
SOCIO ECONOMIC RESPONSE

TO COVID-19

ASSESSMENT AND FRAMEWORK



PREFACE

In April 2020, the United Nations Secretary General launched an operational framework to develop and implement a socio-economic response plan on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. UN Country teams in 162 countries and territories will activate the recovery plan over the next 12-18 months.

The UN's global framework sets out a strategy for urgent socio-economic response based on five pillars:

- Protecting health services and systems;
- Social protection and basic services;
- Protecting jobs and small and medium sized enterprises, and the most vulnerable productive actors;
- Macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration; and
- Social cohesion and community resilience.

The following Socioeconomic Assessment is a joint product of the Trinidad and Tobago UN Country Team as it aims to support the country's efforts to build back better from the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The report before you is a rapid assessment based on the UN Secretary General's five pillars for socioeconomic recovery. It is based on the discussions held between UN agencies and their technical counterparts in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. It has been undertaken in fluid and challenging circumstances as the impact of the pandemic becomes clearer. The assessment serves as a key component of a fundraising drive that aims to ensure that the UN plays its part in supporting the authorities of Trinidad and Tobago in its recovery efforts. While the assessment report looks at all five pillars identified by the UN Secretary General, the UN Response Framework does not include a Macroeconomic Response as this is an area that falls outside of the remit of existing approved UN-Government programming framework. It is complementary with the national Roadmap to Recovery plan as well as being fully aligned to the existing United Nations Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework in the Caribbean (2017-2021)



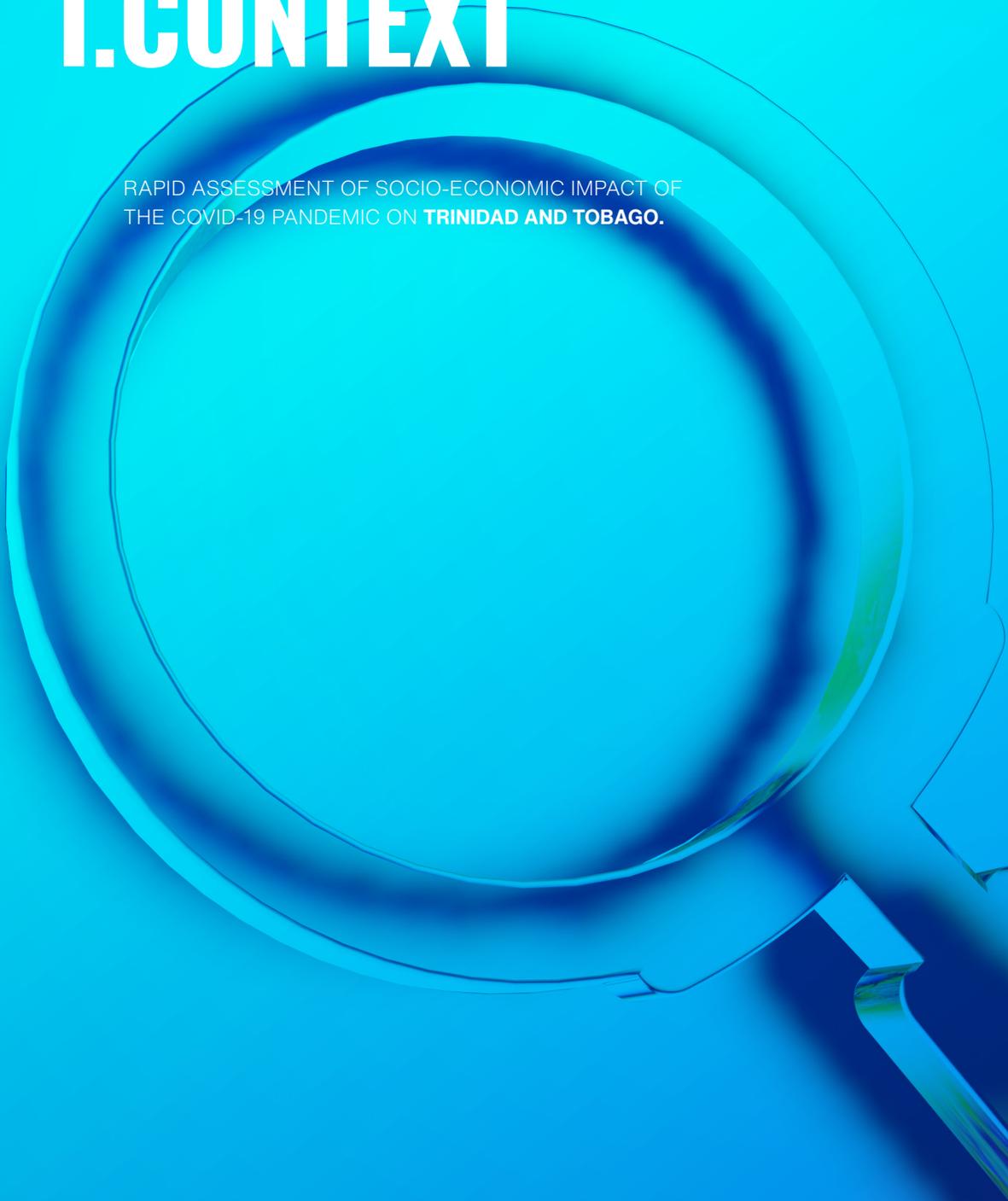
TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Context	06
II. Health First	10
III. Protecting People	12
3.1.1 - Social Insurance/ Protection Coverage	16
3.1.2 - Health And Nutrition	17
3.1.3 - Water, Sanitation And Hygiene	18
3.1.4 - Waste Management	20
3.1.5 - Education And Child Protection	20
3.1.6 - Food Security And Nutrition	22
3.1.7 - Unemployment And The Informal Sector	24
3.1.8 - Persons Of Concern (Refugees And Immigrants)	26
IV. Macroeconomic Response And Recovery	28
4.1 - Fiscal Challenges In Commodity Dependent Economy	29
4.1.2 - Inclusive Institutions For Promoting A Balanced Economic Trajectory	30
4.2 - COVID-19: The Evolving (Deep) Economic Risks To Small Island States	31
4.3 - Projected Economic Losses For Trinidad And Tobago	32
4.3.1 - Real GDP Projections	32
4.3.2 - Employment Prospects	33
4.3.3 - Fiscal Net Lending(+)/Borrowing(-)(& Fiscal Stress)	33
4.3.4 - Current Account (Proxy For External Sustainability)	34
4.4 - Compounding Fiscal Stress With COVID-19: Limited Fiscal & Probable Future Debt Burdens	34
4.4.1 - Fiscal Stress & Economic Growth	35
4.4.2 - Policy Choices	35
4.4.3 - Future Debt Burden & SDGs	36
V. Social Cohesion And Community Resilience	37
5.1.1 - Urban Planning, Disaster Risk Reduction and the Environment	40
5.1.2 - Policing and Organized Crime	42
5.1.3 - Social Tension	44
5.1.4 - Prisons and Justice Administration Institutions	45
5.1.5 - Family and Community Cohesion	47
5.1.6 - Inclusiveness and Trust	47
VI. People Most At Risk	49
6.1.1 - Women/Girls + Female Headed Households	50
6.1.2 - Children	51
6.1.3 - Informal Sector Workers	52
6.1.4 - Persons with Disabilities, Victims of GBV, Underlying Medical Conditions, LGBTIQ PLWHA and Older Persons	53
6.1.5 - Dwellers in Urban Settlements and Underserved Rural Communities	53
6.1.6 - Migrants, Refugees and Host Communities	54
6.1.7 - Youth in High Risk Communities	55
6.1.8 - Prison Population	56
VII. Conclusion	57
UN Response Framework	59



I.CONTEXT

RAPID ASSESSMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON **TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**.



Trinidad and Tobago recorded its first COVID-19 case on 12 March 2020. Before this, the Government took early and proactive action to implement a series of restrictions and prohibitions on entry of foreign travelers from countries with rising cases of infections, with effect from 30 January. Subsequently, restrictions were expanded to cover more epicenter countries and by 16 March, the Government closed the borders to all non-nationals. By 22 March, this was increased to include all persons (nationals and non-nationals), except cargo vessels bringing food and pharmaceuticals into the country. Arrival of cruise ships was also suspended for the remainder of the 2019/2020 cruise ship season, while protocols were developed for vessels and planes providing food and essential needs, to be granted exceptions. Persons who were unable to leave Trinidad and Tobago by March 22, 2020 and whose landing certificates may have expired during the period or whose certificates expired by April 30, 2020 were granted an extension until June 22, 2020.

Concurrently, on 16 March, the Government directed the closure of public places and limited mass gatherings to no more than 25 persons initially. It also encouraged newly arrived persons to self-isolate and sensitized citizens on social distancing. By 20 March, local laws were amended to provide for effective enforcement of restrictions. Government also increased resources available to the Ministry of Health to enhance its readiness to respond. Whilst developing the necessary infrastructure for the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, Government continuously emphasized the criticality of prevention, and expanded sensitization programmes and testing facilities for citizens who may have symptoms of the virus.

The lockdown and restrictions necessitated the physical closure of business premises and the adoption of 'teleworking', except for those deemed essential such as pharmacies and supermarkets that were exempted. Government therefore established mechanisms for protecting workers, including but not limited to guidelines on safety in the workplace, paid work leave, paid sick leave, unemployment insurance, and measures to prevent discrimination in the public sector. The Government also provided a salary relief grant of up to TTD1,500 per month

to each worker who might have experienced income loss, for a maximum period of three months. This was to be disbursed through the National Insurance Board (NIB). Food card support of TTD510 per month was also provided for households where a family member was retrenched, terminated or income reduced during this period.

Public sector workers were offered the opportunity to apply for leave, based on certain terms and conditions. The private sector was encouraged to implement labor friendly measures, with government providing incentives through accelerated payment of a substantial proportion of outstanding VAT refunds and income tax refunds to put businesses in funds and ensure much needed cash flow. In return, the two main business organisations in Trinidad and Tobago, namely the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce and the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturer's Association, agreed to encourage all of their members to keep their employees in jobs for at least the next 4 weeks (i.e. no staff reductions).

On the economic front, the Government restricted productive activities, including closure of shops and shopping centres, as well as bars and restaurants, at different times during the month of March. This not only resulted in loss of income to some employees, but negatively impacted the local agricultural and fisheries supplies value chains that had been resourcing such businesses. To cushion the harsh effects of these measures, the Government implemented an economic stimulus package, which leveraged on the existing Social Sector Investment Programme (SSIP).

The package included fiscal policy measures to keep supply chains active, support to hotels to keep them afloat during a period of low patronage, tax credit and tax deferrals. On monetary policy, the government reduced the reserve requirement for commercial banks from 17% to 14% and the repo rate by 150 basis points from 5% to 3.5%, which injected TTD2.6Bn in increased liquidity into the commercial banking system. Commercial banks were also encouraged to provide moratorium for repayment of loans. The industrial sector players who benefited from the incentives were encouraged to implement similar measures.

In the social sphere, the Government topped up the food card for households with children who had benefited from the School Feeding Programme, for persons who had been benefiting from the public assistance and disability grants. Rental support was also provided to eligible persons. Government provided financial support to Community Based Organizations and Faith-Based Organizations to distribute to their members. The government also provided a TTD2,000 per month fuel subsidy to each maxi taxi owner as part of the relief initiatives for self-employed citizens who have lost their income due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

These proactive measures combined with an excellent communication strategy contributed to the effective management of the COVID-19 crisis in the country to date and stands as a model case of an effective and successful management of the COVID19 health emergency. The establishment of the parallel health care system to treat

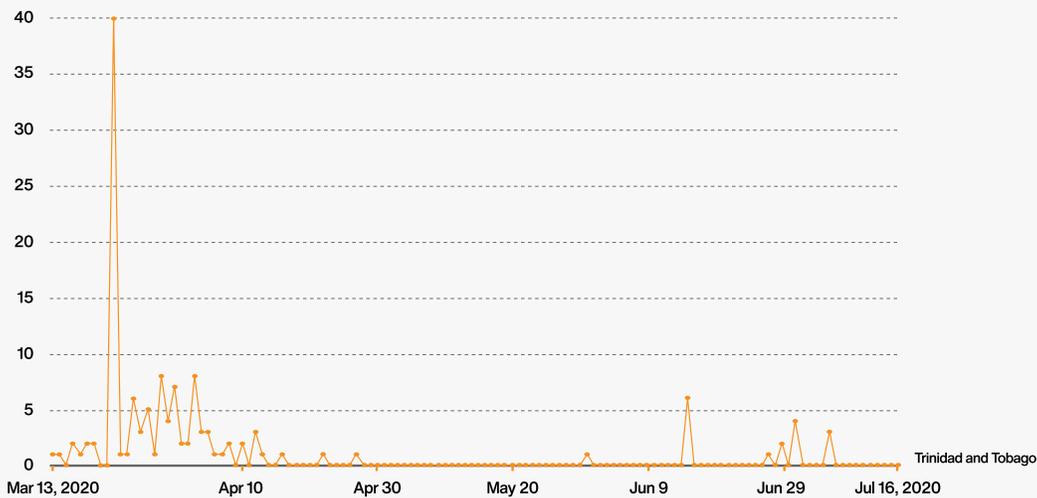
COVID-19 also ensured the flattening of the COVID-19 curve and prevented the health system, as well as the social fabrics of communities, from collapsing.

Of greater significance to the economy was the concomitant collapse in gas and oil prices, and the resultant trade imbalance, which was in part the result of reduced global demand due to industrial slowdowns worldwide.

The measures adopted to contain the spread of COVID-19 however resulted in negative impacts on the economy, thus presenting the country with complex socio-economic consequences. As a result, these impacts are further compounded by the limited available resources, and the limited number of stakeholders who can access the support to date, thus raising the challenge of reaching the most vulnerable persons in the communities.

Fig 1.1: Daily confirmed COVID-19 Cases

The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of total cases. The main reason for this is limited testing.



Source: European CDC - Situation Update Worldwide - Last Updated 16 July, 10:07 (London time)

The United Nations Secretary General whilst describing the global COVID-19 pandemic as a human crisis, urged stakeholders to fundamentally focus on the most vulnerable people. The United Nations (UN) system subsequently developed an integrated approach to supporting countries and peoples to navigate the complex aftermaths of COVID-19. This is encapsulated in the UN Framework for Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 (the Framework). It provides the basis for the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) to support the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT) in undertaking multi-dimensional, conflict-sensitive, and gender-responsive analysis and forecasting that enhances the quality of socio-economic recovery initiatives; catalyzes targeted investments in resilience-building and livelihoods support, strengthens the food value chain and supply logistics, and protects the most vulnerable groups, **towards building back better than in the pre COVID-19 Phase.**

Based on the foregoing, the overall objective of this rapid assessment is to generate a snapshot of the macroeconomic and socio-economic impact and policy options aligned to the UN Framework, for strengthening long-term resilience. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Conduct a rapid assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 in Trinidad and Tobago in alignment with the broad guidelines provided in the Framework;*
- ii. Identify specific “gaps” in the policy response and provide recommendations to strengthen the UNCT’s COVID-19 intervention and programmatic portfolio in consultation with the Government, key development partners and stakeholders (such as, CSOs);*
- iii. Provide policy recommendations to the GORTT on inclusive, environmentally sensitive and equitable socio-economic recovery programmes, **to enable Trinidad and Tobago to build back better;** and*
- iv. Strengthen the coherence of engagement between the UNCT and the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) on policy advice (including, complementary policy initiatives) and resource mobilization for COVID-19 programming for Trinidad and Tobago.*

The assessment shall be focused on the adapted five pillars in ‘the Framework’ document.



II. HEALTH FIRST

PROTECTING HEALTH SERVICES AND SYSTEMS DURING THE CRISIS

RAPID ASSESSMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON **TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**.

Trinidad and Tobago's health system includes public and private sectors and nongovernmental organizations whereby the public sector is dominant. All public sector health services are free, funded by the government and taxpayers, although non-nationals who are not in a regular situation or are not residents cannot have access to health services beyond primary care. The public health system operates along two tiers:

A. At the first level is the Ministry of Health, which oversees the system, and is responsible for financing, regulation, and governance, and for setting any necessary policies and enacting legislation. The Ministry operates under 12 core strategic priorities, including: chronic NCDs; communicable diseases; maternal and child health; mental health and wellness; human resource planning and development, the integration of information and communication technology in the health sector; and improved health sector management.

B. At the next level, the health care delivery system is decentralized into five semi-autonomous Regional Health Authorities: four in Trinidad and one in Tobago. Health care services are through a network of 96 health centers, nine district health facilities, and nine hospitals.

To ensure that the Health Care System was not overburdened, the Government created a parallel healthcare system to specifically deal with COVID-19 cases. The Government identified a total of twelve (12) facilities (offering different levels of care including severe/critical, intermediated/mild; quarantine/convalescent) with a total of 932 beds (108 Intensive Care Units Beds and 824 Inpatient/Ambulatory Beds). Clinical management of COVID-19 Cases was conducted at these facilities.

The rapid expansion and reorganization to respond to COVID-19 also emphasized the need for a strong workforce as an integral part of the health system. There were new contracts for 200 Cuban medical staff.

Additionally, Primary Health Care (PHC) services were reorganized to include:

- 1. Identification and reporting of contacts through contact tracing and early detection, pre-triage and triage of respiratory patients, diagnosis;*
- 2. Containing the expansion through support for isolation of cases and contact, quarantine, and communication of public health measures;*
- 3. Management through domiciliary treatment, care and monitoring of individuals with mild COVID-19 symptoms in isolation and prevention of transmission including drugs;*
- 4. Referral mechanisms of patients with severe signs and symptoms to the parallel health care facilities, and;*
- 5. Community testing at 9 health centers (8 in Trinidad and 1 in Tobago).*

Continuity of essential services during the pandemic which included immunization and deliveries were maintained as a result of the establishment of the parallel health care system. However, access barriers, quality of care, use of resources, high cost and also client satisfaction remain challenges to having a stronger Primary Health Care system.

Given the issues migrants, refugees and other vulnerable groups have in accessing the formal health sector, key civil society partners such as the Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago (FPATT) and the Medical Research Foundation, altered healthcare delivery by introducing services by appointment and telemedicine.



III. PROTECTING PEOPLE:

SOCIAL PROTECTION AND BASIC SERVICES

RAPID ASSESSMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON **TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**.

The GORTT has a Social Sector Investment Programme (SSIP), which in its design and implementation is aligned with Sustainable Development Goals. It contributes to the achievements of the country’s Vision 2030 objectives through investing in people and promoting governance and service excellence. It invests in human capital, supports the family as the foundation of the society, and contributes to building sustainable communities. It also strives to provide a sound, relevant educational system, ensuring quality, accessible healthcare and funding initiatives aimed at inculcating in the populace, the values, attitudes and behaviours required to advance the nation.¹

Following the economic recession from 2015, the country developed a National Social Mitigation Plan which led to the development of poverty profiles for the regions and the promotion of community-based actions which empowered civil society to build resilience. The plan formed the basis for

enhanced social interventions for the category of persons impacted by the recession. Given this background, the GORTT was able to respond to the immediate socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic using its relatively strong social protection system. However, COVID-19 presented Trinidad and Tobago (TTO) with unique challenges in implementing its SSIP as it accentuates, in a totally new way, existing inequalities and vulnerabilities in society and makes medium term recovery a complex task.

This section examines the sectoral protection progress, issues and challenges before the outbreak of the pandemic, the immediate manifestations and effects of COVID-19, responses by the Government and other key stakeholders, gaps and areas for improvements, based on the evolving dynamic of the crisis, as well as the aggravated risk of not addressing the gaps timeously.

Box 3.1: Social Protection and Basic Services: Summary of Key Issues and Impact

Key Issues	Gaps	Impact
<p>Social Insurance/ Protection Coverage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Replenishment of social insurance which is fast depleted due to the pandemic, ageing and other factors. ▪ Digitization, social register issues and complex social factors inhibits easy access. ▪ Limited access by informal sector workers. ▪ Peculiar challenges by LGBTIQs and PLWHA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited resources for COVID-19 related social interventions. ▪ Increased leakages, in spite of insufficient resources. ▪ Inequitable access by some informal sector workers due to structural factors. ▪ Limited inclusiveness of ‘outlier’ poor, with heightened safety concerns.

1. GORTT (2017) “Shaping a Brighter Future- A Blueprint for Transformation and Growth”, Social Sector Investment Programme, Port of Spain; GORTT

Box 3.1: Social Protection and Basic Services: Summary of Key Issues and Impact

Key Issues	Gaps	Impact
Social Insurance/ Protection Coverage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Replenishment of social insurance which is fast depleted due to the pandemic, ageing and other factors. ▪ Digitization, social register issues and complex social factors inhibits easy access. ▪ Limited access by informal sector workers. ▪ Peculiar challenges by LGBTIQs and PLWHA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited resources for COVID-19 related social interventions. ▪ Increased leakages, in spite of insufficient resources. ▪ Inequitable access by some informal sector workers due to structural factors. ▪ Limited inclusiveness of ‘outlier’ poor, with heightened safety concerns.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Weak remote medicare (telemedicine). ▪ Out of Pocket spending for medicare by most vulnerable. ▪ Supply Chain Disruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Timely delivery of medicare could be impacted by ICT challenges. ▪ Risk of rise in fatalities due to Contagious and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). ▪ Dengue, malaria and other tropical diseases in urban settlements and rural communities in border regions. ▪ Risk of drug scarcity/ counterfeiting.
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ageing infrastructure affected water access to rural populations. ▪ Inadequate sanitation facilities in rural areas could increase risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Water disruption in water supplies expose citizens to infection. ▪ Risk of rise in communicable diseases in rural areas and urban settlements.
Education and Child Protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inadequate psychosocial and material support for parents coping with peculiar challenges. ▪ Lack of community-based support for children with special needs. ▪ Infrastructural and social difficulties related to online education. ▪ Teacher education/ preparedness for online pedagogy. ▪ Weak cybersecurity system and enforcement mechanism to protect the child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Risk of increased school dropout. ▪ Risk of mass failure in external/ qualifying examinations. ▪ Migration to online education favoured the wealthy over the poor. ▪ Industrial action and disorientation by teachers. ▪ Risk of higher exposure to sexual abuse, violence and pornography.

