabrielle Hosein, the Director of the University of The West Indies St. Augustine's Campus Institute for Gender and Developmental Studies, in November 2020. The lecture, titled "Unboxing Biases", tackled toxic masculinities, and broke down the stereotypes assigned to different genders. The webinar, hosted on Facebook live, allowed for viewers to interact, and ask questions to better tailor the learning experience.

Equality Bahamas

Equality Bahamas is an NGO that promotes promotes women and other human rights issues, by way of community engagement, public education, and advocacy. Equality Bahamas has a focus to help the most vulnerable communities, in line with ensuring that no one is left behind.

Equality Bahamas hosts monthly "Women's Wednesdays" sessions, where the community is invited to engage in open dialogue on various topics. The sessions are also recorded and streamed on Facebook Live, to extend the reach and allow people to participate virtually.

Equality Bahamas also has an expo each March, in celebration of International Women's Day. Other organizations are invited to come and share about their work in the community, and information about how to get involved is provided. There are also interactive activity sessions and women-owned business vendors.

The founder of Equality Bahamas, Alicia Wallace, writes for The Tribune newspaper every week, to highlight issues on gender equality to spark conversation and raise awareness in a public arena.¹²⁰

The Dignified Girls Project

The DGP is an NGO that provides menstrual hygiene products to girls in need. Dignity kits are packaged by the organization, which donates the packages to distribution centres that work with girls in marginalized communities. Additionally, The DGP hosts an annual, "My Period My Pride" seminar, where girls can hear from an array of speakers on all things menstruation related. The interactive sessions allow the participants to gain a better understanding of their cycles and boost their confidence. The "My Period My Pride" seminar is the educational segment of the NGO. The Organization also has a "Period Management & Hygiene" booklet which is available for sale as a PDF or physical copy, as well as other menstrual hygiene products, whose sales go towards the continuity of the organization.

The Citizen Security & Justice Programme

In 2019, trainers of the Citizen Security and Justice Programme (CSJP), trained hundreds of community residents in how to identify, address and find resolve in challenges relating to gender-based, violence, conflict resolution, parenting, and sexual assault. The sessions were made free to the public and were made accessible to various communities.¹²¹

Male Perpetrators Programme

In 2018 and 2019, the Roman-Catholic Archdiocese in The Bahamas, held a 26-week programme for male perpetrators of GBV. The programme seeks to change the cognitive behaviours of men through teaching them various skills that they can apply every day, inclusive of how to better manage their emotions and conflict resolution.

SDG 5

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 5 PROGRAMMES

- 1 HARMFUL STEREOTYPES**
- 2 LIMITED PUBLIC EDUCATION ON GENDER EQUALITY**
- 3 LACK OF DATA**

¹¹⁹ <https://civil.org/civil-bahamas-national-chapter/>

¹²⁰ Tribune Media Group SDG Report 2021

¹²¹ <https://www.csjpbahamas.gov.bs/news/hundreds-of-community-residents-get-trained-on-anti-violence-curriculum-to-make-a-change/>



The Water and Sewerage Corporation (WSC) manages, distributes, and develops water resources, serving most of New Providence and 14 of the Family Islands. Grand Bahama and Paradise Island each have their providers; the Grand Bahama Utility Company and Paradise Utilities, respectively.¹²²

According to a 2011 IDB report, 38% of properties in New Providence rely on WSC for water, while many households and businesses use personal well water and wastewater treatment facilities. The often untreated and contaminated nature of well water¹²² in The Bahamas, however, has led to the normalization of using well water, primarily for washing, while relying on purchased water for cooking and drinking. Still, some households, lacking access to running water, rely solely on water from public water pumps.¹²⁴ Water and sanitation infrastructures have also suffered water loss rates as high as 58% in previous years, caused by years of inadequate maintenance.¹²⁵ Aimed at improving the lives of individuals in the OTH Community, the OTHCDPI/OTH Initiative is emerging as a good practice for partnering between sectors, to achieve sustainable national development. Indeed, the private sector, civil service, civil society organizations, the media, and other stakeholders, are mobilizing to restore social vitality, economic wealth, and environmental health to the community. The OTH initiative comprises 6 Pillars, with its current focus being placed on

Rejuvenation – coupled with elements of the Economic Empowerment Pillar. Furthermore, under SDG 17's emphasis on partnerships, the OTH Foundation was created as a vehicle through which interested private donors could contribute to specific pillars of the project. Thus far, \$300k has been donated and allocated toward the Rejuvenation Pillar.¹²⁶

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 6

Water Supply Expansion Effort

In November 2016, WSC embarked on a series of projects to extend water supply to various locations, as well as the construction of several wastewater treatment plants and pumping stations in New Providence; and the development of a Wastewater Master Plan.¹²⁷

SDG 6

ENSURE AVAILABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION FOR ALL

¹²² IDB 2011 (Project No. BH-L1028) p. 1

¹²³ Genting 2012

¹²⁴ Nunez, Paco, 18 September 2013 and Department of Environmental Health Services 2013

¹²⁵ Wyatt, A. (2018). Case Study: Performance Based Contract for NRW Reduction and Control – New Providence, Bahamas. Inter-American Development Bank Publication. Retrieved from <https://publications.iadb.org/handle/11319/8729>

¹²⁶ <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2018/nov/06/600000-for-over-the-hill-from-albany/>

¹²⁷ <http://www.wsc.com.bs/Press.aspx>

SDG 6

Water for All Strategy

To ensure modern indoor sanitation and access to piped water to all residents of the Zone by 2025, the government, through its OTH project, established the Water for All Strategy, that is comprised of the refurbishment of 77 standpipes in the zones, the retrofitting of 100 homes for indoor plumbing, and the design of a household, prepaid smart metering system, for water resources.

In June 2018, the WSC announced a \$75 million project to expand the sewerage system, to cover over two-thirds of OTH households.

In addition to the water for all strategy, several other initiatives were launched. An example of this project, along with other initiatives, is the Water-for-All Strategy. An inspection and a workshop were held with PAHO officials and consultants, in October 2018. A pilot programme for installation was expected to commence, but it was not until the end of 2020, that efforts to install key infrastructure were introduced in the target community.

Climate Resilience of the Water Sector in The Bahamas

As part of the Green Climate Fund project which aims to ensure the resilience of the water sector in The Bahamas, it was noted that the resulting impacts of climate change, including seawater intrusion, rising sea levels, increasing temperatures, etc., could have a profound effect on prospects for sustainable development throughout the region, and particularly in The Bahamas. Stronger hurricanes, longer dry seasons, and shorter wet seasons will have particularly serious impacts on the water sector in The Bahamas. This can potentially drive supply-side deficits, while also undermining the integrity of the country's water storage and distribution infrastructure. In sum, climate change threatens to undermine decades of progress and effort.

Climate change poses severe threats to the water sector in The Bahamas.¹²⁸ Projections suggest that temperatures in The Bahamas are likely to increase, rainfall may decrease, storms may intensify, and sea levels are likely to rise. In

¹²⁸ <https://www.greenclimate.fund/document/climate-resilience-water-sector-bahamas-0>

response to these challenges, the Climate Resilience of the Water Sector in The Bahamas project, aims to enhance the resiliency of the water sector in The Bahamas, to safeguard the country's water security in a changing climate. The project will accomplish this by: (i) strengthening the foundations for more evidence-based policy and decision making on climate change and the water sector; (ii) supporting relevant stakeholders to apply this knowledge to the development and implementation of a more coordinated and coherent policy and governance framework; and (iii) scaling up investment on highly vulnerable islands to enhance the resilience of the water system and services. In so doing, the project will deliver tangible climate change adaptation benefits, while also equipping government and non-government stakeholders to work together to continue strengthening the resilience of the water sector, project closure. The project will be coordinated by the CDB as the Accredited Entity and executed by the WSC of The Bahamas, as the Executing Entity.

Partnerships

The Water and Sewerage Corporation recently signed a MOU with IsraAID for the development and implementation of a Sustainable Groundwater Management Project (SGMP) in Abaco, following the passage of Hurricane Dorian in 2019. IsraAID is an Israel-based non-governmental organization, founded in 2001. Since its inception, this organization has worked in over 50 countries, providing post-disaster assistance and utilizing an extensive roster of Israeli and international experts. During this project, IsraAID will be working closely with Corporation personnel to develop and implement a groundwater management system for Abaco.

The project is utilizing a series of monitoring wells equipped with sensors to provide data to a central Microsoft Access database that will guide our management of the Abaco aquifer system. The project commenced in December 2020 and is expected to be completed by late 2021. The Corporation has identified staff from Abaco, along with New Providence,

Andros, and other islands to participate in this project, with the view of expanding the project to other islands, utilizing the skills and technology acquired. A similar project is being implemented in Grand Bahama involving the Grand Bahama Utility Company and IsraAID. The long-term goal is to ensure that our natural resources, in this case, groundwater, is properly and sustainably managed, now, and into the future, for the benefit of all Bahamians and visitors to our shores.¹²⁹

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 6 PROGRAMMES

The Ministry of Environment and Housing noted the following key challenges facing the water sector in The Bahamas. These include the following:

- Declining freshwater availability
- Increasing contamination of (already scarce) freshwater
- Negative impacts on critical water infrastructure
- Lack of coordinated national water policy or plan that considers the needs of, and guides, other sectors and sectoral stakeholders



¹²⁹ Corporation Signs Memorandum of Understanding with IsraAid February 11, 2021. Retrieved from <https://wsc.com.bs/corporation-signs-memorandum-of-understanding-with-israaid/>

¹³¹ <https://wsc.com.bs/corporation-signs-memorandum-of-understanding-with-israaid/>



Much of the country's efforts to ensure a future characterized by access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy, have been mapped out in the 2013 - 2023 National Energy Plan (NEP) from which strategic initiatives have been drawn forth. At its crux, The NEP focuses on diversifying the country's energy mix, and achieving a long-run target of up to 30 % Renewable Energy (RE) penetration by 2030.

Throughout the 2019 - 2021 period, the country's main electricity provider - Bahamas Power and Light (BPL), has invested in multiple renewable energy projects in New Providence and other islands, including solar car parks, microgrid facilities, and enhanced energy infrastructural capacity. Policy efforts have included subsidies on imports containing renewable energy components, and increasing engagements with stakeholders and civil society, to raise awareness of the importance and urgent need for energy reform.

The impact of Hurricane Dorian reinforced the need for comprehensive reconstruction and resilient infrastructure programs that address climate change challenges. While much progress has been made, successful efforts to achieve the targets set out in SDG 7 demands the enhancement of political will, and prioritization of the country's transition to renewable energy; increased investment in capacity building, design and implementation of sustainable renewable energy programmes and technology across private and public sectors; and commitment to energy efficient practices and attitudes.

Access to clean, affordable energy has significant impacts on indicators of wellbeing, including health, education, food security, gender equality, livelihoods, and poverty reduction. According to the IDB Country Strategy 2018-2022, The Bahamas ranks lowest in the region for renewable energy penetration, relying nearly 100% on imported fossil fuels to meet its energy needs. The lack of diversification in the country's energy mix has increasing negative implications. The Bahamas suffers from a high fuel import bill (4% of GDP), while consumers of electricity are impacted by the price volatility of fossil fuels in the global market. Furthermore, due to the existence of old power generation infrastructure, power outages and load-shedding are frequent.¹³² This volatility in price and service availability has negative effects on businesses activity, therefore straining economic activity and growth, ultimately impacting the quality of life for Bahamians.

The GOB aims to achieve a significant renewable energy penetration by 2030 to replace expensive generation from



SDG 7

ENSURE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, SUSTAINABLE AND MODERN ENERGY FOR ALL

¹³² IDB Strategy Report 2018-2022

SDG 7

fossil fuels, and reduce dependency on fuel imports. According to the 2013-2023 NEP, the target is to achieve 30% of electricity generation from renewable sources of the total generation portfolio. Given that the current renewable share is less than 1% of the overall generation, an ambitious and fast-track programme is required to achieve this target.¹³³

Leveraging The Bahamas' natural resources by seeking clean energy solutions will create opportunities for reducing energy costs for consumers, while preserving the environment.¹³⁴

■ TABLE 6
KEY DATA & INFORMATION - ENERGY SECTOR

Population	385,300 [1]
GDP (USD) Per Capita	\$35,239 [1]
Debt as % of GDP	66.80% [2]
Human Development Index (2018)	0.805 (3)
National Development Plan/Overall Country Development Strategy	Vision 2040: National Development Plan of The Bahamas [4]
National Energy Policy	The Bahamas National Energy Policy 2013 - 2033 [5]
Renewable Energy (RE) Policy	No
RE Target	30% by 2033 [5]
No. of Persons Employed in Energy Sector (Bahamas Power and Light)	878 [6]
Total Oil Import (BOI) per day	19,150 (2015 est.) [7]
Total Oil Export (BOE) per day	0
Total Installed Capacity (MW)	438 [6]
Total Installed RE (MW)	0.75 [6]
Electricity System Losses (%)	13% [6]
Energy Use (kWh) Per Capita	3,904
Fuel and Oil Imports as % of GDP	11.35% (2015) [8]
Climate Change Policy	Yes (2006) [9]
Electric Vehicle Stock	0
National Determined Contributions (NDC)	30% [9]
National Repository for Energy Data	No

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 7

Since establishing Energy Reform as a key priority in 2018, stakeholders continue to focus on five strategies including, raising public awareness and education, solarizing public buildings, and improving the regulatory environment to expand renewable energy consumption.¹³⁵ To encourage the use of RE, the government's 2018/2019 budget included a

reduction on duty for electric and hybrid vehicles, valued at \$50,000 and under; electric motorcycles, rechargeable and conventional car batteries, to 10%.¹³⁶ The GOB engaged in several energy reform efforts over the 2019 - 2021 period. Between May 2018 and May 2019, up to eleven government buildings underwent Solar PV (Photovoltaic) feasibility

¹³³ BPL Renewable Energy Plan 2019

¹³⁴ PMDU Annual Report 2018-2019

¹³⁵ Ibid

¹³⁶ <https://www.bahamasbudget.gov.bs/2018/our-priorities/environmental-sustainability/>

SDG 7

assessments, and over 2 megawatts of renewable energy installed capacity was registered via the Small Scale Residential Generation (SSRG) program from residential and commercial renewable energy systems.¹³⁷ In 2019, a 250kW Solar PV system was installed at Anatol Rodgers High School; a 925kW solar car park and an electric vehicle charging station at the National Stadium Complex; and several feasibility studies were carried out across Abaco, to determine sites for microgrid facilities, post hurricane Dorian.¹³⁸ The country was awarded "Best Distributed Generation Project" for its solar car park project, at the



Thomas A. Robinson Stadium and "Best Energy Efficiency Project" for the Anatol Rodgers Solar PV System, at the Caribbean Renewable Energy Forum, 2019.¹³⁹

In August 2019, the Family Island Solarization Program was launched and spearheaded by BPL, in partnership with the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) and Carbon War Room's Islands Energy Program; with a focus on energy transformation projects on Andros, Bimini, Eleuthera and Inagua, initially.¹⁴⁰

SDG 7

In December 2019, at \$95 million and 130-megawatt, BPL's Station A at Clifton Pier Power Plant, went online as the largest single power plant in The Bahamas. The Plant's seven Wartsila tri-fuel engines can burn both natural gas and heavy fuels.¹⁴¹ Improving the reliability and efficiency of the local energy infrastructure is key for the sustainable future development of the Bahamian economy. Performance measured against the 2018 baseline (renewable energy share of total energy produced/used at .22%) increased from .33% to .55% in 2019.¹⁴²

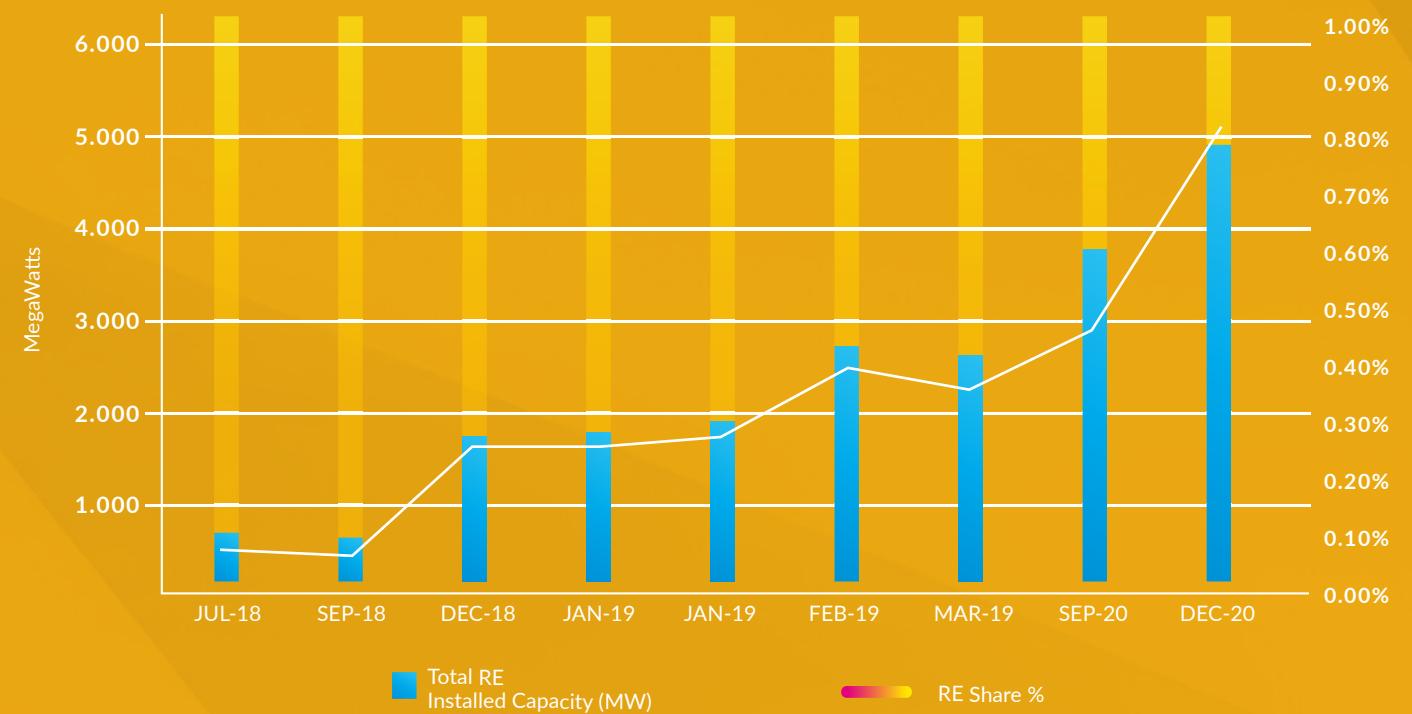


Figure 11. Station A, Clifton Pier

As a part of the government's ongoing efforts to revitalize Ragged Island, post hurricane Irma, which ravaged the island in 2017, the Green Island Initiative was launched, prioritising the implementation of infrastructure resilient enough to withstand the impacts of natural disasters. In March of 2020, the government partnered with BPL to install The Bahamas' "first hurricane-proof solar microgrid" and battery storage facility on Ragged Island. According to the Report, the new RE facility is resilient, and also reduces diesel usage on the island by 90%, promising positive long-term benefits for consumer costs.¹⁴³ In December 2020, a ground-breaking ceremony for a 500-kW solar car park at the Office of the Prime Minister was held, when completed, this would add to the inventory of Government Facilities retrofitted with renewable energy components.¹⁴⁴ Performance in RE production measured against the 2019 baseline (renewable energy at .55% of the total energy produced) increased by .31% to .86% in 2020.

