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DEVELOPING STATES

Education  
2030

## UNESCO Caribbean Futures of Education Webinar Series presents: Webinar 1: Human and Planetary Sustainability

8 December 2020, 10:00 am - 11:30 am (GMT -5)



### Context

Students from families in the highest 20% of income distribution in the Latin America and Caribbean Region are five times more likely to complete secondary education than those students coming from families earning in the lowest 20%. This systemic inequity has been a critical challenge for Caribbean policymakers as they confront developmental challenges in the region, including poverty, lack of access to quality health care and sluggish job creation. School closures across the Caribbean region in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic has intensified concerns about growing inequities in the education systems across the region.

According to UNICEF, approximately 97% of students from Latin America and the Caribbean region were affected by these school closures. Regional governments have mobilized resources to respond to the challenges of their education systems by implementing programmes for online and distance learning to ensure continuity of learning in the short-term. Loss of earning power in low-income families may impact the ability of students to return to school when normal operations resume as parents evaluate the opportunity costs of education against short-term needs such as food and shelter.

The regional discourse around education and the pandemic highlights four common central themes that require immediate and longer-term political and programmatic support:

(1) Innovation in the development of robust instructional technology programmes across the Caribbean is vital to the future of education in the region. Challenges related to the implementation of online learning were exacerbated by systemic deficiencies including the lack of devices, lack of requisite competencies of teachers to use these technologies for instructional purposes and the lack of highly reliable internet infrastructure (predominantly in rural communities). In the long-term, development of high quality digital instructional materials and tools including games, simulations, animations, infographics, and adaptive learning tools provides opportunities for addressing longstanding issues in the education system such as inclusion and engagement.

(2) There is an urgent demand by stakeholders for resilient education systems focusing on risk management, particularly in the areas of operational continuity, safety, and adaptability in preparation for future disasters.

(3) A shift in the mental models of Caribbean policymakers toward interdisciplinary and intersectoral partnerships including private stakeholders as this is crucial in areas such as building technology infrastructure and establishing health protocols in school which were two of the deficiencies unearthed by the global pandemic.

(4) Addressing structural inequalities resulting from extreme poverty as there are still critical challenges faced by vulnerable population groups who are dependent on schools for access to nutritious meals. Also, these marginalized groups had limited or no access to internet service due to its unaffordability.

In other words, this crisis has substantiated the need for resilient education systems which can maintain core operational functions in the face of external shocks. The global pandemic allows Caribbean policymakers to accelerate the transformation of national education systems toward reducing inequities, fostering the development of robust instructional technology infrastructure and reimagine education as an essential catalyst for meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the region.

### Caribbean Webinar Series

It is against this background that in collaboration with the Education Sector, UNESCO Headquarters, the UNESCO Cluster Office for the Caribbean launched the UNESCO Caribbean Futures of Education webinar series.

This webinar series builds on the framework of UNESCO's Futures of Education Global Initiative, which seeks to reimagine education and its role in sustainable human development. In particular, the Caribbean Futures of Education webinar series aims to promote discourse on the strategies Caribbean educational systems utilize to serve their stakeholders in an increasingly complex, diverse, and interconnected global community.

During the upcoming weeks the Caribbean Futures of Education webinar series will concentrate on the role of education in addressing central challenges of human development including Human and Planetary Sustainability; Citizenship and Participation; Work and Economic Security; and Knowledge Production, Access and Governance.

Management and dissemination of relevant evidence and to inform the immediate response as well as the medium and long-term actions towards the 2030 SDG goals.

Also, considering the need for an interdisciplinary response, other vital considerations such as culture, technology and inclusion will be integrated into our discussions throughout the series.

Each webinar will be recorded and made available with presentations and reference materials on UNESCO's portal dedicated to Futures of education.

### Webinar Series n° 1: Human and Planetary Sustainability

The first webinar on December 8, 2020 will focus on Human and Planetary Sustainability and occurs in the context of a global pandemic, an escalating climate crisis and calls for sustainable mining, fishing, and agricultural practices in the Caribbean.

The Caribbean region is affected by increasingly frequent and severe tropical cyclones and droughts resulting from human activities which have damaged our ecological systems. These result in billions of dollars in damage annually and significant disruptions to economic and social activities. Additionally, Caribbean governments contend with other imminent crises, including depletion of natural resources and pollution. The World Bank estimates that only 8% of wastewater is treated before entering the Caribbean Sea. They also expressed concerns that marine litter, plastics, sewage, oil, and chemicals which enters marine water is causing extensive damage to the ecosystem<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, a study conducted by the Interamerican Development Bank (IADB) suggests that climate change could have an annual cost of US\$22 billion by 2050 (approximately 10% of the current Regional GDP). These costs include lost earnings in the tourism, agriculture, and fisheries industry as well as property damage caused by drought, flooding and severe winds.

Developing states have the added challenge of ensuring they do all they can to lift their countries out of poverty and provide decent jobs for their citizens. These additional social and political pressures in some cases provide a disincentive for the initiation and enforcement of policies which promote environmentally friendly practices.

Balancing the complex tradeoffs between economic development and mitigating damage to the environment requires a culture of innovation and citizens with a high degree of proficiency in complex problem-solving. This webinar will delve into the debate regarding the role of education in equipping Caribbean citizens to tackle these complex issues.

As such, this webinar serves to address the following questions:

- How do Caribbean states address complex issues of human ecology such as climate change, pollution, and conservation in their curricula?
- How does Caribbean culture promote or hinder efforts to produce environmentally aware students?
- What are the most effective strategies educators can utilize to promote the development of the self-regulation skills students need to be environmentally responsible?
- What roles do education and cultural diversity play in promoting innovation and change in the Caribbean?
- Which areas would have the most significant impact on preparing students to solve complex real-world problems?

### Format

This 90-minute webinar features a round of key presentation from thought leaders in education and environment and a panel of select member/ associated member states, with Question & Answer sessions following segments.

### Audience

The webinar is primarily directed to planners and officials at Ministries of Education, National Commissions representing the Caribbean and stakeholders from Regional Development Organizations and other agencies working on improving education systems in the Caribbean. Additionally, members of the academic, environmental and NGO community are invited to contribute.

### Technical Platform and Interpretation

The webinar is conducted in English and hosted through the Zoom webinar platform. You may also access links to the webinar at  
<https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/webinars>  
<https://en.unesco.org/events/joint-unesco-unicef-world-bank-webinar-series-reopening-schools>

### Webinars Schedule

<b>Date</b>	<b>Webinar Series</b>
December 8, 2020	Human and Planetary Sustainability
December 15, 2020	Citizenship and Participation
January 19, 2021	Work and Economic Security
January 26, 2021	Knowledge Production Access and Governance

### Contact Details

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