Box 3.1: Social Protection and Basic Services: Summary of Key Issues and Impact

Key Issues	Gaps	Impact
Food Security and Nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reliance on imported food needs ▪ Slow measures for repurposing lands for agricultural activities. ▪ Insecurity in agricultural settlements/ farms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supply chain disruption (85% of food supply imported) ▪ Increased conflict over farmlands. ▪ Increased incidences of praedial larceny at crop and livestock farms
Unemployment and the Informal Sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficulties with targeting across sectors due to inadequate data. ▪ Absence of enforcement mechanisms for protocols on reopening of businesses safely. ▪ Lack of recovery plans for cottage industries with income below TTD20 million. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Risk of rise in livelihoods loss, labour exploitation and poverty among informal sector workers. ▪ Safety hazards to workers and loss of income due to infirmity. ▪ Slow recovery of cottage industries.
Persons of Concern (Refugees and Migrants).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited material support by Non-Governmental Organizations. ▪ Limited opportunities for alternative livelihoods support ▪ Non-coverage by most social relief programmes. ▪ Lack of access to quality education and healthcare services. ▪ Lack of psychosocial support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exposure to increased unemployment. ▪ Risk of homelessness due to inability to pay rent. ▪ Exposure to infection due to out of pocket arrangements for medicare. ▪ Risk of rise in labour and sexual exploitation. ▪ Risk of outbreak of epidemics (and possible COVID-19 second cycle). ▪ Expected rise in negative coping mechanisms.
Waste management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overwhelmed capacities/infrastructure for the collection, treatment and disposal of healthcare and infectious waste (including waste generated at healthcare facilities, household waste produced by COVID-19 infected patients and disposable personal protective equipment) ▪ Lack of a national inventory of (healthcare) waste management capacities ▪ Lack of awareness on the risks associated with handling COVID-19 waste and lack of training for waste workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Risk of uncontrolled dumping and open burning of healthcare and infectious waste, with consequent health and environmental impacts ▪ Health and protection risks (including heightened social stigma) for waste management personnel, including those employed in the informal waste management sector formed by the most vulnerable (women, children, people on the move, etc.) ▪ Loss of livelihoods for waste pickers if recycling is discontinued ▪ Adverse health and environmental impacts linked to the uncontrolled disposal of thousands of masks and other personal protective

3.1.1 SOCIAL INSURANCE/ PROTECTION COVERAGE

Social insurance coverage in TTO is quite broad. The country is a model in social insurance for other countries in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region. The National Insurance Board of Trinidad and Tobago (NIBTT) provides protection for over 50 percent (634,381) of TTO's population, with 23 benefits in seven categories. The protection packages are in the form of conditional cash transfer and/or grants for workers in the public and private sectors. Before the advent of COVID-19 pandemic, the social insurance coverage had been impacted by the challenge of ageing, which could potentially affect future contributions. According to the 2011 census, approximately 13 percent of the TTO population was over age 60. This age cohort was estimated to be 14.2 percent in 2015 and projected to be 28.2 percent by 2050.² Fifty-eight percent of older persons fall within the 60-69 group and the age of 80 years and over was also growing. Eighty percent of persons 65 years and older are receiving the non-contributory pension while, in the social insurance scheme administered by the NIB, there is 73.0 percent coverage of persons 60 years or older receiving long-term benefits.³

With the advent of COVID-19, the GORTT will likely deplete the reserves available to social insurance far more quickly than it did in previous years. Tax-funded non-contributory social protection programmes which support the poorest are being extended to more families and persons at risk of falling into poverty. If the schemes are not replenished in time, the quick depletion could erode the safety-nets provided to beneficiaries in the medium to long term. The UN's Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) highlighted some COVID-19 risks to include gaps in access

to contributory social protection.⁴ Added to these is the risk of increased labour migration out of TTO due to the expected loss of livelihoods (particularly among the young and most productive population), which could decrease the base of skilled, medium to high-income workers and the labour pool financing the pensions of current aged retirees.

In the immediate response to the COVID-19 crisis, the GORTT extended social benefits to provide temporary relief for citizens negatively impacted by COVID-19. These ranged from increase in food card allowances for the unemployed, to food vouchers for families that benefited from the school feeding programme, food assistance grants, rental assistance grants for persons laid off or experiencing reduced income, deferral on loans, reduction on interests on loans, and expedited repayment of credits owned by the government to the private sector. However, there were a number of challenges experienced during implementation.

Firstly, there were delays in the issuance of cheques to new beneficiaries, partly due to the complex processing of forms and the absence of full digitization of the process.⁵ This challenge also enabled fraudulent activities,⁶ including double-dipping, false declaration of information, submission of counterfeit documents, falsification of records, and the emergence of criminal cartels who reportedly swindled some members of the public. The Government eventually simplified the registration forms, but the process of full digitization has not been achieved, thus increasing the risk of registering unintended beneficiaries of the programmes.⁷

Ensuring that the insurance and protection coverage is inclusive of the poorest has been a major challenge during the crisis. Whilst the GORTT attempted to reach the persons most in need based on the combined use of existing pre-COVID benchmarks and newly drawn criteria during the crisis, the strategies of delivery did not consider the particular fears of

2. <https://www.paho.org/salud-en-las-americanas-2017/?p=4311>.

3. 'Universal Social Protection' <https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/RessourcePDF.action?id=53964>.

4. Latin America and the Caribbean and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Economic and Social Effects, <https://tradingeconomics.com/trinidad-and-tobago/unemployment-rate>.

5. For instance, for the Salary Relief Grant as at 24 March, 11,453 (representing 37.9%) of the 30,210 application forms were submitted manually, <https://www.looptt.com/content/finance-ministry-notes-inconsistencies-article-grant-delay>.

6. www.news.gov.tt/sites/default/files/MSDFS%20COVID%20re%20FRAUDULENT%20PRACTICES.pdf, https://trinidadexpress.com/newsextra/fraudsters-are-trying-to-profit-from-t-ts-covid-tragedy/article_bcfdf736-87e9-11ea-ab2b-dfe48cf1699f.html, <http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/thta-claims-unknown-hotels-on-list-for-tha-grant-6.2.1123304.a7748926c7>.

7. "Fraudsters are trying to profit from T&T's COVID Tragedy, https://trinidadexpress.com/newsextra/fraudsters-are-trying-to-profit-from-t-ts-covid-tragedy/article_bcfdf736-87e9-11ea-ab2b-dfe48cf1699f.html.

vulnerability by specific groups. For example, Persons Living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) or Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, Transsexual, Intersexual, and Queer (LGBTIQ).

3.1.2 HEALTH AND NUTRITION

A key requirement for economic recovery is a healthy workforce. Health in this context, goes beyond the physical well-being of the citizens but also includes their mental, emotional and social well-being, reinforced by a strong social capital and unified community. TTO's Ministry of Health (MOH), which is the lead institution for healthcare delivery, provides specific support for the most vulnerable in the society, notably through the Children's Life Fund (CLF) for life-saving surgeries, and the External Patient Programme (EPP) which fund surgeries in private healthcare facilities. The MOH also provides equitable access to healthcare through implementation of policies and legislations, improvement of healthcare infrastructural facilities, and reduction of the prevalence of communicable diseases.⁸

Whilst no paid COVID-19 sickness benefits were provided for infected persons, the Government funded all costs related to the testing and management of infected persons, including full board and accommodation. Eligible infected persons also had the opportunity of requesting social relief from the GORTT. In spite of the exemplary activities of the MOH, the complexity of the problem exposed certain challenges, particularly on nutrition, management of Non-Communicable Diseases and equitable access to medicare.

Structural challenges in timely access to TTO healthcare services (such as long waiting times and out of pocket spending for basic services)⁹ disfavours the poor and informal workers, who do not have health insurance, while favouring

those with means to purchase health insurance. The causal factors include loss of income, which could make medicines unaffordable to poor persons that have to pay out of pocket, disruption to supply chains for medicare products, which could lead to unavailability and inflated costs, and long waiting times to access CLF and EPP programmes due to the need to prioritize COVID-19 management. A WFP COVID-19 impact survey in TTO indicates that only 39 percent of respondents said medicines were always available in stores during the lockdown. Though another 46 percent of respondents stated that medicines were "partially/sometime available," disruption to supply chains might have precipitated relative scarcity of medicines.

TTO has a relatively low prevalence of HIV. The legal environment for PLWHA is gradually improving; in 2018, a High Court repealed the sexual offences act, which punishes "buggery". The Government did not challenge this judgment which is pending final review by the Privy Council.¹⁰ The 2016 National Workplace Policy on HIV and AIDS estimated that 27,207 were diagnosed with HIV between 1983 and 2014. Nevertheless, AIDS-related deaths increased from 55 in 2012 to 101 in 2014, pointing to the need for better management of PLWHA. In the same category of vulnerable persons are members of the LGBTIQ community. For PLWHA and LGBTIQ, inadequate access to safe and secure healthcare protection due to risk of stigmatization and fear of attacks mean that they may not be able to access timely healthcare to manage underlying healthcare needs. Members of these groups and communities working in the informal sector of the economy may not be able to access social insurance. This implies that they may not be able to afford a balanced nutrition in a crisis situation—a factor that increases their exposure to infections.

With the onset of the rainy season, the COVID-19 risk could be aggravated by increased exposure to tropical diseases like dengue and malaria. The GORTT had been proactive in

8. <http://www.health.gov.tt/sitepages/default.aspx?id=38>.

9. For instance, in 2014, Government health spending was 55% while households were the second largest spenders, contributing 44% via out-of-pocket spending. See, GORTT (2015) *Trinidad and Tobago 2015 Health Accounts- Main Report*, http://www.health.gov.tt/images/cms/2019/20190325-HAR/Trinidad_Tobago_Health_Accounts_Main_Rpt.pdf. See also, Bahall, Mandreker (2018) "Health Equity and Access to Healthcare in Trinidad and Tobago" *World Journal of Public Health*, 3 (3): 83-92.

10. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/13/trinidad-and-tobago-court-overturns-same-sex-intimacy-ban>.

managing these diseases. For instance, during the period 2014 to 2018, the implementation of the Airborne Virus Integrated Management Strategy for Vector Control resulted in a noteworthy reduction of suspected dengue cases by 87.5 percent.¹¹ Over the years, the Insect Vector Control Division (IVCD) of the Ministry of Health also embarked on an aggressive campaign to reduce mosquito breeding and the spread of mosquito-borne diseases through larviciding, adulticiding, source reduction, and health education/community participation outreaches. These activities were done routinely throughout the year, with approximately three to four cycles of perifocal work being completed annually. In 2016 for instance, 88 percent of the confirmed mosquito-borne Zika virus cases were in five communities in the Central region; namely, St. George East, St. George West, St. George Central, Caroni and Victoria.¹²

The onset of the rainy season could increase the risk of reversal of gains made in reducing incidents of tropical diseases like dengue, malaria and yellow fever, particularly around far-flung rural communities hosting migrants in the Cedros/Icacos axis.¹³ Other high-risk locations include urban settlements that may not be easily accessible for fumigation, squatter settlements and makeshift facilities being utilized by homeless persons.

3.1.3 WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

Goal 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focuses on making clean water and sanitation accessible to persons in the world. This is against the backdrop of more countries experiencing water stress and increasing drought

and desertification due to the combined impacts of climate change, inadequate infrastructure, wastage, and other factors. Inadequate water access compromises sanitation and hygiene and increases the chances of communicable diseases.

Water in TTO has been relatively accessible and affordable. Approximately 94.7 percent of the population in Trinidad and 84.8 percent in Tobago are connected to the piped water supply network. However, only 16.6 percent and 39.6 percent for each island are provided with a 24-hour supply,¹⁴ and 4.9 percent of the rural population have access to drinking water source.¹⁵ The problems of adequacy and assurance are due largely to climate change impacts (particularly flooding), ageing infrastructure and efficiency of use. It is estimated that the country has 40 percent of “unaccounted-for” water, which means sufficient water resources but inadequate infrastructure or institutional framework to close the supply-demand gap.¹⁶

The restrictions on potable water deepened during the COVID-19 crisis due to increased demand, particularly for personal hygiene purposes. The immediate response of the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) was to increase the daily water supply by around 18 million gallons¹⁷ at the onset of the lockdown. However, ruptured transmission pipelines, and marginal shortfalls in projected rainfall,¹⁸ compelled WASA, a few weeks later, to reduce water production by 40 million gallons per day.¹⁹ This led to recurring service disruptions across the country. Table 3.1 illustrates the fact that, though disruptions occurred throughout the country, they were most frequent in the Central region, which also hosts a substantial number of vulnerable migrants and refugees from Venezuela.²⁰

11. <http://www.news.gov.tt/content/ministry-health-takes-proactive-steps-treat-dengue-virus#.Xsaxem5Fy-o>.

12. GORTT “Shaping a Brighter Future” Op. Cit, P. 60.

13. https://trinidadexpress.com/newsextra/cedros-lockdown-suspected-covid-19-at-play/article_65263528-9acc-11ea-9de3-bb6d5cfd003.html.

14. EU & GORTT (2019) *Ibid*.

15. https://www.indexmundi.com/trinidad_and_tobago/demographics_profile.html.

16. Cashman, Adrian (2013) *Water Security and Services in the Caribbean*, Washington, DC; Inter-American Development Bank, <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Water-Security-and-Services-in-The-Caribbean.pdf>.

17. <https://www.looptt.com/content/covid-19-wasa-implements-water-management-plans>.

18. https://www.wasa.gov.tt/WASA_Media_Press.html. See also, “Leaks account for wastage of half water supply” <http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/wasa-leaks-account-for-wastage-of-half-water-supply-6.2.1054290.eb6659a1dd>.

Table 3.1: Tracked Causes of Water Supply Disruption during COVID-19 Lockdown

Date of Service Disruption/ Interruption	Location of Service Disruption/ Interruption	Causes
5 March	Parts of South-East Trinidad	Scheduled Electrical Maintenance by T&TEC
7 March	Parts of North-East Trinidad	Scheduled utility relocation
10 March	Parts of Central Trinidad	Scheduled maintenance
24 March	Parts of Central Trinidad	Scheduled Electrical Maintenance by T&TEC
2nd April	Parts of Central Trinidad	Emergency Repair due to ruptured transmission pipeline
2nd April	Mayaro/Tableland	Broken pipelines on Mayaro/Naparima Road
6th April	Parts of Central Trinidad	Emergency Repair due to ruptured transmission pipeline
8th April	Curepe/Tunapuna	Aged Pipelines/ Leakages
10th April	Southwest Trinidad	Ruptured Pipelines
21st April	Parts of Central Trinidad	Scheduled electrical and mechanical interconnection work
22nd April	Parts of Central Trinidad	Ruptured Pipelines
4th May	Arima	Ruptured Pipelines

Source: Recent Press Releases, Water and Sanitation Authority (WASA), https://www.wasa.gov.tt/WASA_Media_Press.html, tracked on 7.5. 2020, 12:54pm

The Table further indicates that the majority of disruptions were due to infrastructural challenges. In the Crown Point, Concordia, Plymouth, Canaan, Charlottesville, Betsy, Roxborough and Goodwood communities of Tobago, WASA announced adjustment to its water schedule due to a cumulative shortfall of 70 percent in rainfall for the months of March and April.²¹ However, to alleviate hardships caused by supply disruptions within the Port of Spain Corporation, WASA provided water with mobile tanks to families, with limited impact.

On sanitation, it is estimated that only 8.5 percent of the rural populations are served with proper sanitation facilities, based on a 2015 estimate.²² The expected water loss due to insufficient rain and lingering infrastructural challenges could worsen the hygiene situation going forward, weaken the immunities of persons in rural areas and in urban settlements, and increase their exposure to possible infections, including from COVID-19.

19. https://www.wasa.gov.tt/WASA_Media_Press.html.

20. International Organisation for Migration (2019) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) 2019, Main Findings.

21. <https://www.looptt.com/content/caroniarena-dam-26-tobagos-schedule-adjusted-says-wasa>.

22. https://www.indexmundi.com/trinidad_and_tobago/demographics_profile.html.

3.1.4 WASTE MANAGEMENT

One of the main challenges posed by COVID-19 is the management of healthcare and infectious waste. This includes both the wastes generated at health facilities and household waste produced by COVID-19 infected patients, as well as all disposable personal protective equipment. Any waste that has been in contact with an infected individual should be considered as hazardous and treated as infectious waste.

While overall waste generation might decrease under COVID-19 movement restrictions and the closure of businesses, countries are faced with increased amounts of infectious waste to manage. This is even more true when recycling is discontinued. The issue of disposing of personal protective equipment such as masks is especially of concern for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) where, in addition to accelerating cross-infection, it is significantly contributing to ocean contamination.

TTO houses nine operating disposal sites for landfilling: Beetham, Forres Park, Guanapo, Guapo, Toco, Blanchisseuse, Point Fortin, Cedros, Los Bajos and Studley Park. Recycling rates were already low prior to COVID-19, with significant portions of recyclable waste ending up in landfills, where scavenging of waste is a common practice. Some of these landfills are also located in ecologically sensitive areas, posing a threat to the surrounding environment. Waste management is especially challenging in informal settlements and poses severe health and protection risks for waste personnel and waste pickers.

In order to build back better, it is recommended that a national inventory of healthcare waste management capacities be initiated to identify areas which may need augmentation if the number of COVID-19 cases continues to increase; that training be provided to waste management personnel to continue waste collection while ensuring adequate personal protection;

that alternative livelihood support is offered to waste pickers negatively impacted by the situation; and that awareness-raising campaigns are organized to sensitize the population on the risks associated with COVID-19 infectious wastes.

3.1.5 EDUCATION AND CHILD PROTECTION

It is estimated that 340,298 of TTO's total 1,398,852 population are children,²³ majority of whom are enrolled in school. Primary and post primary education is free and largely accessible in TTO. The proportion of children at the end of primary school achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics for 2019 is 86.3 percent. The proportion of children at the end of lower secondary school achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics is 51.3 percent.²⁴

However, there were lingering challenges in the pre-COVID era. It is estimated that between 20 and 30 percent of students, predominantly boys, do not complete their secondary education, which makes them unfit for employment—60 percent of which requires at least complete secondary education or some form of specialized training.²⁵ Traditionally, school dropout has been associated with the attraction of gangs and crime, pregnancy, substance abuse, and family troubles, all of which could increase further in the aftermath of COVID-19 crisis. Students who have limited or no family support and who need special care are also likely to have insufficient Government support to cope with the diminished self-esteem and increased apathy towards academic work arising from social distancing in the 'new normal'.

Before the COVID-19 crisis, child protection was a major challenge. According to Table 3.2, there appears to be a culture of silence concerning familial abuses of children as the police received zero incidence reports between 2016 and 2018. Table 3.2 also indicates structural challenges with the investigation

23. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/trinidad-and-tobago-population/>.

24. Ministry of Education, cited in Draft VNR TTO, 2020.

25. <https://uwispace.sta.uwi.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2139/8525/Michael%20Kallon3.pdf?sequence=1>.

and successful prosecution of crimes against children. Specifically, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) solved an average of 22.5 percent of reported cases relating to the sexual penetration of a child, 16.9 percent of cases related to sexual touching of a child, and 22 percent of cases of child pornography between 2016 and 2018. In spite of a gradual increase in the number of reported cases (itself an indicator of growing confidence in the system), insufficient progress with prosecution points to key deficiencies including the need for enhanced training of the police toward deeper knowledge of the ever-evolving trends and issues in child abuse.

Prior to COVID-19, the Government had a laptop distribution programme aimed at equipping all secondary schools with fifty (50) high-quality laptop computers, which were only available for use within the confines of the school compound.²⁶ However, the implementation had been slow and unequal, ensuring that schools within city centres had more of these tools. Also, challenges of infrastructure and the lack of ICT skills in some schools in rural areas made the programme inaccessible to all.

In the aftermath of COVID-19 *and in order to build back better*, TTO developed a School Learning Management System (SLMS) as the online learning platform for publicly funded primary and post-primary education. The glitches experienced by the SLMS within its initial hours of operationalization²⁷

reflected the accelerated deployment of a still-incomplete system to meet an acute, unexpected need. In addition, inadequate internet access by students in rural areas limited universal quality access. The migration from face-to-face to full online schooling (at the detriment of homeschooling) has exposed other aspects of the country’s digital divide, including inequality of internet access, lack of confidence in using the internet and insufficient laptops for students. Teacher education issues relating to creative web-based pedagogy/ delivery, and development and assessment of online course content have also not been fully addressed.

In addition, temporary school support was provided for students in the school feeding programmes, benefitting 20,500 families; and an overall 278,000 individuals have received support from the Ministry of Social Development.²⁸ The Ministry of Education indicated that 60,000 students may not have access to online learning due to lack of internet access and/or devices.²⁹ A similar situation is applicable to some teachers.

However, inequality of access to online schooling may also lead to mass failure by students who have to adapt quickly to the new system. Internet penetration in Trinidad is 77.3 percent, according to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), due largely to massive state investment in the development of digital infrastructure and e-services in the public sector.

Sexual Offences	2016		2017		2018	
	Rep	Solved	Rep	Solved	Rep	Solved
Sexual Penetration of a Child	199	55 (27.6%)	244	45 (18.4%)	405	88 (21.7%)
Sexual Touching of a Child	69	15 (21.7%)	78	6 (7.6%)	156	33 (21.5%)
Child Pornography	3	0 (0%)	2	0 (0%)	3	2 (66%)
Abuse of Familial Relationship	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Recent Press Releases, Water and Sanitation Authority (WASA), https://www.wasa.gov.tt/WASA_Media_Press.html, tracked on 7.5. 2020, 12:54pm

26. GORTT “Shaping a Brighter Future” Op. Cit, P. 57.

27. https://trinidadexpress.com/news/local/problems-as-thousands-rush-learning-website/article_fb36a7fe-7eb2-11ea-bfdd-fb3d6e24725b.html.