In February 2021, BPL's first renewable energy plan was approved, aiming to install 119 megawatts (MW) of solar generation by 2023, so that more than 6% of energy demands in New Providence are met by Solar PV, and more than 10%, in the Family Islands. The plan highlights the implementation of renewable generation, island by island until 2023, ultimately accounting for up to 11% of BPL's total energy generation.¹⁴⁵

TABLE 7: TOTAL RE INSTALLED CAPACITY & RE SHARE (2018-2020)¹⁴⁵



¹³⁷ PMDU Annual Report 2018-2019
¹³⁸ PMDU Annual Report 2020

¹³⁹ Ibid
¹⁴⁰ <https://rmi.org/our-work/islands-energy-program/>

¹⁴¹ <https://opm.gov.bs/prime-minister-minnis-station-a-part-of-governments-energy-sector-reform-strategy-to-reduce-cost-of-living-and-transition-to-cleaner-fuel/>
¹⁴² PMDU Annual Report 2020
¹⁴³ Ibid
¹⁴⁴ Ibid
¹⁴⁵ Ibid
¹⁴⁶ <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2021/feb/24/regulators-approve-bpls-119-mw-solar-energy-plan/>

Partnerships

In 2019, the **IDB** also provided \$80m in the funding of the \$170m long-run (3 phases over an eight to ten-year period) approved for the GOB to assist with, post Dorian electricity infrastructure development projects.¹⁴⁷ In July 2020, the IDB partnered with the government to launch a first of its kind, fuel hedging solution, focused on protection against the price volatility of oil, in global markets.¹⁴⁸

In 2021, the **European Union (EU)** granted a near \$90m financing line, to transform the energy sector. Most of the funding will be allocated toward “the installation of a 4 MW Solar PV plant and energy storage”, and to subsidize rooftop installations in New Providence.¹⁴⁹

In March 2021, the **U.S. Embassy**, in partnership with California-based Primo Energy, donated state-of-the-art renewable energy technology devices, and a project-based STEM curriculum to St. John’s College, through which more than 900 students will be able to learn about sustainable energy and STEM subjects.¹⁵⁰

Despite women being more vulnerable than men to the devastating effects of Dorian, they were essential in the community when it came to childcare and care of the elderly. Women were also instrumental in managing their households post Dorian. The almost exclusive burden of care work, serves as yet another barrier to women’s ability to be mobile, and access rebuilding resources.

Women and girls served as important actors in recovery and relief efforts, even during the storm, through community organizations and utilizing their social networks.

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 7

The Energy Reform Stakeholders will continue to implement their identified strategies to achieve the set targets. Moving forward, the focus will be on assessing and identifying any additional investments or strategies that would be needed to facilitate an increase in the rate of renewable energy penetration in The Bahamas. Strategies currently being considered include:

Working with direct investors of major project developments to have a minimum of energy generated from resources.

Facilitating the creation of financing opportunities for residential and small commercial customers who wish to participate in existing renewable energy programs.

BPL expects to complete the roll-out of its \$30m nationwide Advanced Metering

Infrastructure (AMI) on New Providence in 2022, encompassing the replacement of manual meters with advanced, real-time meter technologies that could promote more efficient identification and rectification of system issues.

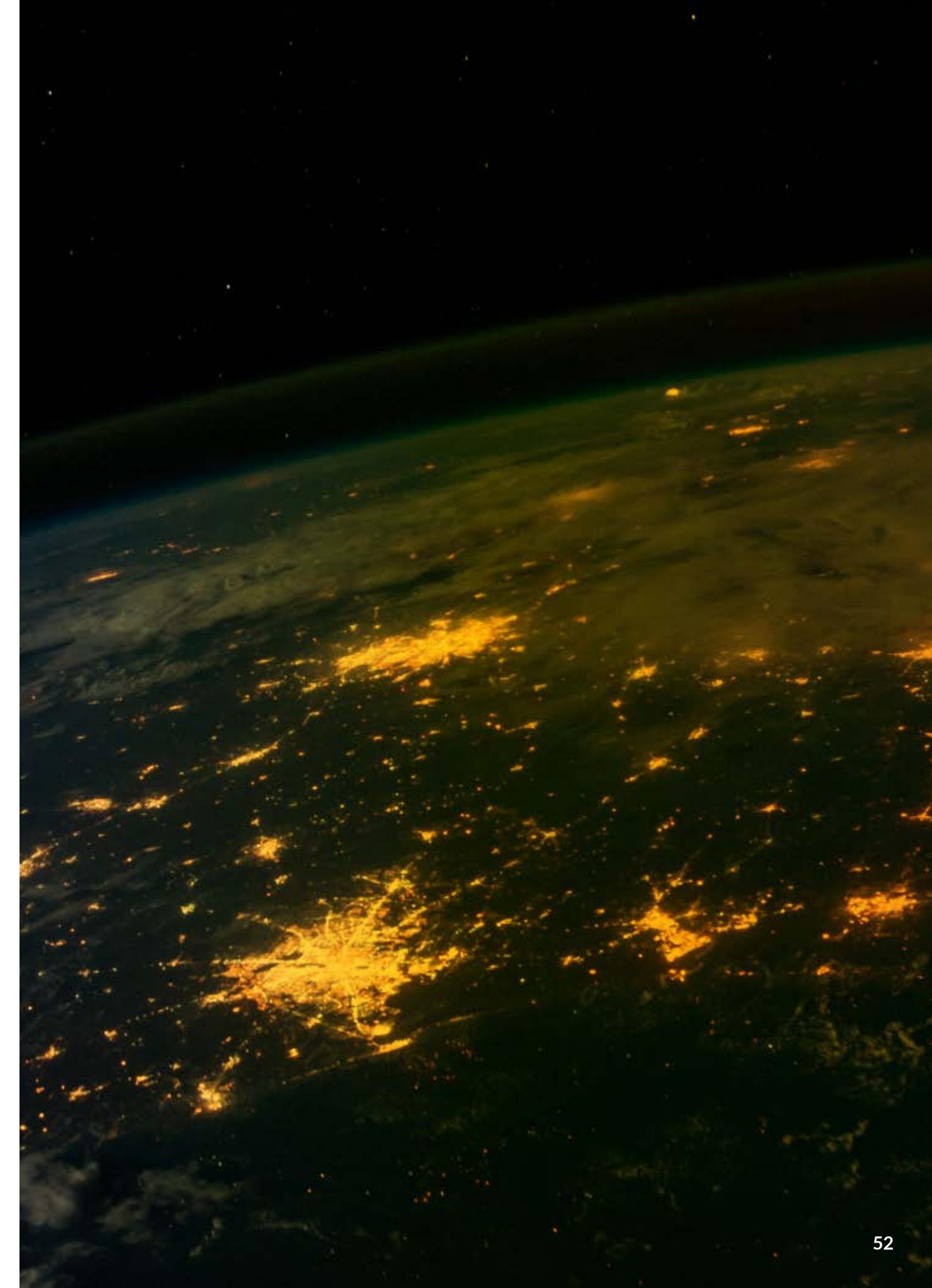
Challenges

Effective implementation of SDG 7 depends on the following:

Sustained political will and consistent policy momentum is required to aggressively strengthen the capacity and transformation of BPL, in reliable and renewable energy products.

More investment is required in grid stability and renewable energy framework studies, as well as sustainable financing models to implement renewable energy programmes throughout the country.

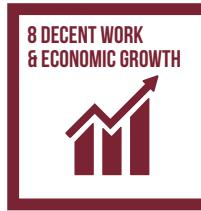
Greater efforts must be made to ensure public awareness of energy efficiency practices and renewable energy adoption, as well as increasing technical capacities of experts in the renewable energy field.



¹⁴⁷ <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2019/dec/11/energy-industry-eyed-for-80m-post-dorian-boost/>
¹⁴⁸ <https://www.iadb.org/en/news/idb-partners-bahamas-launch-new-oil-hedging-solution-bpl>

¹⁴⁹ <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2021/mar/10/renewable-boost-9m-grant-financing/>

¹⁵⁰ <https://bs.usembassy.gov/u-s-embassy-delivers-renewable-energy-tech-stem-curriculum-to-local-school/>



SDG 8 targets have been significantly hampered by the increase in unemployment caused by the hurricane Dorian-related displacement in 2019, and further worsened by the economic crisis which has accompanied the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. The fiscal deficit increased by 6.1% GDP in 2019/2020, as efforts were made towards post-Dorian reconstruction and to mitigate the negative implications of COVID-related economic contractions, via social welfare schemes, mass purchases of medical supplies, and funding for quarantine facilities.

Significant budgetary adjustments were made during the 2020-2021 period in response to the resultant economic crisis, including allocations for government-funded food support, unemployment, and tax credit/deferral programs. Economic concessions made available in the hurricane Dorian recovery efforts were sustained to cushion the increased burden, as well as allocations for MSMEs in 2020, with investments ongoing. Notable efforts have been made to reform the tax regime, to ensure long-run efficiency, attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and increase entrepreneurial activity. Economic progress depends greatly on increased activity in the global economy, and the abating of COVID-19. Still, internal challenges such as skill shortages among the Bahamian workforce, threaten to keep unemployment numbers high. SDG 8 implementation efforts, therefore, should target skill shortages as well as policy and regulation reform, supporting a diverse entrepreneurial ecosystem.

In The Bahamas, economic growth is mainly driven by the tourism industry and related services. In 2019, the tourism industry celebrated, exceeding a record-breaking seven million visitors. The effects of the Pandemic on the country's economic growth, have highlighted the cost of relying on a singular industry. While the country has enjoyed a steady rise in GDP over the past 3 decades, a lack of economic diversification remains a major vulnerability factor, especially in the face of exogenous risks such as, climate change, shocks to the global travel market, and their impacts on tourism-related resources and activities.

According to The Bahamas 2020 Fiscal Strategy Report, the economic outturn for the Bahamian economy, during the fiscal year 2019/20, was shaped by two devastating external shocks.¹⁵¹ In September 2019, Hurricane Dorian, the strongest storm in recent history, interrupted economic activity in Abaco and Grand Bahama, causing an appreciable loss in output and



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PROMOTE SUSTAINED, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH, FULL AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK FOR ALL

¹⁵¹ Ministry of Finance 2020 Bahamas Fiscal Strategy Report - Retrieved: https://bahamasbudget.gov.bs/media/filer_public/ce/dc/cedc6989-4c48-47c0-b2a9-3dc35cfdad8a/2020fsrcommunication_-_minofstate_final_dec_16.pdf

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unplanned fiscal costs to address revenue losses and expenditures associated with recovery and restoration efforts. An analysis of the economic outturn for 2019 shows that, despite the loss of output attributed to Hurricane Dorian, the performance of the economy in 2019, was much stronger than originally anticipated. According to official estimates released by the Department of Statistics in July 2020, real GDP expanded at an annual rate of 1.2 percent in 2019, which exceeded the revised estimate post-Hurricane Dorian of 0.4 percent, but is below the original 1.8 percent estimate used in the government's 2019/20 budgetary framework.

The more favourable outturn was attributed to the incorporation of new, and more detailed and comprehensive sources of data, leading to revisions across the GDP series, for the previous six years, commencing 2013.¹⁵² The impact of COVID-19 in March 2020 resulted in the most severe economic crisis in the history of The Bahamas, and was characterised by persistent

lockdowns that halted the Bahamian economy for four months. The Bahamas' deficit in the 2019/2020 fiscal year, missed its 5.3 percent target, falling to 6.5 percent.¹⁵³

The 2020/2021 budget, forecasted a decline in revenue at an estimated \$1.3 billion deficit, and debt levels at 82.8% of GDP.¹⁵⁴ As "one of the hardest-hit countries in the Caribbean", International Monetary Fund's (IMF) publications conclude, GDP in 2020 fell at an estimated 16.3% and is projected to increase by 2 % in 2021, while suggesting that recovery of pre-COVID-19 economic output losses in 2020, could take up to 4 or 5 years.¹⁵⁵ The Ministry of Finance continues to emphasize its focus to build economic resilience in the post-COVID-19 Bahamas, with a focus on macroeconomic stability, and fiscal and debt sustainability, through economic growth and diversity. Areas such as education, health, and social programs, will continue to receive priority.



¹⁵² Ministry of Finance 2020 Bahamas Fiscal Strategy Report - Retrieved: https://bahamasbudget.gov.bs/media/filer_public/ce/dc/cedc6989-4c48-47c0-b2a9-3dc35cfdad8a/2020fsrcommunication_-_minofstate_final_dec_16.pdf

¹⁵³ https://bahamasbudget.gov.bs/media/filer_public/ce/dc/cedc6989-4c48-47c0-b2a9-3dc35cfdad8a/2020fsrcommunication_-_minofstate_final_dec_16.pdf

¹⁵⁴ The 2020/2021 Budget: A Resilient Bahamas - Retrieved: <https://www.pwc.com/bs/en/assets/bahamas-budget-2020.pdf>

¹⁵⁵ <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/12/02/mcs-the-bahamas-staff-concluding-statement-of-the-2020-article-iv-mission>

¹⁵⁶ <https://www.bahamas.gov.bs/wps/portal/public/gov/government/news/minister%20of%20state%20for%20finance%20real%20down%20the%20government%20comprehensive%20covid-19%20response/> /ut/p/1/ZT2qM4CEaprk gCtvslyQCP1h1EiQzYlEg_Ck7JUQppnpv2fEvPhytB_4PKZMKU7VOG6qvuiO1ehjXApjC3QHY05pLmW5m5yxxVYPUMyznZj2vnjL0WDb_9tCau8uPEPurallblMT85ufpCnR0RzCm5vKp4C5E8T19_lhsJqz2yAp0dINzHrkDx3YdsDr2ubVxpp1mJjpaA2uyaAcGg3vQKMqyOfm5yBdJ42xxd1Fw1oxSE5n1fLczaouGnJjjjpcz91LB2VjYdammvELES12opOMXdsLmc5m5k0kylkjXkbaIAuVmdivsZ4dc0xaZl8qctql8wFwdHjyWMAZfKyB5gln7_Jvbzbz0X0IM4d4rnbeyLb48Br47onP5j8mdA_HVVAZAta6Mdtn50f3GNEACR2uSnkMqbjU9712s2z1Qqf0kfdw68Q041Gf7GrpkfwmnCWNHf76m67IAyObe1QlsKrepeyLgsx4NRkC9s_GG_191_wcmkz1f13cX0B_88gBQx0IRkw0YhzueFnHX4WbRe4NtRykQ3qN2F7M63Udtpf6xwA1U91pkwflkXhDmLz5pjs45T1684fRnGtDp7PQH4L4HxmSQp3g87LB1evjoVsode_itb52H7QVut08PnrlP34WrtEdv_2opMEPK0AHErwJL4f1ZGh6STQmB0B4pa4jRjB97nfufaQxNz9QLEtB4Op5_7S3kNpVpm1xt2bw13qf0f88SH_Po26fCq4f83wLqmPMPoPS5UMpaxhiflPf8cG_vv-HWUOMMksyfQkQfJxkEs3wULV04fR6U08XpkG4odfctr1_be3sy1lvy6Fv87EP4h9C79L9G0jQcCgzzV7X-mq2alB57rfO16uWEdu-SN23fKw_L_Nu54x670pDXy71cOQf1jOadvoZnYTKz1frEu3S_96e00a9ZjyjRA2-12km60Wxw6NnhuXuMnjloDyKKWnrdMn7bHlBxjP1bMAAAzadFXVW-uA5nPiyyh9V7nBz0fA_sgWcbDy8rMG3hpGf2phyd1M71-hYhA

TABLE 8: Key Macroeconomic Indicators Source: Ministry of Finance 2020 Fiscal Strategy Report

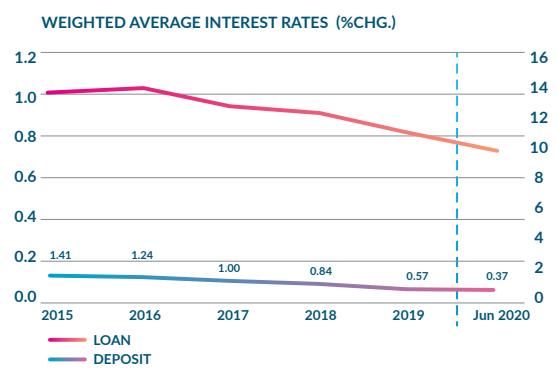
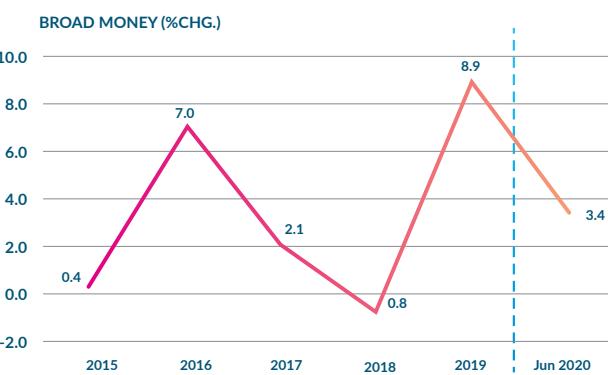
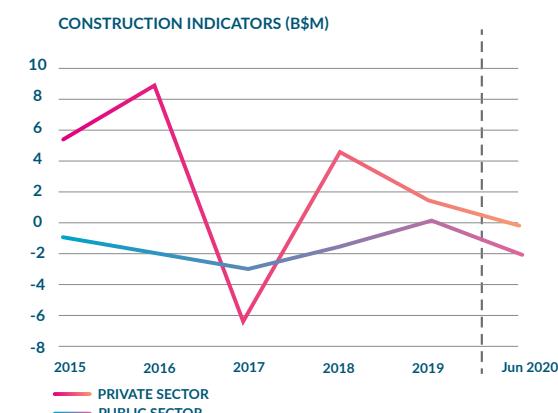
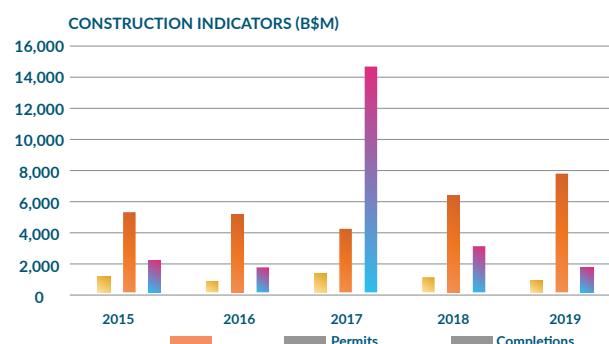
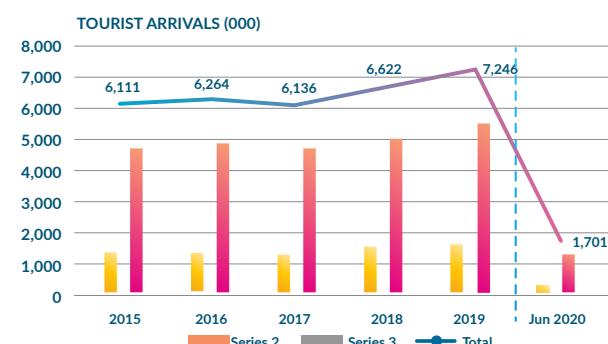
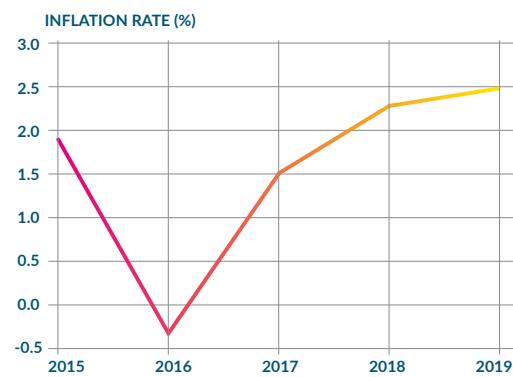


TABLE 9: MACROECONOMIC FORECASTS - SOURCE: MINISTRY OF FINANCE 2020 FISCAL STRATEGY REPORT

2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
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GDP GROWTH AT CONSTANT PRICES (%)

OCT 2019	-0.6	2.1	1.7	1.6	1.6
NOV 2020	-16.2	2.0	8.5	4.0	3.7

GDP DEFLATOR (%)

OCT 2019	1.2	3.7	3.4	3.4	3.4
NOV 2020	-17.3	3.4	10.6	6.1	5.9

INFLATION RATE - PERIOD AVERAGE (%)

OCT 2019	2.6	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.2
NOV 2020	-0.2	1.5	2.2	2.2	2.1

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 8

The World Health Organization (WHO) first declared COVID-19 a world health emergency¹⁵⁷ in January 2020, and on March 11, announced that the viral outbreak was officially a Pandemic, the highest level of a health emergency. During the nine months, from March to October 2020, the government spent over \$177m, providing the following forms of COVID-19 related social assistance:

\$22.8 million in public health, sanitation, and other related expenditures

\$17.2 million to fund essential food support programs aiding approximately 140,000 families with the assistance of NGO partners.

