

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Job Title:	Human Rights and Debt Analysis Consultant (Economist)
Hiring Unit	UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR)
Contract type:	Individual Contract
Duration of assignment:	Mid-August 2021 – 15 December 2021

I. Background

Even before COVID-19 pandemic the Eastern Caribbean States (EC)¹ region was among the most heavily-indebted in the world². Governments' responses to the emergency, which focused on public health and social spending measures, in combination with the drastic fall in tax revenues, has increased fiscal deficits and exacerbated debt burdens, especially in smaller economies, including in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Challenges facing the region before COVID-19 were identified as slow productivity, stagnant economic growth, high debt, rising inequality, socioeconomic vulnerability, limited institutional capacity to effectively respond to strategic development challenges, the need for disaster prevention and preparedness and reconstruction relief and rehabilitation efforts due to climate change. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Caribbean region exposed the need for policy actions for effective support to protect the most vulnerable and ensure participatory growth.

Further, long-term growth has been depressed for over a decade and the current COVID-19 crisis has worsened this situation. High debt service payments limit fiscal space for investing in development projects with regional linkages and multiplier effect, and forecast for potential improvement in the rate of economic growth is restrained by the need for structural changes, including economic diversification, the pursue of further economic integration, debt restructure, innovative tax reform to generate greater levels of revenue, and the expansion of concessional financing based on the vulnerability condition of SIDS.

As the economic repercussions of the pandemic are worsening debt levels, announced austerity measures risk to severely inhibit states' capacity to respond to growing needs in

¹ Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines.

² Riding the Storm: Fiscal Sustainability in the Caribbean: Serhan Cevik and Vibha Nanda: WP/20/21: January 2020

protecting access to economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) of its populations. Previous experience in the Caribbean has shown that private-public partnership mechanisms are critical in driving political will to mitigate the social and economic impacts of restructuring programs. Today, although debt servicing was suspended with the onset of the pandemic, the ongoing fiscal consolidation is expected to resume shortly in order enable debt servicing. Over the next three years, for example, Grenada is expected to slash expenditures by the equivalent to 3.1 times its public health care budget, which will limit the capacity of the government to meet its minimum core obligations with respect to ESCR³.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) has been on the decline because of the high-income and upper middle-income status of the Caribbean countries. In addition, there is a need for structural improvements to boost economic growth and further economic integration through solutions to the various challenges in logistics, transportation and supply chains need to be incorporated into efforts at strengthening intra-regional (and extra-regional) trade and economic integration to address issues of economies of scale and competitiveness. The violence and high incidence of crime across the subregion has reduced foreign direct investments, increased the cost of doing business and diverted resources from the social sector (health and education, particularly) to crime control and the administration of justice.

OHCHR monitoring in the region indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing risks in accessing ESCR. These are linked to structural challenges faced by all of the seven countries, including high inequalities⁴, poverty⁵ and unemployment levels⁶, weak health infrastructure as well as high vulnerability and low resilience to cope with the adverse impacts of climate change. The economies of the EC countries are characterized by energy dependence, financial insecurity and strong economic dependence on the tourism industry.

Previous Caribbean stabilisation and adjustment programmes have resulted in reduction in spending in public sectors, such as health and education, negatively affecting vulnerable persons such as those living in poverty, women, children, persons living with disabilities, and the elderly, placing them at risk of being further left behind. Socio-economic vulnerabilities intersect with high levels of violent crimes, including by organized crime groups and one of the highest migration rates in the world. In recent years, the flow of migrants and refugees from Venezuela and Haiti to countries in the region has also been on the rise and shed light on a lack of institutional preparedness to respond to increased vulnerabilities of these populations. Sexual and gender-based violence, discrimination affecting in particular LGBTI persons, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and indigenous peoples, as well as little progress in the administration of justice, underpin the growing concerns regarding access to economic, social and cultural rights, particularly in the context of future austerity measures.

³ https://www.eurodad.org/grenada_covid19_debt

⁴ The Latin American Economic Outlook 2019: Development in Transition, OECD Publishing, Paris.

⁵ Shock-responsive Social Protection in the Caribbean Literature Review: Valentina Barca, Madhumitha Hebbbar, Marwah Malik et al: Oxford Policy Management November 2019.

⁶ According to the Caribbean Development Bank, prior to the COVID-19 crisis unemployment levels in English-speaking Caribbean were higher than 20% in some countries with 25% unemployment among young people. [Justin Ram, Director of the Economics department at the CDB, 9 March 2020 Speech, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados].

II. Scope of Work, Duties and Responsibilities

The project seeks to analyse how growing external debt levels and accompanying projected budget cuts and austerity measures, particularly in the post-COVID-19 context, may impact access to ESCR in the Eastern Caribbean, with a particular focus on education and health spending.

It also intends to identify existing best practices and recommend mitigation measures for the socio-economic effects of the current economic and debt crisis, based on ESCR standards (identifying policy options for maximum available resources) to influence action by state authorities, and provide recommendations for key regional actors (CARICOM, Caribbean Development Bank) as well as UN actors working in the region. Following the recent strengthening of a regional structure for the English-speaking Caribbean under the leadership of the Regional Representative in Panama, the project will be a strategic tool for advocacy with governments but also donor countries and potentially creditors as well as other relevant international actors (ECLAC, IMF, World Bank).