28. “No Evidence of Severe Hunger in T&T” Saturday Express, May 2, 2020. P. 14.

29. <http://www.looptt.com/content/moe-almost-60k-students-cant-access-online-learning>.

Nevertheless, internet penetration in the educational system has not kept pace.

Available data on possible family abuses and child pornography indicate the need to engage in enhanced community mobilization and sensitization to increase reporting of such crimes. In addition, there is need to develop a cybercrime policy and implement existing laws in ways that protect the identities of children that may have been assaulted. During the COVID-19 lockdown, there was at least one reported 'invasion' of an online learning portal with pornographic contents in Tobago. Such incidents are expected to increase due to higher exposure of children to the internet without commensurate monitoring.

In addition, a lack of effective family support mechanisms for the 'new normal' in the educational system including poor implementation of comprehensive sexuality education through the Health and Family Life Education curriculum, both by the Government and at home, could also lead to failure to achieve the goal of child development. A UNICEF survey indicated that a substantial 31.5 percent of children were living with their mothers alone while a paltry 4.9 percent lived with their fathers during the lockdown.³⁰ This indicates that, of the two categories of single-family units, female heads were disproportionately burdened with child upkeep, with mothers more exposed to the stresses of parenting and undermined quality care and attention. Though the survey indicated that 54.9 percent of children live with both parents, the prevalence of family violence could still expose the children to abuses. Children with disabilities, children living in 'high-risk communities' and those with a history of abuse are likely to become more exposed due to absence of sufficient mechanisms to protect them, as parents and guardians who have experienced frustrating job losses may expose them to the risk of increased violence at home.

The majority of migrants, asylum-seeking and refugee children

also do not have access to public education.

3.1.6 FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

In TTO, agriculture is recognized as a major component of food security and economic viability with a strategic focus on 'creating a food secure nation' by providing access to adequate nutrition, safe and affordable food to all people at all times. However, the sector is among those usually with the lowest budgetary allocation each year. Agri-food's exports are 2.6% of GDP but agriculture's share of total employment is relatively higher at 3.4%. Trinidad and Tobago imports 85% (USD740.3 million) of its food supply.

Poultry sector and pluck shops are a vital part of the economy. Poultry production is the most important agricultural sub-sector in Trinidad and Tobago, producing about 40% of the gross value of the country's agricultural production. It is a major source of protein for consumers. Poultry, like other livestock subsectors, is highly dependent on imported inputs, including feed, chicks, and medication. Its value chain is well developed, and the level of competition is high. Imported poultry is considered to be of inferior quality compared to domestic production. Lack of standardization is also a constraint on potential poultry export expansion.

The Tobago House of Assembly (THA) seeks to increase food security in livestock production through enterprises in poultry, small ruminant, pig and rabbit production. It is proposed to make state lands available for medium to large poultry farms; the THA also proposes to contribute up to 70% of the cost of establishing approved facilities (up to a maximum of TTD \$80,000) for agro-processing approved commodities.

30. *The Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on children and young people in the Eastern Caribbean Area, April 2020. P. 6.*

The Division of Food Production, Forestry and Fisheries is also committed to increase their capacity in chill and cold storage facilities via private sector investment through an incentive of 60% of the cost of establishing approved infrastructure and facilities (up to a maximum of TTD \$50,000).

As one of the pillars of the government diversification programme, agricultural revamping has been focused on small grants to farmers and fisherfolks, training of farmers on high-yielding crops, tax exemptions, fisheries infrastructure development, and other related incentives. Nevertheless, the prices of locally produced food crops are unfavourable when compared to the cheaper imported options available to consumers. Additionally, the farmers and fisherfolk themselves claimed that over the years, there was no clear policy by the government to increase the consumption of local goods within the agricultural sector.³¹

The COVID-19 lockdown led to increased risks to farmers. Fisherfolk, for instance, recorded loss of income. They complained that in the Gulf of Paria, they had to travel further out to sea to make a decent catch, even though there were fewer boats engaged in fishing at the time,³² and that sales had declined due to the closure of restaurants and the movement restrictions of their customers. As the restaurants work with a lot of small and medium scale business owners, from fishermen to farmers, entertainers, and cottage industry owners, the closure of their businesses negatively impacted the entire value chain. The traditional demand for fish by families and resulting higher retail prices, as part of the Lenten and Easter celebrations did not occur, leading to the loss of potential 'peak period' income by fishermen.³³ Many may have accessed credit facilities to retool their infrastructure in anticipation of bumper sales and would now be in possession of additional liabilities. Farmers and fisherfolk also had to discard their excess produce, causing them financial losses.³⁴

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Trinidadian fishermen were already at risk and under threat from smugglers and traffickers moving illicit goods, including drugs and arms, from South America through the Caribbean. With the economic impact of COVID-19, particularly increased unemployment and the subsequent lack of income, not only are fishermen at risk of attack, but they are also increasingly vulnerable to pressure to engage in illicit activity on the water to earn a living. Likewise, the movement in fish stocks could also drive increases in illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing, which has the potential to provoke conflict and provide an avenue for other illicit crimes, including money laundering.

For the farmers, an immediate impact of the pandemic is lower agriculture outputs due to larceny and inadequate security, as robbers took advantage of the lockdown to plunder farm produce from holdings primarily located in rural areas where farmers do not have adequate security protection or financial resources to hire private security firms. This also led to loss of livestock, as well as threat to the lives of farmers.³⁵

COVID-19 exacerbates existing environmental and climate change risks including rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and increased atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels, water resources scarcity, and anomalous presence of extreme events, leading to lower yields for farming, and unattractive incentives by the private sector to grant credit facilities. The farming and fishing communities that are most vulnerable to climate change impacts are mainly located in Central and Southern Trinidad, particularly Salybia/Balandra, Blanchisseuse, Claxton Bay, Tobago (Charlottesville), and many of the coastal and low-lying areas across the twin islands.³⁶

Land management challenges could lead to increased communal conflict, as only 10.5 percent of TTO's total land area is categorized as agricultural land, and encroachment

31. *Ibid.*

32. <http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/fish-sales-low-due-to-covid19-spread-6.2.1091783.6ec7364a85>.

33. No Easter Rush for Fish, https://trinidadexpress.com/business/local/no-easter-rush-for-fish/article_b9a8ccbe-7ace-11ea-8553-0b9511e64c16.html.

34. <https://fostt.com/2020/03/23/lets-support-our-local-farmers-and-fishers/>.

35. <https://www.facebook.com/ttliveonline/videos/176298347031330/>.

36. European Union & GORTT (2019) Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCAR) Report, <https://www.planning.gov.tt/sites/default/files/Final%20TAEP%20Vulnerability%20and%20Capacity%20Assessment%20Report%20Trinidad%20and%20Tobago%20Jan%202019.pdf>.

on private lands by unemployed persons seeking immediate succor in agriculture may lead to increased localized conflict.³⁷ Conflicts and competition for land between agriculture and other users often resulted in the permanent loss of agricultural land. Agricultural activities are also increasingly pushed to unsuitable and unsustainable locations, such as hilly and forested areas.³⁸

Glitches in agricultural supplies could adversely affect food security, and while the full impact of the risks is not yet known, the country's food import bill is substantial,³⁹ and faces the likelihood that supply chain disruptions could lead to food scarcity and/or nutrition deficits. The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF) enumerated some of the risks associated with the supply chain disruptions, in particular the potential impact of disrupted shipping routines out of the USA, not only for food but also for seeds, chemicals, equipment, packaging from various global sources, as well as for domesticated animals and wildlife.

The MALF has undertaken to assist in preventing and managing potential interruptions in traditional supplies, and with helping importers search for new sources (including through online/remote trade-process facilitation) that meet local requirements, in order to satisfy the country's food/meat protein needs.⁴⁰ Further to this, the MALF authorized agriculture-based livelihood assessments in order to inform further measures. Finally, the combination of insecurity, climate change impact and supplies disruption could lead to food scarcity and or consumption of non-nutritious food, thus exposing persons to diseases.

Nutrition is a key requirement for the body to fight the disease. However, according to a survey by the WFP during the lockdown period, fear over possible infection in the marketplace prevented 15 percent of respondents from accessing stores and markets. While food items are generally available in

stores, 66 percent the respondents reported an increase in food prices. Over 80 percent of respondents in Trinidad and Tobago changed their shopping behaviours due to disruptions caused by the pandemic, primarily by buying larger quantities than usual. The vast majority reported having at least one week of food stock at home. Nearly a third of respondents changed their eating habits, mainly by eating less preferred foods, while some skipped meals or reduced their food intake. In this context, COVID-19 increases nutrition-related risks to the most vulnerable in a number of ways.⁴¹

It exposes persons with Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) from poorer strata of the society to the additional risk of deteriorated health through unhealthy eating habits. With more than half of the deaths in the country attributable to NCDs, more persons in TTO were exposed to a high risk of COVID-19 infection.⁴² Lack of physical activities during the lockdown, when combined with dietary constraints due to loss of income, limited access to clinical management of cases due to the prioritization of COVID-19 cases, and limited capacity for remote medical support (online), created a risk of greater fatalities should there be a second wave of COVID-19 in TTO. In this scenario, there could be local transmission, especially among the aged, migrants, rural and other vulnerable populations, which would overwhelm the existing facilities for managing NCDs.

3.1.7 UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE INFORMAL SECTOR

Due partly to the impact of an economic recession, employment conditions in TTO deteriorated in 2018 and 2019, with joblessness at 4.9 percent and 3.8 percent, respectively, with reduced labour demand (e.g., the number of vacancies

37. Poor land management has also led to revenue leakages and conflict on rented state land for agriculture. It is believed that there is over 500 million dollars in uncollected state land rent due to expiration of leases, some for between 30 and 60. Roadmap Committee recommends plugging tax loopholes" *Trinidad Guardian*, May 2, 2020. P. 9

38. National Spatial Development Strategy for Trinidad and Tobago, https://www.planning.gov.tt/OurTnOurFuture/documents/Surveying_the_Scene_web.pdf.

39. Between 2003 to 2016, the food bill was an estimated US\$8.91 billion or TT\$56.9 billion <http://www.guardian.co.tt/opinion/food-security-in-tt-6.2.701115.89d5fada32>.

40. <https://agriculture.gov.tt/media-releases/concerns-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19-and-its-effect-on-food-production-and-supply/>.

41. WFP (2020) Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security and Livelihoods Impact Survey: Trinidad and Tobago Summary Report, May.

42. 14% of deaths in TT are attributed to diabetes, 10% for cardio-vascular diseases, 25% for heart conditions and 13% are cancer-related. 0.55 % of the population or 266,000 are estimated to have diabetes and 23.6% or 341,000 have hypertension. See "Population at Risk for COVID" <http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/population-at-risk-for-covid-6.2.1103760.6062a66bae>.

advertised in the print media dropped by 9.8 percent) in those years.⁴³ Sectors mostly impacted were energy, transport, storage and communication services subsectors.⁴⁴ With the expected job losses associated with the pandemic, some analysts project unemployment to peak at 5.50 percent by 2021.⁴⁵

To protect jobs in the informal sector, the GORTT implemented a number of COVID-19 measures. In the case of a family where a member was retrenched/terminated⁴⁶, income support was provided for a maximum period of three months under the Public Assistance Grant. Where there are children under 18 years of age, the grants were extended for a further period not exceeding three months. In terms of accommodation, and in accordance with established policy, rental assistance will be provided for an initial period of three months, but no more than six months for households where a wage earner was retrenched/terminated or where the household income was reduced due to a cut in salary. For Socially Displaced Persons, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) provided additional financial support to NGOs to ensure that meals were distributed for lunch and dinner, as a strategy to cater to the homeless.⁴⁷

For Medium and Small Enterprises (MSMEs), the Government outlined loan support to businesses with under TTD20 million of annual sales. It also committed to provide TTD50 million in grant funding to Tobago for hotel upgrades, as well as support for Caribbean Airlines. The Government also encouraged social dialogue between unions, employers and employees, and this enabled the GORTT to formulate a COVID-19 Workplace Guideline.⁴⁸ It is intended that the Draft will be forwarded to the National Tripartite Advisory Council for consideration, then submitted to the Cabinet for approval, and eventually implemented by the private sector. However, the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprises Development (MOSLED) said that the Ministry could not seek to compel private employers

to implement the exact policy and rather could only encourage them to introduce compassionate measures aimed at ensuring business continuity and social security in the national interest.⁴⁹

The groups that seem to have been 'left behind' by the pandemic measures include self-employed individuals, including migrants and refugees working in small businesses. Also, in the self-employed category there are thousands of freelance workers, event planners, professionals in private practice, and members of the so-called 'gig economy'.

The service sector in particular is disproportionately affected, as it accounts for over 53 percent of GDP over the period 2011-2018 and is responsible for 68 percent of total employment. The sector is critical to diversification of the economy. Some of the features of the service sector include the existence of several labour intensive industries, seasonal employment, and the predominance of semi-skilled labourers. Prior to the first COVID-19 cases being reported, the Trinidad and Tobago Coalition of Service Industries (TTCSI), made up of 53 financial and non-financial members, said it was grappling with a number of bureaucratic challenges hampering the ease of doing business; notably, difficulties in clearing shipments, and the securing of passports and work permits.⁵⁰

The negative impact on the tourism sector includes loss of jobs, cancellation of events, and uncertainties as to when businesses will rebound (particularly for community, social and personal services). The very active entertainment sub-sector is also labor intensive and contributes roughly 7 percent of GDP annually. The cancellation of major festivals, signature events and holiday weekend packages as a result of COVID-19 restrictions negatively affected a significant share of the working population and resulted in overall loss of economic activity within the country.⁵¹

Based on a TTCSI survey, 40 percent of the tourism sector has

43. https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45001/91/BPI2019_TrinidadAndTobago_en.pdf.

44. Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, Annual Economic Survey 2018, <https://www.central-bank.org.tt/sites/default/files/reports/annual-economic-survey-2018.pdf>.

45. Trinidad and Tobago Unemployment Rate Forecast, <https://tradingeconomics.com/trinidad-and-tobago/unemployment-rate>.

46. Only to people under 65 who had made National Insurance contributions, and whose household income was below TTD 10,000 per month.

47. www.news.gov.tt/content/social-support-strategies-vulnerable-persons-affected-covid19#.XsSbIW5FxFc.

48. Major trade unions such as NATUC, NUDE, OWTU, and TTRNA have variously made inputs into the Workplace Guidelines and the special committee to chart a roadmap for recovery. <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/lang--en/index.htm#TT>.

49. <http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/pandemic-leave-for-workers-with-children-6.2.1079440.5954f6b6c8>.

50. UWI Policy Dialogue, "The Implications of COVID19 on Trinidad and Tobago Citizens and the Economy, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ii653FLpoM>.

been negatively impacted, 50 percent are managing business as usual and 10 percent are unsure about their future. This also affects the value chain, as well as the financial and mortgage sectors. Nearly three-quarters of respondents to a WFP Survey reported disruptions to their livelihoods, primarily owing to movement restrictions. Job loss or reduced income were reported by 40 percent of respondents, with women appearing to be slightly more impacted than men. Business owners were more widely affected than salaried workers. The vast majority of respondents predict that their livelihoods will be impacted in the future, with business owners having a more pessimistic outlook.

In terms of the support to MSME, some analysts have stated that the Government's preference for businesses with sales of TTD20 million and above would cut-off smaller cottage industries, which are the most needy and vulnerable, off the lifeline and critical to building back better. However, others pointed to the criticality of providing data to convince the citizens of the criteria for the restriction of support to those categories of the MSMEs, and how stimulus to them will maximise job security for the most vulnerable informal sector workers.⁵²

3.1.8 PERSONS OF CONCERN (REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS)

The Response for Venezuelans (R4V) Platform managed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) estimates that currently there are roughly 33,400 Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Trinidad and Tobago; out of which only 235 were directly reached with some form of protection assistance during the COVID-19 lockdown.⁵³ The IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) of 2019 reveals that, in the pre-

COVID phase, 32.6 percent of Venezuelans surveyed were unemployed. Sixty percent of employed Venezuelans worked in the informal sector, as opposed to 90 percent in 2018. The largest informal employers of the Persons of Concern (POCs) were construction (46 percent) and commerce (25 percent). Only 9 percent of POCs work in the agricultural/ cattle/ fishing sector. The already high unemployment rate among POCs will become compounded.

The majority of POCs belong to the 'non-essential' category of workers. Many of them work in the informal sector, including at bars, restaurants and construction sites. Loss of livelihoods will expose them to negative coping mechanisms, more vulnerability to sexual violence and labour exploitation. Lack of quality food supplies could also expose them to sickness.

The GORTT undertook the registration of migrants and refugees in May/June 2019. Over 16,000 adults and over 2,000 children were registered. Qualified persons were also allowed, via Ministerial waiver, to work for a period of one year. The permit would expire for many of them in matter of months, making them ineligible to work. It is unclear what mechanisms have been put in place by the Government to renew their work permits, particularly against the backdrop of most migrants having lost their jobs during this COVID-19 crisis. Many of these persons could need livelihoods and vocational skills support. Lack of such support could make them resort to negative coping mechanisms, including vulnerability to labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, trafficking and criminal activities.

The social assistance available to migrants and refugees could be improved. There were reports that many lacked basic food needs and were evicted from places of residence due to their inability to pay rent. Unhygienic practices would also increase risks of infection among existing and/or newly arriving migrants, putting the country at risk of a second outbreak.

52. *Tepid, Arbitrary economic response continues* Trinidad Guardian, 29 May 2020. P. 24.

53. *R4V Situation Report, February 2020.* <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/76195.pdf>.

Box 3.1: *Building Back Better in Social Protection and Basic Services Sector*

The UNCT should add value to the Government-led process of recovery by addressing specific vulnerabilities in social protection and necessary improvements to the provision of basic services to underserved stakeholders and communities. Emphasis should be placed on advocacy, policy interventions, programme implementation and technical advice that seeks to improve self-sufficiency and the quality of life of vulnerable persons who are at risk of being 'left behind'.

Response and recovery measures should address:

- a. Sharing of best practices and design of policy options on the use of the social insurance programme to stimulate the integration and productivity of non-contributing citizens in a manner that enhances effective replenishment of the pool of funds, but which also enhances sustainability.*
- b. Support the deployment of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to enable the full digitization of the Social Sector Investment Programme (SSIP) in order for it to serve the targeted beneficiaries in a transparent and timely manner. This would also enhance safety and confidentiality for vulnerable beneficiaries.*
- c. Mobilize the private sector for livelihoods and empowerment programmes targeted at the self-sufficiency of the persons of concern. Such programmes would contribute to bridging supply gaps for local industries and provide job opportunities for persons, particularly through cottage enterprises and agricultural value chain development. Alternative livelihood programmes should harvest opportunities to contribute to greener recovery. These could consider household-level livelihood activities to produce commodities which are in short supply and necessary during the crisis such as soap making (with appropriate formulas) to be effective against COVID-19 and limit effects of detergents in the sea, rivers and streams (minimize phosphates).*
- d. Support the access of the most vulnerable persons to free, efficient and technology-enabled medicare delivery.*
- e. Support small businesses to develop infectious disease strategies to enable them safely re-open their businesses.*
- f. Implement focused child protection interventions for children in high risk communities and the dependents of migrants and refugees. The intervention should include capacity and logistical service centres to support parents and guardians in accessing online education and addressing the peculiarities of children with special needs.*
- g. Increase food and nutritional support for persons of concern.*



IV. MACROECONOMIC RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

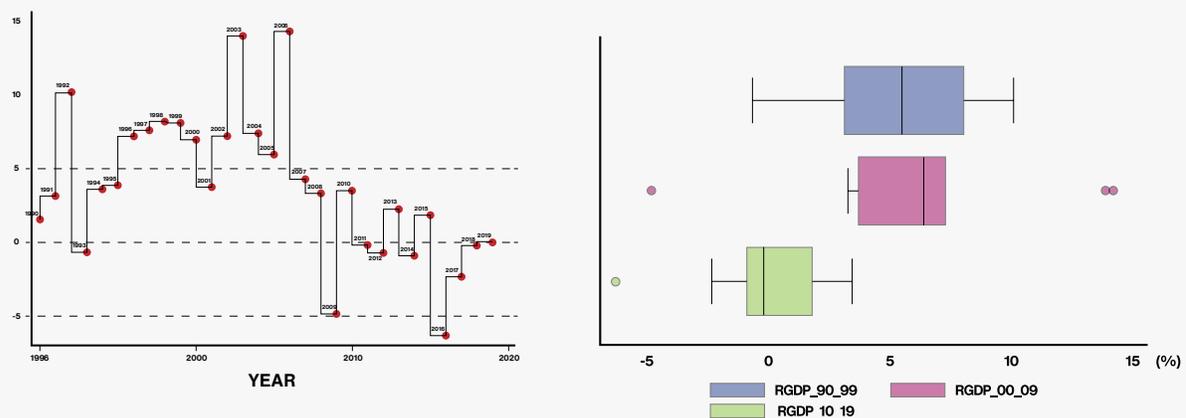
UNDERLYING MACROECONOMIC & SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

RAPID ASSESSMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON **TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**.

4.1 FISCAL CHALLENGES IN COMMODITY DEPENDENT ECONOMY

Trinidad and Tobago fares well when compared to other small island developing states, having achieved high-income status on a per capita income basis. This has been largely driven by the hydrocarbon industry. However, the economy is highly susceptible to external economic shocks⁵⁴ intertwined with the domestic structural issues, particularly emanating from its significant dependence on oil and gas to finance the economy. As a result, economic growth has been largely driven by higher oil prices in the 1990s and 2000s, with median real economic growth well above 5 percent in these two decades (including the extreme swings in price before and after the Global Financial Crises of 2007-2009). The softening of global oil and gas prices in the current decade has impacted on the overall economic prospects, with median real economic growth just below zero percent.