\$45.5 million in the government's unemployment assistance, and the extension to the NIB unemployment benefits program, which aided approximately 7,000 businesses, many of which are sole proprietor-

ships. Nearly 37,000 persons benefited to the tune of over \$63 million through end-September.

\$44.4 million was provided in tax credit/tax deferral, as part of the government's payroll support programme, to assist companies in meeting their payroll expenses. To date, more than 60 businesses have availed themselves of this programme, protecting nearly 7,000 jobs.

\$47.3 million was allocated in small business continuity loans and grants, supporting approximately 1,000 beneficiaries and nearly 4,500 employees, thus far.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Retrieved: <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>

¹⁵⁸ Press Release: Government to Continue Reducing the Economic Effects of COVID-19 - Retrieved: https://bahamas.gov.bs/wps/wcm/connect/mof_content/internet/all+news+press+release/government+to+continue+reducing+the+economic+effects+of+covid-19

Taxation Measures

The GOB aims to boost economic growth, via taxation optimization (mitigating incidences of tax evasion and avoidance) by capitalizing on and enhancing big data testing techniques; improving revenue collection; strengthening investigation intelligence capacity of revenue monitoring units and investing in legal and administrative reform.¹⁵⁹ The government allocated \$120m to the Tax credit and Tax deferral employee retention programme, in response to COVID-19 related job losses. Employers in the private sector were able to access tax deferrals for business licenses and VAT, ensuring payroll requirements were met, once 80% of employees were retained.¹⁶⁰

In 2019, several disaster recovery areas on the Islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama, were designated as VAT-Free Recovery Zones, following hurricane Dorian, meaning that VAT-registered businesses were able to waive VAT for approved goods sold. Under the Dorian Special Economy Recovery Zone (SERZ) Order, select items were extended until June 2021. In addition, VAT import duty and excise tax, were eliminated on construction materials and goods brought into the zones.¹⁶¹

In August 2020, the government rolled out a tax relief measure, aiming to reduce the costs of back-to-school shopping for parents, while encouraging local shopping, to spur economic growth. The relief measure covered both traditional and digital learning tools.¹⁶²

Labour Programs

COVID-related job losses have exacerbated the gap between individuals in high-income and low-income brackets and threatened to erase considerable gains in human development. Efforts to sustain and boost employment through labour-related programs have continued, with several new initiatives introduced, during the period assessed.

Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP)

The National Tripartite Council (NTC) continues its efforts to boost employment in The Bahamas through the enhance-

ment of relationships between the private sector, public sectors, and labour unions. Moreover, NTC aims to integrate key issues into national policy development: the creation of decent employment and jobs, ensuring fundamental rights at work, social protection, and social dialogue.¹⁶³ NTC is in the process of developing The Bahamas' new DWCP, a planning and programming tool, aiming to create decent work in The Bahamas.

The NTC has also proposed National Productivity Legislation, and the establishment of a National Productivity Council; proposed transferring of the functions of The Bahamas Industrial Tribunal, to the Civil Division of the Supreme Court; implemented The Bahamas' Second-Generation DWCP, with the International Labour Organization (ILO) providing \$170,000 in Technical Assistance; submitted the Final Report and recommendations on the National Child Labour Policy.¹⁶⁴



Figure 12. Photos of the virtual contract signing between the University of The Bahamas, the Bahamas Technical & Vocational Institute, & the Ministry of National Security

Citizen Security & Justice Programme (CSJP)

The CSJP, a Ministry of National Security initiative, is a social programme aiming to reduce crime and violence, with a multi-faceted approach, targeting youth and community development, employment, and employability, strengthening the Justice system and implementing prison reform, to reduce rates of recidivism.¹⁶⁵ The CSJP is funded by a \$20 million loan from the IDB. Several initiatives launched under the programme are as follows:¹⁶⁶

In December 2018, the first cohort of 100 inmates, graduated from a training and certification programme at BTVI. The inmates received certification in a wide array of areas, including electrical installation, hair dressing, information technology, garment manufacturing, and auto mechanics.¹⁶⁷

The 2020/2021 Budget: <https://www.pwc.com/bs/en/assets/bahamas-budget-2020.pdf>

160 Ibid

161 Disaster Reconstruction Authority (Special Economic Recovery Zone) (Relief) Order, 2019: <https://inlandrevenue.finance.gov.bs/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Disaster-Reconstruction-Authority-Act-Special-Economic-Recovery-Zone-Concessions-Order-2019.pdf>

162 Back to School VAT Holiday to commence with reopening of local businesses: <https://www.bahamas.gov.bs/wps/portal/public/gov/government/news/back-to-school%20vat%20holiday%20to%20commerce%20with%20reopening%20in%20local%20businesses>

163 <https://thenassauguardian.com/national-tripartite-council-developing-new-decent-work-country-programme/>

164 Remark by Senator the Honourable Dion A. Foulkes, June 2020: https://m.facebook.com/LabourBah/photos/a.2102106996779825/2773425972981254/?type=3&source=4&__tn__=EH-R

165 <https://ewnews.com/govt-uses-job-training-initiative-to-fight-crime>

166 <https://ewnews.com/db-btvi-sign-contract-with-govts-citizen-security-and-justice-programme>

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In November 2019, CSJP launched a Job Corps training initiative that offers free courses for young Bahamians between ages 15 to 29, in up to four disciplines including Technical Trades, Hospitality and Retail, and Numeracy and Literacy.¹⁶⁸ In November 2020, UB, BTVI, and the Ministry of National Security, signed a contract to deliver numeracy and literacy, and soft skills training to 1,000 at-risk youth, over a period of 12 months. The program is intended to benefit and improve the prospects of at-risk youth, who will undergo critical skills training intervention to increase employability and employment, thereby assisting in decreasing crime and improving lives.¹⁶⁹



National Training Agency (NTA)

The NTA is a competency-based agency, focused on workforce development, with a particular focus on youth populations. The agency partners with industry leaders, through its Job Placement Unit, and remains a "Go-To Agency" for employer sourcing employees.¹⁷⁰ Six Thousand (6,000) Bahamians have been trained in NTA programmes, with 60% of individuals successfully placed in full-time employment.¹⁷¹

In June 2019, 200 youth were trained in soft, practical, and technical skills as a part of NTA's 14-week programme, in the fields of Allied Health Care, Information Technology, Housekeeping, Microsoft Office, Food and Beverage, Web Design, Diving/Fishing, and Butler Service.¹⁷² The same month, the National Divers Training Programme was launched with an

[169] http://www.thebahamasweekly.com/publish/bis-news-updates/Training_Contracts_Signed_with_UB_and_BTVI_for_1_000_Beneficiaries_through_Citizen_Security_and_Justice_Programme_printer.shtml

[170] National Report by Minister of Labour, Transport and Local Government

[171] 255 students enrolled in initial cohort of free NTA online job training - Retrieved: <https://www.bahamas.gov.bs/wps/portal/public/gov/government/news/255%20students%20enrolled%20in%20initial%20cohort%20of%20free%20online%20job%20training>

[172] Training begins for new cohort of 200 at National Training Agency: <https://ewnews.com/training-begins-for-new-cohort-of-200-at-national-training-agency>

[173] Strachan, S. Launch of National Divers Training Programme (June 2019): <https://www.bahamas.gov.bs/wps/portal/public/gov/government/news/launch%20of%20national%20divers%20training%20programme>

[174] 44 Enrolled in Agriculture and Marine Resources' First Diving Programme: <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2019/aug/02/44-enrolled-agriculture-and-marine-resources-first/>

[175] Govt. renews 52-week national job creation and skills enhancement programme: <https://ewnews.com/govt-renews-52-week-national-job-creation-and-skills-enhancement-programme>

[176] National Report by Minister of Labour, Transport and Local Government - Senator the Honourable Dion

Foulkes (Oct, 2020)

aim to promote access to work on board commercial vessels. The program was established as a collaborative effort between the NTA, the Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF), the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources, and the Department of Marine Resources. The Program, targeting youth between 15 and 30, focused on training Bahamians in Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) certification skills, first aid, and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).¹⁷³ As of August 2019, 44 Bahamians were enrolled in the programme.¹⁷⁴

In July 2019, the Government's National Job Creation and Skills Enhancement Programme (or 52-week programme), which was started in August 2018 and meant to end in June 2019, was renewed for another year. The initiative was established to enhance hands-on skills for the unemployed, by providing opportunities for professional certification, classroom instruction, and paid internships in several areas including construction, plumbing, hospitality, business and informational technology.¹⁷⁵

NTA launched a fully interactive online platform called Brightspace, where trainees can register and receive training, and be assessed throughout The Bahamas, from the singular digital space. In July 2019, 232 individuals from thirteen (13) islands, were trained during the Summer Cohort in-Office Procedures, Information Technology, Microsoft Office, Graphic Design, and Web Design. NTA also partnered with Doctor's Hospital, to train 30 Emergency Medical Technicians, from which, top graduates were to be offered full-time employment, with Doctor's Hospital.¹⁷⁶

Figure 13. The National Divers Training Programme Launch



In December 2019, bolstering its efforts to reduce youth unemployment, the Ministry of Labour launched a \$50m National Skills-Building Program - Skills for Current and Future jobs in The Bahamas - in partnership with the IDB. The program, a five-year initiative, targets individuals from 16-40 and emphasizes "building skills through a nation-wide apprenticeship program, investing in improvements in software, hardware, and infrastructure, to assist job-seekers



Figure 14. 218 staff members, training providers and assessors who successfully completed City & Guilds certification as internal verifiers and assessors were awarded certificates

Micro-small & Medium Sized Businesses (MSMEs)

20-30% of The Bahamas' gross domestic product comes from the activity of MSMEs, with 98% of some 23,000 business licenses issued, representing MSMEs.¹⁷⁸ The importance of MSME sustainability has been a key priority, recognized by the government and actors in the private sector.

Access to Financial Capital

The BDB is the main institution that provides the GOB with the promotion of agricultural, commercial, and industrial development.

The BDB began its rebranding efforts in 2019 and fully mainstreamed the SDGs in its Strategic Plans, with special emphasis on mainstreaming environmental sustainability and climate change in all projects. The Bank is also committed to sectoral development in the Blue, Green and Orange Economy.¹⁷⁹ By June 2020, the BDB had approved \$2,865,319 in loans and \$181,077 in grants to MSMEs, in an effort to

with finding the best-matched employers; and investing in a robust labour management information system, which can monitor the progress of the program, and provide enhanced labour market data.¹⁷⁷ At its launch, the program focused on training 1,100 pre-apprentices and 1,350 apprentices, across the maritime, medical services, and information communication technology sectors.

Program, backed by a government allocation of \$20m, was launched in March 2020, aiming to cushion temporary losses in business, resulting from COVID- 19 challenges. The initiative provides loans ranging from \$5,000 to \$300,000.



Progress on the Ease of Doing Business

In the World Bank's Doing Business 2019 Report, The Bahamas was ranked 118 out of 190 economies, with an ease of doing business score of 58.90. Positive changes were recognized including: the improvement of the regulatory framework for credit reporting through the introduction of regulations governing the licensing and functioning of credit bureaus in The Bahamas, and enhancing the ease of filing and paying taxes, via the implementation of the Inland Revenue online taxation system.¹⁸⁴ Additionally, in the Doing Business 2020 Report, The Bahamas' ranking fell slightly to 119 out of 190 economies, with an ease of doing business score of 59.9.¹⁸⁵ Several changes impacting the ease of doing business score were highlighted in the report. Positively, the economy enjoyed a reduction in registration processing time for business licenses, VAT, and the elimination of business registration fees. Posting electricity tariffs online, improved access and transparency to electricity; minority investor protections were strengthened, as disclosure requirements for conflicts of interests and greater corporate transparency were prioritized. Negatively, the report highlighted the negative impact that the increasing costs associated with property registration, would have on the ease of doing business.¹⁸⁶

Figure 15. Small Business Development Centre Investment Partners, February 2018 - Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, as well as the Financial Secretary, featured with SBDC's partners from Scotiabank, The Bahamas Entrepreneurial Venture Fund, RBC Banking and The Bahamas Development Bank, who are working together to make credit available to small businesses



[177] <https://www.bahamas.gov.bs/wps/portal/public/news%20and%20press%20release/ministry%20of%20labour%20launches%202450%20million%20national%20skills-building%20program>

[178] DPM: FDI alone cannot power a sustainable economy: <https://ewnews.com/dpm-fdi-alone-cannot-power-a-sustainable-economy>

[179] <https://ewnews.com/bahamas-development-bank-moves-to-robinson-road-and-key-west-street>

[180] <https://ewnews.com/bahamas-development-bank-more-than-2-mil-covid-19-business-loans-approved>

[181] <https://ewnews.com/the-bahamas-development-bank-moves-to-robinson-road-and-key-west-street/>

[182] <https://ewnews.com/access-accelerator-completes-third-round-of-grants-for-small-businesses>

[183] <https://ewnews.com/nearly-15-million-of-20-million-small-business-loan-programme-requested-to-date>

[184] Doing Business 2019

[185] Doing Business 2020: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/688761571934946384/pdf/Doing-Business-2020-Comparing-Business-Regulation-in-190-Economies.pdf>

[186] Ease of Doing Business - World Bank 2020: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/688761571934946384/pdf/Doing-Business-2020-Comparing-Business-Regulation-in-190-Economies.pdf>

Reflective of the improvements evidenced in the World Bank's reports, stakeholders, inclusive of the Ministry of Finance, Department of Inland Revenue, the Registrar General's Department, the Ministry of Public Works, the Securities Commission of The Bahamas, the CBOB, and the Office of the Attorney General, have evidenced the following from April 2018 to April 2019:

- 1 **37% decline** in the time it takes to get Business Licenses approved.
- 2 **77% decline** in the time it takes to get Business Licenses renewed.
- 3 **44% decline** in the time it takes to get a property conveyance registered.
- 4 **12 % decline** in the time it takes to get construction permits approved.

The GOB identified an operator for the country's first credit bureau, "allowing financial institutions to make better informed credit granting decisions".¹⁸⁸ Legislative reforms expected to improve The Bahamas' Ease of Doing Business ranking include, the introduction of the Business License (Amendment) Act 2018, allowing for the granting of provisional business licenses for low-risk businesses, and automatic renewals, and the following legislation that significantly enhances the protective measures available to minority investors in the country:

- The Companies (Amendment) Act 2019
- Securities Industry (Amendment) Act 2019
- The Securities Industry (Takeover Rules) 2018 (presently being enforced)¹⁸⁹

Revitalization of the Sponging Industry

In 2016, the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF), approved the technical cooperation grant of US\$535,450 for the project "Revitalization of the Sponging Industry". The project aims to foster the sustainability of the sponge population and has directly benefited 200 spongers, and indirectly helped 440 beneficiaries in Mangrove Cay, on the island of Andros. Training includes developing the supply chain, improving marketing, and accessing foreign markets; furthermore, several other Family Islands are organizing sponging associations, with expressed interest for assistance and training in Long Island and Abaco.¹⁹⁰

Tribune Radio Limited

In 2020, Tribune Radio Limited, which is home to various radio stations, assisted some of their staff members with flexible working environments, due to COVID-19. The company allowed their staff to bring their children to work with them, during the COVID-19 Pandemic, throughout the school year, as all schools were being conducted virtually. This allowed parents the ability to continue to earn a living, through difficult circumstances.¹⁹¹



CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 8 PROGRAMMES

While it is too soon to quantify the full impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on The Bahamas' efforts to achieve decent work and economic growth, we note that higher unemployment, increasing skills shortages and existing inequalities, were exacerbated as a result of the Pandemic. As such, many of the existing challenges persist. Progress will rely on:

- Continued reform (inclusive of reskilling and upskilling) of educational and training systems to ensure a workforce that is better positioned for the future labour market.
- Broadening the relatively narrow tax base to effectively fund development-enhancing infrastructure.
- Reforming Policy and regulation supporting the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem (i.e., ease of doing business, human capital, market access and connectivity, access to capital, and infrastructure).
- Increased cross-sectoral stakeholder engagement between the public sector, private sector, and civil society, to enhance productivity and efficiency of doing business.

[187]PMDU Annual Report 2020 May 2018 - April 2019 https://mofstil.gov.bs/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/PMDU-Annual-Report-2018_2019.pdf

[188] Ibid.

[189] Ibid.

[190] <https://bidlab.org/en/node/344>

[191] Tribune Media Group SDG Report 2021

5.0 PROGRESS ON GOALS & TARGETS



Progress to sustainable industrialization and advancement in innovation have been hampered by Hurricane Dorian and the COVID-19 Pandemic. Infrastructural challenges which existed before Hurricane Dorian, were further exacerbated as Dorian-related loss and damage incurred, were estimated at \$3.4 billion.¹⁹²

Budgetary strain caused by efforts to rebuild residential communities and public infrastructure, even amidst financial assistance from bilateral and intergovernmental donors, was further mounted with the increased social assistance demands of the Pandemic.

While infrastructural needs have increased, projected capital expenditure is set to decrease concomitant with the projected loss in GDP, and shift in priority spending towards health and education. According to the IDB, projected capital expenditure in 2022/2023, is expected to decline to 2.0 % of GDP.¹⁹³ This reality has implications for the robust recovery of the tourism sector, as budget constraints have resulted in the side-lining of tourism-related infrastructure projects. Notably, however, the government has prioritised several ports of entry transformation projects, financed by intergovernmental loans and private-public partnerships, including the main cruise port at Nassau's Prince George Wharf, and airport upgrades in Exuma, North Eleuthera, Long Island, and the Berry Islands.



SDG 9 BUILD RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE, PROMOTE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIALIZATION AND FOSTER INNOVATION

[192] <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Assessment-of-the-Effects-and-Impacts-of-Hurricane-Dorian-in-the-Bahamas.pdf>
[193] <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2021/mar/24/be-bold-infrastructure-spend-must-hit-5-gdp/>
[194] <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2021/jan/15/sovereign-wealth-fund-helps-plug-2bn-infrastructure/>
[195] State of the Digital Economy in the Commonwealth February 2020
[196] <https://thenassaujournal.com/report-bahamas-internet-penetration-at-90-percent/>

exports i.e. films, printed matter, sounds, media and software, and video games. The Pandemic environment has encouraged the accelerated digitization of government services, including recent investments in the enhancement of online facilities and the introduction of new services.

Progress to successfully implementing SDG 9 continues to depend on increased research capacity; increased funding and partnerships; continued investment in the country's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure, education; enhanced trade opportunities for digital exports; growth and diversification.

Digital Bahamas Initiative

In 2018, The GOB obtained a \$30 million loan from the IDB, to boost competitiveness by reducing the time and cost of carrying out administrative procedures with the government. In November 2019, the Department of Transformation and Digitization (DTD), in the OPM, launched a workshop on Government Digital Transformation, to Strengthen Competitiveness organized in conjunction with the IDB.

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 9

Building Codes

In October 2020, the Ministry of Disaster Preparedness, Management and Reconstruction, launched the Guide to Housing Standards for The Bahamas – Build Back Better, a joint initiative with the Ministry of Public Works. Assistance was also given by the UN's Development Programme, Engineers Without Borders, Shelters Sector Bahamas, NEMA, the Building Control Department of the Ministry of Public Works, the UB's School of Architecture, and private-sector engineers, architects, and contractors. The Guide will illustrate the details of the minimum standards required for residential building construction as set out in The Bahamas Building Code, 3rd Edition, and the Construction Manual for Small Buildings within the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.¹⁹⁷



Figure 16. Government Officials at Digital Transformation to Strengthen Competitiveness Workshop

[197] Guide to Housing Standard for The Bahamas – Build Back Better, August 2020

SDG 9

The government's Department of Transformation and Digitization (DTD) has made progress in enhancing existing online facilities and is piloting several digital projects aiming to boost innovation and competitiveness, for which some \$11.4 million

was budgeted for related activities, for the 2020/21 period, \$13.5 m in 2021/22, and \$10.8 m in 2022/23.¹⁹⁸ The GOB plans to have at least 200 government services online, within five years.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs).