Specifically, this project will cover an analysis of the impact and/or relationship of external debt on public expenditures in the region and 3-4 Eastern Caribbean countries and the Sustainable Development Goals relevant to the debt issue, as well as health, including SDG 17.4, 3.8, 4.1 in these countries. This project is envisioned as a desk-based study of debt, budget and socio-economic data that will allow to produce an analysis of the impact of debt on ESCRs in the relevant countries.

Under the present Terms of Reference, the Consultant will be responsible to:

1. Conduct research on historical debt levels and trends (over the 2015-2019) in the Eastern Caribbean region using the human rights framework as well as the SDGs commitments.
2. Review the patterns of impact of debt and IFI restructuring programmes from 2015-2019 on public expenditures, with a focus on health care, in the Eastern Caribbean.
3. Review of 3-4 Eastern Caribbean government budgets and debt over the past five years.
4. Identify trends and possible impact of current (within the last five years) debt levels on public spending with an emphasis on public spending for the health sector, reviewing data on health sector expenditure, and including an analysis of disaggregated data if available, such as health expenditure by region, groups, income levels, etc.
5. Impact of COVID-19 in relation to debt and debt servicing levels on the economies and public expenditures of 3-4 Eastern Caribbean countries, which will require reviewing debt and budget data for FY 2020 and 2021, and projections for upcoming years if/when available.
6. Carry out an analysis of the potential impact of projected budget cuts over the next three to five years in the education sector due to increasing debt and debt servicing levels resulting from COVID-19. This analysis will have a particular emphasis on the potential impact on the people and groups most left behind, including in relation to gender equality, by identifying the budget that is allocated/could be cut, for those particular groups.

7. Identify existing best practices and recommend mitigation measures for the socio-economic effects of the economic crisis that different actors could implement, including state authorities, regional actors (CARICOM, Caribbean Development Bank), and the UN.
8. Identify recommendations on addressing debt in the assessed countries in the post-COVID-19 context directed to the UN agencies and the governments.

The Consultant/Heterodox Economist will work under the direct supervision of the Human Rights Adviser, in close collaboration with the Surge team.

III. Deliverables

Specific deliverables and indicative timeframe are presented below:

Nr.	Deliverables expected	Indicative Timeframe
1.	The consultant will submit an inception report at the start of the project. This report will briefly outline the objectives, approach, methodology, key activities, and timeline.	Late August 2021
2.	Draft 1: report that includes the analysis required under numbers 1 and 2 above.	Mid-September 2021
3.	Draft 2: report that includes revisions to draft 1 and the analysis required by tasks 3-8 above.	Mid-October 2021
4.	Final report: conceived as a position paper which includes revisions to draft 1 and 2 and recommendations, and should be of maximum 35-40 pages.	Mid-November 2021
5.	Advocacy brief with the key findings and recommendations of the analysis, which should be of maximum 4 pages.	Early December 2021
6.	PPT to present the analysis, findings and recommendations to UNCT and other relevant actors	Early December 2021

The payments under these Terms of Reference will be made upon successful certification of all deliverables, based on the submitted time – sheet and activity report.

IV. Competencies

- Proven commitment to the core values of the United Nations, in particular, respect for differences of culture, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, language, age, HIV status, disability, sexual orientation, or other status;
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability;

- Accepts responsibility and accountability for the quality of the outcome of her/his decisions.

V. Job Knowledge/ In-depth knowledge of the subject-matter

- Excellent knowledge of the economic specificities of Eastern Caribbean countries, in particular with regards to the debt situation, and the role of economic policies in promoting the wellbeing of people;
- Sound knowledge of the human rights standards and human rights context in the Eastern Caribbean countries;
- Advanced knowledge of the national legal frameworks;

VI. Development and Operational Effectiveness

- Excellent communications and teamwork skills;
- Strong organizational skills;
- Ability to engage with various partners and stakeholders at different levels;
- Ability to adapt flexibly to changing situations, overcomes obstacles and recovers quickly from set-backs;
- Proactive in seeking new and improved methods and systems for accomplishing the work of the unit;
- Ability to keep abreast of new developments in area of professional discipline and job knowledge and seeking to develop himself/herself professionally.

VII. Required Skills and Experience

Education:

- Mandatory Post-graduate degree education/courses in economics or law; a sound understanding of development, human rights, and gender would be considered an advantage.

Experience:

- At least 10 years of professional experience in economics and public policies;
- Ability to link macroeconomic policies and practices with States' human rights obligations with the aim to identify measures and interventions towards "transformative economies" at the national, local and community level;
- Ability to apply heterodox economic theories and concepts, related to the structure and performance of the economy, to build the case for human rights and identify advocacy and programmatic responses;
- Ability to do an intersectional analysis especially on "Leave No One Behind";
- Experience of working with budgets and in social development and/or human rights field;

Language Requirements:

- Fluency in English

VIII. Evaluation Criteria

<i>Criteria (MAX 5)</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Max. Point</i>
<u>Technical</u>	70	70
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10 or more years of professional experience in economics and public policies	10	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10 or more years of working experience in the Caribbean region.	20	20
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ability to analyse macroeconomic policies and practices and to apply heterodox economic theories and concepts, to an analysis of Caribbean countries' human rights obligations.	30	30
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience of working with national budgets and in social development and/or human rights field;	10	10
<u>Financial</u>	30	30