Figure 4.1: Trends and Dispersion Real GDP Growth (%) of Trinidad & Tobago (1990-2020)



Over the years, the heavy dependence on the hydrocarbons industry (which accounts for more than 40 percent of the GDP⁵⁵) has created an unbalanced pattern of sectorial economic growth, with very limited diversification of the economy in non-energy sectors.⁵⁶

Furthermore, the energy-centered source of economic growth has created significant challenges for the fiscal sector noting the high level of uncertainty in predicting global oil and gas prices (which are used as benchmarks for export contracts and pricing) for debt planning and strategy. The reminiscence of

54. Structural Vector Autoregression (SVAR) model Impulse-Response show that crude oil prices have a positive impact on government debt. Overall, external factors significantly impact the Trinidad and Tobago' economy. (Roopnarine, K.A., Bowrin, D. & Ramirez, S. The Impact of External Conditions on a Small Open Economy: A Structural-VAR Approach for Trinidad and Tobago, WP 04/2019, Research Department, Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago.)

55. IDBG Country Strategy with the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago 2016-2020 (released in March 2017).

56. 2018 IMF Article IV Staff Report.

the oil price surge prior to the 2008-09 Global Financial Crisis (GFC), and the significant correction soon after, reverberated in TTO's fiscal balance and debt management challenges for several years after the GFC.

These fiscal challenges are exacerbated by knock-on effects of external financial conditions into the domestic economy.⁵⁷ The corporate collapse and bailout of CLICO, which cost the economy around 10 percent of GDP⁵⁸ is an example of the vulnerability of a commodity dependent and financially integrated economy.

Country programming and macroeconomic assessments⁵⁹ carried out by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) indicate that the economy experienced slow growth and continues to suffer from developments in the global oil and gas market and domestic structural issues related to long term debt management, and the need to broaden the economic base.

The management of the current debt levels compares favorably with debt levels, of most Caribbean countries, resulting in an economy that is only moderately debt leveraged. However, the continued reliance on global oil/gas prices causes higher volatility in fiscal aggregates. To manage the effects of such volatility, the development of a country-led and owned medium term fiscal strategy to deal with fiscal uncertainty and planning in the medium-to-long term will be essential. In the medium term, setting-up credible fiscal targets⁶⁰ will be critical to ensure support a gradual reduction in national debt with a minimum or phased-out impact on the economy, as well as, build up buffers in the form of Central Bank's Gross Foreign Reserves and improving the next asset value of the Heritage and Stabilization Fund (HSF).

4.1.2 INCLUSIVE INSTITUTIONS FOR PROMOTING A BALANCED ECONOMIC TRAJECTORY

Prudent fiscal planning and the building of an appropriate fiscal space are crucial for continuously improving service delivery to the population and managing economic shock in the medium term. The GORTT, in partnership with the IDB⁶¹, already focused on the need to innovate and diversify the economy through building a productive and internationally competitive non-energy tradable sector and creating jobs through enhanced options in the domestic labor market.

The medium-term challenges for the economic diversification agenda (2016-2020) include promoting an enabling inclusive institutional structure for long-term sustainable economic growth through:

- a. strengthening public sector institution and governance;*
- b. promoting private sector development; and*
- c. focusing on human development.*

These initiatives will be integrated with sustainable policies to mainstream climate change and gender issues to create an inclusive and sustainable development trajectory for the economy and to support Agenda 2030 and the national SDGs. This inclusive agenda is also expected to tackle the high costs of doing business for the private sector and reduce the costs of crime in TTO. Studies⁶² show that the costs of crime weigh negatively on the economy and private sector development. These costs are estimated at around 3.5 percent of TTO's nominal GDP⁶³, in the form of high public and private spending

57. Roopnarine, K.A., Bowrin, D. & Ramirez, S. *The Impact of External Conditions on a Small Open Economy: A Structural-VAR Approach for Trinidad and Tobago*, WP 04/2019, Research Department, Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago.

58. <https://www.bis.org/review/r131112a.htm> and IDBG Country Strategy with the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago 2016-2020 (released in March 2017).

59. Various IMF Article IV Staff Reports and IDB Country Strategy documents for Trinidad and Tobago.

60. 2018 IMF Article IV Report.

61. IDBG Country Strategy with the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago 2016-2020 (released in March 2017).

62. Chamon, Chen & Leigh, 2017; Ruprah & Sierra, 2016; Sutton, Ruprah & Alvarez, 2017.

on policing and security, medical expenses, judicial procedures and opportunity cost of forgone income. This further leads to loss in productivity, distortions in resource allocation, and volatile perceptions of safety.

Complementarily, studies over 85 percent⁶⁴ of TTO businesses pay for security at the cost of around 2 percent of their sales. A 10 percent reduction in crime can thus increase businesses' sales by around 4 percent.⁶⁵

4.2 COVID-19: THE EVOLVING (DEEP) ECONOMIC RISKS TO SMALL ISLAND STATES

The nature and impact of the COVID-19 economic shock is unique and different for small island states, like TTO, when compared to the analogue of previous financial and debt crises. Globally, partial comparisons are drawn to the Great Depression of the 1930s, if the COVID-19 effects are protracted and countries continue lockdowns for containment and quarantine purposes.

For TTO, the impact of COVID-19 will be more direct and can be due to:

1. *The global synchronized economic lockdown had a direct and protracted impact on the price and demand for global energy products (oil and gas),⁶⁶ which accounts for around 80 percent⁶⁷ of TTO's merchandise exports (although the current global natural gas prices seem to be more stable than those for crude oil⁶⁸), more than 40 percent of the domestic economic activity (and associated jobs*

and livelihoods), and a significant portion of fiscal revenue;

2. *The public health crisis and containment measures transmuting into a fiscal crisis for small islands states. The limited fiscal buffers and fiscal space (excluding the expected drawdown from HSF) to deal with a severe economic shock, coupled with the demands for a massive economic stimulus to support the economy, livelihoods, and re-ignite economic activity (in absence of negligible private investment) will increase economic risks. Existing higher debt to GDP ratios in TTO may have already constrained the fiscal space that is required to boost the economy. Furthermore, the global stimulus packages provided by developed, emerging and larger developing countries⁶⁹ will result in higher borrowing requirements across the world, which may increase the demand for funds and invariably the cost of finance⁷⁰ (i.e., higher interest rates); and*

3. *Potential risk for laying the foundation for another crisis, especially for already debt-distressed small islands states. The high debt to GDP ratios in small island states⁷¹ indicate that stimulus packages are to boost the economy may actually lead to higher debt to GDP ratios over time. This can potentially lead to debt overhangs and may create another future problem, even with the gradual reduction of containment and lockdown measures. For small, open trade, commodity dependent economies, this will be attributed to the time-to-build constraints, where supply chains need to be relinked against expected (changing) market demand. This will have influences production decisions that impact*

63. Chamon, M. J. Charap, Q. Chen, and D. Leigh. 2017. "Reinvigorating Growth in the Caribbean." *Unleashing Growth and Strengthening Resilience in the Caribbean Book (Chapter 2)*, International Monetary Fund.

64. Sutton, H., I. Ruprah and L. Alvarez, 2017. "Crime and the Private Sector." In *Restore Paradise in the Caribbean: Combatting Violence with Numbers*, edited by H. Sutton and I. Ruprah. Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, D.C.

65. Ruprah, I., and R. Sierra. 2016. *Engine of Growth? The Caribbean Private Sector Needs More Than An Oil Change*. Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, D.C.

66. See <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/the-week-when-oil-cost-minus-38-a-barrel-what-it-means-whats-coming-next>

67. <https://www.gecf.org/countries/trinidad-and-tobago>

68. <https://www.looptt.com/content/economist-low-oil-prices-concerning-natural-gas-remains-stable>

69. Latest IMF Fiscal Monitor (April, 2020) notes a global fiscal response package of US\$9 trillion, of which around US\$8 trillion is the fiscal measures (that is, revenue and expenditure policies) in Group of Twenty (G20) economies, equivalent to 4.5% of GDP on average, which larger than fiscal measures provided during the 2008-09 GCF. (See: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/FM/Issues/2020/04/06/fiscal-monitor-april-2020> and <https://blogs.imf.org/2020/05/20/tracking-the-9-trillion-global-fiscal-support-to-fight-covid-19/>)

70. Latest report by UN DESA notes that even with a near zero global interest rates, the borrowing costs for most developing countries have risen, for instance then credit spreads on emerging market sovereign bonds more than doubled (i.e. widening to more than 600 basis points) from the beginning of the year to April. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-72-covid-19-and-sovereign-debt/>

71. *Ibid.*

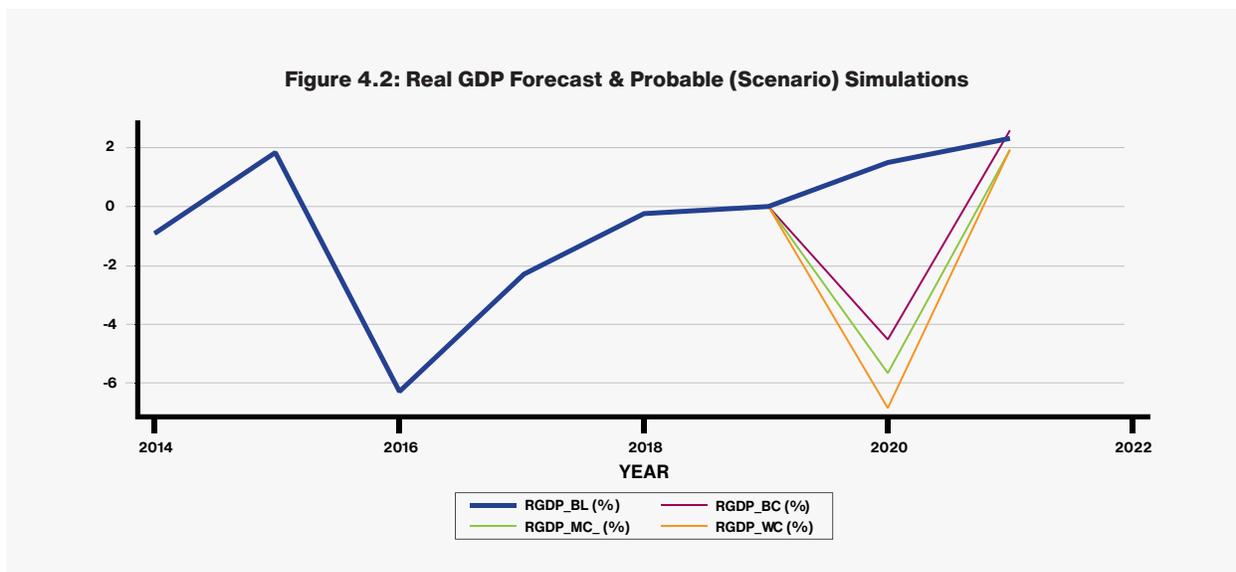
on domestic economic activity. Balancing national debt issues with boosting the economy through deficit-financed stimulus packages will therefore become very difficult for small open economies; especially for small states that are highly dependent on commodity prices (tourism and remittances) with limited capacity to diversify their sources of economic growth.

4.3 PROJECTED ECONOMIC LOSSES FOR TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

4.3.1 REAL GDP PROJECTIONS:

Economic growth projections for the TTO economy indicate a significant dip in the GDP in 2020 followed by recovery in 2021. However, protracted lockdowns of major trading partners and depressed global energy prices, this will likely result in further downward revisions to the projections later in the year. The simulation⁷² of further reduction is provided in Figure 4.2.

Under these scenarios the level of real economic growth can fluctuate between -4.5 percent (BC) to -5.7 percent (MC) to



⁷² The simulations are presented vis-a-vis the baseline (BL) scenario as per the IMF projections in October 2019, followed by the best case (BC) scenario based on the projections by the IMF-World Economic Outlook (IMF-WEO) in April 2020; a moderate case (MC) scenario assumption, where the system is shocked by 25 percent in 2020 and 25 percent in 2021; and the worst case (WC) scenario where brunt of the effect will be felt in 2020, and is assumed to be a 50 percent correction on top of the best case scenario, followed by a 25 percent reduction in 2021.

-6.8 percent (WC) for 2020. For 2021, real GDP fluctuation could range from 2.0 percent to 2.6 percent, depending on how the scenarios unfold in 2020. Given the uncertainty with the changing dynamics, such simulations can provide, some broad boundaries and/or benchmarks for maneuvering macroeconomic policy and identifying appropriate policy responses are desirable in case these eventuate.

4.3.2 EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS:

Economic activity measured by the GDP and the level of unemployment in any economy are highly correlated. A significant drop in the level of economic activity will invariably indicate redundancies in the labor force. The latest projections for unemployment in TTO is expected to be around 4.96 percent in 2019, 5.04 percent in 2020 and 5.12 percent in 2021. These are best case scenarios. Future reductions in the level of economic activity would signal a proportionate increase in unemployment. Recent job market analyses for the Caribbean by the IDB⁷³ for 2020 indicate that additional job losses in TTO, due the impact of COVID-19, can range from 3.9 percent (during fast recovery) to 7 percent (during a long-term recovery), to 10.5 percent (if economic conditions translate into a deep recession).

Latest assessment by the UNDP⁷⁴ highlights that unemployment rates have been historically higher among women and the youth in TTO. Consequently, any negative spillover effects on the economy as a consequence of the COVID-19 outbreak, will more than likely affect women and the young people, disproportionately

A critical part of the puzzle⁷⁵ is the impact on the informal economy and businesses operating as small and medium

enterprises (SMEs) which have very limited social safety nets. Some of these SMEs may permanently exit if they are unable to survive the business losses emanating from an extended period of lockdown. This potential risk of hysteresis could eventually lead to further permanent increases in unemployment in the informal sector. Such high levels of unemployment will create significant demand on the fiscal sector to provide livelihood support (or social security payments) and it may propagate higher economic income inequality and increasing poverty, especially for marginal households sitting just above the poverty line. Such deep impacts on the labor markets in the informal sector can proliferate into higher crime and violence, where diminished economic opportunities for lower income earners and youth coincide with available opportunities in the underground economy.

4.3.3 FISCAL NET LENDING(+)/BORROWING(-) (& FISCAL STRESS):

Similar to the project scenarios of the Real GDP, the IMF-WEO provides the outlook for net lending/borrowing by the government. The simulation for the fiscal net lending/borrowing shows that the level of net borrowing by the government in 2020 will probably range from 10.9 to 16.3 percent of GDP (see Figure 4.3). The outlook for Government net borrowing in 2021 will depend upon economic growth financing options taken in 2020. At the outset for 2021, it is estimated that net borrowing by the government will range from 7.6 percent to 9.6 percent of GDP.

Overall, the report⁷⁶ project an increase in the fiscal deficit for FY2020, by around \$10.2 billion, as the forecast deficit is expected to be around \$15.5 billion from initial estimates of \$5.3 billion. The Road to Recovery Report noted that TTO has recently borrowed

73. <https://blogs.iadb.org/caribbean-dev-trends/en/what-effects-will-covid-19-have-on-employment-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean/>

74. UNDP Country Paper - COVID-19 Impact and Policy Options: Trinidad and Tobago, March, 2020.

75. *Ibid.* The data from IADB does not provide a segregated data on the informal sector, as they note for Trinidad & Tobago "there is no legal differentiation between the formal and informal worker, since access to social security is not determined by occupational category of the work".

76. First Report of the Roadmap for Recovery Committee, 30 May 2020.

US\$300 million (TT\$2 billion) from multilateral agencies⁷⁷ and sourced TT\$500 million from the domestic market.⁷⁸ To seek further budgetary support, TTO is in negotiations with external lenders/MDBs of around US\$500 million (TT\$3.4 billion).

4.3.4 CURRENT ACCOUNT (PROXY FOR EXTERNAL SUSTAINABILITY):

Given that TTO is a small open economy integrated with the global financial system, shocks in the real economy or economic activity combined with depressed fiscal outlook and potential debt increment will likely be reflected in the external accounts; namely, the balance of payments. The energy exports (a key driver of the current account) declined by 56% in Quarter 1 of 2020⁷⁹ and have resulted in losses of US\$25 million per month⁸⁰. This corresponds to projected loss of revenue of \$9.2 billion in FY 2020, based on a predicated conservative prices of US\$25 per barrel for oil and US\$1.80 per

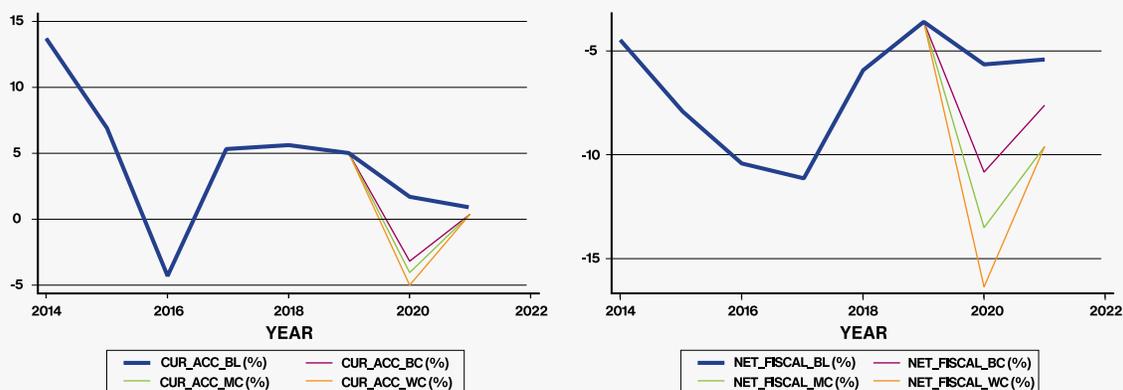
MMBTU for natural gas for the rest of the year.

To this end, the IMF-WEO provides projection for the current account balance, which is a net of merchandise trade balance, services trade balance and net income. Using a similar pattern of scenario analyses, the current account balance is expected to be between -3.3 to -4.9 percent of GDP in 2020, before almost converging to a baseline level in 2021; that is, 0.5 to 2.4 percent of GDP (see Figure 4.3).

4.4 COMPOUNDING FISCAL STRESS WITH COVID-19: LIMITED FISCAL & PROBABLE FUTURE DEBT BURDENS

The current crisis has transmuted into a situation of fiscal stress for governments to finance immediate health response and simultaneously revive the economy, support businesses, employment, and the vulnerable. These political

Figure 4.3: Fiscal Net Lending/Borrowing (Left) & Current Account (Right) Forecast & Probable (Scenario) Simulations



77. US\$20 million from the World Bank, US\$130 million from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and US\$150 million from the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF). (First Report of the Roadmap for Recovery Committee, 30 May 2020)

78. To pay for the increased goods and services for the Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) and to settle aged trade payables in the Health Sector. (First Report of the Roadmap for Recovery Committee, 30 May 2020)

79. Due to closure of four plants (Yara, Titan, Nutrien and the MHTL M3 plant) and sharp drop in the US crude oil prices, measured by West Texas Intermediate (WTI) (First Report of the Roadmap for Recovery Committee, 30 May 2020).

80. First Report of the Roadmap for Recovery Committee, 30 May 2020.

economic choices have costs, in the form of higher borrowing requirements by the governments to finance this stimulus. Going forward, these choices may have detrimental impacts on the overall fiscal balance and government debt positions for small island economies, like TTO.

4.4.1: FISCAL STRESS & ECONOMIC GROWTH:

Figure 4.4 outlines the relationship between fiscal balance and real GDP growth. The top-right quadrant indicates high economic growth combined with fiscal surplus, which describes the growth scenarios during oil price booms largely experienced during the mid 2000s by TTO. The top-left quadrant highlights a combination of high economic growth with fiscal deficits. This quadrant encompasses most of the experience of TTO's economic growth since 1990. The bottom-left quadrant describes a situation of high fiscal deficits correlated with negative economic growth. This quadrant actually explains some of the outliers attributed to exceptional economic (and/or global oil and gas price) shocks; e.g., the impact of the GFC in 2009 and envisaged impact of the COVID-19 in 2020.

Based on (time-series) correlation evidence from Figure 4.4, it is clearly evident that: (1) fiscal deficits are highly correlated with positive economic growth in TTO; (2) economic and global price shocks (oil and gas) have a strong bearing on both the fiscal space and economic prospects, as during the period of high global oil and gas prices (prior to the GFC,) the economy registered large budget surpluses averaging around 5 percent of the GDP.⁸¹ Consequently, on the fiscal front, with energy prices and demand currently depressed and financial conditions constrained, the result may be higher borrowing costs for high income countries.⁸² Concurrently, lower income generation prospects from commodity exports will lead to

lower fiscal tax revenues (from the oil and gas sector) and are likely to further constrain the fiscal space. Latest forecast⁸³ outline an increase in the fiscal deficit \$15.5 billion from initial estimates of \$5.3 billion in FY2020. This will probably lead to three options for the Government to buttress the fiscal space in the immediate-to-medium term: (1) withdrawal from the Heritage and Stabilization Fund to support the fiscal space in the immediate term; (2) fund this stimulus entirely through borrowing from domestic and external sources, which will add to the overall debt burden (and constrain the future incomes due to debt repayment); and (3) using a combination of withdrawal from the Heritage and Stabilization Fund in combination with additional borrowing from domestic and international sources. The Road to Recovery report notes significant fiscal buffers that the Government has access to through the HSF and this will be supplemented with external and domestic borrowing to minimize the impact on long-term savings in the HSF.