TABLE 10: BASELINES, PERFORMANCE AND TARGETS FOR DIGITIZATION EFFORTS ARE OUTLINED BELOW:¹⁹⁹

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	BASELINE 2018	PERFORMANCE 2019	PERFORMANCE 2020	TARGET 2021
% of Government Services Delivered Online (end-to-end, based on a 2018 IDB assessment of there being 400 government services requiring digitisation)	3.5%	0%	4.75%	17.5%
# of Government Services Delivered Online by the digital Transformation Unit	0	0	5	40
# of Government Institutions connected to the interoperability platform	3.5%	0%	7	TBD
# of Government Procedures Mapped in BPM Tool	3.5%	0%	130	TBD

Source: Department of Transformation & Digitisation

Bahamians can now request services from the Registrar General's Department, Road Traffic Department, and the Passport Office, online. The following government services are delivered online:²⁰⁰

The first iteration of The Bahamas Travel Health Visa

Driver's license renewals, marriage certificates, death certificates, birth certificates and passport renewals for adult e-passports

In 2021, the launch of the Electronic Cabinet Management Information System

E-Cabinet, was announced. It aims to improve business processes, operating procedures, and communication between stakeholders. Moreover, it will increase efficiency with Cabinet approval processes and reduce the nation's carbon footprint, via the switching over to online approvals and e-distribution of Cabinet documents.

In 2020, the Click2Clear (C2C) (formerly The Bahamas Electronic Single Window) was launched to facilitate the import and export of cargo by traders and businesses within The Bahamas, via a singular access point. This electronic platform has reduced the processing time of services significantly, from hours to minutes.

Sand Dollar & Digital Assets & Registered Exchange ACT ('DARE')

In October 2020, the Sand Dollar was deployed as a digital version of a country's fiat currency. Project Sand Dollar is the initiative embarked on by the Central Bank of The Bahamas, to issue a digital representation of the Bahamian dollar (BS). It is an undertaking to promote more inclusive access to regulated payments and other financial services, for unbanked and underbanked communities and socio-economic groups within the country. Additionally, through the introduction of this retail Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), the Central Bank expects to reduce service delivery costs and increase transactional efficiency for financial services, across The Bahamas. As a result of online competition, this initiative acquired the name Project Sand Dollar, with Sand Dollar also being the name assigned to the CBDC.²⁰¹

In December 2020, The DARE ACT came into force, delineating the regulation, issuance, sale, and trade of digital assets through the auspices of the Securities Commission of The Bahamas. This landmark legislation allowed The Bahamas to join the few jurisdictions which have legislation to regulate the sale and purchase of digital assets. The Sand Dollar will significantly

SDG 9

contribute to the modernization of the country's monetary landscape, payment, and financial infrastructure.

Family Islands Solarisation Project

During the 2020/21 Budget Agenda, the government obtained a borrowing resolution approval for an \$80 million loan with IDB, to progress the solarisation in the Family Islands.²⁰² This is a part of the \$170 million Contingent Credit Line for Investment Projects (CCLIP) facility, over eight to ten years. A key element of Phase 1 of the CCLIP program will be the introduction of rooftop solar installations in public buildings, as well as the start of commercial solar installations across the Family Islands. Once completed, this will achieve fiscal savings for the Government, by lowering the monthly electric bill for public buildings, as well as decreasing the level of subsidization required by New Providence, to power the Family Islands. Furthermore, street lighting accounts for more than 30 percent of the country's electricity consumption, and roughly three percent of the country's overall energy consumption. As such, the government will launch a \$17.1 million Street Light Retrofitting project, which is being spearheaded by BPL. This will also support our green energy efforts with its use of LED lighting.

In March 2020, the government received its first natural disaster resilient Solar Microgrid and Battery Storage Facility in Ragged Island. Once installed, it will be the first hurricane-proof solar microgrid in The Bahamas.²⁰³ This initiative forms part of the government's strategy to transform Ragged Island into a Green Island.

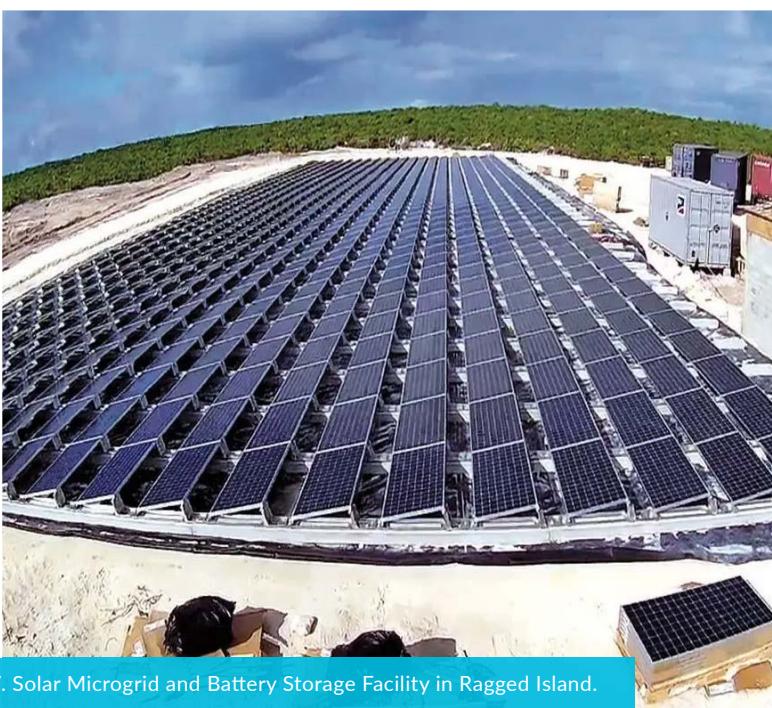
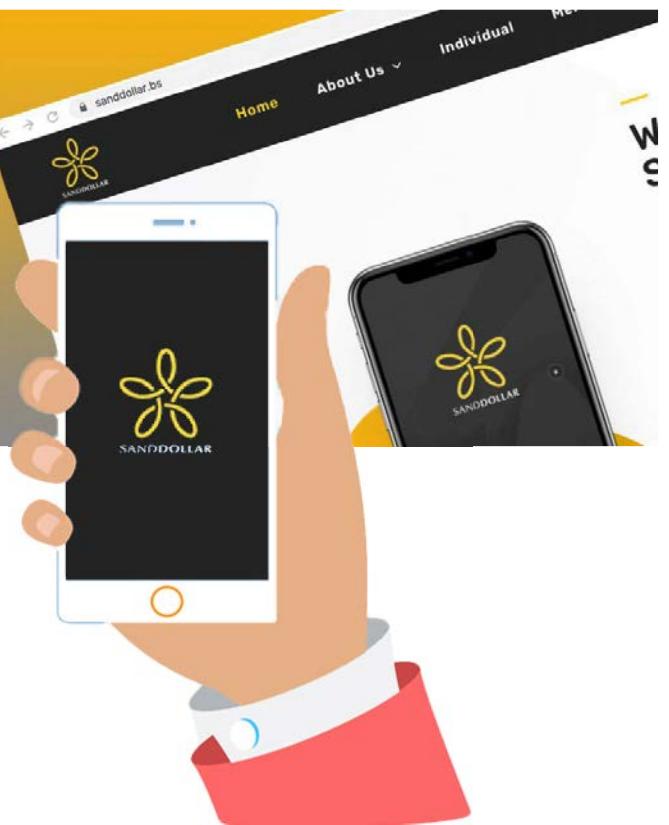


Figure 17. Solar Microgrid and Battery Storage Facility in Ragged Island.

Redevelopment of the Nassau Cruise Port

In August 2019, the GOB entered into a \$250 million heads of agreement with Global Ports Holding, to transform Nassau's Prince George Wharf. It is estimated that the project will result in 2 million more cruise passengers to Nassau every year, and thousands of direct and indirect new jobs. Between 2020 through 2022- 1,000 construction and permanent jobs will be created.²⁰⁴ Additionally, due to COVID19, more outdoor space was incorporated into the design and project scope. The redesigned waterfront is expected to be completed in 2022.

Figure 18. Rendering of Nassau Cruise Port



Airports

The GOB is undergoing a \$165 million Family Island Airport Upgrade. Exuma's airport redevelopment will be funded through the \$35m loans with IDB. The redevelopment of the remaining Family Island Airports, i.e., North Eleuthera airport, Deadman's Cay airport in Long Island and the Great Harbour Cay airport, will be financed through the use of Private-Public Partnership (PPP).



Figure 19. New Airport Great Harbour Cay



[204] Kingdom Media. 2021. PROJECT DETAILS. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://thekingdominsider.com/nassau-bahamas-is-getting-a-big-transformation-here-are-all-the-recent-details/> [Accessed 11 April 2021]

SDG 9

Strengthening Cyber Security Landscape

In November 2020, the GOB entered into a partnership agreement with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), for a national cybersecurity project. The project will provide technical support by analysing the country's current cybersecurity capacity and developing a cybersecurity strategy. Resultantly, the government established a national Computer Incident Response Team (CIRT) that will serve as the primary contact for cybersecurity. The project also aims to support related cybersecurity platforms including, the National Public Key Infrastructure (PKI), e-government services. Full implementation is set for 2022.

On March 30 and 31, 2021, the GOB held CIRT Assessment sessions, which formed part of the government's overall digital transformation strategy. Key IT government and private sector personnel professionals participated in the session, to evaluate the national cyber threat landscape. Representatives also included oil and gas industries, energy sector, health, banking, electricity sectors, transport, ports, and aviation.²⁰⁵ Furthermore, civil society groups, internet governance representatives, professional associations, cybersecurity, and leaders in higher education, participated. .

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 9 PROGRAMMES

The key barriers to achieving SDG 9 for The Bahamas relate to:

OVERCOMING THE
CHALLENGE TO
INCREASE THE
PROVISION OF CLEAN
AND MODERN ENERGY
SERVICES.

STRUCTURAL REFORM
TO ENSURE GREATER
EASE OF DOING
BUSINESS TO UNLOCK
INNOVATIVE
ENTREPRENEURIAL
ACTIVITY.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF
RESEARCH AND INNO-
VATION CAPABILITIES AT
UB.

THE NEED FOR A GREAT-
ER EMPHASIS ON
CLIMATE RESILIENT
BUILDINGS AND OTHER
INFRASTRUCTURE.

BETTER ALIGNED AND
FUNDED CAPITAL AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
PLANS TO SUPPORT
ECONOMIC GROWTH
AND DIVERSIFICATION.

THE NEED FOR GLOBAL
PARTNERSHIPS TO
MOBILIZE FINANCIAL
RESOURCES AND FACILI-
TATE KNOWLEDGE AND
TECHNOLOGY TRANS-
FER.

[205] Eyewitness News. 2021. Cyber Security Assessment. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://ewnews.com/top-it-professionals-participate-in-govts-first-ever-national-cybersecurity-assessment-session> [Accessed 11 May 2021]



THE IMPORTANCE OF BRIDGING INEQUALITY AND INEQUITY GAPS TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE BAHAMAS, HAS BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED. MIGRANTS AND THE CHILDREN OF MIGRANTS BORN IN THE BAHAMAS, FACE VULNERABILITIES. ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS IS THE IMPACTS OF HURRICANE DORIAN. A UNITED NATIONS REPORT FOUND THE CATEGORY FIVE HURRICANE'S IMPACT ON WOMEN, "ESPECIALLY WOMEN OF HAITIAN DESCENT, WAS GREATER DUE TO PRE-EXISTING INEQUALITIES."²⁰⁶

In addition, male and female Haitian migrants lived in "informal settlements that were destroyed by the hurricane, losing their documents, jobs and belongings."²⁰⁷

Children born in The Bahamas to non-Bahamian parents, are sometimes unable to obtain the nationality of the parents, nor Bahamian citizenship, until they reach the age of 18 years. Some face considerable challenges meeting the requirements for citizenship, because of a lack of requisite documentation.

Discrimination against persons with disabilities and the limited environment which allows them to participate fully in society, remains a concern. The Department of Statistics' 2010 Census of Population and Housing determined that there were 10,138 people with disabilities in the country, and that men accounted for 51.8% of that population. The Census report also found that only 17% of persons with

disabilities 15 years of age and over, were employed and that 72% of persons with disabilities had no form of health insurance. The population of persons with disabilities is rapidly growing, due to the prevalence of non-communicable diseases, which are a major cause of preventable disabilities. There is, therefore, a continuing demand to ensure that people with disabilities have a voice, are afforded access to health care and employment, and that laws are enforced. In 2014, the government enacted the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act, 2014, and in September 2015, ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to ensure that people with disabilities are treated equally under the law, and can participate fully in society.

Cases of elder abuse and neglect are on the rise. The forms of abuse include: verbal, physical and financial abuse.²⁰⁸

SDG 10 REDUCE INEQUALITY WITHIN & AMONG COUNTRIES



[206] Jasper Ward, Dorian's Impacts were Amplified for Women, UN Report says, April 6, 2022, The Nassau Guardian.
[207] Travis Cartwright-Carroll, Where Do They Go?, October 16, 2019, The Nassau Guardian.
[208] Maycock Denise, Ministry Considers Legislation To Protect The Elderly, 16 May 2016, Tribune Newspaper.

SDG 10

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 9

Persons with Disabilities

The GOB ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWD's) in 2015, prioritizing the equal treatment of persons with disabilities, and their full participation in all spheres of society. While most provisions of the PWD's (Equal Opportunities) Act, 2014 came into force between 2016 and 2018, the requirement for all public facilities to be equipped with disability access, has been quite difficult to enforce considering that many, including government establishments, remain inaccessible to persons with a range of disabilities.²⁰⁹

Overseen by the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development (and included in the PWDs national legislation), the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) and its secretariat, alongside the Disability Affairs Division of the Department of Social Services, have been collaborating closely to ensure that both the needs of regular and new clients, who are persons with disabilities, are being met during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Officials at the Disability Affairs Division have also collaborated with The Bahamas Red Cross to ensure that persons with disabilities are part of the Red Cross' Meals on Wheels Programme. Meanwhile, officials at the NCPD, and its secretariat, have established a 24-hour call and WhatsApp line, as part of the measures it has implemented to ensure that the needs of persons with disabilities are being met, and with a view of bringing any outstanding matters to a speedy resolution. The commission and its secretariat have also been liaising with the relevant non-governmental organizations to ensure that persons with disabilities have sufficient food, medical supplies, and protective equipment, to ensure their safety and protection, during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Other initiatives have included working closely with members of the blind community and the association of banking and clearing houses in The Bahamas, to enhance and

improve members of the community's banking experience, and ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to, and receive the benefits and assistance due them, and that they remain safe, protected, and have the necessary items for their continued well-being.

Additionally, they have ensured that persons with disabilities, who are deaf or hard of hearing, have access to information being disseminated from the media, through the participation of a sign interpreter, on all national broadcasts; and have assisted persons with disabilities and other able-bodied persons, to obtain wheelchairs by liaising with The Bahamas Association for the Physically Disabled.

Administrators have ensured that the NCPD website, is frequently updated to reflect information relative to the COVID-19 Pandemic while performing the general administrative duties of the secretariat, by assisting the 15 commissioners of the NCPD, who ensure that the provisions contained in the PWD (Equal Opportunities) Bill, 2014, are adhered to.²¹⁰

Migrants Rights

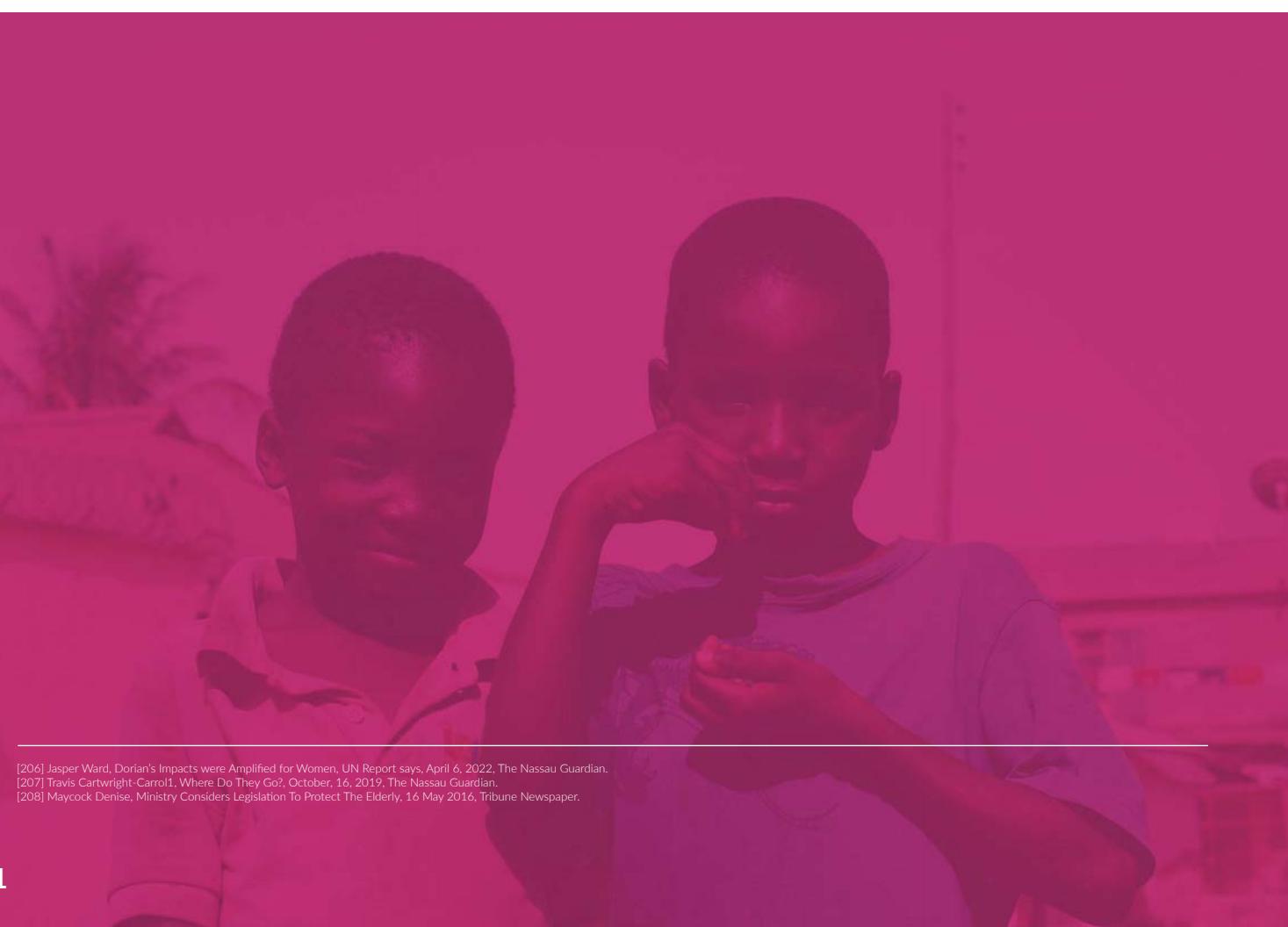
The revised draft Nationality, Immigration, and Asylum Bill, 2018, is currently under review and if enacted, it could regularize individuals who are at risk of statelessness until they reach the age, for which they are entitled to apply for citizenship.

The importance of fulfilling the rights of all in The Bahamas, including irregular migrants, has been foregrounded by the twin shocks to The Bahamas – i.e., Hurricane Dorian and COVID-19. That is, the state of displaced irregular migrants has led to responses by humanitarian organizations, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which (among other local and international organizations) has assisted this group in the aftermath of Dorian and during the pandemic. With IOM's assistance, 52 migrants (38 Female, 14 Male) received financial and technical support with obtaining the supporting documents required to obtain legal status in The Bahamas.

[209] VNR 2018.
[210] Nassau Guardian. (2020, May 12). Social agencies working to ensure access for persons with disabilities. Retrieved from <https://thenassauguardian.com/social-agencies-working-to-ensure-access-for-persons-with-disabilities/>.

After a nationally published “call for applications”, an independent committee selected the “redocumentation” beneficiaries. There are many more people in need beyond this project, also due to the declining economic situation because of the economic impacts of COVID-19.

To foster social cohesion, IOM launched the 2-month Bahamas Kind media campaign, with a key message and 5 interview programs. The Bahamas Kind campaign, in conjunction with IsraAID, was supported by “influencers” from the wider range of vulnerable and marginalized groups. The COVID-19 emergency restrictions delayed the program because the main institutions were closed. The COVID-19 Pandemic distracted and reduced the impact of the key messages of the #Bahamaskind campaign. IOM is planning to continue to assist undocumented migrants. IOM will also support the government with Migration Governance training for government officials. IOM is planning to continue and expand the #Bahamaskind social cohesion program with, community-driven sports, art, and training activities.



