



10 Things to Know About the Impact of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Groups in the Caribbean

COVID-19 has made vulnerable groups including children, youth, women and girls, the poor, informal sector workers, and small businesses, more susceptible and less able to cope with the negative socio-economic effects of the crisis. As a result, government responses should give special consideration to their multiple deprivations and the additional shocks detonated by the pandemic, particularly given the potentially long-lasting impact of these shocks, and their disproportionate exposure to contracting and transmitting the disease.

1



Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs) such as curfews and stay-at-home orders contribute to curbing the spread of COVID-19, but they have destabilized and disrupted social and economic activities.

These restrictions have disproportionately affected vulnerable groups' access to income, food, hygiene products, social protection, and small business sustainability.

2



Caribbean countries were already at a disadvantage going into the pandemic, with under-resourced health systems, weak social protection for most informal sector workers, limited economic diversification, and predilection to natural disasters, all which

hamper governments' ability to fully respond to the pandemic's fallout.

3



Learning from home has negatively impacted many students, the greatest challenge being difficulty focusing on schoolwork. This was worse for students in poorer households, particularly for those with no access to

internet, no devices for connecting to online classes, and the absence of a learning-conducive environment.

4



People's abilities to earn an income have fallen, as have incomes themselves. Women have experienced about double the amount of permanent job losses than men.

5



More female-headed households have received food support, as they are more likely to be in need. They are generally worse off than male-headed households, and they are more likely to include children.

6



Spending savings was the main coping strategy used to meet expenses, given the dip in earnings. Savings of poor households were impacted twice as much as in non-poor households.

7



Small business owners were impacted by lowered demand, supply, and productivity. Many small businesses were ineligible for government grants and/or salary subsidies as their operations were unregistered. This situation was worsened by the limited capacity to adapt as more than half of them reported making no adjustment.

8



Vulnerable groups' access to social protection was constrained by financial exclusion, lacking social protection payment mechanisms, errors of inclusion and exclusion, and weak coordination and integration of programmes. A social registry would significantly address all of these gaps.

9



Youth are among the worst impacted by the pandemic vis-à-vis higher unemployment, more limited access to the job market, and, with the disruption to technical and vocational training, the loss of opportunities for social connections, practical skills training, and internships.

10



Many issues of targeting and reach could be resolved with more citizens being integrated into formal systems. This could be achieved by promoting and incentivising informal sector workers' participation in a contributory social insurance system, and making it easy for them to do so.

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