4.4.2: POLICY CHOICES:

Given the need and stimulus required to fortify the economy, TTO has indicated to utilize funds Heritage and Stabilization Fund (not exceeding US\$1.5 billion (TT\$10 billion)) coupled with domestic and external borrowing (i.e. TT\$500 million from domestic sources & US\$300 million already sources from external sources and in negotiation for another US\$500 million). This approach will minimize the future debt burden and manage future structural shocks and assist in balancing the inter-temporal economic fundamentals. In the long-term, the government needs to focus on gradual fiscal consolidation to build buffers for any unexcepted tail risks. To this end, initial debt-dynamics simulation estimated an adjustment of annual budget deficits of 3 percent of GDP from fiscal year 2016-17 to 2019-20 was necessary to stabilize the net public sector debt-to-GDP ratio at 50 percent.⁸⁴

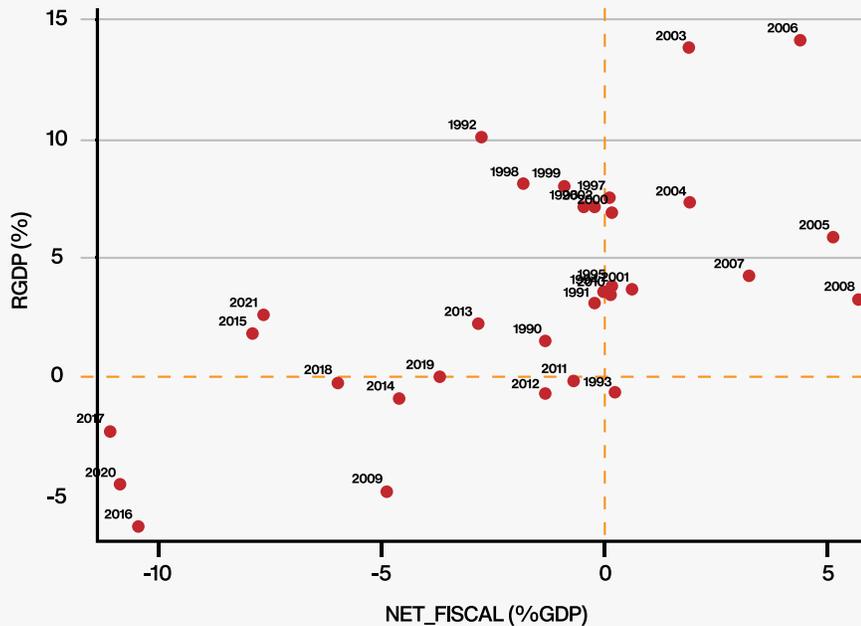
81. <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Caribbean-Region-Quarterly-Bulletin-Volume-5-Issue-2-June-2016.pdf>

82. Latest IMF Fiscal monitor and Global Financial Stability report outline the unprecedented increases in government stimulus packages which will potential increase the demand for global loanable funds (due to large fiscal deficits), which will increase the borrowing costs for countries based on their specific country risk profiles and portfolio. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/FM/Issues/2020/04/06/fiscal-monitor-april-2020>

83. First Report of the Roadmap for Recovery Committee, 30 May 2020.

84. <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Caribbean-Region-Quarterly-Bulletin-Volume-5-Issue-2-June-2016.pdf>

Figure 4.4: Correlation of Fiscal Balance and Real GDP (1990-2021)



4.4.3: FUTURE DEBT BURDEN & SDGS:

A depressed global outlook will have a disproportionate impact on TTO, which will subdue domestic economic conditions (due to high dependence on oil and gas sector, and allied sectors and economic fundamentals, such as wholesale and retail trade sector and household personal consumption coupled with private sector investment). As a result, the fiscal space would be highly constrained by lower than expected revenues

from the oil and gas sector, lower indirect tax revenue with an increasing demand on expenditure to support livelihoods, SMEs and economic stimulus packages. This may increase the debt to GDP ratios in the medium term. Consequently, higher debt financed fiscal stimulus in the medium term to revive the domestic economy may result in an additional debt repayment burden for the economy. This may be disadvantageous for the balance of payments, which measures external sustainability. This outturn is contingent upon the current depressed outlook for global oil and gas prices, and any positive rebound in global hydrocarbon demand and prices would drastically change the picture in favor of TTO.



V. SOCIAL COHESION AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

RAPID ASSESSMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON **TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**.



Trinidad and Tobago is one of the most diverse countries in the Caribbean in terms of ethnic groups, religions, and social outlooks. In order to harness the country's diversity to promote sustainable development, a National Policy on Sustainable Community Development was drafted in 2018. The policy encapsulates the core values of the Trinbagonian as sustainability, social justice, asset-based community development, local leadership and participation, data driven and evidence based development and performance measurement, collaboration and community cohesion, respect for the environment, equality and inclusion, transparency and accountability, social change, as well as appreciation and celebration of successes.⁸⁵

It also recognizes that the framework for community development could be improved as it has occasionally displayed: (i) an uncoordinated approach to community interventions; (ii) little collaboration across Government agencies; (iii) underutilization of community development infrastructure; and (iv) a lack of scientific information on the impact of programmes and services. It provides for investments in community capacity as a critical unit of socialization.

Notwithstanding consistent public and private sector investments in strengthening communities' harmony over several decades, they continue to be challenged by a number of socio-cultural issues. Some of these include the intractable crime problem, school violence and delinquency, intergenerational poverty and vulnerability, and persistent attitudes of dependency.

Inequality has been a critical drawback on social cohesion in TTO. Inequalities, particularly of opportunities, weaken social cohesion and peoples' trust in the Government, institutions and each other. They hurt economies and prevent

people from reaching their full potential.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Trinbagonians agree that, for development to be sustainable, healthy and progressive social co-existence, based on equitable opportunities, is critical. An earlier perception study on multidimensional progress indicates that a sense of community, closeness to the environment, freedom of movement, safety from harm, access to religious choices, empowerment and personal ability to diversify skills contribute to self-identification and are seen as critical indicators of progress.⁸⁷

The COVID-19 pandemic and attendant lockdown placed enormous strains on healthy, peaceful and harmonious community coexistence. It also tested the level of the national community's trust in their leadership. In the face of this, the GORTT provided visionary, proactive and purposeful leadership which put the people at the centre of its COVID-19 policies and measures. In addition to successfully avoiding community spread of the virus, the GORTT was able to utilize democratic means in making and enforcing decisions, particularly on citizens compliance with lockdown measures. Sacrifices and rectitude made by citizens ensured orderliness in access to public services and enhanced safety. This led to global acclaim on the effectiveness of government measures and the readiness of the country to reopen after flattening the curve of infections in May 2020.⁸⁸

In spite of the progress recorded, the pandemic created complex social cohesion challenges with far reaching impacts on quality of life and the potential attainment of the sustainable development goals. Some of the effects of the pandemic have also jeopardized citizens' safety security and sense of community, and constructive management of conflicts in communities.

85. Ministry of Community Development (2018) Draft National Policy on Sustainable Community Development (DNPCSD) for Trinidad and Tobago, <http://parcloud.ttparliament.org:8081/PapersLaidViewer/TempFiles/Draft%20National%20Policy%20on%20Sustainable%20Community%20Development.pdf>.

86. Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century, hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/TTO.pdf.

87. UNDP (2015) Perspectives on Well-Being, Progress and Vulnerability in Trinidad and Tobago, Port of Spain; IGDS/UNDP.

88. https://trinidadexpress.com/news/local/t-t-now-ranked-1-by-oxford-university/article_7c3f9ab4-8da3-11ea-98ef-8b60a5b0f55b.html.

Box 3.1: Social Protection and Basic Services: Summary of Key Issues and Impact

Key Issues	Gaps	Impact
<p>Urban Planning, Disaster Risk Reduction and the Environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited relief for squatters and the homeless. ▪ Patrol of forest reserves to prevent abuses. ▪ Unsustainable management of game species/wildlife leading to unhealthy and unsafe practices of hunters ▪ Lack of sustainable approach to plastic waste management (for PPEs) ▪ Lack of integration of the Minimum Initial Service Package to address SRH and GBV in emergencies ▪ Overwhelmed capacities / infrastructure for healthcare and infectious waste management, with additional challenges for informal settlements ▪ Lack of protocols for environmentally sound management of medical waste ▪ Lack of training of waste personnel, including waste pickers/handlers ▪ Sensitization on and promotion of waste prevention and minimization ▪ Nature based solutions - energy efficiency and climate resilience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Risk of more COVID-19 infections in urban centres. ▪ Increased oil spillage due to low extraction activities. ▪ Increased deforestation. ▪ Rise in temperature. ▪ Increased deforestation. ▪ Increased Plastic Pollution due to widespread use of PPEs. ▪ Improper practices for ecological sustainable harvesting of game species from field to table ▪ Increased risk of cross-infection from COVID-19 wastes ▪ Loss of livelihoods and protection issues for waste pickers ▪ Increased pressure on waste management infrastructure; ▪ Increasing vulnerabilities of communities
<p>Policing, Organized Crime and Violence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Absence of cybersecurity policy/ preventive action. ▪ Weakness of intelligence-led policing ▪ Community Policing challenges ▪ Inadequate protection of victims of gender-based violence ▪ Limited measures to ensure safety of persons of concern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased land-related conflicts. ▪ Difficulties to communities affected by water restrictions.
<p>Social Tension</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inadequate land-related conflict resolution mechanism. ▪ Inadequate water supplies to vulnerable communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased land-related conflicts. ▪ Difficulties to communities affected by water restrictions.

Box 3.1: Social Protection and Basic Services: Summary of Key Issues and Impact

Key Issues	Gaps	Impact
<p>Prisons and Justice Administration Institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementation of COVID-19 pandemic plans in prisons. ▪ Inadequate rehabilitation and reintegration programme for released prisoners. ▪ Slow implementation of virtual trials and non-extension to all courts in the country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attempted jailbreak at the Arouca Prison and continued concerns over safety in prisons. ▪ Increased risk of violence due to livelihoods challenges to inadequate rehabilitation of released prisoners. ▪ Uncertainties over use of electronic evidence. ▪ Delay in justice administration.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of adequate transitional shelters for victims of Gender-Based Violence. ▪ Limited state capacity to investigate and prosecute offenders. ▪ Inadequate plans to protect women and children impacted by COVID-19 (transitional homes, food and security). ▪ Absence of livelihood support programme for victims of Gender-Based Violence. ▪ Inability of conflict management and mediation programmes to seamlessly migrate online. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased fear of sexual violence. ▪ Increased risk of community conflict/ violence. ▪ Limited psychosocial support for victims of Intimate Partners Violence. ▪ Increased protection challenge at home, particularly for women, girls and children.

5.1.1 URBAN PLANNING, DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Urbanization is one of the repercussions of rapid physical development in TTO. A large proportion of the country’s population is concentrated in the highly urbanized regions of the East/West and North/South corridors. Between 2000 and 2011, the regions with the highest increases in urban populations were Chaguanas (23.8 percent), Sangre Grande (17.8 percent) and Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo (9.6 percent). By contrast, a much lower proportion of the national population lives in eastern Trinidad, the deep southwest peninsula, and the north-east of Tobago--all of which have relatively sparse populations.⁸⁹

According to the Office of Disaster Planning and Management (ODPM), informal settlements concentrated in the Diego Martin, San Juan/Laventille, Tunapuna/Piarco, Chaguanas, and San Fernando Corporations. These corridors also have the most proximities to

89. 71 percent of TTO’s population lives in urban areas (concentrated in East/West and North/South Corridors) while the remaining 29 percent reside in smaller rural villages and towns. Settlement patterns show a marked concentration of urban settlements in the western half of Trinidad, and the southwest of Tobago. National Spatial Development Strategy for Trinidad and Tobago, https://www.planning.gov.tt/OurTnTOurFuture/documents/Surveying_the_Scene_web.pdf.

high risk industrial areas and are prone to flooding, fire, high winds and landslides. The challenges to the urban spaces are social, environmental and infrastructural. Social problems include crime, poverty, health, housing and education. The environmental impacts involve climate change and increased hazard vulnerability. Infrastructurally, there are challenges of transportation, waste management, water and wastewater management, flooding and access to energy.

The draft National Spatial Development Strategy, produced by GORTT in 2015, considers the existence of substantial pockets of poverty and deprivation in the main urban areas attributed to limited income generation opportunities, challenges related to access to adequate and affordable housing, concentration of vulnerable persons in these urban settlements, limited social trust among inhabitants, and deficit in human capital development; and maps out urban planning milestones and enabling frameworks to tackle these challenges.

Settlements established in high risk zones closer to urban centres, informally established for convenient access to employment and amenities by primarily low-income squatters and on marginal lands such as hillsides, flood plains and industrial estates, have expanded. According to the 2011 census, an estimated 5,473 persons lived in institutions or were street dwellers.⁹⁰

While the limited movement of people and the closure of industries provided improvement in air quality and pollution in cities globally, the poor management of healthcare and infectious waste, including that generated at healthcare facilities, household waste produced by COVID-19 infected patients and the use and improper disposal of plastic medical materials in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, (particularly the PPEs, testing kits and the face masks), can significantly increase the risk of cross-infection and potentially also increased the potential cause harm to the environment.

The local environmental advocacy group Fishermen and Friends of the Sea (FFOS) called attention to the gradual environmental degradation of the Gulf of Paria during the lockdown. Noting that the Gulf is where about 70 percent of the country's fish are caught, FFOS reported on the risk of increased oil spillage from dormant oil wells, which continued to 'extract' and spill into the oceans during the period. FFOS also pointed to the absence of suitable and environmentally safe facilities for storing unsold crude oil, particularly against the backdrop of a Shell 2017 Report which recommended the decommissioning of the twelve tanks being used to store excess oil.⁹¹ FFOS also reported on 6 May of an oil spill at Chaguaramas, discharged from an oil vessel which was being serviced.

The impending 2020 rainy and Atlantic hurricane season is also a risk aggravator, given the fact that most local governments are not completely ready to clear major watercourses in their areas. The restrictions implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic are cited as factors that delayed drainage works.⁹² Accordingly, the potential for flash flooding and other hazards in vulnerable areas like the Caparo River and the adjoining communities, Dianna River, the Bull Bull River in Claxton Bay, and the Guaracara River, in Gasparillo and adjoining communities.⁹³ is amplified.

The country is highly vulnerable to impacts of climate change despite contributing very little GHG emissions which are mostly derived from the power generation, transportation and industry sectors. The Paris agreement of which TTO is signatory to commits countries to support a low-carbon resilient future which is reflected in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). It is important to employ actions that tackle climate change at the same time protecting the environment and human health by transitioning to low-carbon economy and climate resilient growth through renewable energy penetration, alternative fuels and technology upgrades.

90. ODPM(2014) Preliminary Vulnerability Assessment of Trinidad and Tobago, Port of Spain; ODPM.

91. <https://ffostt.com/2020/04/22/earth-day-2020-ffos-warns-of-increased-risk-of-oil-spills/>.

92. "Corporations not ready for rainy season" *Trinidad Guardian*, 1 June 2020, P. 8.

93. "Are we ready for the Rainy Season? No" *Daily Express*, 21st May 2020. P. 16.

Deforestation is also a major environmental issue. Thirty-six forest reserves, covering 119,056.82 hectares, are currently considered threatened. Immediately before and during the COVID-19 lockdown, there were reports of destruction of about 300 hectares of forests reserve in Tableland, while 25 hectares of the Ecclesville Wind belt Reserve in Rio Claro were ploughed down by farmers to plant crops.⁹⁴ Those responsible for the encroachment are quarry operators, miners, farmers, squatters and criminals who destroy valuable forests for wood. The Forestry Division subsequently reported that the level of deforestation escalated to a crisis level due to inadequate patrols and monitoring, occasioned huge number of vacancies.⁹⁵ In addition, the staff has no authority to evict encroachers.

The country's biodiversity resources are of great importance to all sectors of society mainly through agriculture, fishing, hunting, recreation, tourism and culture. The emergence of COVID-19 highlights the fact that human health is linked to the health of the planet in particular the utilization of biodiversity for instance hunting. Some of the animals hunted are known reservoirs for zoonotic diseases. In the path to recovery from COVID-19, there is opportunity to highlight the importance of promoting health and safe practices to prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases and promoting the sustainable use of biodiversity resources as a fundamental component of the economic recovery of the country.

5.1.2 POLICING AND ORGANIZED CRIME

The COVID-19 crisis took place against the backdrop of a decade-long rise in violent crimes, particularly homicide. TTO had its second highest homicide rate in its history in 2018. The data for 2019 and the current year have shown no significant improvement but rather demonstrated the resilience of

organized crime against the impact of the pandemic. Factors that have accentuated organized crime and insecurity include family violence, corruption among some officers in law enforcement institutions, gang culture in some communities, availability of small arms and light weapons, and trans-shipment of illicit drugs. The economic crisis in neighbouring Venezuela also contributes to the crime and violence challenge and exacerbates the challenges surrounding the smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and Gender-based violence overall, including family violence.

From 1990 to 2003, the average rate of crime detection was 60 percent, but from 2006 to 2016 it fell to an average of 20 percent. Since then it has hovered between 14 and 20 percent.⁹⁶ This indicate that in spite of the progress made in crime prevention, which increased citizens' confidence in the TTPS in 2019, more resources should be dedicated to community policing, investigation and prosecution.

Nevertheless, between 2018 and 2020, the TTPS improved the quality of police training and have followed due process to discipline police officers who were allegedly engaged in corrupt practices.⁹⁷ The Commissioner of Police has also taken additional measures to improve internal oversight on officers. The service also continues to explore community policing options to sharpen intelligence gathering.

The closure of TTO's borders from 21 March, and the eventual lockdown of the country, reduced opportunities for crime but did not prevent an escalation of homicides during March and April. The situation improved in April,⁹⁸ but May has also witnessed rushes of homicides. The trend demonstrated that gangs and organized crime groups may have built resilience against the COVID-19 shock, contrary to trends observed in most parts of the world.

Illicit drug trafficking is a critical driver of organized crime. Due

94. "T&T's Deforestation at Crisis Levels" <http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/tts-deforestation-at-crisis-levels-6.2.1123274.7139b6d530>.

95. There are 60 vacancies for Foresters and 40 for game wardens.

96. "Make Police Reform a Scientific, Reflective Exercise" Daily Express, 11 May 2020, P. 8.

97. 75 Cops on Police Radar for Criminal Activity, Trinidad Guardian, 29 May 2020, P. 9. See also: <https://newsday.co.tt/2020/05/18/cop-wants-to-root-out-corrupt-officers/>.

98. "Murder Rates unaffected by COVID Regulation" https://trinidadexpress.com/newsextra/murder-rate-unaffected-by-covid-regulations---2-more-die/article_0fa819b8-8735-11ea-9241-97df94f906aa.html.

to the adaptability of drug supplies chain in Latin America to COVID-19 shocks,⁹⁹ there is growing desperation to trans-ship drugs through the Gulf of Paria and TTO's territorial waters to destination markets in North America and Europe. Distribution routes are switching to maritime shipping, with contraband concealed in freight not impacted by market closures.¹⁰⁰ However, a new counter-narcotic operation in the Caribbean seas¹⁰¹ has proved disruptive to illicit drug trading into the sub-region. The Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force (TTDF), for instance, successfully worked with the US-led Counternarcotic Operation in the Caribbean Sea to thwart an audacious attempt to trans-ship over 600 kilograms of crack cocaine by suspected transnational criminal networks.¹⁰² Given the losses incurred by the organized crime groups, revenue losses will have to be recouped, raising prospects of violence around unmet payments and deliveries. Increased homicides, particularly against Venezuelan migrants, have been recorded since the interception of the drugs. This trend could continue. Due to the socio-economic risk posed by COVID-19 to the national community, the GORTT embarked on an ambitious disbursement of support to several segments of the people. In the recovery phase, some analysts have called on the Government to stimulate informal sector employment through spending on public infrastructure projects. If spending increases on such projects, there will be attempts by 'community leaders' to obstruct implementation unless they are co-opted. As a response to the socio-economic challenges arising due to the COVID-19 restrictions and measures implemented, Government may adopt an accelerated construction program in the short term but can encounter challenges with successful implementation, on time and within budget, as a result of the existing gang culture within some communities.

The possibility of increased gang leaders involvement in public contracts was however rejected by the Police Commissioner, who promised that measures would be taken to prevent gangsters from being funded from state contracts.¹⁰³ This

could increase the transaction costs of project implementation and further delay delivery of results.¹⁰⁴ If the patronage for the 'community leaders' declines in this scenario, disgruntled elements among them may resort to sabotaging national strategic assets and/or assets of big private sector players and targeting of contractors. Analysts however say that only convicted criminals or indicted persons may be legally classified as 'gangsters', thus and effectively leaving out suspects who have affiliations to gangs but who have managed to evade direct conflict with the law may yet be able to continue to superintend local contracts. This means their continued access to state funds to finance the purchase of small arms and illicit drugs.

Cybercrime continues to be a concern. Though TTO has several laws on cybercrime, it has no comprehensive policy on cybersecurity. This makes it challenging for Government agencies to implement robust preventative and mitigation programmes in a coordinated manner. Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, more intense patterns of internet abuses and security breaches have been observed. There have also been episodes of partisan political mobilization ('fake news') for the upcoming elections in 2020.¹⁰⁵ There was also increased use of hate speech, misinformation, hacking and scamming. The Government disseminated timely news on COVID-19, but attempts to counter fake news and hate messages have proved insufficient and ineffective.

In addition, there were increasing reports of bugging and infiltration of online meeting rooms by hackers to eavesdrop on the discussions of corporate entities and governments across the region. There were also multiple reports of attempts to scam persons through the promise of fake testing kits and falsified social relief documents.¹⁰⁶

99. <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/covid-19-and-mexicos-criminal-cartels>

100. <https://dailybrief.oxan.com/Analysis/DB252432/Pandemic-prompts-narcotics-shifts-in-Latin-America>.

101. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-52133500>

102. https://trinidadexpress.com/newsextra/drug-boat-dumps-cargo-during-tt-coast-guard-chase/article_214e1442-8bb8-11ea-82b6-f78ccd47663d.html, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/us-intel-helped-tt-seize-160m-cocaine-tanker-6.2.1108200.09e1ddbe09>.