[206] Jasper Ward, Dorian's Impacts were Amplified for Women, UN Report says, April 6, 2022, The Nassau Guardian.
[207] Travis Cartwright-Carroll, Where Do They Go?, October 16, 2019, The Nassau Guardian.
[208] Maycock Denise, Ministry Considers Legislation To Protect The Elderly, 16 May 2016, Tribune Newspaper.

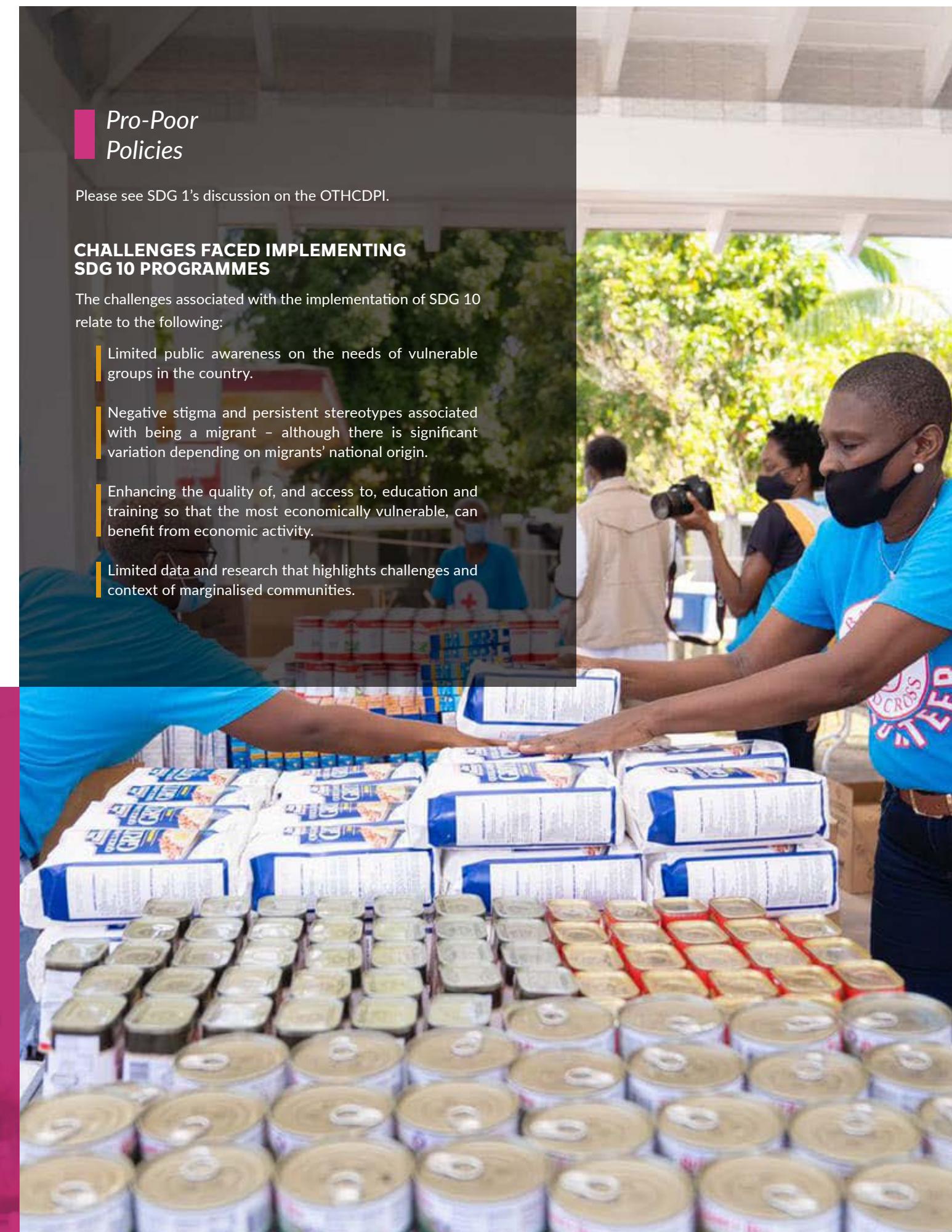
Pro-Poor Policies

Please see SDG 1's discussion on the OTHCDPI.

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 10 PROGRAMMES

The challenges associated with the implementation of SDG 10 relate to the following:

- Limited public awareness on the needs of vulnerable groups in the country.
- Negative stigma and persistent stereotypes associated with being a migrant – although there is significant variation depending on migrants' national origin.
- Enhancing the quality of, and access to, education and training so that the most economically vulnerable, can benefit from economic activity.
- Limited data and research that highlights challenges and context of marginalised communities.





MORE THAN 70% OF THE BAHAMIAN POPULATION RESIDES IN NEW PROVIDENCE, THE COUNTRY'S MOST URBANIZED ISLAND.²¹¹ IN NEW PROVIDENCE, PUBLIC GROUND TRANSPORTATION IS LIMITED TO PRIVATELY-OWNED BUSES, REFERRED TO AS "JITNEYS" OPERATING ON GOVERNMENT-DEFINED ROUTES AND GOVERNMENT-REGULATED FARES.

There is limited bus coverage for unprofitable routes and during the evening hours. This has led to over-reliance on personal vehicles and traffic congestion. Additionally, there are no designated cycling lanes which also leads to an over-reliance on automobiles.²¹²

Access to a proper waste management system is an ongoing concern throughout the country, and particularly in New Providence. The Department of Environmental Health Services (DEHS) estimates that in The Bahamas, 660 million pounds (300,000 tonnes) of solid waste, are discarded from packaging, waste food, and other thrown away items, each year.²¹³ Currently, the country has limited recycling practices. Dump fires in The Bahamas have become a recurring event, with as many as 17 acres burned in January 2015.²¹⁴ Several dump fires have occurred between the 2018 - 2021 periods. There is a need to address sanitation and housing challenges, particularly in urbanized areas. Moreover, there has been a steady increase in informal settlements, usually

found on Crown or Public land in New Providence, Abaco Island, Exuma Island and Eleuthera.²¹⁵

The housing structures in these towns are generally informally organised, overcrowded with illegally constructed structures built with non-durable hazardous material, without proper sewage disposal systems and access to water.²¹⁶ The results of a 2018 survey of informal settlements in New Providence, revealed that 1,410 residents were residing in the Shanty Towns and a total of 428 households. Thirty-eight percent (536) of the residents were under the age of 18, and sixty-two percent (874) are adults. Among the 428 heads of households who were interviewed, 71% had legal status in The Bahamas; 23% unknown and 6% were undocumented. Sixty-eight percent (68%) or 600 of the adult population, reported working in the last six months, and 76% of the households reported a total weekly income of under \$400.²¹⁷



SDG 11

MAKE CITIES AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS INCLUSIVE, SAFE, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE

[211] McDonald Mott 2000 p.22
[212] Thomas, A et al., 2015.
[213] Scavella, Nico 2015
[214] Ministry of Environment and Housing 2013, Shanty Town Project. Accessed at: <http://eh.gov.bs/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Shanty-Town-Bahamas-Report.pdf>
[215] Department of Environmental Health and Services 2013 p.26
[216] See Shanty Town Statement and Report

SDG 11

There is also a need for more green and public spaces in New Providence, particularly in the historical and often marginalized communities. Green and public spaces will not only incentivise community strengthening but provide an enabling environment to enhance the quality of life of residents, and encourage physical activity, creativity, and innovation.

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 11

Public Bus Unification

The previous VNR reported that, in March 2016, the IDB confirmed that the Government would start the implementation of the bus unification process, through a pilot project funded by the Bank, to demonstrate how the bus unification scheme will work.²¹⁸ Unification of the bus system is intended to streamline public bus transport and *inter alia*, upgrade the buses to make them more energy-efficient, and ensure that there is a good routing system, so that areas in New Providence not currently serviced by buses, are covered.²¹⁹

However, there were several delays with the Ministry announcing, in August 2019, an estimated cost of \$600,000 to undertake a study of the bus system to determine the value of a bus franchise.²²⁰ Following this announcement, Hurricane Dorian struck the country. The study eventually commenced in January 2020, to collect data that would be pertinent to determining schedules, bus stop placement, bus fare payment methods, and other key data points. Again, before the six months set aside to conduct the study was completed, the national response to COVID-19 resulted in a lengthy cessation of bussing.

New Providence Ecology Park²²¹

The New Providence Ecology Park, Ltd. (NPEP), is a 100% Bahamian-owned business that currently is contracted with the Ministry of Environment and Housing, for the remediation, upgrade and operation of the NPEP (formerly the Harold Road Landfill).

The company was engaged by the Ministry of Environment and Housing in late 2018, to address the persistent issues with the former Landfill's solid waste system. Among the issues faced by the Landfill were, "yearly raging fires, groundwater contamination, gas emissions, mosquitos and other vectors, all of which threatened the health of the surrounding residents, the waste collection company employees, and the lifeblood of the local economy – the Tourism Industry." The company began work in March 2019, and has achieved, among other things, the following:

- Consolidating and capping over 80 acres of waste.
- Effecting rigorous solid waste handling practices in accordance with U.S. EPA Subtitle D regulations.
- Implementing modern best-management-practices for maximum protection of human and environmental health.
- Commencing recycling and recovery activities for construction demolition debris and vegetative waste.

Figure 20. New Providence Ecology Park



[218] IDB Report as referenced in The Tribune Newspaper (McKenzie, Natario and Hartnell, Neil 9 March 016)
[219] Ibid and Lowe, Alison 19 October 2013
[220] Rolle, R. (2019, August 28). Unified Bus System Pilot Plan To Cost \$600,000. Retrieved from <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2019/aug/28/unified-bus-system-pilot-plan-to-cost-600000/>

[221] The information in this section was retrieved from NPEP's website and is available at <https://www.ecologyparkbahamas.com/about-us/>

SDG 11

The NPEP states that it intended to construct the following elements over the next few months and years:

- A new Residential Drop Off Facility
- A new Material Recovery Facility (recycling centre)
- Landfill Gas Collection and Recycling Infrastructure
- A public Green Space developed on reclaimed landfill property.

Local Government Initiative for New Providence

In 1996, Local Government was introduced to several major populated islands, outside of New Providence, and in 2017, the GOB committed to bringing Local Government to New Providence by the 2020 cycle of local government elections. A committee was established to successfully carry out the project and the 2018/2019 budget communication committed \$100,000 to support this initiative.²²² However, since the government's pronouncement in April 2019, that the Committee's report had been finalized and would be submitted to the Cabinet, no further commitment has been made to establishing a local government in New Providence.²²³

Shanty Town Action Task Force (SATF)

The SATF was established in 2018. A survey of all ten Shanty Towns in New Providence, was conducted over four weeks with a view of assisting residents in finding alternative accommodations and closing these informal settlements by 31st July 2018.

Access to Affordable Housing

In 2018, the GOB introduced a landmark bill to provide affordable housing for Bahamians titled, Access to Affordable Homes Bill, 2018. (Please see SDG 1's discussion on Access to Land and Housing).

City Clean-Up Efforts

The GOB launched a clean-up initiative for New Providence and the Family Islands in October 2017. The scope of the clean-up will involve the removal of derelict vehicles and waste within neighbourhoods, and the incorporation of rodent control mechanisms.²²⁴

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 11 PROGRAMMES

The acceleration of urban sprawl in The Bahamas has led to an increase in energy consumption, pollution, water and waste management, and a consequent need to improve related public services. Effectively implemented SDG 11 requires the following efforts:

- Enhancing participation of local actors in and efficacy of decision-making, via the devolution of governance.
- Strengthening the capacity of the country's urban planning institutions to ensure that cities are inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable, with disaster planning at the forefront.
- Resolving issues of overlapping and unclear property claims, particularly in New Providence, to allow for the upgrading of residences in economically depressed communities.
- Better funding and policy reform to address the challenges of the public transportation systems.
- Allocating fiscal resources to invest in much needed infrastructural works such as, drainage and innovative solid waste management solutions, for urban centres.





Achieving sustainable consumption and production remains a considerable challenge for The Bahamas, particularly given the country's tourism-based economy. Meeting the economic, social, and aesthetic demands of the tourism sector could have negative implications on the environment and natural resources, if not carried out sustainably. Our impact on the environment and human health is inextricably linked to production and consumption activities.

Achieving many of our aims, (i.e., poverty alleviation, food security, and infrastructure-based development), also depends on productive activities and their economic output. While some government interventions promote more sustainable and efficient use of natural resources (i.e., the Styrofoam ban and other key legislative reforms), considerable work remains to be done.

SDG 12 can only be achievable when sustainable production frameworks are coordinated with sustainable business practices, public procurement for the government, and a shift in consumer attitudes and behaviours towards sustainability. Furthermore, given its transversal supply chain, the tourism sector is best poised to advance sustainable consumption and production practices. Therefore, extensive multi-stakeholder engagement and robust educational awareness-raising are essential to policy coherence for sustainable development.



KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 12

Sustainable Management & Efficient Use of Natural Resources

In October 2019, key legislations to address wide-ranging environmental protections, and ban single-use plastics, were passed, which include:

The Ministry of Environment Act, 2019

A bill for an act to establish the Ministry of the Environment to oversee the integrity of the environment of The Bahamas, to make the minister responsible, therefore a corporation sole, to establish the Environmental Administration Fund, and the Environmental Trust Fund and for matters connected thereto.

SDG 12

ENSURE SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION & PRODUCTION PATTERNS

SDG 12

The Environment Planning and Protection Act, 2019

A bill for an act to establish the Department of Environmental Planning and Protection to provide for the prevention or control of pollution, the regulation of activities, and the administration, conservation, and sustainable use of the environment, and for connected purposes.

The Environmental Planning and Protection Act was passed on December 19, 2021, and resulted in the establishment of The Department of Environmental Planning and Protection (DEPP). The purview of the DEPP deals with the "regulation of activities and the administration, conservation, and sustainable use of the environment, and for connected purposes. The Department also manages multilateral environmental agreements and research permit applications for scientific investigations involving or affecting natural resources within The Bahamas. In addition, the Department is responsible for the development and implementation of policies, programmes, and plans for the effective management and conservation of the physical environment within The Bahamas.²²⁵

The Environment Protection (Control of Plastic Pollution) Act, 2019

A bill for an act to prohibit single-use plastic food ware and non-biodegradable, oxo-biodegradable, and biodegradable single-use plastic bags; prohibit the release of balloons; regulate the use of compostable single-use plastic bags; and for connected matters.

The Ministry of Environment and Housing created a task force to advance an inclusive national campaign, "Plastic Free 242" to phase out single-use plastics, such as plastic bags, straws, food utensils, and Styrofoam containers, by 2020. The ban came into full effect on July 1st, 2020.

Plastic Ban

In July 2020, the government of The Bahamas successfully implemented a full ban on single use plastics and Styrofoam. Complete implementation of the ban came after a grace period of six (6) months, which allowed the banned items to be sold locally, but no new importation of these prohibited items was allowed. There are four (4) items banned that can no longer be imported. These are: single use plastic bags, plastic utensils, plastic straws, and Styrofoam containers. Alternatives were provided as part of the government's educational campaign including reusable bags, compostable utensils, compostable paper, steel or bamboo straws, and compostable containers. To encourage the public to comply with the ban, duty was removed from the alternative items, and a fine could be given to persons or businesses, if found to be in breach of the stipulations.²²⁶

Addressing Waste and Promoting Recycling

In February 2019, the government signed an agreement with the New Providence Ecology Park (NPEP) (which comprises the Waste Resources Development Group and Providence Advisors) for a \$45 million multi-phased redevelopment of the New Providence Landfill.



Figure 21. The Ministry of Environment & Housing announces its partnership with ALIV to promote the Plastic Free 242 campaign which is raising awareness about the January 1, 2020, national plastic ban. Pictured from left to right are Janice Miller, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Environment & Housing (MOEH); Hon. Romauld Ferreira, Minister of Environment & Housing; Sasha Lightbourne, ALIV Media Champion; Dr. Rhianna Neely-Murphy, Technical Consultant, MOEH; and Lyndee Bowe, Environmental Officer, MOEH.

SINCE MARCH 2019, THE NPEP HAS:

Extinguished fires at the site significantly reduced the risk of future fires.

Cleaned and organized the landfill, transforming what was once an "open waste" dumping ground into a clean, safe, and organized park – 100 percent compacted, capped, and contained.

Created and maintained proper roads and established specific treatment of areas for the various types of waste received.

Rerouted and contained the overflowing septic waste at the park.

Started reusing and recycling onsite materials and waste to maintain and revitalize the park.

Shredded organic materials and turned back to the soil.

Began the establishment of its recycling program and can accept cooking oil, electronics, cans, glass, plastic, aluminum, cardboard, and mixed paper, for recycling.



Promoting Sustainable Tourism and the Cultural and Natural Heritage

The GOB approved the Public-Private Investments Limited (PPIL) group's multi-million-dollar proposal to restore and revive sites, which include Nassau's three forts, the Queen's Staircase (66 Steps) and Water Tower, and the Pompey Museum. It is projected that the venture could generate \$1.5bn in gross revenues throughout a 25-year lease, along with several hundred jobs.²²⁷

The GOB implements and executes restoration works on public property and rehabilitation initiatives within the main local historical urban contexts.

There are also other ongoing initiatives, like the implementation of special campaigns and local and international observances, in the public and private sectors, that aim to raise awareness for sustainable development. Some of those initiatives include:

Scotiabank joined MasterCard on the expansion of the Priceless Planet Coalition to generate climate change awareness and to impact four Caribbean countries: Jamaica, Barbados, The Bahamas, and the Dominican Republic.²²⁸

The Eden Farms company was launched in 2021 and marks the future of farming and sustainable food production in The Bahamas for residents and the millions of tourists who visit The Bahamas year-round. The technology company relies on repurposed shipping containers to create the ideal environment to nurture the farming process from beginning to end. This process then allows for maximum control over crops, at every stage, from germination to harvest, which translates to optimum yield with minimum loss. Eden Farms' technology methods aim to fill gaps in the agricultural supply chain.

The Bahamian government worked along with the Israeli government and the Israeli Non-Governmental Organization - Volcani International Partnerships to open a Caribbean-wide agriculture workshop. The workshop has, so far, registered more than 2,000 persons across the Caribbean.

The Bahamas Cabinet has approved 30 acres of land at the Gladstone Road Research Centre. The land will be repurposed for smart farms. These smart farms use data-driven approaches to meet real-time needs, with an aim to avoid shortages and surpluses.

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), as a part of its "Creating Economic Opportunities Project", facilitated several workshops across the Caribbean, training farmers on creating opportunities for managing organic waste to solve the challenges of the bio-economy. In The Bahamas, the project was executed in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources and involved up to 90 participants from five islands.

