



Launch of the Caribbean RISS Model

Towards A Caribbean Model for Resilient, Inclusive, Smart and Safe (RISS)

Cities

31 October 2022, UN House Barbados

Opening remarks delivered by:

Tonni Brodber, Representative, UN Women MCO - Caribbean

Protocol

- The Honourable Colin Jordan Minister of Labour, Social Security and Third Sector
- Mr. Didier Trebucq – United Nations Resident Coordinator for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean
- Ms. Abebech Assefa, - Head of Cooperation for the Eastern Caribbean, High Commission of Canada to Barbados and the OECS
- First Secretary, Dr. Kikuko Saki of Embassy of Japan in Barbados
- Development partners - Ms. Viviana Alva Hart, IDB Representative to Barbados and colleagues from the Caribbean Development Bank
- Ms. Limya Eltayeb UNDP Resident Representative to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean and other UN Colleagues - from FAO, PAHO
- Private Sector Partners – Ms. Joanna Edghill, CEO of Megapower
- Members of the Media

Good morning. Colleagues, Friends

On behalf of the UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean, it is my pleasure to welcome you this morning to this presentation of the Resilient, Inclusive, Smart and Safe (RISS) Cities Model for the Caribbean. My name is Tonni Brodber.

I want to begin this morning highlighting the Honourable Colin Jordan, the Minister of Labour, Social Security and Third Sector who is always a support to effective work on social development and physical development. Thank you to first Secretary Dr. Kikuko Saki of the Embassy of Japan in Barbados and thank you so much to our colleagues from the IDB, and my colleague Limya Eltayeb Resident Representative of the UNDP Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, lead agency for the EnGenDER Project. Thank you also to Global Affairs Canada and the UKFCDO for the EnGenDER Project and for seeing gender equality at the nexus of climate change. Without that, we would not have had the opportunity to say there is still a gap in our consideration of cities. We speak of resilience, but what is it that we mean exactly?

One of things Professor Mycoo (keynote speaker) spoke to that added colour to at least my experience in dealing with disasters in the Caribbean, is where you find women and girls. In 2015, Dominica experienced Tropical Storm Erika. When I was flown into Dominica, one of the questions I kept asking was which community was it that had suffered the most damage - it was an informal settlement. 80% of the households were women-headed households. These women worked hard, most of their businesses were based out of their homes which they had concretised, built new edifices, but nothing was insured because it was informal. When the river expanded with the rains and took away all of their homes, there was no way to be able to really rebuild and recover. It

reminded me of a Parliamentarian from Dominica a few years later after Hurricane Maria relaying one of the challenges – “We are tired, we have lost everything and you are asking us to be resilient. It feels almost like an affront to what we have just experienced”. What we are presenting to you now, acknowledges that human feeling of what it means to really live in the Caribbean where the climate impacts are not going to stop any time soon, and for which we must be prepared.

The **vulnerability** that we speak of, is a combined effect of risks to the people who may be exposed, which are physical, social, economic and environmental, where some are more vulnerable than others depending on the context. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights speaks to us all of being equal. Once we are born our context speaks to our vulnerability and our vulnerability can lead to marginalisation. Through our EnGenDER Project, we were able to pivot when COVID-19 hit. We were supposed to be on the ground, but we had to be on the ground in a very different way whereby we saw how people lived, and in some cases where they were living made them even more vulnerable and more marginalised.

At a recent meeting of Caribbean judicial officers where discussion focussed on addressing crime, it was interesting to hear the conversation from the judicial space versus the conversation from the urban planning space versus the conversation from the health sector space and that is the unique offering of the United Nations that we hear all the conversations and are able to create that bridge to all of the different supported solutions that come from each sector. Let us stop looking at climate change in a silo, let us stop looking at cities in a silo and let us start looking at them across sectors – what makes

cities more resilient, smart and inclusive which I believe is related to the crime rates that we are seeing.

As a person who walks in the countries I visit, I notice where there is for example a lack of sidewalks. In walking around you see your neighbours, you actually start to appreciate your space, you see the garbage you would not see driving past in a car. Our lack of public spaces, being able to see each other safely in public spaces, - we commend the Barbados Government for having a boardwalk that allows us to do so – that is also part of social resilience that builds our opportunity to see one another, understand one another. The sustainability of the world and the Caribbean region relies not only in our ability to be environmentally resilient and climate resilient, but also socially resilient.

We know that 40 economies of the 58 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have been deemed to have maximum exposure scores in at least one of the Food, Energy and Finance dimensions of the impact of the Ukraine crisis (UNCTAD, 2022). We build on top of that in the Caribbean, where more than 80 percent of us relies on tourism and countries where **226 percent** of GDP could be lost in one event - that was Hurricane Maria for Dominica and Grenada has just recovered from Hurricane Ivan when it lost **200%** of its GDP (World Bank). Yet 40 of our economies are now at risk for these food, energy and finance resilience challenges.

When we look at it like that, we forget what we can start with in our spaces. We can start small, we can start with the Model, we can start with small steps to creating resilience in our spaces.

At UN Women, we are using the woman as an entry point to understand the different vulnerabilities any human being will face in the space (we know it is not only women). If we know that women and girls living in the Caribbean cite that public spaces are unsafe because of harassment and unwanted behaviour such as groping and catcalls at work, at school, on public transportation, and we know that every fifth woman in Caribbean has experienced sexual harassment or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime, then we may have a problem with harassment and violence in our space.

The data from the [Caribbean Women Count Portal](#), a partnership between UN Women and the Caribbean Development Bank, shows that intimate partner violence across the region – the data is 46 % - that is almost 1 in 2 women experiencing this form of violence. We also know that men who are more likely to choose violence in their relationships are more likely to choose violence against other men. It is a connection. So we are looking at a situation in which people are choosing more violence in private spaces and if we do not address how public spaces enable this choice of violence we will not have resilient public spaces.

As Caribbean SIDS grapple with the full scope of what it means to be resilient we note that “Everything is everything”. That is what this model is about. Building on the global “Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls” model which is a UN Women model, UN-Habitat HerCity Toolbox and the Caribbean EnGenDER project through the partnership with Global Affairs Canada and UK FCDO, which enables Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery, Climate and Environmental Resilience, - a project led by UNDP, with support from UN Women, World Food Programme (WFP) and CDEMA – we are now able to say

let us start small. We have this RISS Model that is relevant for the Caribbean that we can insert into different projects and programmes. We can speak to urban planning institutions as well as the institutions that train our urban planners to say integrate the considerations in this Model.

This Model takes into account environmental resilience, climate resilience, economic resilience and social resilience, simply and effectively. In our next segment this morning, we will hear from experts around the region, who have been creating resilient communities.

Thank you to UN-HABITAT for your partnership and collaboration and thank you again to all of you for joining us online. It is World Cities Day and we have something from the Caribbean to say – that is, we are officially launching the Caribbean Model for Resilient, Inclusive, Smart, Safe and Sustainable Cities!

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