103. There were death threats against the Prime Ministers of St. Lucia and Trinidad, as well as hacking into the Facebook account of the latter's Minister of Health. See: <https://www.looptt.com/content/deyalsingh-facebook-post-i-was-hacked>; <http://www.loopslu.com/content/man-charged-video-death-threat-against-prime-minister-chastanet>; <http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/man-jailed-for-threatening-to-kill-pm-6.2.1098180.abbfe471d9>. There are also several attempts at politicizing the pandemic management online in Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Jamaica and Trinidad. In Belize, a social media activist was arrested for divisive news. <https://amandala.com.bz/news/police-make-first-arrest-for-spreading-false-news-amid-covid-19-crisis/>, <https://www.nationnews.com/nationnews/news/244152/st-lucia-warns-spreading-fake-news-about-covid-19>.

104. https://trinidadexpress.com/newsextra/fraudsters-are-trying-to-profit-from-tt-covid-tragedy/article_bcfdf736-87e9-11ea-ab2b-dfe48cf1699f.html; <http://www.news.gov.tt/content/ministry-warns-against-fraudulent-practices-covid-19-social-support#.Xs10S25Fy-o>.

5.1.3 SOCIAL TENSION

The GORTT has in existence a policy on land management. In 2017, the GORTT implemented further reforms through the Land Adjudication and Land Tribunal laws. The principles of these policies and laws have been largely disrespected by community stakeholders. This has led to proliferation of land-related conflict, with some of the causes being limited accessibility of the poor and perceived ethnicization of land access. In addition, distribution of both public and private lands according to use are not accurately recorded in published documents while the definitive measure of documentable tenure status is not always available.¹⁰⁷

Resolution of land conflicts by the courts and the land tribunal is time consuming. Even while cases await adjudication, it is not uncommon to see litigants resort to self-help. Also, the land information management system has not been fully digitized.

With the advent of COVID-19, farmers have reported opportunistic land-grabbing and excavation activities by some businessmen in Penal, for examples, which they said exposed them and their farms to losses.¹⁰⁸ In addition, the Jammatt Al-Musiimeen (JAM) allegedly returned to work on the disputed No. 1 Mucurapo Road facility, which had been a subject of controversy between land authorities and the group, and which was a factor that contributed to an escalation of conflict that eventually led the JAM to attempt a coup d'état in 1990.¹⁰⁹

Due to WASA's water restriction policy, some underserved urban centres like Morvant, Laventille, Moruga/Tableland and St. Joseph protested water scarcity in the last two years. The water restrictions became more severe and spread to more communities during the COVID-19 crisis;¹¹⁰ a situation which

greatly stressed community members, mainly in the urban centres. Given the need for adequate supply of water to fulfil hygiene requirements to prevent COVID-19 infection and the vulnerability of these urban centres to communicable diseases, water scarcity has the potential to inflame passion.

5.1.4 PRISONS AND JUSTICE ADMINISTRATION INSTITUTIONS

TTO has seen several jailbreaks from its prisons over the years, even during non-crisis periods. Notable episodes occurred in September 1998, July 2015, March 2016, May 2019 and October 2019. In March 2020, following the lockdown generated by the COVID-19, inmates at the awaiting trial section of the Arouca Prison attempted a jailbreak which was put under control. The protest and jailbreak were motivated by prisoners' concern over their safety. Indeed, investigators later discovered that prisoners had amassed cellphones and improvised weapons across the country's prisons,¹¹¹ arguably to undertake similar endeavours.

The health profile of prison populations generally tends to be significantly lower than the community at large. This factor, coupled with overcrowding and inadequate resources, including ill-equipped personnel and limited linkages to public health systems, make prisons hazardous environments in a pandemic.¹¹² After participating in a meeting of CARICOM Heads of Prison Institutions in April, the GORTT decided to implement the early release of 'non-threatening' prisoners to reduce the prison population and mitigate the potential risks of infections.¹¹³ In line with this decision, TTO authorities, in close coordination with the judiciary, facilitated an early release programme for certain categories of prisoners. Nine hundred and fifty-seven prisoners who were eligible for early release

105. Asad Mohammed (2003), "Trinidad and Tobago: Land Policy, Administration and Management", in *Land in the Caribbean: Issues of Policy, Administration and Management in the English-Speaking Caribbean*, http://www.terrainstitute.org/carib_workshop/pdf/landbook.pdf.

106. "Residents object as businessman backfills river" *Trinidad Guardian*, 21st May 2020. P. 10.

107. "Land Excavation at Jamaat Site" *Trinidad and Tobago Guardian*, 18th May 2020, P. 8-9.

108. <https://newsday.co.tt/2020/03/17/water-crisis-in-midst-of-covid19-scare-no-water-at-childrens-home/>.

109. www.guardian.co.tt/news/cellphones-weapons-found-after-prison-riot-6.2.1082895.99b0e5afc3.

110. https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/COVID-19/20-02110_Position_paper_EN.pdf

111. Summary of the CARICOM Heads of Prisons Meeting: <https://www.cnc3.co.tt/right-move-to-release-some-prisoners/>.

using enumerated criteria¹¹⁴ were processed for early release to the society, during the lockdown.

If early release of prisoners is not accompanied by the implementation of a COVID-19 pandemic plan within the prisons, tensions among prisoners over their safety are unlikely to abate. In this situation, there could be a repeat or escalation of rioting and/or attempted jailbreaks. In environments with criminogenic factors that pushed previous offenders into cycles of recidivism, the early release of prisoners, whilst positive in itself, could pose additional risks—except if it is accompanied by clearly defined risks assessments, effective monitoring and reintegration programmes.

On justice administration, the judiciary, to mitigate COVID-19 risks among persons accessing the courthouses and administrative buildings, suspended physical court sittings. However, it made provisions for adjudication of urgent matters through remote hearings;¹¹⁵ a situation which ensured the continuation of justice administration, albeit with limited delays. Furthermore, the GORTT pioneered a virtual courtroom system and prioritized 12 courts for the Golden Grove, Maximum Security Prison, Eastern Correctional and Rehabilitation Centre, Women's Prison, Frederick Street Prisons and the Youth Training and Rehabilitation Centre.¹¹⁶ This ensured continued justice administration in the midst of the crisis and has the potential to increase the efficiency of the justice administration process, if extended to all courts in the country. Nevertheless, citizens continue to complain of delay in court hearings due to the limited number of cases that can be accommodated by the virtual system. Cases related to domestic violence have been disproportionately affected by the delays.¹¹⁷

Practice directions were also issued for the COVID-19 situation, but it is not clear how aligned they are to extant statutes on the use of electronic evidence. Also, it is unclear how this system would function effectively for criminal trials with lingering

difficulties of ensuring witness protection, the use of electronic evidence in criminal trials, and equitable access by lawyers.

5.1.5 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY COHESION

Family support is a bedrock of community stability and integration; *it is also critical to building back better*. In recognition of family values, TTO developed a National Parenting Policy in 2017. The policy aimed to empower parents to perform their roles, improve the linkage between existing programmes, provide parenting education and promote inclusive family health.¹¹⁸ In 2018, the GORTT facilitated national dialogues on the development of a national family policy. The consultation process was to fashion ways to help families address challenges such as reproductive health, child wellbeing, violence, poverty, intimacy and initiation of sexual activity by adolescents. Pre-COVID 19, TTO had developed a Central Registry on Domestic Violence. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) also developed a National Social Mitigation Plan to support families and reduce incidences of domestic violence.¹¹⁹ However, targeting, monitoring and evaluation remain major challenges of these structures.

The challenges to family violence are institutional and social. A 2018 Parliamentary Inquiry analyzed the institutional challenges.¹²⁰ TTO lacks an officially approved national plan to address violence against women, even though a draft is pending in Parliament. The human resources available to coordinate domestic violence prevention were found to be inadequate. There were eight transitional shelters in operation and additional four in the pipeline. However, the capacity was not sufficient to cater to the number of cases. The Parliament also noted the absence of a standard response time for domestic violence reports. Other issues relate to breaches of

112. *These are largely 8 categories- persons convicted of summary offences; persons convicted summarily of indictable offences; persons convicted of indictable offences; children convicted of summary and indictable offences; children charged with summary and indictable offences, including those granted bail pending appeal and are unable to access bail; persons serving terms of imprisonment in default of payment of maintenance fines; persons convicted of summary offences and indictable offences who are now in their final year of their sentence.* Trinidad and Tobago Guardian, 18th April 2020, P. 6.

113. <http://www.ttlawcourts.org/index.php/newsroom-69/news/9529-judiciary-s-response-to-covid-19>.

114. https://trinidadexpress.com/newsextra/covid-ending-80m-prisoner-transport-contract-as-courtrooms-go-to-jails/article_445e1b7a-80ba-11ea-9860-33dd653b1773.html.

115. *For instance, a victim of domestic violence threatened lawsuit against the judiciary.* <http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/man-threatens-lawsuit-over-delay-in-domestic-violence-complaint-6.2.1125498.7cda535fc7>.

116. <http://www.social.gov.tt/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/National-Parenting-Policy-revised-06.-06.-17.pdf>.

117. *The types of family violence experienced in TT includes rape, attempted rape, incest, and grievous sexual assault. Most of these crimes are committed by close family members.*

118. *Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (2018) www.ttparliament.org/reports/p11-s3-J-20180307-HRED-r7.pdf.pdf.*

protection orders by alleged perpetrators, absence of mandatory counselling for the perpetrators, limited access of social assistance for victims, weakness of communication and advocacy against GBV, and inadequate financial allocation to GBV prevention.

The COVID-19 lockdown provided an opportunity for the utilization of improved reporting mechanisms on domestic violence, particularly the establishment of the TTPS Gender-Based Violence Unit (GBVU) and the sexual offences unit. In March 2020, reported cases of domestic violence were 96, up from 42 for the same period in 2019. Cumulative cases from January to March 2020 amounted to 558, up from 232 for the same period in 2019.¹²¹ However, as of 30 March, the police were able to support only 48 of the 96 domestic violence victims.¹²² Improved reporting revealed deeper problems, such as ill-equipped and insufficient transitional shelters for victims,¹²³ as well as a lack of systems to address food and other basic needs of victims. The absence of a robust protection system in many CARICOM countries has prevented help from reaching the most vulnerable children and women.

Data prior to the COVID-19 crisis indicate challenges with investigation and resolution of domestic violence cases. Table 5.1 summarizes the reported and resolved cases between 2012 and 2018. During this period, the TTPS solved an average of 40 percent of reported rape cases, 54 percent of attempted rapes, 55 percent of incest reports, and 47 percent of grievous sexual assaults. Forty-eight percent of female victims were under 14 and 35 percent were between 14 and 16.

Sexual Offences	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018	
	Rep	Solved	Rep	Solved	Rep	Solved	Rep	Solved	Rep	Solved	Rep	Solved	Rep	Solved
Rapes	286	80 (27.9%)	212	68 (43%)	198	87 (43%)	180	63 (35%)	118	58 (49%)	124	48 (38%)	113	54 (47%)
Attempted Rapes	10	6 (60%)	6	4 (66%)	9	5 (55%)	11	8 (72%)	3	3 (100%)	4	1 (25%)	0	0 (0%)
Incest	104	89 (85%)	17	9 (52%)	35	22 (62%)	38	32 (84%)	5	2 (40%)	2	1 (50%)	6	1 (16%)
Grievous Sexual Assault	202	90 (44%)	109	53 (25%)	206	130 (63%)	136	52 (38%)	62	33 (53%)	56	22 (37%)	59	41 (69%)
Female Under 14	106	59 (55%)	81	44 (54%)	135	91 (67%)	111	80 (72%)	15	1 (6%)	7	1 (14%)	7	5 (71%)
Female 14-16	219	129 (58%)	122	45 (36%)	238	152 (63%)	141	71 (50%)	18	4 (22%)	6	0 (0%)	6	1 (16%)
Male 14-16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: TTPS Crime and Problems Analysis Branch (CAPA)

These trends, and weaknesses in generating the required evidence, protecting witnesses, and preventing the stigmatization of victims, in themselves, make it difficult for public faith to increase in the state's capacity of the state to protect the most vulnerable difficult to increase, due to the weaknesses in generating the required evidence, protecting witnesses, and preventing the stigmatization of

119. <https://globalvoices.org/2020/04/10/stay-at-home-orders-accompanied-by-rise-in-domestic-violence-in-trinidad-tobago/>.

120. <https://globalvoices.org/2020/04/10/stay-at-home-orders-accompanied-by-rise-in-domestic-violence-in-trinidad-tobago/>.

121. Phone interviews with gender activists across selected CARICOM Member States, 21st April 2020.

victims. The table also shows that the younger the victims, the less likely they could access justice. Interestingly, it reveals the lack of reporting on sexual assaults against males, which some analysts attribute to a culture of silence. In the COVID-19 context, the prosecutorial capacity of the state is even more limited, thus exposing victims to more danger.

Sex workers and female migrants and refugees have heightened vulnerability due to the lockdown and have been more fearful. These groups of women have been exposed to greater exploitation due to financial insecurity, lack of awareness of their legal rights and, for the migrants among them, language barriers and their irregular immigration status.¹²² Though the IOM currently assists over fifty trafficked women, a systematic and structured approach to supporting them is lacking.

To address the challenge of domestic violence, the Gender Based Violence Unit of TTPS, the Gender Affairs Unit at the Office of the Prime Minister and the National Aids Coordinating Committee were all supported by UNFPA, other UN Agencies and civil society organizations to address gaps in safe accommodation and feeding, and to provide dignity kits for victims, as state-managed shelters and resources for psychological support were not sufficiently available.¹²³ The University of the West Indies' Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) summed up the key deficiency by noting that resources available to victims were inadequate even in the pre-COVID-19 era, and calling for the tackling of domestic violence to be put on a crisis footing.¹²⁴

5.1.6 INCLUSIVENESS AND TRUST

Inclusiveness is critical to effective diversity management. TTO has extant policies and programmes to promote diversity and equitable treatment of all races and ethnic groups. It also has specific policies to enhance participation of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs),¹²⁵ as well as incentives for equitable access to social goods and services. Gender inclusiveness is progressing, with a population that is 50.59 percent female having in 2019 33.3 percent of the national parliament, 36.7 percent in local government political positions¹²⁶ and 43.3 percent in senior and middle management in 2017.¹²⁷ Positions being filled by women in

Analysts observed that female inclusivity during management of the COVID-19 crisis was not reflective of their contributions to national development and that women bore a disproportionate burden. They observed, too, that the Roadmap to Recovery Team established by the Government to develop medium to long-term socio-economic solutions to the crisis, has only 2 females of 22 members.

Activists argued that as a group that has been negatively impacted by the pandemic, women should have equal input to the recovery.¹²⁸ Other groups that claimed marginalization of Muslim religious leaders¹²⁹ and of the disabled, with the Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association (TTBWA) requesting that information on COVID-19 be provided in multiple formats so that vision- and hearing-impaired persons can also be properly informed.¹³⁰

On the issue of trust in Government institutions, an IDB 2018 study highlighted how public institutions are perceived by Trinbagonians. Citizens acknowledged that the country has a

122. <https://reliefweb.int/report/trinidad-and-tobago/iom-supports-response-human-trafficking-and-gender-based-violence>.

123. Addressing GBV Central to COVID-19 Recovery, <https://sta.uwi.edu/news/releases/release.asp?id=22082>.

124. *Ibid.*

125. <https://www.social.gov.tt/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/18-Draft-National-Policy-on-Persons-With-DisabilitiesFinal-Version.pdf>.

126. Election and Boundaries Commission, cited in Draft TTO VNR

127. Central Statistical Office, cited in Draft TTO VNR

128. "Assessing the Committee of 22" https://trinidadexpress.com/opinion/columnists/assessing-the-committee-of-22/article_57233cc0-8f30-11ea-9cbe-b7300fba708f.html.

129. "Muslim Group Claims Discrimination in Govt. Funding" *Trinidad Guardian*, 16th May 2020, P. 17.

130. www.guardian.co.tt/news/blind-welfare-association-wants-covid19-response-plans-to-be-more-inclusive-6.2.1094835.36a09dc814.

functioning parliamentary democracy, has improved spending in health and education, and has effective institutions, that respect the rule of law.¹³¹ However, the report also documents citizens' perception of corruption in Government, lack of political will to address crime and insecurity, and low trust in the police.¹³² The performance of the TTO on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) in the last decade indicates the need to redouble efforts in fighting corruption.¹³³

The strong trust shown by citizens in the political leadership's

collective effort to flatten the curve of infection is not impenetrable. There is, for instance, a perceived lack of a level playing field for diverse stakeholders in the private sector during the lockdown, which created momentary tension and racist abuses.¹³⁴ This situation could recur as the economic hardships exacerbate in a post-COVID scenario, particularly against the big private sector conglomerates. Another example was the use of social media to spread divisive comments aimed at undermining humanitarian actions undertaken to support the management of the COVID-19 crisis.¹³⁵

Box 4: Building Back Better in Social Cohesion and Community Resilience

The UNCT should complement the role of the Government in strengthening social cohesion and community resilience by using a 'bottom-up', integrated grassroots development programme, with the aim of building social trust and peaceful coexistence. It should also implement more livelihood programs in rural communities to address sustainable use of resources. The community 'social dialogue' space would then be utilized to address problems related to family life, reproductive health, personal development, mediation and conflict management, and civic pride, starting with specific geographical areas that have been impacted by structural inequalities.

Criteria to be employed should include: gang-activities, acute environmental crisis, urban settlements, communities where migrants and refugees are concentrated, and locations where the beneficiaries of early release from prisons are concentrated. Institutional stakeholders to be targeted for partnership by the United Nations should include the prisons, the TTPS, the Children Authority and its Agencies, Gender Affairs Department, the Community Mediation Services Department, the Police Youth Clubs and other grassroots institutions.

131. *Institutions and Trust: A Caribbean Perspective*, <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Caribbean-Region-Quarterly-Bulletin-Volume-7-Issue-1-March-2018.pdf>, 132. *Ibid.* See page 31.

133. <https://newsday.co.tt/2020/01/23/tt-falls-seven-spots-on-2019-corruption-perception-index/>. See also, <https://tradingeconomics.com/trinidad-and-tobago/corruption-index>.

134. "Clear up Doubles Trouble" https://trinidatexpress.com/opinion/editorials/clear-up-doubles-troubles/article_23bcacf8-779d-11ea-8ce9-93cd938d941a.html.

135. <https://www.stabroeknews.com/2020/05/16/news/regional/trinidad/trinidad-derek-chin-hurt-over-social-media-comments/>



VI. PEOPLE MOST AT RISK

RAPID ASSESSMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON **TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**.

There are certain categories of Trinbagonians and persons living in the country (see 6.1.1- 6.1.8 below) that belong to the most vulnerable groups. ***They have either not fully benefitted from the Government's social relief or have been insufficiently covered.*** Some of these persons do not have the capacity to access the support or lack the pre-requisite to be successful in their application for support. In some situations, they had benefitted but the support packages have not met their most important social, economic and psychosocial needs due to insufficient diagnosis and/or mapping of complexities that ought to have been considered.

In addition, some of them have had their pre-COVID-19 vulnerabilities heightened due to the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. Some also live in outlier/remote communities with complex vulnerabilities that predated the advent of COVID-19, and whose exposure to additional risks, if not addressed, could potentially reverse the gains recorded by TTO in flattening the curve of infections.

6.1.1 WOMEN/GIRLS + FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

Women and girls are amongst the most vulnerable to the socio-economic shocks presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Women are overrepresented in some of the worst affected sectors: at the front line of the health sector (75% globally), heavily involved in the tourist sector, the informal sector and in SMEs. They also bear the brunt of unpaid care work, performing more than three times as much as men globally – a burden which has exponentially increased with the closing of schools, day care centers and elderly care provision. There is also a blurred line between work life and family life especially to those doing work from home, which in consequence is deepening

already existing inequalities in the gender division of labour. COVID-19 has also worsened intimate partner violence and domestic violence has increased dramatically over the course of total lockdowns (in many cases of upwards of 25%), while crowded homes, substance abuse, limited access to services and reduced peer support are exacerbating these conditions. Migrant and refugee women are in particularly precarious situations, exposed to xenophobia, violence and facing discrimination in accessing services and social protections. Lack of adequate counselling and psychosocial support, as well as safe and secure tools for reporting sexual violence continues to undermine the achievement of a violence-free country for women and girls.

In times of economic difficulties and social tension, women, as primary providers for their families, become exposed to increased risk of sexual exploitation and abuse. Women's domination of the informal, low-wage economic activities would also expose them increased mental stress, and high 'out of pocket' health spending for their dependents could undermine their and their dependents' access to medicare. Supporting women and women headed households needs to be a targeted strategy of social protection programmes and recovery - aiming to leave no one behind and to support those who are most vulnerable. This means active measures to identify and reach those normally not captured in formal social protection systems such as home workers, informal casual, seasonal and, self-employed.

Schemes could include non-contributory pensions for elderly women, the broadening of food policies targeting elderly, pregnant, women and girls, the extension of ad-hoc payments and cash transfers for those previously not captured in the system, suspension of tax payments or exemptions for sectors such as tourism that are highly feminized. Female-headed households could receive time-bound suspension of essential

services such as water, electricity and gas. Additionally, active measures should be taken to capture women in formal banking and credit systems and benefit from stimulus support through credit expansion.

Given the impending labour crisis precipitated by the pandemic, women could become less competitive in the workplace as employers will “go with more productive employees; the ones who don’t have family responsibilities and can give the maximum amount of work from home”.¹³⁶ Public and private sector will have to work together to maintain income support and ensure women remain active in the economic sector.

This means active measures to facilitate flexi work policies while schools remain closed, revised leave policies to enable female workers to care for sick family members and as social distancing measures relax, the provision of subsidies and vouchers to hire care workers. It means protecting income and jobs and supporting business continuity of the weakest links of the supply chain, especially MSMEs and Women- Owned Business, and protecting key stakeholders of their value chains such as their distributors, commercial channels and customers in the marketplace is vital for supporting women; moreover, there is an urgent need for communication campaigns for the promotion of shared responsibilities of parenting, domestic chores and care work within the household.