In cooperation with the Caribbean Philanthropic Alliance's (CariPhil Alliance - CPA) pledge to plant one million trees by June 5, 2021, members of the House of Rastafari Inter-Mansion Farming Collective (HOR) and the staff and students of Akhepran International Academy, paid tribute to the late Priest, Philip Blyden, by participating in the launch of CariPhil Alliance Tree Planting Ambassador Programme. On Sunday, January 10, 2021, participants planted several fruit trees – including almond, avocado pear, banana, coconut, mamey sapote, mangola, sapodilla, and soursop – at Akhepran International Academy on Bernard Road.²²⁹

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 12 PROGRAMMES

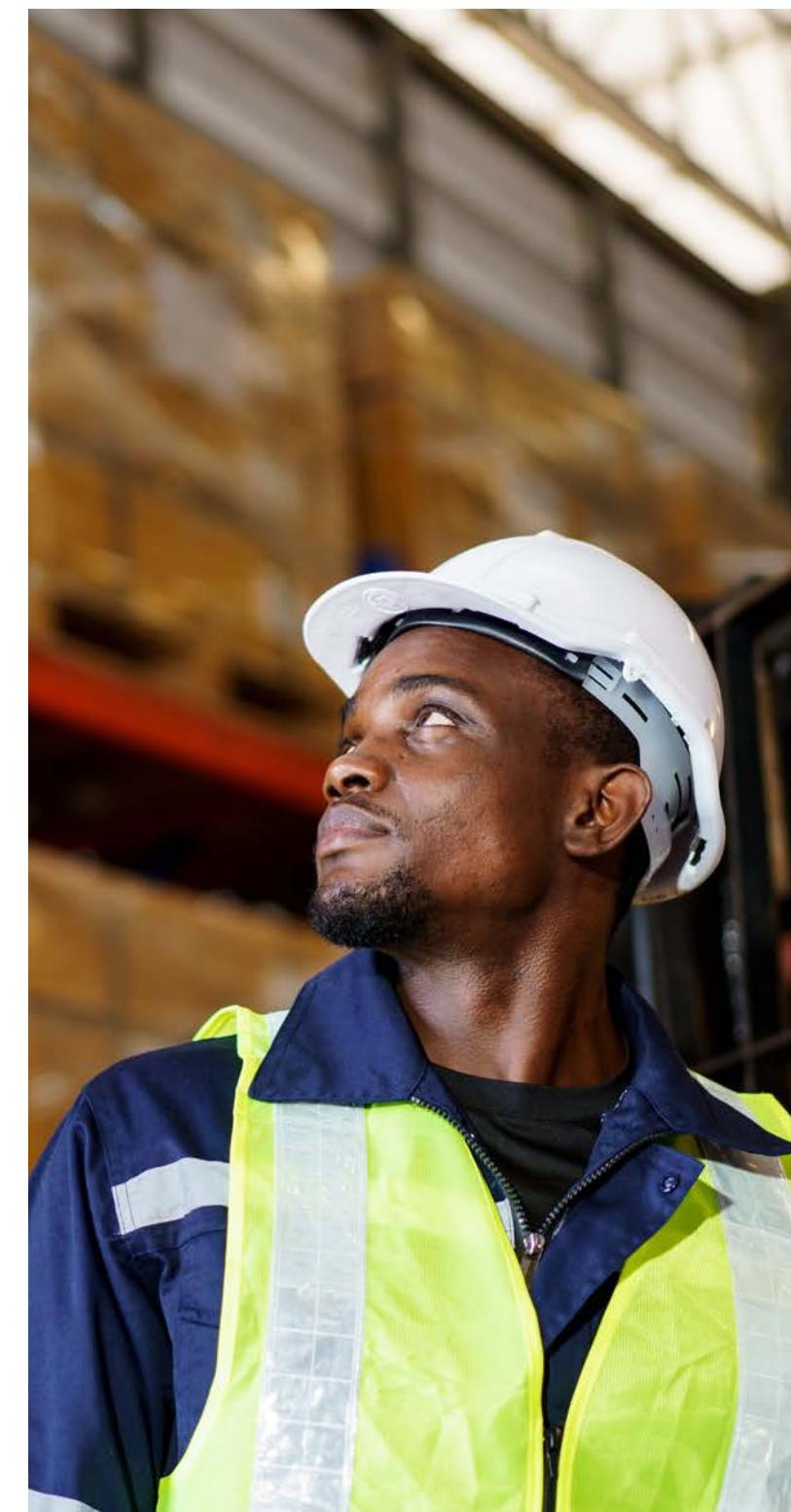
The key challenges for The Bahamas in implementing SDG 12 relate to:

Limited public awareness on the importance of sustainable consumption and production practices.

Lack of a sustainable consumption strategic plan and accompanying policies to govern economic actors.

Limited business models not suited to the circular economy.

The need to consider an integrated whole-supply-chain approach to stakeholder engagement, inclusive of Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and the private sector.



[227] Tribune. Cabinet go ahead \$1.5 billion heritage plan. [ONLINE] Available at <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2020/dec/10/cabinet-go-ahead-15bn-heritage-plan/> [Accessed at 12 January 2021]

[228] MasterCard. Doing well by doing good. [ONLINE] Available at <https://www.mastercard.us/content/dam/mccom/global/aboutus/Sustainability/mastercard-sustainability-report-2019.pdf>. [Accessed at 12 January 2021]

[229] Eyewitness News. CariPhilAlliance Tree Planning Ambassador Programme. [ONLINE] Available at <https://ewnews.com/carphilalliance-tree-planting-ambassador-program-gives-tribute-to-rastafarian-priest-blyden/> [Accessed at 03 March 2021]



IN STATEMENTS MADE TO THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON SEPTEMBER 2018²³⁰ AND AGAIN ON SEPTEMBER 2019,²³¹ THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE BAHAMAS URGED FOR INTENSIFYING COMMITMENT TO CLIMATE ACTION WHILE DISPLAYING THE BAHAMAS' COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVING SDG 13.

In October 2018, The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published the report, "Impacts of 1.5°C Global Warming on Natural and Human Systems". This report highlights that lower temperatures have a more severe impact on climate than predicted. This threat is even more serious to vulnerable Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like The Bahamas. The Bahamas is currently experiencing the impacts of climate change. These impacts include rising sea levels, declines in coral reefs, and the increasing intensity of hurricanes; changes that affect every area of life in The Bahamas and require real action.²³²

In September 2019, Hurricane Dorian made landfall in The Bahamas, wreaking havoc on the islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama. The category five winds and storm surges of over 20 feet destroyed entire communities, churches, medical facilities, and more. Dorian was a cataclysmic natural disaster that undoubtedly was the product of the intensifying effects of climate change in the region and the world. Repeated disasters, such as Dorian, are harsh reminder

of why climate action is vital.

The United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, visited The Bahamas immediately after Hurricane Dorian. During this visit, he highlighted that countries that produce the least amount of greenhouse emissions or are the poorest or most vulnerable communities are more severely impacted by the effects of climate change, and that the international community must band together to ensure that we are all actively planning towards climate action.²³³

The Bahamas demonstrates its continual commitment to climate action through:

The University of The Bahamas

UB established a Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Research Centre in 2019 after Hurricane Dorian. The centre aims to address how climate change affects societies and people in SIDS and coastal communities. The centre also

SDG 13

TAKE URGENT ACTION TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACTS



[230] <https://reliefweb.int/report/bahamas/pm-calls-un-intensify-commitment-addressing-climate-change>
 [231] <https://mofa.gov.bs/prime-minister-minnis-addresses-un-general-assembly-urges-world-leaders-to-address-global-climate-emergency/>
 [232] <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2018/oct/22/insight-climate-change-coming-and-we-have-prepare/>
 [233] <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/1046392>

SDG 13

focuses on adaptation, comprehensive disaster management, and loss and damage. These three areas are key elements in climate research and will be instrumental in building resilience to climate change.²³⁴

accessible through IICA's social media pages and platforms.²³⁷

The Green Climate Fund

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) was created in 2010 by Member States signed on to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The fund's commitments include: helping developing countries and vulnerable societies to lower their green-house gas emissions and helping them to adapt to climate change.²³⁸ In November 2020, the GCF launched two (2) projects which target The Bahamas, among other countries. The Sub-national Climate Fund Global aims to effect and increase climate investment on a long-term basis for adaptation and mitigation solutions at a sub-national level by way of a transformative finance model.²³⁹ While one project focuses on Equity, the other project centres on the Technical Assistance Facility. The GCF has also engaged in 5 readiness activities²⁴⁰, one of which included an awareness building video highlighting what is climate change and how it affects The Bahamas.²⁴¹

The Global Environment Facility

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) provides grants and co-financing options to countries to address and deal with pressing environmental problems in line with the Paris Agreement. The GEF has had 17 projects with The Bahamas, with 5 of them tackling climate change, specifically totalling over \$8 million GEF grant funds, and over \$28 million co-financed.²⁴²

The Bahamas Protected Areas Fund

In 2019, in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, The Bahamas Protected Areas Fund (BPAF) launched a call for concept proposals that would focus on the islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama, while targeting the ecosystem, water purification, or renewable energy. The BPAF is a national conservation trust fund that ensures that national marine parks have enough revenue to provide the efficiency of staff, equipment, community support, monitoring, and visitor facilities.

[234] <https://www.ub.edu.bs/university-bahamas-establishes-climate-change-adaptation-resilience-research-centre>
 [235] <https://www.perryinstitute.org/reef-rescue-network#focus-areas>
 [236] <https://repository.iica.int/bitstream/handle/11324/15563/BVE20078021.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
 [237] <https://repository.iica.int/bitstream/handle/11324/10736/BVE20078021.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
 [238] <https://www.caribbeanclimate.iica.int/about-gcf/>
 [239] <https://www.greenclimate.fund/project/fp152#impact>
 [240] <https://www.greenclimate.fund/countries/bahamas>
 [241] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eo4ntrUcBY8>
 [242] [https://www.thegef.org/projectsfaceted?\[\]&field_country%3A21&page=1](https://www.thegef.org/projectsfaceted?[]&field_country%3A21&page=1)

Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

The IDB approved the project “Recommendations for the Implementation of Sustainable and Climate Resilient Tourism Certifications in The Bahamas” in November 2020. It is a Technical Cooperation project to support to the Ministry of Tourism and Aviation, by listing recommendations and providing a governance framework.²⁴³ The IDB is also implementing the project “Climate Resilient Coastal Management and Infrastructure Program”, which was approved in 2017. The program aims to enhance resilience to coastal risks, including risks related to climate change. Methods of program implementation include the use of coastal protection infrastructure and integrated coastal management. Selected coastlines of the islands of Grand Bahama, New Providence, Andros, and Long Island are to be affected.²⁴⁴

Public Private Sector Activities Retrofitting of the Anatol Rodgers High School Project

The Ministry of the Environment and Housing, through a project funded by the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea (IMELS), incorporated renewable energy technology and Energy Conservation Measures (ECMs). The project reduced the carbon footprint of the Anatol Rodgers High School by installing a 250 kW-Dc rooftop solar PV array, exterior lighting control system, vacancy sensors, lounge, programmable thermostats, and low-flow lavatory aerators. The project also reworked the entrance's interior lighting system and refrigerant lines.²⁴⁵

To spread awareness about the initiative, the Ministry of Environment and Housing, along with the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, premiered a short film about the project and its outcomes.²⁴⁶

The Ministry of Disaster Preparedness Management, and Reconstruction, the Disaster Reconstruction Authority, and the National Emergency Management Authority

The Ministry of Disaster Preparedness Management, and Reconstruction, was created in September 2019, days after the passing of Hurricane Dorian. The ministry was tasked with recovery coordination for Abaco and Grand Bahama. NEMA, and the Disaster Reconstruction Authority (DRA) were moved to the new Ministry of Disaster Preparedness Management and

Reconstruction. NEMA led aid relief efforts during the aftermath of the hurricane. The agency organized the collection and disbursement of donations and collaborated with various international organizations that offered technical support on the ground. The DRA worked with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to conduct hurricane damage assessments and to rebuild more resilient communities. The DRA identifies seven (7) priorities that it centres on. These are economy, health, education, systems improvement, environment, housing, and infrastructure.²⁴⁷

NEMA has since been working on a comprehensive hurricane response plan for The Bahamas. The Pacific Disaster Centre was contracted to perform a baseline assessment in 2019. The assessment results found that if a Category 5 hurricane hits New Providence, 70% of the island would be underwater. The Meteorological Department and The Bahamas National Geographic Information Systems (BNGIS) are other partners used for a category 5 response recovery plan. The comprehensive hurricane response plan should consider the amount of shelter space needed, the functionality of the government, and the provision of food and water supplies across the archipelago.²⁴⁸

The DRA has since outlined 14 projects it aimed to execute. These projects included: debris collection and debris management sites in Abaco and Grand Bahama, Small Home Repair Programmes in Abaco and Grand Bahama, construction of dome and modular temporary housing in Abaco and Grand Bahama, airport development in Treasure Cay, Abaco, construction of semi-permanent homes for public offices and teachers in Spring City, Abaco, and planning for comprehensive schools in High Rock, Grand Bahama, and Treasure Cay. The DRA also plans to build permanent housing in Central Pines, Abaco, and roll out landfill redevelopment in Snake Cay; develop two 60-acre subdivisions in Spring City and Wilson City, Abaco; reconstruct Abaco's port facilities and rebuild the police and fire stations in Marsh Harbour, Abaco. In these efforts, the DRA partnered with the Grand Bahama Power Company, WSC, BPL, the Grand Bahama Utility Company, The Bahamas Telecommunications Company, and Aliv, working across sectors to make the rebuilding of these Bahamian islands a reality. NGOs, private institutions, churches, and the international community also lent a huge hand in assessing needs on the ground and providing assistance.²⁴⁹

In April 2020, The DRA provided eight families, whose homes were destroyed by Hurricane Dorian, with temporary housing in Spring City. The dome-style homes can hold up to 6 people and are built for extreme environments. Forty (40) domes are to be given to residents of Grand Bahama, and one-hundred 100 more domes are to be shipped to Abaco to assist more families who were left homeless, due to Dorian. The domes are the property of NEMA and cannot be rented or sold by residents.²⁵⁰ Given the increasing threat of hurricanes, the domes serve as a short-term solution for those who may be displaced due to disasters and emergencies.

The DRA also gave out over 800 vouchers for home repair up to June 2020. The vouchers were in the amount of \$2,500 to assist with home repair efforts to ensure that homes were made more resistant to hurricanes and flooding. Up to June 2020, at least 4,600 people applied, and more than 2,600 of them were approved.²⁵¹

Tribune Media Group

The Tribune Media Group publishes an annual Hurricane Supplement, which provides a hurricane tracking map, and safety and shelter information, for the Bahamian Community. In addition to the Hurricane Supplement, the Tribune Media Group also offers daily Eco-Friendly tips on the radio station KISS 96.1FM. Further, during the implementation of the Plastic Ban, The Tribune Media Group partnered with the Ministry of Environment and Housing to disseminate information on the ban and the negative impact plastic has on our environment. The Tribune Media Group also runs articles on Climate Change regularly, and provides weather reports sponsored by BPL during hurricane seasons.²⁵²

CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING CLIMATE ACTION:

The Bahamas relies on tourism; a sector with many associated activities that contribute to high greenhouse gas emissions

Efforts to sustain the sector may conflict with interest in combating climate change.

Weak Food Security

High levels of economic inequality

Vulnerability to climate events

Lack of human capital with expertise

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES:

“Establishing a standardised system that would allow for the project reports, compiled by the relevant professionals, to be archived in a publicly accessible government repository, is one way researchers and government representatives can perform assessments and identify local trends, that would enable a more efficient response to climate change issues.”²⁵³

Increase the resiliency of infrastructure.

“Enhancing warning systems, upgrading the structural integrity of hurricane shelters, and ensuring citizen compliance with evacuation protocols, are lifesaving actions.”²⁵⁴

Bolster citizen engagement in disaster preparedness and response.²⁵⁵

[243] <https://www.iadb.org/en/project/BH-T1082>

[244] <https://www.iadb.org/en/project/BH-L1043>

[245] <https://www.caribbeanclimate.bz/blog/2020/10/23/the-cccc-and-the-ministry-of-the-environment-and-housing-the-bahamas-launch-video-highlighting-anatol-rodgers-energy-retrofits/>

[246] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QlEK1hVE7xo>

[247] <https://thenassauguardian.com/a-reconstruction-overview-one-year-after-hurricane-dorian-and-still-committed/>

[248] <https://thenassauguardian.com/govt-working-on-a-comprehensive-hurricane-response-plan-for-future-storms/>

[249] <https://thenassauguardian.com/a-reconstruction-overview-one-year-after-hurricane-dorian-and-still-committed/>

[250] <https://thenassauguardian.com/a-reconstruction-overview-one-year-after-hurricane-dorian-and-still-committed/>

[251] <https://thenassauguardian.com/families-receive-temporary-housing-domes-in-spring-city/>

[252] <https://lewis-over-800-dorian-home-repair-vouchers-issued/>

[253] Tribune Media Group SDG Report 2021

[254] https://www.thebahamasweekly.com/publish/community/Adopt_a_Culture_of_Readyiness_in_Tackling_Climate_Change66980.shtml

[255] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1912965/>



In August 2020, during a webinar hosted by the IDB, The Minister of Agriculture and Marine Resources expressed plans to further develop the Blue Economy through legislation and policy, with an emphasis on aquaculture. The Bahamas has been experiencing the loss of marine resources and research benefits from institutions and companies who conduct research and use the information in the medical and cosmetics industries.²⁵⁶

The Marine Protected Plan

The Bahamas' Protected Project, consisting of TNC, BNT, and BREEF, produced their "20 by 20 White Paper" in September 2018, which sought to meet The Bahamas' 2020 Declaration. The Bahamas' 2020 Declaration was born from The Bahamas' commitment to the Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI), launched in 2008. The 2020 declaration outlines The Bahamas' plans to: (i) Exceed the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) goals by effectively conserving at least 20% of the near-shore marine resources across The Bahamas, by 2020; (ii) Achieve the "20 by 20" Goal, to have in place fully functioning sustainable finance mechanisms that will provide long-term and reliable funding, to conserve and sustainably manage the marine and coastal resources of The Bahamas; (iii) Preserve the country's marine and terrestrial environments to meet the targets established by the CBD PoWPA for 2010 and 2012; and (iv) Mobilize efforts to conserve and sustainably use

the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) – Life Below Water, which came into force in January 2016.²⁵⁷

The document was written after stakeholder consultations, and it suggests important maritime areas that require protection.²⁵⁸ The aims of the project are to:

- Design a new set of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) so that The Bahamas has at least 20% of its marine habitat protected by 2020.
- Increase the effective management of Protected Areas (Pas) within the MPA Network.
- Increase sustainable funding dedicated to PA management.
- Strengthen public awareness and support for MPAs.²⁵⁹

SDG 14

CONSERVE AND SUSTAINABLY USE THE OCEANS, SEAS AND MARINE RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

[256] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7000000/>

[257] <https://www.bahamatradeinfo.gov.bs/government-moving-aggressively-to-develop-blue-economy/>

[258] Bahamas Protected Marine Protection Plan, <https://bahamasprotected.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Bahamas-Protected-Marine-Protection-Plan.pdf>

[259] https://www.depp.gov.bs/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/FINAL-20-by-20-White-Paper_Marine-Protection-Plan_Rev27Sept2018.pdf

Fisheries Conservation in the Wider Caribbean Region through FAO's Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission

The Bahamas continues to be a partner country to the Fisheries Conservation in the Wider Caribbean Region through FAO's Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECAFC). The Commission serves to encourage the management, conservation, and development of marine resources. The commission also serves to tackle fishery related issues experienced by commission members. There are 35 states, and 16 of them are SIDS. The commission works to form recommendations which may be considered by the countries and NGOs that participate.²⁶⁰

The Bahamas Development Bank

The BDB has honed in on the Blue Economy to support the realization of SDG 14 by 2030. Areas of focus include fisheries, tourism, mining and energy, transport, and environment and technology. While the BDB functions to grow Bahamian businesses and, in turn, the economy, the bank has become a partner for the SDGs, ensuring that those businesses related to the Blue Economy are striving to make their approaches as sustainable as possible. An example of this is the Livewell Fisheries project, which aims to support Bahamian fishers who are engaged in the lobster market. This project seeks to diversify the market to reduce waste while maintaining or increasing profits for the fishers involved.²⁶¹ In 2021, the BDB added a Blue Economy grant for up to \$7500, which sought applicants specifically looking to advance sustainable development in the Blue Economy in The Bahamas. The grant is scored based on its ability to be outcome oriented, innovative, community based, climate smart and knowledge building.²⁶²

To encourage the exploration and growth of business in the Blue Economy, the BDB's Strategic Development and Initiatives Unit hosted a Blue Economy Think Tank in 2021. Over 340 people registered and there were 20 panellists for the event themed "From Small Island State to Big Ocean Nation".²⁶³

The Inter-American Development Bank

IDB approved the first operation of the modality titled, Programmatic Policy- Based Loan (PBL), through a \$200million loan to increase the resiliency of the environment, as well as MSMEs. The loan supports The Bahamas' Marine Protected Areas, as well as the private and public sectors.²⁶⁴ Another loan for \$140million was later approved in 2021, as the second part of the PBL.²⁶⁵

Fisheries Act, 2020

In December 2020, the GOB passed the Fisheries Bill, which repealed the Fisheries Resources (Jurisdiction and Conservation) Act 1977. The Fisheries Bill was passed in the Senate days later, creating the Fisheries Act 2020. The Minister of Agriculture and Marine Resources noted that the new legislation would call for new regulations, including Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) on commercial fishing boats, the licensing of foreign sport and commercial fishers and their vessels, fishing management plans for every fishing asset, and resources for the development and management, using best practices, of the aquaculture sector. The new Act also allows for the creation of a National Fisheries Stakeholder Forum, a Fisheries Advisory Council, and a clear outline of the powers of the director and the Minister. The new legislation enacts the UN/FAO Port State Measures Act into local law and bans foreign involvement in commercial fishing.²⁶⁶

Biological Resources and Traditional Knowledge Act, 2020

The new Biological Resources and Traditional Knowledge Act, 2020²⁶⁷ functions to ensure that the country benefits in a just way from its own natural resources and from organizations and institutions that conduct research with and on our natural resources. The act has catalysed the creation of new protocols to ensure that the legislation is being properly executed.²⁶⁸

[260] <https://breif.org/index.php/resource-library/bahamas-protected-project/>

[261] <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=7825>

[262] <https://bahamasdevelopmentbank.com/about-us/fisheries/>

[263] [file:///C:/Users/alicilarolle/Downloads/Blue-Economy-Grant-Requirements-Form-Fillable%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/alicilarolle/Downloads/Blue-Economy-Grant-Requirements-Form-Fillable%20(1).pdf)

[264] <https://ewnews.com/use-of-the-bahamas-vast-ocean-resources-bahamas-development-bank-looks-at-the-potential-and-offers-grants-for-training/>

[265] <https://www.iadb.org/en/news/bahamas-will-promote-competitiveness-and-environmental-resiliency-idb-support>

[266] <https://www.iadb.org/en/news/bahamas-will-boost-resilient-and-inclusive-growth-idb-support>

[267] <https://ewnews.com/fisheries-bill-passes-in-parliament-unanimously>

[268] https://depp.gov.bs/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Biological_Resources_and_Traditional_Knowledge_Act.pdf



The July 2018 VNR, outlined the rich biodiversity of The Bahamas, and highlighted the role of the country's terrestrial ecosystems, in providing protection and nourishment to flora and fauna which inhabit them. Additionally, healthy terrestrial systems are critical to protecting coastal areas from the impacts of Climate Change.

