

Facing the risks of climate change within the framework of Caribbean regional cooperation: a case example.



By Dr. Víctor Manuel López López
National Polytechnic Institute (Mexico)
vlopez@ipn.mx

Introduction.

The impacts of climate change and the effects of the ecological footprint in the countries of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) represent a long list of threats that affect hundreds of coastal communities in our region and, therefore, also our existence. These threats range from the climate crisis, particularly represented by hurricanes and droughts, to the destruction of biodiversity, acidification, and rising sea levels.

The poorest nations in our Caribbean region, lacking money and well-being, continue to be the most threatened in terms of their integration into the world. Faced with this harsh reality, more equitable, efficient, and genuine regional cooperation is essential.

Regional cooperation to address climate change within the framework of sustainable development. The sustainability and equity of human development in our nations are intertwined when we consider the natural resources that the region provides for the intertemporal development of the population. This intertemporality means that for development to be sustainable, it must not only benefit the current generation but also protect the resources and rights of future generations—that is, the intergenerational responsibilities to preserve the reproductive capacity of resources. Failure to take these dimensions into account can exacerbate existing inequalities and widen the gaps between today's and tomorrow's inhabitants by allowing some groups to benefit in the short term while the negative consequences fall disproportionately on more vulnerable communities. The idea of sustainable human development puts the people of today and tomorrow at its center: it is an idea that considers current living standards, as well as the preservation of resources and opportunities for future generations.

Concerns about intertemporal and current inequalities play an important role in the face of challenges such as global warming and climate change, and their impacts resulting from

consumption and the management of natural resources.

Currently, the increasingly frequent, powerful, and destructive adverse impacts of climate change disproportionately affect impoverished communities. Such as vulnerable populations who often reside in areas prone to extreme weather events in the region, such as hurricanes, floods, or droughts, which often cause loss of homes, infrastructure, livelihoods, and access to basic resources such as clean water and food.

These regressive effects exacerbate existing inequalities and create what former Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley has aptly called "a double injustice," as the inhabitants of today's least developed countries bear the brunt of climate change, which in turn is the result of emissions from industrial development in wealthier countries.

Recognizing this common scenario and acting accordingly could lead to broader and more comprehensive cooperation for the ACS region.

There are currently successful examples of cooperation in our region, but these are restricted to certain countries, either bilaterally or by sector. These cooperation initiatives could be expanded to the entire region through agreements to achieve this.

An example of Caribbean regional cooperation that could be expanded.

As an example of this possible and desirable expansion of cooperation initiatives spread throughout the Caribbean, this article cites the Mexico-Jamaica Visiting Chair. It aims to enhance knowledge about Mexico within Jamaican society and its academic community, and vice versa, as well as foster exchanges and cooperation between Mexican and Jamaican higher education institutions. To this end, the Mexico Chair convenes annually to support and carry out activities such as research, teaching, analysis, and dissemination of information about Mexico in the Chair's special area of knowledge.

The author of this article was selected by the Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID) to travel and participate in said Chair in 2020, focusing on Disaster Risk Management, with an emphasis on risks derived from climate change, which is the undersigned's specialty.

Briefly, as Mexico's representative in Jamaica, I carried out my six-week stay at The University of the West Indies (UWI) Mona Campus in Kingston. However, due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the visit was only partially covered. My time in Jamaica was optimized by giving presentations on global warming, climate change, adaptation to the impacts of climate change, visiting recently hurricane-stricken areas and their rehabilitation, speaking with undergraduate and graduate students, and exchanging professional perspectives, ideas, and materials with staff from various UWI faculties.

Finally, the projected six-week time commitment, interrupted by the pandemic, was completed with a keynote video conference on climate change in the Caribbean region, which I gave from Mexico and broadcast on the UWI television network to all its academic units.

In addition to this example, other joint initiatives for regional cooperation and integration could include the following:

- Creation of an International Research School: This would be an online program specifically designed to provide research training to those interested in pursuing undergraduate and graduate studies in any discipline available in the ACS countries.

- Language courses: In-person, eight-week English and Spanish courses.
- Specific courses on environmental education to address global warming and climate change at the local level.
- Disaster resilience procedures for the built environment and other infrastructure (impacts of earthquakes and climate change).
- Dual Master's Degree: These would be courses focused on international partnerships, in which students would complete one year of modules taught at their home universities, followed by a research project for another year at Mexican universities, which would include a minimum of three months of internships in industry and/or communities.
- International internships: International students will be able to complete an internship in selected countries for approximately 500 hours, over a period of three to six months, during which they will participate in a wide range of activities, depending on what the ACS countries offer.
- Other joint activities could extend to disciplines such as medicine, international law, social programs, and sports.
- Other online courses: based on the needs and topics proposed by the interested countries.

In conclusion:

As a university professor, I believe that the sustainable cooperation programs of the Association of Caribbean States countries should prioritize students and young people eager to participate in cross-cultural activities. They should be instilled with respect for cultural diversity, fostering a different environment than the everyday one they are accustomed to through social interaction, language practice, and personal development, which are today's requirements for transformative global citizenship that seeks to connect with the world.