6.1.2 CHILDREN

One of the groups most impacted by the social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are children. In particular, children in ‘high risk’ communities with a prevalence of gang violence, sexual exploitation and other form of violence; children that had been previously sexually exploited and were being given treatment,

counselling and other form of support prior to the crisis; children of migrants, refugees and others displaced by climate change impacts; children with disabilities; and children with learning difficulties, requiring special attention and support, fall in the category of the most vulnerable. Targeted programmes of care for these children were largely missing from the Government’s response plans. In addition, some children with infirmed and/ or dead relatives during the crisis could have been subjected to emotional and psychological trauma and could potentially need counselling and other forms of support.

During the COVID-19 lockdown and restriction of movements, all physical schooling activities were suspended. The immediate closure of schools as an early response to the pandemic resulted in schools and school- based material including school-based sports, diversions and counselling programmes. being accessed in person physically The closure, coupled with new requirements of social distancing increased parenting responsibilities and the additional time to be dedicated to childcare by parents, which female parents, having an increased parenting load A UNICEF Survey indicated that during the lockdown, 91.3 percent of children were living with the parents, of which 31.5 percent live with just their mother and 4.9 percent lived with their father.¹³⁷ The combination of homeschooling and teleworking increased the stress level in parents and explains occasional slippage in supervision.

Digital education has advantages and disadvantages. Some of the challenges encountered in navigating the digital world include uneven access to the necessary tools and technologies, limited digital literacy by teachers and students, challenges of adaptation to newly established platforms for undertaking ‘formal’ processes required for competence and confidence, and uncertainties over the effectiveness of the digital system.¹³⁸ Other challenges include lack of support services for students with physical and learning impairments, absence

136. <https://antiguaobserver.com/experts-address-working-from-home-concerns/>.

137. “The Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Children and Young People in the Eastern Caribbean Area” April 2020.

138. Trinidad and Tobago’s Education Digital Divide, <https://globalvoices.org/2020/05/08/covid-19-and-trinidad-and-tobago-educations-digital-divide/>.

of an online learning system that takes into account students stressful home environments, as well as the peculiarities of children with poor parental care and support. Other challenges include the need to assess the disparities in IT facilities across the schools (in urban and rural areas) to not disadvantage the latter's academic performance in Secondary School Entrance Assessment (SEA), including electricity supplies and security. Children from low income households with limited access to internet services, lack of computers and illiterate parents experienced a higher degree of disruption to their learning.

Government provided meal tickets to parents of children who hitherto benefitted from the school feeding programme before the COVID-19 crisis, there were no mechanism to ensure that those from dysfunctional families were supported to ensure that nutritional food was provided to the children. Children in under-resourced public schools in remote locations were supported with teaching modules on the state-owned TTT daily but this was not customized to the needs all categories. Whilst private schools seamlessly migrated to online platforms within weeks of the COVID-19 crisis, many public schools in rural areas were unable to do so. Also, given the educationally disadvantaged status of the students from such areas, confidence to use computer-based learning and online tools deterred many from utilizing the GORTT's Learning Portal. This digital divide created immediate disadvantage as children in public schools experienced only limited disruption in knowledge acquisition and an uneven playing field for private and public schools in external post-primary qualification examinations later in 2020.¹³⁹

Among those at risk are students set to write qualifying examinations later in 2020. The GORTT decided that the July/August 2020 examinations would proceed as planned. Initial concerns with the format for holding the primary and secondary examinations included the following:

- *fair access to all students if examinations migrate to an online format;*
- *provisions to that guarantee students in remote or rural areas, those with disabilities, and those with no (or low-quality) access to the internet or to computers or tablets will not be at a disadvantage during examinations; access;*
- *ensuring that test security is maintained mechanisms to that can prevent test manipulation or item leakage; and*
- *the abilities to prepare students from different socioeconomic backgrounds for the new format/delivery of examinations in an equitable and fair way, given the disruption of classroom learning.¹⁴⁰*

6.1.3 INFORMAL SECTOR WORKERS

The International Labour Organization (ILO) observed that persons who work in informal enterprises, unregistered small-scale units employing ten or fewer undeclared, low-skilled, mainly female workers, those who labour in precarious conditions without social protection or health safety measures at the workplace fall into the category of the most vulnerable to labour exploitation, loss of jobs, and other forms of economic shocks.¹⁴¹

In TTO, underserved areas for informal sector workers include support for small enterprises with low financial capacities, measures aimed at reducing the exposure of workers and their families to infection, systematic capital and advisory support for recovery enterprises from supplies chain disruptions to safeguard jobs, and provision of alternative livelihoods for semi-

139. CXC Announces Strategy for the Administration of May/June Examination, <https://www.cxc.org/may-june-strategy-2020/>.

140. High-Stakes School Exams during COVID-19, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/high-stakes-school-exams-during-covid-19-coronavirus-what-best-approach>.

141. "COVID-19 crisis and the informal economy: Immediate responses and policy challenges, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/briefingnote/wcms_743623.pdf.

skilled workers who experienced loss of jobs but are willing to engage in other forms of self-employment. Farmers and fisherfolk, many of whom despite exhibiting extreme resilience to the COVID-19 shocks, have been exposed to increasing losses due to the economic impacts of climate change, robberies and larceny, weak adoption of new technologies and innovative value-chain developments.

Reports of non-transparent disengagement by some companies,¹⁴² suggest that support may be required for collective bargaining by non-unionized workers to ensure fairness and equity in retrenchment. A WFP Survey indicates that 62 percent of respondents who lost their livelihoods had resorted to negative coping mechanisms. The Survey noted that “the psychological impact is affecting persons more than would be imagined,” with “general unwillingness to get tasks done” and “Fear to do simple everyday tasks”. The few small percentage of respondents (2 percent) with positive coping mechanisms attributed this to family bonds, appreciation of nature and good mental health. This highlights the cross-cutting nature of solutions to some of the COVID-19 challenges. It also illustrates that whilst social support is critical in the short run, an economic diversification model which puts SME development at its centre is critical to overall recovery of the country.

6.1.4 PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, VICTIMS OF GBV, UNDERLYING MEDICAL CONDITIONS, LGBTIQ PLWHA AND OLDER PERSONS

The first major risk factor to these persons is their underlying physical and medical incapacitations. Their weak resistance to illness might expose them to risk of infection. Depression associated with COVID-19 could potentially be higher in these

persons who often category inadequate psychosocial support. Challenges for PLWHA and the LGBTIQ include safety concerns concerning with revealing their identities, which has made it difficult for them to access Government social relief programmes. For those in rural areas, logistical challenges discouraged them from applying to and benefiting from the social relief supports.

For victims of domestic violence, additional challenges include stigmatization, fear of re-victimization by perpetrators, and concerns over insecurity. Due to poverty, these groups also often lack access to basic internet access. There are no structures to implement these services in safe homes where the most vulnerable persons are sheltered. Additionally, there are insufficient Governmental and non-governmental service providers to ensure access to these services by vulnerable persons.

For the elderly, the risk of infection to COVID-19 is higher than for younger persons. Many of the elderly are also susceptible to non-communicable diseases, particularly diabetes, hypertension and high-blood pressure. Given uncertainties over how problematic new infections can become, this group could be at the highest risk of infection require special support to prevent infections. Support should be given to elderly homes to implement policies developed using global best practices to prevent them from becoming hotspots for the disease.

6.1.5 DWELLERS IN URBAN SETTLEMENTS AND UNDERSERVED RURAL COMMUNITIES

The Land Settlement Agency of Trinidad and Tobago estimates approximately 300,000 squatters in the country, representing 50,000 households. It also attributes squatting to an inability

142. *Private Security Firms hit by COVID-19 Pandemic* Trinidad Guardian, May 1, 2020 P. 15.

to access land in the real estate market, leading to unplanned settlements. The characteristics of such settlements include lack of security of tenure; inadequate access to basic services and utilities; poor quality housing in terms of durability, adequacy and design; inaccessibility; non-adherence to building codes; and displacement and relocation issues.¹⁴² These challenges make these settlements susceptible to the impact of flooding, as well as outbreak of tropical diseases, especially during the rainy seasons.

Despite the best efforts of the GORTT, some urban settlements lack quality access to social services, resulting at times in exposure to diseases within these areas. They most often lack adequate water supply to fulfil the minimum hygiene standards. They may have insufficient financial resources to pay out of pocket for medical needs. They often live in cramped buildings which makes social distancing difficult, often inadequate. Challenges with enforcement of lockdown and social distancing measures during the period of restriction indicate the need for targeted and sustained social dialogues with NGOs and CBOs to ensure adherence to safety measures. Some of these communities' unplanned settlements lack easy access to abodes with minimal space between structures, modern toilet facilities, and proper ventilation in the home. This could jeopardize the health of residents and of health and social workers. In these areas, persons socialize in close proximity with one another, with little respect for health hazards.

In the rural areas, access to basic services are also limited due to aged infrastructure. Many Venezuelans who migrate unofficially to Trinidad arrive through these rural communities, thus exposing the dwellers to health risks. The GORTT confirmed reduction in illegal activities and other 'black market' operations due to closure of the Venezuelan borders, special operations of the Trinidad Coast Guard and the recent upgrading of the TTO radar system, but reports of new arrivals during the lockdown period were recorded.¹⁴³ There

were also reports of increased illegal importation of wildlife from Venezuela, and the pollution of the seas through illegal dumping.¹⁴⁴ Given that COVID-19 emergence is traceable to meat sold at a wild animal market in Wuhan, China, unregulated importation of wildlife and pet trade from Venezuela, often through these remote villages, comes with a potential risk of a new wave of infection.¹⁴⁵ Whilst continued sensitization of COVID-19 is useful for the villages, regular supply of basic social services is critical to consolidating the current COVID-free status of TTO.

6.1.6 MIGRANTS, REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITIES

Following the registration of over 16,000 Venezuelan migrants and refugees in 2019, the demography, skill sets and other data mined from the migrants were not publicized by the Government. The absence of such data sets provided challenges for the R4V Platform in providing comprehensive livelihoods support programmes for migrants and refugees. The information may have been useful in the strategic deployment of the absence of an approved data bank limits opportunity for migrants with specific skills in areas with labour gaps to add value to local productivity. A worsened post-COVID unemployment situation could lead to more desperate competition for jobs and restrict the integration and acceptance of migrants within local communities. Lingering challenges which could be aggravated by COVID-19 crisis include overcrowded living conditions, poor access to healthcare, risk of de-prioritization of migrants and refugee issues by national authorities, and hazards related to unsafe travel by newly arrived refugees and migrants.

New arrivals from Venezuela during the lockdown led to illegal settlements along the coast, such as on the Icacos beach.¹⁴⁶

142. <https://mirror.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=11012&catid=592&typeid=79>.

143. <https://www.looptt.com/content/trinidadians-caught-sending-vessels-venezuela>. See also, <https://www.cnc3.co.tt/14-venezuelans-quarantined-after-coast-guard-rescue-operation/>.

144. "Poachers dump animals into sea from Venezuela" *Trinidad Guardian*, June 3 2020. P. 9.

145. <https://www.looptt.com/content/man-woman-held-capuchin-monkey-yellow-headed-parrot>. <https://www.looptt.com/content/2-held-43-parrots-4-dead-river-otters-found-dead>.

146. <http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/venezuelan-migrants-form-small-community-on-icacos-beach-6.2.1111953.b3eectac2f>.

The unhygienic living conditions increases health hazards to the environs and the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Reports indicate continued travels of Venezuelans to Trinidad through unofficial border entry points during the lockdown.¹⁴⁷ Also, on the Cedros-Icacos axis, there are protection risks related to unsuitable accommodation, food, medicine and medicare for some of the existing and newly arrived Venezuelans. This puts the country at risk of communicable diseases and/or new COVID-19 outbreak. There are reports of hundreds of destitute families (both migrants and hosts), mainly comprising children and young persons, co-habiting in unhygienic shelters.¹⁴⁸

6.1.7 YOUTH IN HIGH RISK COMMUNITIES

For over a decade, TTO has managed an escalating crime and violence challenge with repeated setbacks. The gang-related shootings in high-risk communities have been perpetrated and inflicted on mainly young persons involved in gang culture, leading to hundreds of fatalities. This has also created a culture of violence in affected communities, militarizing young persons. The resilience of the gangs against COVID-19's impacts, could increase the risk of more fatalities to young men in the high-risk communities, as a new struggle for drug distribution turfs lead to renewed gang warfare.

Unemployment is a persistent problem which will worsen due to the disproportionately economic impacts on youths, who mostly work in low skilled jobs in the informal sector. Young women of ages 15-24 suffer higher unemployment rates compared to their male contemporaries in the Caribbean region.¹⁴⁹ As a result of unemployment, young persons (and young women in particular) could potentially suffer increased levels of frustration, aggression and violence. Persons who were displaced or suffered loss of income as a result of the

COVID-19 pandemic could become more vulnerable to being recruited into organized criminal gangs, while categories such as aged persons, the sick, users of ICT services, and others may become easy targets for mushrooming criminals. The advent of new players in the crime industry could increase turf battles, and the resumption of rival gang shootings. This could eventually result in inaccessibility to critical livelihoods and developmental programmes at the community level and deny stakeholders opportunities to create and implement livelihood initiatives.

In addition, COVID 19 restrictions led to the partial suspension of programmes aimed at providing counselling, conflict resolution and peacemaking support to communities; this could potentially lead to the disruption of scheduled yearly camps and other outreach programmes usually scheduled for the July/August holiday session. Some effects of this included the following:

- *Diminished fundraising opportunities for NGOs, CBOs and charities should be addressed, especially since economic slowdown will reduce CSR and philanthropy.*
- *The inability of the Community Mediation Services Division (CMSD) and the Police Youth Clubs (PYCs) to optimize their services due to a lack of adequate infrastructure for the programmes and for the serviced communities to migrate online;*
- *Only a few Police Youth Clubs (PYCs) undertook youth development activities online during the lockdown, but these were accessible by a limited number of young persons in 'high-risk' communities;*
- *the lack of physical contacts and connections could*

147. 32 Venezuelans quarantined after coast guard rescue operation, *Trinidad Guardian*, 23rd May 2020. P. 11.

148. *Ibid.*

149. See "Implementation of the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development in the Caribbean", https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/44473/1/S1801148_en.pdf;

undermine the effectiveness of online delivery of such programmes. There is also no record of the adaptation of the CMSD and PYCs programmes to address some of the peculiar COVID-19 challenges young persons might have been facing in their communities during the lockdown.¹⁵⁰ ; and

- *The reach and impacts of the PYCs' initiatives were greatly limited due to insufficient funding and safety concerns of members.*

positive in itself, could pose additional risks, except if it is accompanied by clearly defined and effective monitoring, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. Finally, a less than conducive prisons atmosphere could potentially expose the lives of prison warders to danger.

6.1.8 PRISON POPULATION

The physical health of the prison population is often much poorer than that of the general population. Though the prisons in TTO are not overcrowded¹⁵¹, some of them are challenged by unsanitary situations, ageing facilities and infrastructure, inadequately trained staff, and abuse of contraband drugs by inmates. This makes them vulnerable to blood-borne diseases, inadequate medicine and medicare facilities, mental health challenges that could lead to high-risk behaviours, and safety challenges due to gang rivalry. For example, insufficient funding to implement a safe visitation programme could lead to infections within the prison, and lead to other negative consequences. In the absence of adequate resourcing of prisons to fight COVID-19, any new outbreak of the virus could lead to violence, civil unrest, and human rights concerns, and result in citizens' diminished trust in the public authorities to protect the rights of the most vulnerable prisoners.

Any prolonged delay in the administration of justice could lead to a perception of breach of human rights and heighten anxieties within the prisons. In environments with criminogenic factors that pushed previous offenders into cycles of recidivism, the early release of prisoners by the TTO Government, whilst

150. *Their activities were largely sensitization of older members of the local communities against domestic violence, distribution of meals and hampers to members of communities in need, and online COVID-19 awareness for youth.*

151. *World Prisons Brief Data, <https://www.prisonstudies.org>.*



VII. CONCLUSION

RAPID ASSESSMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON **TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**.

The strategies adopted by the government resulted in the successful management of the COVID-19 pandemic. The strategies included restricting the movement of the majority of the society and effectively putting the economy on hold in order to restrict the spread of the virus through communities, minimize case loads, limit mortality. The success of these strategies also reflected the widespread support of the population in adhering to the guidelines set out by government even though it affected income generation and ultimately the standard of living. Beyond the health crisis, government measures to provide an increased social safety net, to limit the loss of jobs and to support the educational needs of the children also delivered a degree of comfort despite the unprecedented strain on national resources and reserves. The government interventions were ably supported through the United Nations Country Team COVID-19 response and assistance to Trinidad and Tobago. UNCT's initiatives within the early months of the pandemic (March-June 2020) at an estimated cost of USD \$3.4 Mn complemented government efforts to **build back better** and deliver social, economic, and public health service to all of society, especially the most vulnerable communities.

While the efforts of government, complemented by the work of the UNCT, delivered much needed support and relief to the population, there are **some** gaps in delivery to the most at risk sections of the population. Delivery could be further challenged as the country focuses on stabilizing the economy and restarting growth. Sustainable financing of future economic growth will be key to determining how fast Trinidad & Tobago can recover. With limited resources available, moving from resilience to economic rebound will require the prioritization of where these resources are best directed to avoid the disastrous consequences of massive deficits and aspects of some groups in the society being left behind. The Government's Road to Recovery Plan seeks to address the pathway to recovery and growth and may distinguish between sectors that can navigate the crisis safely, and others that may need structural change. Digitalization of government services to increase delivery to the population, to improve productivity in the workplace, and

a re-engineering of the social contract between government and the private sector are measures that can help reach those that are more severely impacted by the social and economic consequences of the pandemic.

Concurrently, the UNCT's socio economic plan, developed in consultation with government counterparts across ministries and state agencies, and aligned to the UN's 5 pillar socio economic framework, is intended to support the efforts of government's Road to Recovery measures in response to the existing gaps in social and economic service delivery to marginalized and vulnerable citizens and communities. The plan is formulated along five streams of work as follows:

- 1. ensuring that essential health services are still available and protecting health systems;*
- 2. helping people cope with adversity, through social protection and basic services;*
- 3. protecting jobs, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, and informal sector workers through economic response and recovery programmes;*
- 4. guiding the necessary surge in fiscal and financial stimulus to make macroeconomic policies work for the most vulnerable and strengthening multilateral and regional responses; and*
- 5. promoting social cohesion and investing in community-led resilience and response systems.*

The measures contained in the plan (attached as **Annex 1**) are proposed to be implemented jointly with government through the existing Multi-country Sustainable Development Framework (MSDF)/Country Implementation Plan (CIP) mechanism to ensure integration within government's work agenda, accountability and measurement.

UNITED NATIONS RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

The socio economic recovery plan sets out the United Nations Country Team's support to Trinidad and Tobago in the face of COVID-19, putting in practise the socio-economic response framework offered by the United Nations Development System (UNDS) to protect the needs and rights of the population living under the duress of the pandemic, to preserve the gains with respect to the SDGs made pre COVID-19, and to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The Plan was developed based on the following:

- the preceding rapid socio economic assessment that offered insight into COVID-19 management responses by the government and the UNCT, and probable gaps that may still exist; and
- close collaboration with government ministries and agencies so that proposed interventions can match the short and medium term development needs of the country and complement government's Road to Recovery Plan.

Interventions are formulated against five streams of work:

1. ensuring that essential health services are still available and protecting health systems;
2. helping people cope with adversity, through social protection and basic services;
3. protecting jobs, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, and informal sector workers through economic response and recovery programmes;
4. guiding the necessary surge in fiscal and financial stimulus to make macroeconomic policies work for the most vulnerable and strengthening multilateral and regional responses; and
5. promoting social cohesion and investing in community-led resilience and response systems.

The total estimated cost of the Plan is USD 46,423,741.