Given that The Bahamas is a coastal nation it is important that our efforts towards conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity are made with terrestrial and coastal resource targets in mind. Indeed, a recent study predicted that storm-related damages could be tripled if protective ecosystems such as coral reefs and mangrove forests are degraded or lost.²⁶⁹

The Bahamas Development Bank

During the period since the submission of the previous VNR, The Bahamas enacted the Environmental Planning and Protection Act of 2019. This Act established the Department of Environmental Planning and Protection, a department which would focus on prevention of pollution and would regulate activities and administer the conservation and sustainable use of the environment. Some of the key objectives of the Act are to ensure the establishment of an integrated environmental

management system; to protect the environment of The Bahamas while providing for development in a way that maintains ecological integrity and the social and economic welfare of local communities; and to provide a legal framework for the protection, enhancement, and conservation of the environment, and for the sustainable management, use, development and enjoyment of the environment by the people of The Bahamas, including present and future generations.

Other regulatory regimes which were also implemented are The Ministry of Environment Act 2019 which established the Ministry of Environment to oversee the integrity of the environment of The Bahamas, to establish an environmental trust fund and to make the Minister a corporation sole for the retention of lands. Other laws which have implications for the environment are: Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations and Extension Act of 2020 which legally identified the requirement for public consultation and the dissemination of information to the public regarding development projects.



SDG 15

PROTECT, RESTORE & PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE USE OF TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS, SUSTAINABLY MANAGE FORESTS, COMBAT DESERTIFICATION, & HALT AND REVERSE LAND DEGRADATION & HALT BIODIVERSITY LOSS

SDG 15

Other undertakings for this goal are the sustainable master plan for Andros, which is to be funded by the IDB. The implementation of this program will accelerate sustainable development, through the following strategies highlighted in the previous VNR – i.e. identification of public and private investment opportunities, policy recommendations, land and sea zoning guidelines, and other management actions to guide sustainable development of the island.²⁷⁰ While the previous report indicated the government's intention to create similar plans for more islands, this remains the goal.

The BNT continues to pursue its goals of protecting and restoring marine and terrestrial ecosystems. To build resilience using natural solutions to address the adverse effects of climate change, civil society organizations and The BNT, Friends of the Environment, local bonefish fishing guides, the Bonefish Tarpon & Trust, are working together to replant mangrove forests on both Grand Bahama and Abaco, to address the Hurricane Dorian-induced destruction of 74% of mangrove cover, on Grand Bahama and 40% on Abaco. Not only are these programmes focused on climate action, but also on renewable energy and sustainable food systems.²⁷¹

Through these collaborative efforts the BNT and its partners have identified a multi-year initiative to restore the mangrove forests that were severely damaged in Grand Bahama and Abaco.²⁷² In fact, following Dorian, it was estimated that there were as few as 232 square kilometres (2019) of healthy pine forests, compared to the 400 square kilometres documented by Global Forest Watch in 2014.²⁷³

While there is no readily available information on forest expansion, deforestation, and net change throughout The Bahamas, the Ministry of Environment and Housing's Forestry Unit, intends to conduct a National Forest Inventory (NFI) to address this issue.²⁷⁴

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 15 PROGRAMMES

The specific challenges for The Bahamas in implementing SDG 15 include:

Financial and capacity barriers to development and implementation of sustainable action plans.

Economic trade-offs which result in the importation of destructive invasive species and the direct weakening of terrestrial ecosystems.

Capacity for ecosystem services valuation and modelling.

Capacity to access funding mechanisms which support research on biodiversity and ecosystems.

Development and maintenance of a central data system for monitoring and tracking environmental changes.



[269] <https://www.bahamas.gov.bs/wps/portal/public/gov/government/news/minister%20ferreira%20discusses%20the%20new%20legislation%20protecting%20the%20country's%20biological%20resources>

[270] Cafasso, S. (2019, September 24). A Stanford-led study suggests ecosystem investments to minimize storm damage. Retrieved from <https://news.stanford.edu/2019/09/24/ensuring-coastal-resilience-bahamas/>

[271] [2] Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). 2016. Sustainable Development Master Plan for Andros Island. http://www.vision2040bahamas.org/media/uploads/AMP_EXECUTIVE_SUMMARY_FINAL_VERSION_FEB_2017_1_.pdf

[272] Eyewitness News. (2020, December 3). Moore Bahamas Foundation fulfills million-dollar Dorian relief pledge. Retrieved from <https://eyewitnessnews.com/moore-bahamas-foundation-fulfills-million-dollar-dorian-relief-pledge>.

[273] Maycock, D. (2021, May 7). East Grand Bahama Set For Mangrove Restoration Planting Initiative. Retrieved from <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2021/may/07/east-grand-bahama-set-mangrove-restoration-plantin/>.

[274] Bahamas National Trust. (2021). BNT 2020 – Impact Report. Retrieved from: <https://bnt.bs/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/BNT2020-Impact-annual-report.pdf>.



Rule of Law

The realization of sustainable development depends greatly on the existence and efficacy of just, peaceful, and inclusive institutions at all levels. Goal 16 addresses priorities that are aligned with the Ministry of National Security's mandate for safety and security.

The Ministry of National Security has, and continues to use, a three-pronged approach to advance safety and security, inclusive of investments in human capital, the introduction of technologies, contemporary legislation, and increased partnership.

With reference to human capital, the Ministry, and the agencies under its remit, continue to recruit, as it is essential to strengthen the agencies to carry out the mandate of safety and security. Simultaneously, our personnel engage in professional development, as it is pivotal to predict safety and security priorities, instead of being reactive.

Public Institutions

Strong institutions are necessary for a prosperous country. The Bahamas has, in the past, had limited central planning and coordination capacity, within Government. Another area of



SDG 16

PROMOTE PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, PROVIDE ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL AND BUILD EFFECTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE AND INCLUSIVE INSTITUTIONS AT ALL LEVELS

[275] FAO, (2020). Global Forest Assessment – The Bahamas. Retrieved from <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9973en/ca9973en.pdf>

[276] IDB, 2014b.

SDG 16

Act 2012 (FOIA 2012), while already enacted, has only partially entered into force.

A November 2018 assessment of the Bahamian Public Service highlighted that there is much room for improvement. That is, using 38 critical areas for which to generate an aggregate score, regarding the level of civil service development, the report revealed that The Bahamas scored an overall 19 out of 100 – with issues ranging from the absence of ministerial level strategic plans, the hollow middle between senior and mid-level public administrators, a reportedly overstuffed civil service, absence of employment assistance programmes, perceived ineffectiveness of the Ministry of Public Services, and a host of areas for improvement.²⁷⁷

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 16

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSFORMATION & DIGITIZATION

A year after the assessment of the Bahamian Civil Service, the DTD was officially launched by the Government of The Bahamas, in November of 2019. It is an initiative to transfer and make all major government services accessible via online platforms, thereby creating a more effective and seamless process for business to be conducted, both locally and internationally. Funded by a \$30 million dollar loan by the IDB, the project will be completed in phases over the course of six (6) years. The project's goal is, "to foster the competitiveness of The Bahamas by reducing the costs of conducting business with the Government". In effect, this will remove and reduce the costs associated with red tape and delays, attract local and international business, contribute to the country's GDP through the financial service sector, increase the transparency of Government activities, strengthen the auditing and control mechanisms of the government for better governance of the country, and improve The Bahamas' ranking on the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Report. Moreover, the day-to-day operations of the government would be less vulnerable and more resilient, to the issues that arise with paper trail, such as the mismanagement and misplacement of documents, from natural (hurricanes) and happenstance disasters (fires).

DTAD'S EFFORTS AIM TO ACHIEVE:

Access to Government services 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 52 weeks per year, wherever there is internet connectivity.

Access to over 200 government services electronically.

Access to services through a single window, which reduces cost and time in obtaining critical government services.

The ability to access government agencies online, except to update e-IDs.

Immediate and accurate responses.

The ability to hold the government accountable through increased transparency, via the freedom of the Information Act.

Increased confidence for businesses due to greater government transparency and less red tape.

Security of personal data through a robust data protection act and cybersecurity measures.

Power of choice as citizens can opt-out of the electronic ID.



[277] Diagnosis of Institutional Capacity to Implement Management for Results Using the PRODEV Evaluation Tool Methodology (PET) Progress Report (Inter-American Development Bank, July 2014), pp. 9, 18.

- Opportunities to learn/improve and execute digital skills.
- Reduction in the cost and time of registering businesses.

To date, the DTAD in conjunction with the Passport Office, has made the task of renewing a passport more trouble-free, with the introduction of E-Passports. Individuals, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website, are now able to complete and send in an online passport renewal application, pay online for the renewed passport, and receive an electronic notice of when they can physically retrieve the Passport, from the Passport Office. The GOB further plans to bring this tech accessible approach, not only to government services, but also to the Cabinet Office, as an e-Cabinet Management System. The e-Cabinet is set to facilitate, streamline, and digitize the various operations run by the Cabinet office. It will incorporate the best of security features, positively influence the delivery of government services, and assist the various ministers, permanent secretaries, etc., with mobile accessibility.²⁷⁸

Ministry of Finance Interventions

Since July 2018, the Ministry of Finance has prioritized legislation related to enhancing accountability, intergenerational equity, transparency, responsibility, stability, and inclusive growth. To ensure that these principles are institutionalized, the Ministry has enacted the following pieces of legislation:

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT (FRA), 2018

Fiscal Balance Targets

- Originally, it was to be reduced to 0.5% of gross domestic product (GDP) from FY (Fiscal Year)2020/21; however, it was delayed until FY2024/25 because of exceptional circumstances—impact of Hurricane Dorian and now COVID-19.

Fiscal Debt Objective

- Long term debt to GDP ratio to be reduced to no more than 50% by FY2030/31

New Reporting Requirements

- Annual Fiscal Strategy Report
- Pre-election Economic and Fiscal update

Establishment of Fiscal Responsibility Council

- Assess and report on government's compliance with fiscal objectives

PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT ACT (PFM), 2021

- Clarity of roles and responsibilities.*
- Linked annual budget to Fiscal Strategy in the FRA, 2018.*
- Strengthened financial management requirements. Improved accounting, reporting & publication requirements for Govt.*
- Comprehensive sanction provisions—administrative, criminal, and institutional; and provisions for recovery of losses.*
- Improved accountability for Ministries, State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), and Local Govt.*
- Distinction between commercial and non-commercial government entities, with tailored reporting and publication requirements.*
- Clear role for Minister of Finance in reviewing commercial SOE plans, along with Responsible Minister.*
- Strong policy framework for commercial government entities.*

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT ACT, 2021

- Aligned with best practices for transparency.*
- Openness in solicitation and award of government contracts.*
- Electronic procurement system*
- Comprehensive coverage—includes all ministries, departments, statutory agencies, and local government entities.*
- New Institutional arrangements*
- Public Procurement Department | Public Procurement Board | Public Procurement Units*
- Defined processes for bid preparation, publication, submissions, and final selection activities.*
- Establishment of Procurement Review Tribunal, to adjudicate disputes and complaints from suppliers/contractors, relating to government contracts.*

- Preparation of Annual report on activities*
- Provisions for employees of procuring entities to be surcharged for offenses under the Act.*

Anti-Corruption Regime

The following anti-corruption bills proposed in 2017, have not yet been enacted:

[Anti-Corruption Commission Bill 2017](#)

[Ombudsman Bill 2017](#)

[Corruption Investigation Bureau Bill 2017](#)

Immigration and Border Control²⁷⁹

The Government continues to implement its Immigration Integrated Management System (IIMS) discussed in the previous VNR comprising:

Ministry of National Security Interventions

To strengthen institutions through SDG 16, the Ministry of National Security acquired technology (e.g., CCTV, Gunshot detection software, etc.) to combat crime. In addition, the Ministry oversaw the introduction of a national neighbourhood watch council, to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. Two years ago, the Ministry identified only 10 groups that were in existence for years. In March 2019, the Ministry of National Security shared, that the number has grown exponentially, to 80 groups in New Providence, and that 'some 15 groups have been started in Grand Bahama, and two groups have been formed in Abaco', because of the higher density of these islands' populations relative to the other Family Islands, and an effort to increase community engagement and participation. A snapshot of the Ministry's interventions is as follow:

With reference to the introduction of technologies, the Ministry has assisted the agencies under its remit, as technologies improve effectiveness and efficiency in our efforts to protect a nation and its citizens. Some of those technologies include:

Marco's Alert, which is a platform to provide real-time alerts for missing children, to improve their chances of returning to their loved ones. The technology will also be used to update the public, during states of emergencies such as hurricanes.

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) installation continues and, to date, approximately 221 of 507 cameras have been installed, and it increases surveillance capabilities to detect, prevent and prosecute offenders.

Dash and Body Cams were introduced in July 2020 and, to date, 200 are being used by Police Officers.

The Real-time Crime Centre was launched on the 14th of July, and it integrates and centralizes all police technology.

The National Drone Programme will allow all law enforcement agencies to work collaboratively and increase intelligence gathering.

A Bridge Simulator was commissioned in September 2020, for the Defence Force to conduct the ship's evolutions, under simulated conditions. It also assesses ship's company bridge resources management and assess bridge equipment proficiency.

Radar installations have been ongoing, and to complement the installation in Inagua, a second coastal radar installation is occurring at the Coral Harbour Base.

The National Crime Intelligence Agency Juries and Bail Bills is a contemporary legislation, which passed in both the upper and lower houses.

With reference to improved partnerships, the Ministry, and the agencies under its remit, continue to foster and improve cooperation with national, regional and international partners in an effort to advance safety. The Ministry is keenly aware that all persons within The Bahamas' borders, have the fundamental right to live in a safe society. Therefore, focus has been placed on ensuring that some of the most vulnerable in society are afforded opportunities for equal participation in society. The Ministry's priorities are reflected in the following:

The Citizen Security and Justice Programme: This Ministry lead initiative, focuses on our youth, inmates, judicial sector, and communities. To ensure the successful implementation and integration of project outputs, the project has been extended to August 2022. Our youth are provided with safe spaces (community centres), in some of the most vulnerable communities, and at these centres, our youth will be trained

[278] Underwood, J. H. (2018). Building State Capacity in the Caribbean – The State of the Civil Service in The Bahamas. Retrieved from <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Building-State-Capacity-in-the-Caribbean-The-State-of-the-Civil-Service-in-The-Bahamas.pdf>

[279] <https://www.opnbg.com/digitization-initiative/>

with technical skills to improve their well-being. In addition, the programme, in conjunction with BTVI, seeks to train inmates to reduce the prospects of them returning to a life of crime. To improve the efficiency of the judicial system, investments have been made to digitalize the courts process.

Victims of human trafficking: The TIPS Unit continues to improve awareness on human trafficking via billboards, and training law enforcement personnel and civic organizations. This partnership can assist in thwarting persons from becoming victims of human trafficking, and for those who have been identified, rehabilitative opportunities are provided.

The Neighbourhood Watch Programme operates with community partners, local businesses and national security officials, all teaming to prevent crime through public interaction and education. Youth programmes are also facilitated in conjunction with law enforcement to provide mentorship for young people.

The Keep Children Safe Programme is being developed to facilitate dialogue and coordinate efforts to develop a comprehensive and integrated platform to prevent, protect and defend the nation's youth, against violence.

Prime Minister's Delivery Unit

With respect to supporting attempts to shore up the accountability and transparency of institutions, the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU) achieves this in several key areas of national development. That is, the PMDU is a component of an IDB-loan agreement (entered into in 2016) and focuses on eight priority areas: Education, Safety & Security, Ease of Doing Business, Over the Hill Community Development Partnership Initiative, Land Reform, Energy Reform, Infrastructure, and Modernization. The PMDU's development of the Prime Minister's priorities was informed by the SDG-aligned draft NDP (2016). As such, the priorities' targets align partially/completely, with the relevant SDGs.

Tribune Radio Limited

Tribune Radio Limited partnered with Crime Stoppers to hold a "Jail-a-thon" event at the Marathon Mall, in 2019. Tribune Radio Limited provided radio ads, print articles, a live broadcast remote, and radio personalities, to be "jailed". Money was donated by listeners to bail radio personalities out of jail. All money raised was donated to Crime Stoppers. Crime Stoppers is a community action programme, that allows persons to call in with information that may be helpful, regarding crimes that have been committed. The callers remain anonymous, which helps to ensure their safety, given the small population size of The Bahamas.²⁸⁰

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 16 PROGRAMMES

The specific challenges for The Bahamas relate to:

- Strengthening government's internal decision-making processes to better deliver results.
- Strengthening the public service's capacity to execute programmes.
- Improving transparency and accountability within government services.
- Using ICT to better deliver services.
- Strengthening the integration of government decision making with the business community, non-governmental organizations, civil society, and academia.
- Strengthening of local government, of state-owned enterprises, and facilitating the use of business development zones and associations, and other innovations, to involve more citizens in governance.
- Designing effective interventions for youth.
- Rehabilitation programmes in the correctional facilities and support for those who leave those facilities.

Strengthening the court system through better case management.

Supporting the independence of the judiciary.²⁸¹

The archipelagic nature of The Bahamas makes safety and security an extensive mandate because resources must be placed on all islands; it is challenging to always have persons available to migrate between islands, in a timely manner, and monies to ensure that all outposts have adequate support. To assist in alleviating the associated challenges, the Ministry of National Security continues to facilitate collective initiatives between law enforcement agencies, so as to pool human capital and resources. In addition, the agency actively seeks to continue to improve its relationships with its stakeholders, including all agencies, civic society, citizens, and international partners.



[280] Symonette, The Honourable Brent. 2017. 2017/2018 Budget Contribution. June 20th 2017.

[281] Tribune Media Group SDG Report 2021



SDG 17 Calls for strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, by encouraging and promoting effective public partnerships, public-private and civil society partnerships, and building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships. The Bahamas continues to strengthen its multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development.

Partnerships are considered an important cross-cutting goal and effective instrument for realizing the SDGs. The issues confronting The Bahamas today, which the SDGs aim to tackle, are so complex that it requires a multi-disciplinary approach to development. Working in silos will not assist in implementing and achieving the goals and targets. Through cooperation, we can collaborate with all actors involved at various levels of government, as well as local, regional, international, and multi-lateral partners, for resource mobilization.

Similarly, given The Bahamas' high-income status, based on GDP per capita, the country does not qualify for concessional development finance, which further exacerbates our vulnerabilities and development challenges. The Caribbean community has long advocated for qualifying and quantifying the vulnerabilities of small island developing states, through the adoption of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index approach, that factors in the physical, economic, social, environmental, and institutional characteristics.²⁸²



SDG 17

STRENGTHEN THE MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION & REVITALIZE THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Additionally, civil society plays an important role, as a source of information advocacy, and a means through which the government can be held accountable. Yet, we recognize that it's not just about responding to pressure from external stakeholders, finding solutions to the SDGs also present a huge opportunity for us to work towards development, through an integrated approach. Partnerships are crucial for capacity building in developing countries. Through capacity building, we can position and empower individuals and organizations with the knowledge, tools, and other resources that they need, to reach their goals.