PILLAR 1:

HEALTH FIRST: Protecting Health Services and Systems during the crisis

Area of Response	Actions to be taken	Lead Agency	Implementing partner (Ministry, State agency, NGO etc.)	Resource Requirements (\$)
Provide analytical and policy support, and rapid technical guidance	Technical guidance through provision of relevant guidance and tools to ensure sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are prioritized	UNFPA	Ministry of Health - Directorate of Women's Health, HACU, PPU, Psychological Support Unit; FPATT; Mamatoto; MRF;	
	SRH service mapping to ensure appropriate and timely referrals to live-saving SRH services, including clinical management of rape.	UNFPA/ NACC	NACC; MOH - Directorate of Women's Health, HACU, PPU	
	Assessment of RH Commodities stock-outs and challenges in supply and distribution.	UNFPA	Ministry of Health - Population Programme Unit; Directorate of Women's Health; CMO/ Chief Pharmacist	
	Technical and financial support reorganizing models of care such as SRH telemedicine for continued antenatal and prenatal care, and contraceptives delivery/mobile including HIV counselling and rapid testing.	UNFPA	FPATT	USD 25,890
	Strengthening of GBV referral pathway including gender-sensitive SOPs at each intervention level of the pathway including health, police, judiciary, social sector	UNFPA		
	Assessment of the Supply Chain Management System (including NIPDEC) and develop a costed implementation plan of action	PAHO	Ministry of Health - Drug Inspectorate Unit	USD 21,000

Area of Response	Actions to be taken	Lead Agency	Implementing partner (Ministry, State agency, NGO etc.)	Resource Requirements (\$)
Provide analytical and policy support, and rapid technical guidance	Translate, design and disseminate communication products with key information from Ministry of Health on COVID-19, targeted at Venezuelan migrants and refugees	IOM	Ministry of Health	USD 30,000
	Support to active surveillance, including health screening, referral and data collection at POE. Support to the development and dissemination of POE specific standard operating procedures (SOPs) for detection, notification, isolation, management and referral, including the development of training curricula and manuals. Training of immigration and border/port health staff on SOP to manage ill travelers and on infection prevention and control. Monitor and map impacted Points of Entry, status of flows and support collection of information in PoEs relevant for IOM and WHO.	IOM	Ministry of Health/ Ministry of National Security (Immigration Division)	USD 310,000
	Provision of administrative support to the Ministry of Health and Regional Health Authorities to recruit nurses for frontline COVID-19 response, and facilitate the procurement of medical equipment, PPE, including high flow nasal cannula machines, cardiac monitors, ultrasound machines, and video laryngoscopes for better intubation	UNDPA	Ministry of Health	USD 8,000,000
Programme implementation and technical support	Provision of PPE to essential SRH/ HIV and GBV-related healthcare providers, including Clinical Management of Rape, HIV and STI treatment and counselling	UNFPA	Medical Research Foundation; other CSOs and Government	USD 1,000,000
	Support to the Caribbean Regional Midwives Association- capacity building of midwives across the Caribbean in infection control measures, updates and training on guidelines related to COVID-19 and maternal care and production of relevant material	UNFPA	Caribbean Midwives Association	USD 20,000

Area of Response	Actions to be taken	Lead Agency	Implementing partner (Ministry, State agency, NGO etc.)	Resource Requirements (\$)
Programme implementation and technical support	Provide technical assistance to central and local government agencies- ODPM, MNS, Immigration Division	IOM	ODPM/Ministry of National Security	USD 100,000
	Provide support to improve health care facilities and services, including training and increase of health staff and equipment (will cover case management and continuity of essential services while ensuring improve logistics, procurement and supply management)	IOM	Ministry of Health	USD 200,000
Support on tracking and reaching vulnerable populations	Support the Ministry of Health in implementation of outreach and mental health services	UNDP	Ministry of Health	USD 3,000,000
	Production and dissemination of various information products in Spanish and English on SRH/ HIV-related matters in the times of COVID-19	UNFPA	MOH Directorate of Women's Health; NACC; FPATT; MRF; TTAM; other CSOs	USD 30,000
	Regional assessment on measuring the impact of COVID-10 on mortality levels due to COVID-19 on the population	UNFPA	Ministry of Health	USD 100,000
	Develop and implement Information System for Health Action Plan	PAHO	MOH- Information and Communication Technology ICT Division	USD 25,650
	Develop Situational Analysis for the National Strategic Plan for Women, Children and Adolescents	PAHO	MOH-Directorate of Women's Health	USD 20,000
	Track and monitor population mobility through DTM to regularly and systematically capture, process and disseminate information to provide a better understanding of the movements and evolving needs of the Venezuelan population.	IOM		USD 80,000
	Provide rehabilitation, aftercare counselling and mentorship support for victims of crime and violence in communities	IOM		USD 150,000
			Total	USD 13,112,540



PILLAR 2:

PROTECTING PEOPLE: Social Protection and Basic Services

Area of Response	Actions to be taken	Lead Agency	Implementing partner (Ministry, State agency, NGO etc.)	Resource Requirements (\$)
Scale up and expand resilient and pro-poor social protection systems	Strengthen linkages between family farming agriculture and the school feeding programme	FAO	Ministry of Education, National School Dietary Services Limited, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, THA, Ministry of Social Protection	USD 30,000
	Establish a unified social registry for all social assistance programmes including provisions to migrant population	UNDP/ UNICEF	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services	USD 200,000
	Implementation of online socio-economic rapid assessments to identify vulnerable groups and bring them into social registry	UNDP	Ministry of Social Development, Family services	USD 250,000
	Support scale up of social assistance to impacted populations and the strengthening of social protection systems to respond to shocks	WFP	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services	USD 200,000
Maintain essential food and nutrition services	Assess and support basic food availability and supply chains, with special focus on poor and vulnerable populations in marginalized communities that are disproportionately affected by the COVID19 outbreak and the subsequent responses.	FAO	UNDP, WFP, Ministry of Agriculture	USD 200,000
	Food/NFI/Shelter Distribution in communities across North and South Trinidad and Tobago.	IOM/UN Women		USD 100,000
	Provision of Cash Assistance and Food Baskets-UNHCR continues the provision of cash assistance through its Cash-Based Intervention programme, supplemented by support to NGOs for the provision of food baskets/hampers. Revision of procedures to administer CBI amidst current restrictions and impact of Covid-19 is underway.	UNHCR		USD 540,000

Area of Response	Actions to be taken	Lead Agency	Implementing partner (Ministry, State agency, NGO etc.)	Resource Requirements (\$)
Maintain essential food and nutrition services	Strengthen value chains and logistical arrangements from farm to market	FAO	UNDP, Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries	USD 250,000
	Strengthen food safety and certification systems among small poultry producers	FAO	UWI, Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries	USD 30,000
	Build agricultural resilience, inclusive of data collection and analysis for policy and evidence based decision making, to enhance domestic production	FAO	Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries	USD 280,000
	Biodiversity conservation and management - making planting material for enhancing domestic production, value chains, marketing and distribution for four selected commodities	FAO	Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, EMA, THA, NAMDEVCO	USD 500,000
	Provision of support to vulnerable households in response to COVID-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify 400 vulnerable households based on lists provided from the Ministry of Social Development inclusive of persons with disabilities; Provide 400 food vouchers to vulnerable households; Provide referrals to UNDP of households with persons with disabilities (for the implementation of the SEIA questionnaire) 	UNDP	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services	USD 137,000
	Implementation of a Grow Garden initiative which aims to enhance citizen security, contribute to violence prevention and introduce agriculture in order to improve food security in Trinidad and Tobago. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1000 at-risk youth and vulnerable families to be recipients of Grow Garden Kits 10 training videos to be produced to aid participants in establishing grow gardens 	UNDP GEFSGP FAO	Ministry of National Security (Police Youth Clubs; National Crime Prevention Programme)	USD 105,000

Area of Response	Actions to be taken	Lead Agency	Implementing partner (Ministry, State agency, NGO etc.)	Resource Requirements (\$)
Maintain essential food and nutrition services	Provision of food assistance to the vulnerable Venezuelan population	IOM	UN Women	USD 132,450
	Provision of NFI to vulnerable refugees and migrants from Venezuela and host communities	IOM	Living Water Community	USD 210,000
	Migrant families with children 0-5 are receiving nutritional counselling information, information on Covid-19 prevention and immunization	UNICEF	NGO partner	USD 14,281
	Migrant families of all school age children are provided with food packages during school closure	UNICEF	Living Water Community	USD 100,000
	Implementation of CARICOM COVID-19 Food Security and Livelihoods Impact Surveys	WFP	CARICOM Secretariat, FAO, CDEMA and national counterparts	USD 30,000
Ensure continuity and quality of water and sanitation services	Provide training and capacity building on environmentally sound management and best available technology (BAT) for disposal of highly infection waste streams- map national capacities, identify gaps and advise on both stop-gap and longer-term solutions, including any training needs as well as with preparing protocols on medical waste handling and disposal. Sensitization sessions on biomedical waste management and on promotion of waste prevention and minimization on the national scale to reduce pressure posed on the infrastructure during emergency period.	UNEP	Ministry of Planning and Development	USD 200,000
Secure sustained learning for all children, and adolescents, preferably in schools but also including out of school and unattached youth	Provide guidance to Ministries of Education for the safe reopening of schools and distribution of critical hygiene and prevention items for use in schools; (School level Hygiene Kit)	UNICEF	Ministry of Education and Local NGO	USD 400,000
	Conduct Rapid Assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on households (including with children) in Trinidad and Tobago, based on telephone interviews using Random Digit Dialing	UNICEF	REACH Initiative	

Area of Response	Actions to be taken	Lead Agency	Implementing partner (Ministry, State agency, NGO etc.)	Resource Requirements (\$)
<p>Secure sustained learning for all children, and adolescents, preferably in schools but also including out of school and unattached youth</p>	<p>Support for the delivery of education through online platforms and support with community level connectivity for under privileged (including connectivity and provision of tablets to underprivileged children to access online educational support)</p>	<p>UNICEF</p>	<p>Ministry of Education and Local NGO</p>	<p>USD 900,000</p>
	<p>Training of teachers to use online platforms while schools are closed and training on safe opening of schools</p>	<p>UNICEF</p>	<p>Ministry of Education</p>	<p>USD 500,000</p>
	<p>Provide parents/primary caregivers with guidance to provide emotional and psychosocial support to their children via virtual-platforms</p>	<p>UNICEF</p>	<p>Ministry of Education and NGO Partner</p>	<p>USD 50,000</p>
	<p>Support counselling programs to support parents and caregivers in the prenatal and post-natal period with quality ECD services in safe and supportive environments, as well as high-quality early experiences in community-based settings.</p>	<p>UNICEF</p>	<p>Living Water Community</p>	<p>USD 20,115</p>
	<p>Provide migrant children with data packages to support the continuity of online education</p>	<p>UNICEF</p>	<p>Living Water Community</p>	<p>USD 10,572</p>
	<p>Strengthen online education via updating the platform to provide offline capability, adapting curriculum and methodological tools to meet the existing cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as to reduce barriers and exclusion factors</p>	<p>UNICEF</p>	<p>Living Water Community</p>	<p>USD 6,995</p>
	<p>Provide training to teachers and other education personnel to respond to psychosocial issues in a diverse language, cultural, and learning environment</p>	<p>UNICEF</p>	<p>Ministry of Education and Local NGO</p>	<p>USD 50,000</p>
	<p>Organization of catch up classes for vulnerable children who missed out on education during school closure</p>	<p>UNICEF</p>	<p>Ministry of Education and NGO Partner</p>	<p>USD 500,000</p>

Area of Response	Actions to be taken	Lead Agency	Implementing partner (Ministry, State agency, NGO etc.)	Resource Requirements (\$)
Secure sustained learning for all children, and adolescents, preferably in schools but also including out of school and unattached youth	Partnership with the Prison Service of Trinidad and Tobago to respond to the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic presents to the population of incarcerated youth at the Youth Transformation and Rehabilitation Centre (YTRC- youth detention centre). This is being done through the provision of psychosocial interventions, education in areas such as conflict resolution, anger management, peer mentorship, resilience building and through online platforms	UNDP	Youth Transformation and Rehabilitation Centre- Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service- Ministry of National Security	USD 2,000,000
	Provision of laptops to 25 Police Youth Clubs to support online learning to at-risk youth during the lockdown period.	UNDP	Police Youth Clubs, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, Ministry of National Security	USD 30,000
Support the continuity of social services and access to shelters	Ensure implementation and/ or scale up of HFLE/CSE programmes for in-school and out-of-school/unattached youth	UNFPA		
	Ensure frontline workers (health, education, social services professionals, community workers) access psychosocial support and PSS training; Recruitment of tele-MHPSS Service Provider for frontline workers and caregivers the Eastern Caribbean in progress. Roll-out of e-Seminars to 12 ECA countries including TnT, on providing Psychosocial First Aid to children and others requiring support	UNICEF		USD 200,000
		PAHO		USD 20,000
	Provision of hygiene kits to children in state care; OPM notification in process for data collection and operationalization	UNICEF	Office of the Prime Minister	USD 36,000
	Provide psychosocial support to children, adolescents and their caregivers through innovative modalities responding to the Covid-19 pandemic	UNICEF	Living Water Community; ChildLine	USD 46,414
	Conduct the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on migrant children in Trinidad and Tobago	UNICEF		

Area of Response	Actions to be taken	Lead Agency	Implementing partner (Ministry, State agency, NGO etc.)	Resource Requirements (\$)
Support the continuity of social services and access to shelters	Support the provision of hygiene products for shelters and dignity kits for those most in need	UNFPA	OPM Gender Affairs; Women of Substance; and shelters	USD 50,000
	Production of guidelines for shelters in responding to COVID-19; and guidelines for the management of shelters	UNFPA	OPM Gender Affairs; CSOs; shelters	
	Provide access to temporary accommodation through strengthening the capacities and/or creation of accommodation for refugees and migrants from Venezuela	IOM		USD 200,000
	Identification, orientation, counselling, specialized assistance, referral and case management to victims or potential victims of trafficking	IOM		USD 70,000
	Support interventions that mitigate against increased incidences of family violence and human rights infringements in identified local at-risk communities due to COVID19 related increased isolation	UNFPA	UNHCR	USD 300,000
Support victims of Gender-Based Violence (GBV)	Support the mapping and updating of GBV services and referral pathways for survivors and other key populations such as migrants and refugees, persons living with HIV, women and girls, young people	UNFPA	Rape Crisis Society	
	Support the coordination and provision of life saving GBV (psychosocial support; shelter; health care; hygiene kits, etc.) and SRH services (prevention and treatment of HIV and other STIs; antenatal care; family planning, clinical management of rape) in response to COVID-19	UNFPA	Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago	USD 50,000

Area of Response	Actions to be taken	Lead Agency	Implementing partner (Ministry, State agency, NGO etc.)	Resource Requirements (\$)
Support victims of Gender-Based Violence (GBV)	Provision of laptops to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, namely the Victim and Witness Support Unit and the Gender Based Violence Unit, to assist with more effective responses to family violence given the spikes recorded in reported cases during the COVID-19 lockdown period.	UNDP	Trinidad and Tobago Police Service- Domestic Violence Unit; Victim and Witness Support Unit- Ministry of National Security	USD 12,000
	Facilitation of tele-counselling and/or remote services for those impacted by GBV	UNFPA	Rape Crisis; CADV	USD 2,000
			Total	USD 8,966,851



PILLAR 3:

ECONOMIC RESPONSE AND RECOVERY: Protecting Jobs, Small and Medium sized Enterprises, and vulnerable Workers in the Informal Economy

Area of Response	Actions to be taken	Lead Agency	Implementing partner (Ministry, State agency, NGO etc.)	Resource Requirements (\$)
Integrated, country-specific policy advice and programme support	Survey of employability skills was undertaken by the NTA in Trinidad and Tobago.	ILO	NTA	USD 40,000
	Support government interventions providing soft loans to micro and small enterprises by ensuring business ideas submitted to NEDCO are properly thought through and analyzed, and that entrepreneurs have strengthened or developed new key technical and soft skills for starting and running a small business (risk management, problem solving, networking etc).	ILO	NEDCO	USD 50,000
	Provide support to government efforts to create entrepreneurship programmes for youth in agriculture	FAO	Ministry of Social Development, Family services	USD 500,00
	Strengthen policy and programmes in fisheries to build capacity for investment in rural communities for employment creation and to sustain economic activities and jobs	FAO		USD 100,000
	Collaboration with the University of the West Indies to produce ongoing assessments socio-economic impact of COVID-19 with policy recommendations for the way forward. Elaboration of short policy briefs and convening of roundtables to inform policy makers	UNDP	UNDP, WFP, Ministry of Agriculture	USD 50,000

Area of Response	Actions to be taken	Lead Agency	Implementing partner (Ministry, State agency, NGO etc.)	Resource Requirements (\$)
Integrated, country-specific policy advice and programme support	Design and roll-out of an anti-xenophobia and anti-discrimination campaign	IOM		USD 70,000
	Socio economic & Labour profile for migrants/refugees affected by COVID-19	IOM		USD 50,000
	Improve the access to employment opportunities of Venezuelan populations and host communities through labour fairs and markets	IOM		USD 150,000
Support to young people and social partners in entrepreneurship and social innovation in response to COVID-19	Promotion of social cohesion through bilingual trainings to young Venezuelan population and host communities	IOM		USD 200,000
	Support to the Venezuelan population to access self-employment or entrepreneurship initiatives	IOM		USD 40,000
	Support the Venezuelan population to access financial systems, including bank accounts access	IOM		USD 200,000
	Roll out of youth innovation labs, cultural centers to support youth in culture and arts industries and support for safe spaces and transitional homes for young people to build resilience and gain employment	UNDP		USD 2,000,000
	Undertake a socio-economic impact assessment of the effects of the COVID19 pandemic in Trinidad and Tobago that guides resource allocation and targeted program development.	ECLAC	UNDP, UNICEF, PAHO	
Rapid and gender-responsive socioeconomic assessments and labor market and business environment diagnostics Advice on nature-based solutions for development, including for SMEs	Estimate the direct and indirect COVID-19 impact on children and young people, including on education, psycho-social wellbeing, unemployment, poverty.	UNICEF	With support of USAID	

Area of Response	Actions to be taken	Lead Agency	Implementing partner (Ministry, State agency, NGO etc.)	Resource Requirements (\$)
	<p>Provide support in raising awareness of the links between nature, health and sustainable living (Biodiversity and management of zoonotic disease); raising public awareness of environment and human health links, creating public support for green growth opportunities within economic recovery, and advocating sustainable living and smart choices through communication campaigns and educational platforms; integrate environmental themes across curricula to help the country to “learn back better”.</p>	UNEP	Ministry of Planning and Development	USD 50,000
<p>Advice on nature-based solutions for development, including for SMEs</p>	<p>Provide technical expert advisory support in deployment of renewable energy & energy efficiency and climate resilience; gradually reducing fossil fuel dependency and delivering clean air and better health through electric mobility; procurement of the latest suitable LED Public lighting and their financing; water and EE efficiency procurement and their financing (pumps and systems) plus power transformer (digital +smart networks). Provide advice</p>	UNEP	Ministry of Planning and Development	USD 155,000
	<p>Support environmentally friendly cooling/AC/Refrigeration by providing remote domestic and commercial systems procurement technical expert advice, including on financing - mainly focused on public procurement measures to international norms for state/ semi-state entities and limited support to labs for Monitoring verification and enforcement (MVE), including lab upgrade; training to best international standards; Remote support for public procurement of Air Conditioners/Space Cooling systems and for Minimum Energy performance standards (MEPs) and labelling development and enforcement. Provide advisory services to help enable ongoing funding and financing to sustain the national electrical energy efficiency programme (self-funding and expansive).</p>	UNEP	Ministry of Planning and Development	USD 50,000

Area of Response	Actions to be taken	Lead Agency	Implementing partner (Ministry, State agency, NGO etc.)	Resource Requirements (\$)
Advice on nature-based solutions for development, including for SMEs	Transition to a zero carbon economy through the transition to renewable energy -support national legislative and regulatory reforms, awareness raising and implementation of pilot and large scale initiatives in the energy sector using new technologies such as solar, district cooling in line with Trinidad and Tobago's multilateral obligations to build a sustainable future	UNDP		USD 10,000,000
	Supporting national efforts to Build a digital economy -National ID project leveraging UNDP work in this area to support government efforts to introduce national ID system.	UNDP		USD 8,000,000
	Support government in introducing online payment systems, online documentation systems and other digital efforts to improve the ease of government work and of doing business, leveraging UNDPs own systems and the support it provides around the world	UNDP		USD 2,000,000
Business linkages support	A catalogue of services for women's economic empowerment will be developed under the Spotlight along with employer and worker education.	ILO/UNF PA	CSO to be determined	
Investments to improve productivity and working conditions in micro and small firms	Support to the Occupational Safety and Health Agency to develop and implement a COVID-19 response plan to reduce the risk of contagion and resume business in a safe and hazard free working environment	ILO	OSHA	USD 150,000
			Total	USD 23,855,000



PILLAR 4: SOCIAL COHESION AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Area of Response	Actions to be taken	Lead Agency	Implementing partner (Ministry, State agency, NGO etc.)	Resource Requirements (\$)
Inclusive social dialogue, advocacy, and political engagement	Development of a 30-minute television programme to be shown every day focusing on children, adolescents and families, their health and coping strategies during COVID-19 period but mainly during the stay at home period.	UNDP UNICEF PAHO	Ministry of Health, OPM (Gender and Child Affairs Division), Children's Authority	USD 100,000
Empower community resilience, participation, and equitable service delivery	Support the mapping of migrant populations, broaden and accelerate direct assistance interventions and migrant programs to mitigate effects of the COVID19 pandemic on migrant populations in Trinidad and Tobago.	UNHCR	Living Water Community	USD 255,000
	Communicating with refugee and migrant communities to provide information on services offered by UNHCR and partners, and general information on COVID19 prevention and response; UNHCR continues to disseminate information among the population of concern	UNHCR		USD 70,000
	Produce and disseminate COVID-19 related information products.	UNFPA		
	Trainings for local authorities, service providers and partners about prevention of trafficking in person and smuggling of migrants and standardization of processes for the identification, referral and case management	IOM, UNODC		USD 35,000
	Provide trainings to national and local institutions, partners and civil society organizations on GBV prevention and assistance to survivors	IOM		USD 15,000

Area of Response	Actions to be taken	Lead Agency	Implementing partner (Ministry, State agency, NGO etc.)	Resource Requirements (\$)
Empower community resilience, participation, and equitable service delivery	Develop and disseminate messages on life saving skills, protective behaviors as well as about services in the context of Covid-19 through social media and traditional channels	UNICEF		USD 14,350
Support to governance, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law	Support for parliament to conduct committee hearings, bring in expert advice and carry out its functions effectively	UNDP	Living Water Community	
	Provide law enforcement and prosecuting authorities in Trinidad and Tobago with reliable information on the modus operandi of criminal networks or individuals that are associated with human trafficking among populations migrating within the region.	UNDOC	Ministry of National Security	
	Promote new investigations and prosecutions for human trafficking cases among migration flow involving Venezuelans establishing liaison between National coordination mechanisms and law enforcement agencies and prosecutors with authority to investigate and prosecute TIP.	UNDOC	Ministry of National Security	
	Provide legal and technical support to Government to strengthen the legislation and responses to maritime crime.	UNDOC	Ministry of National Security	
	Strengthen Law Enforcement investigative capacities at the international airport and support contact tracing for persons entering the country through international airports.	UNDOC	Ministry of National Security	
			Total	USD 489,350



For more information:

United Nations

United Nations House
3A Chancery Lane
Port of Spain

Telephone : +1 (868) 623-7059 | Email : communications@untrinidadandtobago.org

Design by Gig Studio