Challenges Specific to Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

The Bahamas is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), which also has the unique structure of an archipelagic nation. This status is fundamental to our development progress, and is ingrained in our "Vision 2040", draft National Development Plan. Though SIDS make up a small percentage of the world's population, the effects of environmental, social and economic challenges such as, Climate Change and the vast challenges of

SDG 17

the COVID-19 pandemic, impact these nations significantly.

It is expected that Antigua and Barbuda, Cabo Verde, Cuba, Dominican Republic and the Marshall Islands will present their VNR at the 2021 HLPF. Cabo Verde and the Dominican Republic, would be presenting their VNRs for the second time, while Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba and the Marshall Islands, are presenting for the first time. The Bahamas is set to present its VNR in 2022 for the second time.

While each nation is different, they have come together to co-create a common section, to highlight shared challenges and vulnerabilities. The Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway) is recognised as the framework that guides the acknowledgement of SIDS, as having specific challenges and vulnerabilities.

These vulnerabilities include: increased vulnerability to Climate Change, limited economic resources, small size, and dependence on external markets, creating increased vulnerabilities to external shocks, high costs of infrastructure, transportation and energy. The Bahamas also supported the draft statement below, which was presented by the SIDS at the 2021 at HLPF:

① We, the six Small Island Developing States (SIDS), who this year, presented our VNR (Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Cabo Verde, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Marshall Islands), have decided to come together to highlight our common vulnerabilities and development challenges, as well as opportunities, in our respective VNR, through this common section. We come from different regions of the world, we are from different income groups, we have different national priorities and sustainable development paths, specific to our national contexts; nonetheless, we are in line with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The Principle of National Ownership is central to our common pursuit of sustainable development. As a result, each of our VNRs is, of course, country-specific, as are the achievements presented therein. However, no matter how varied this progress has been so far, we all face unique structural and exogenous vulnerabilities that are shared by all SIDS countries, and that are specific to us.

② The Declaration of Accelerated Modalities of Action for SIDS SAMOA Pathway, recognizes that SIDS continue to be a special case for sustainable development, given their unique and common vulnerabilities. Well-documented, common development challenges specific to SIDS include: small land mass; small populations; geographic isolation, and spatial dispersion; high cost of transport, communications and energy; low-lying areas and extreme vulnerability to climate change and natural hazards; fragility of island ecosystems and high level of endemism; small resource-based and undiversified economies; remoteness from markets and heavy reliance on trade, travel and remittances; high sensitivity to international fluctuations and limited trading partners; and, lack of access to concessional financing. These unique and specific challenges are highlighted, for example, in the SAMOA Pathway, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the SDGs, the Paris Agreement, as well as the 2018 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, "Making Development Co-operation Work for Small Island Developing States", and the 2021 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) Financing for Sustainable Development report", for example. These complex, exogenous and underlying conditions undermine the sustainable development gains of SIDS and undermine progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

③ The endemic vulnerabilities of SIDS linked to their unique characteristics and sensitivity to external shocks and natural hazards, for example, have now been amplified by the current COVID-19 global pandemic and subsequent economic consequences.

④ The structural limitations of SIDS, represent several aggravating factors and obstacles to recovery. As a 2020 OECD study demonstrates, SIDS with higher levels of Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, are no longer resilient to the current crisis ("Mapping the Economic Consequences of COVID-19 in Small Island Developing States" OECD, 2020). Lessons from the 2008 financial and economic crisis, point to a slower socio-economic recovery in SIDS, compared to the global level. Whatever the level of growth achieved, whatever develop-

ment gains achieved, the sustainable development pathways of SIDS, will always be relatively more volatile and fragile than average, due to their unique exogenous factors.

⑤ However, the extreme vulnerabilities of Small Developing Islands put the leaders of SIDS countries and their determination, at the forefront, to turn their unique challenges into opportunities, to accelerate the transformative sustainable development of SIDS.

⑥ Despite these vulnerabilities, SIDS are leading by example in several areas. As stated in our respective VNRs, our six countries have achieved, in their own way and through their own route, remarkable results in our progress towards the SDGs, despite the parallel crises - health, economic, climate, natural-biodiversity and pollution, that we continue to experience, even in the context of COVID-19.

⑦ In the SAMOA Pathway, together with the other SIDS, "we reaffirm our commitment to taking urgent and concrete steps to address the vulnerability of Small Island Developing States, including through the sustained implementation of the Barbados Program of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, and underscore the urgency to find additional solutions to the major challenges, faced by small island developing States, in a concerted manner, in order to support them in sustaining the momentum achieving in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. With renewed political will and strong leadership, we are dedicated to work in meaningful partnership with all stakeholders, at all levels."

⑧ Given these perspectives, this joint section reflected in the six SIDS VNRs for 2021, is taking stock and summarizing the main challenges, vulnerabilities, opportunities, and common best practices, reported by those six countries, in accordance with the SAMOA Pathway.

⑨ As reflected in our six VNRs for 2021, we, SIDS, are dealing with competing priorities in the face of pandemic-induced crisis, Climate Change, and other exogenous factors. Parallel crises expose our collective vulnerability. Due to the scale and complexity of our unique challenges, a wide range of local,

national, and regional actors from our countries have joined forces, to produce significant sustainable development outcomes, as highlighted in our different VNRs.

⑩ Despite the disproportionate vulnerabilities we face, we have demonstrated global leadership and pioneered innovative solutions through partnerships. Strategic partnerships for integrated approaches and innovative solutions are more than ever needed, to support our leadership in achieving the SDGs. COVID-19 amplified the need for unprecedented collaboration to build better, greener, and bluer again. With necessity being the mother of innovation, the recovery of COVID-19, represents a unique opportunity to catalyze transformative sustainable development.

⑪ From these perspectives, and to echo the 2019 Interim Review of the SAMOA Pathway, we call for "escalation and development of genuine and lasting partnerships with all stakeholders nationally, regionally and internationally". SIDS are poles of innovation and evidence shows that by turning unique vulnerabilities into opportunities, strategic partnerships can support SIDS to lead innovative solutions and accelerate the transformative sustainable development of SIDS.

⑫ These innovative solutions and transformative paths to sustainable development, will need to be fuelled by public and private investments that require better access to development finance, increased investments for economic growth and diversification, including in Ocean-based Economies and Creative and Cultural Industries, to reduce vulnerability and build resilience.

⑬ At a time when challenges become increasingly intertwined and exacerbated by multiple crises occurring in parallel, the multifaceted vulnerabilities common to SIDS, can be turned into shared integrated solutions and opportunities. Thus, we commit to improve inter-regional and intra-regional cooperation and collaboration among²⁸³ us as Small Island Developing States, to drive sustainable development at scale, and accelerate the achievements of the SDGs.

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE SDG 17

Financial Management, Policy Coherence and Statistics

Since the establishment of a joint agreement with the GOB and the IDB in February 2016, for a \$33million Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) to fund the Public Financial Management/Performance Monitoring Reform programme (PFM/PMR), several initiatives were undertaken, namely:

Introduction of a National Statistical System

Stakeholders from the government, private sector, academia, and civil society, were engaged for a detailed analysis of current (as-is) processes, identification of gaps, benchmarking with existing standards and best practices, and design of future (to-be) processes to enable a seamless, integrated, effective, and efficient National Statistics System (NSS). The implementation of the NSS will ensure that the government is using quantifiable evidence to select projects, develop human resource capacity, and ultimately meet developmental goals. National Statistical Reform is a key step towards the modernization of the information infrastructure and improves the government's ability to make evidence-based decisions about the allocation and management of financial resources.

Reform of the Public Financial System

The implementation of the new IFMIS will modernize and organize public financial information, under the new Chart of Accounts, to provide timely, coordinated, and comprehensive data on the fiscal position of the country. The government is in the process of transitioning from the modified cash basis of accounting that it currently employs, to an accruals-based accounting system, in compliance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). The transition to a full IPSAS reporting is anticipated, by the end of the 2022/2023 fiscal year.



Figure 23. Stakeholder Consultations on the development of the National Statistical System



Figure 24. Mr. Cedric Collie, Public Financial Management Coordinator addresses Senior Financial Officers at Integrated Financial Management Information Systems (IFMIS) Strategy Workshop

Launch of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU)

In May 2018, PMDU was launched to strengthen the management capacity of the public sector, to monitor priority programs more effectively. Resultantly, several priority areas were identified, including Education, Safety and Security, OTH Rejuvenation Land Reform; Ease of Doing Business; Energy Reform; Infrastructure; and Public Sector Modernisation.

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PMDU Highlights



EDUCATION

Pre-school availability has expanded. The Government has recorded an improvement in Grade 3 literacy. The 2019 Language Arts GLAT results indicate the MOE exceeded its target of 60% of students achieving grades A-D by 3%, recording a 63% pass rate. The Government also made huge advances in providing a virtual learning platform.



SAFETY & SECURITY

The number of murders and armed robberies decreased significantly. 300 inmates at DOCS acquired a skill through successfully completing courses and programmes offered by BTVL. Having a skill means that the inmates' opportunities for employment after leaving prison ought to improve, leading to a decrease in the relapse into criminal activity and a reduction in crime generally.



EASE OF DOING BUSINESS

The process of renewing a business licence has improved substantially: the number of working days it required has decreased from a high of 61 in March 2020 to a low of 6 in October 2020.



OVER-THE-HILL

Revitalization of Over-the-Hill continues apace: a multi-pronged approach ranging from the restoration of parks to tax breaks to the creation of the Over-the-Hill Entrepreneurial Training Programme has resulted in steady progress for the social, cultural and economic renaissance of this historic area.



LAND REFORM

The Government has created more opportunities for people to own their own land and build their own homes through initiatives such as the provision of ready-to-build serviced lots and crown land grants.



ENERGY REFORM

Construction of the Ragged Island solar micro-grid project was completed. Once connected, it will provide 90% of the Island's energy needs. Small Scale Renewable Generation across The Bahamas continues to increase at a moderate pace.



INFRASTRUCTURE

The traffic experience is set to improve. Government is to create a Traffic Management Centre in New Providence and has engaged in contract negotiations for the acquisition of a Road Maintenance Management system. A number of road and bridge repair projects are underway in a number of the Family Islands.



MODERNIZATION

Digitization means time and energy savings, in short greater efficiency. More government services have been plotted and will be available online as of February 2021, specifically marriage, birth and death certificates, and drivers' license renewals.



RE-CONSTRUCTION

2645 homeowners in areas designated disaster zones post hurricane Dorian received assistance through the Small Homes Repair Programme. Abaco and Grand Bahama received assistance through the Special Economic Recovery Zone Act which provides tax breaks and waivers on a multiplicity of items needed for the reconstruction efforts in progress.

Adoption of an E-tendering System

In February 2018, the GOB launched the eProcurement and Supplier Registry (ePSR) which facilitates the execution of online procurement activities. The ePSR system is web-based and user-friendly, thereby allowing for a more efficient procurement process for users. It also permits easier access to opportunities and contracts offered by the Government, as all offers will be displayed on the ePSR website. Resultantly, entrepreneurs and companies can register their businesses through the online Vendor Registry. Since the system launched in 2019, 1,629 of the 5,330 or 30% of VAT registered businesses have signed up as ePSR suppliers – enabling them to bid on, and secure, government contracts, through the online portal, and more than 300 government opportunities have been posted on the portal.²⁸⁴

KEY LEGISLATIVE REFORMS

In February 2021, the following suite of new legislation related to modernizing and transforming public finance management, procurement and statistical operations were tabled:

Public Debt Management Bill, 2021 (anticipated to come into effect, July 1st, 2021)

Public Finance Management Bill, 2021 (anticipated to come into effect, July 1st, 2021)

Statistics Bill, 2021 (anticipated to come into effect, July 1st, 2021)

Public Procurement Bill, 2020 (anticipated to come into effect, September 1st, 2021)

The GOB will embark on an education campaign with internal and external stakeholders, to ensure that new roles, procedures, and responsibilities outlined in each act, are explained.

Partnerships through Trade

ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries) Trade Capacity Building TradeComm II Programme

As part of The Bahamas' efforts towards economic diversification and supporting the development of new sectors, the government recently became a beneficiary of the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries) Trade Capacity Building TradeComm II Programme, under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF). The objectives of the ACP-EU Trade Comm II Programme are, to reduce poverty, improve sustainable economic development, and encourage regional integration through capacity-building programmes, in ACP countries. The programme aims to strengthen trade-related infrastructure by partnering with national and regional organizations, to diversify the economy through agriculture and the private sector. The Technical Assistance Component allows Bahamian companies to compete in the European Commission tender process, and allows approved services to be procured, directly under the Rapid Response Facility (RRF), while the Grant Component provides direct funding to beneficiaries.

Under the TradeComm II RRF, the EU-approved technical assistance for two projects for the BDB, that aim to improve food security and food quality, while stimulating local economies, creating employment, and supporting livelihoods on Long Island and New Providence.

Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)

The GOB met with the British High Commission in Nassau, in July 2020, to discuss increasing trade between the United Kingdom (UK) and The Bahamas, primarily through the domestic ratification of the CARIFORUM-UK Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). The CARIFORUM-UK EPA was signed in



Figure 25. Carl Bethel, attorney general and minister of legal affairs; Sarah Dickson, British high commissioner; Elsworth Johnson, minister of financial services, trade & industry and immigration; Brickell Pinder, director of trade; Shane Miller, deputy director of legal affairs; and Deborah Watson, director of financial services.

London in 2019, by Ellison E. Greenslade, QPM, High Commissioner for the Commonwealth of The Bahamas to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, on behalf of the Government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.²⁸⁵

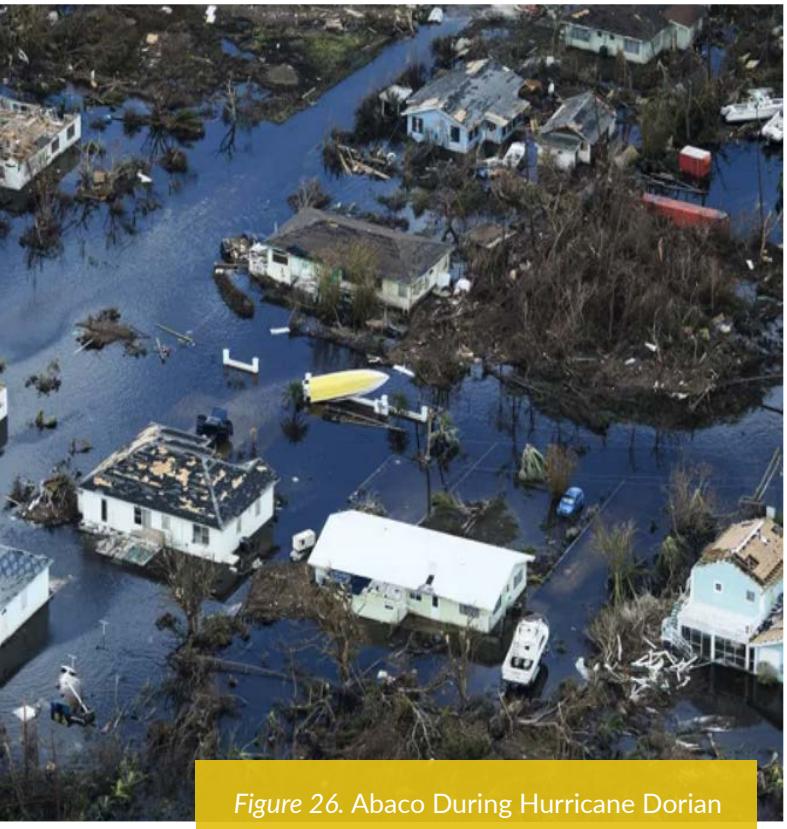


Figure 26. Abaco During Hurricane Dorian

Civil Society Partnerships

During the 2021 Bahamas Business Outlook, Prime Minister, The Most Honourable Dr. Hubert Alexander Minnis, referred to the Abaco and Grand Bahama's recovery post efforts as, "one of the most ambitious and dynamic public-private partnership initiatives in Bahamian history". NEMA, with responsibility for coordinating disaster response, worked with over 100 regional and international partners.

Gina Knowles, founder of HeadKnowles said, "I feel like this time we're working so much smoother with the government and proud to say we are bound to get our country together".

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS TECHNICAL COMMITTEE (SDGTC)

In January 2019, the Cabinet of the Government of The Bahamas approved the establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals Technical Committees. The overall purpose of the SDGTC Technical Committees is to collaborate in order to effectively and efficiently:

- Monitor The Bahamas' progress with implementing the SDGs.
- Identify and reduce duplication to create and optimize synergies across sectors.
- Provide timely, relevant, and specific inputs to inform policy development and organizational priorities.
- Encourage the inclusion of women, children, youth, migrants, minorities, persons with disabilities, and Family Island residents.
- Host and coordinate efforts to promote sustainable development in The Bahamas.

The SDGTC comprised the three groups according to the three dimensions of Sustainable Development i.e., Social Inclusion, Economic Prosperity, Environmental Sustainability and included representatives from government, civil society, private sector, and academia. The committees were chaired by representatives of the SDGU, OPM. The SDGTC drafted SDG Informed Policy Recommendations for COVID19, which were submitted to The Bahamas Economic Recovery Committees during the consultative phase.

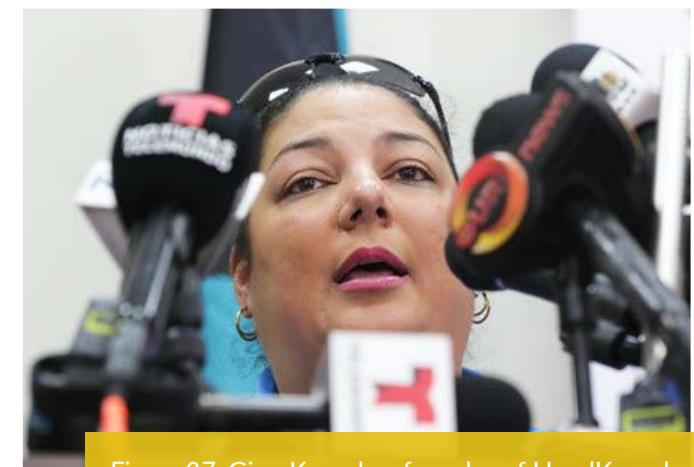


Figure 27. Gina Knowles, founder of HeadKnowles

National Food Distribution Taskforce (NFDT)

Following the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), The NFDT, multi- stakeholder partnership, led by the private sector, government and civil society, was established and more than 76,000 people received assistance. The NFDT stands as an unprecedented public-private partnership, with a shared commitment to aid the most vulnerable members of our community. June through September 2020, a combined \$18.82m was spent on the programme, with the government bearing 85 percent of the cost, and task force NGOs contributing the remainder, with a total investment in food security of \$30,320,000. The unique public-private partnership was the largest ever public/private social care initiative, in the history of The Bahamas, and combined the resources and expertise of the government and a network of NGOs around the country, to provide food assistance to those most in need. Weekly, more than 150,000 people across The Bahamas receive assistance in the form of food parcels or vouchers.

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 17 PROGRAMMES

The key challenges for The Bahamas in implementing SDG 17 relate to:

- Access to financing for development and capacity-building.
- Post implementation evaluation, with attention to change management process, to ensure ICT readiness, project management capability and human resource capacity.
- Continued prudent fiscal management from both the revenue and expenditure perspective, to mobilize significant resources for development, in the face of vulnerability to external shocks.
- The absence of a coordinated framework to effectively coordinate and seek out international technical cooperation.

THE NATIONAL FOOD DISTRIBUTION TASK FORCE

Distribution Days MONDAY-WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY



Northeast sector: The Bahamas Feeding Network

Southeast sector: The Bahamas Red Cross

Nassau City: Lend a Hand Bahamas

Western End: Hands for Hunger

Eleuthera: The One Eleuthera Foundation

Abaco and surrounding Cays: Idea Relief

Grand Bahama: Multi-sector committee

Other Family Islands: The Bahamas Feeding Network and the Bahamas Red Cross





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