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The Sustainable Development Goals Unit (SDGU) in The Office of Prime Minister (OPM), is tasked with gathering and compiling the sourced information from various Ministries, Departments, Agencies, and Organizations within The Bahamas, to present to both local and international entities, as it relates to meeting the targets and objectives of each of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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1.0 OPENING STATEMENT

The Bahamas is pleased to present its second Voluntary National Review (VNR) to the United Nations’ 2021 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). This review highlights the progress made towards achieving sustainable and inclusive development for its citizens and residents, while also learning from the experiences of other jurisdictions.

The localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, has been prioritized by way of its strategic integration in The Bahamas’ Draft National Development Framework – the “Vision 2040” which was established in 2014. Vision 2040 prioritizes four (4) pillars of development - Governance, Human Capital, Economy, Infrastructure and Environment, across 16 goals, which are in alignment with the United Nations’ (UN) 17 SDGs. The SGDU was established in 2019 as the lead agency for promoting, coordinating, monitoring and reporting on the country’s progress towards achieving the SDGs.

Progress since the 2018 VNR has been largely influenced by two major historic events. In September 2019, Hurricane Dorian, a catastrophic category 5 hurricane, devastated the islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama. The hurricane decimated entire communities, resulting in a considerable loss of life, livelihoods, and internal displacement, highlighting the increasingly negative implications of climate change to development progress, and the unique vulnerabilities of small island states like The Bahamas.

The Government of The Bahamas (GOB), in its prioritization of disaster preparedness and response, established the Ministry of Disaster Preparedness, Management and Reconstruction, comprising of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the Disaster Reconstruction Authority (DRA). In addition to investments made by the GOB, recovery efforts have been, and continue to be, bolstered through bilateral, multilateral, and institutional aid, including through the generously expressed in partnership initiatives, with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), and various organs of the United Nations.

Amidst ongoing hurricane Dorian recovery efforts, the arrival of the COVID-19 Pandemic in March 2020, catalysed an indefinite period of economic contractions, precipitated by the halt of global travel and consequently, the abrupt disruption to tourism-related activities in The Bahamas. Nationwide health and safety protocols were adopted, aiming to mitigate the detrimental effects posed by the Pandemic, to the inclusion of Sanitation and Mask Protocols, Lockdowns, Curfews, and Social Distancing Strategies. These measures inevitably led to a decline in economic activity in all sectors, resulting in increased unemployment, and increased demand for government administered social assistance.

The challenges wrought by these two altering events have also coincided with marked progress in the areas of innovation, economic adaptation, reduced inequalities, and environmental resilience, which will remain at the forefront of the government’s priorities. The response to the challenges presented over the 2018 - 2021 period, has also laid bare the resilience of The Bahamas and the holistic commitment to a better future across public, private, and civil society spheres. With the ongoing rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine, globally and nationally, The Bahamas remains optimistic that development progress, which was stagnated in the wake of recent events, will regain momentum, and further progress will be achieved. The Bahamas will continue to prioritize sustainable and inclusive human development, enhancing institutions and capacity to promote good governance, economic growth, innovation, and environmental sustainability for all.

The Bahamas wishes to extend its gratitude to the Secretary-General, for the UN’s continued support in its pursuit of the aims espoused in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and looks forward to continuing its partnership with the United Nations, towards achieving this end.
Several negative trends highlight prevailing challenges to social, political, and economic development. Youth unemployment has remained high – reaching 20.7% for women, 19.5% for men, and 20% for both sexes. Moreover, young women are more likely to be unemployed, despite higher education attainment.1 Skill shortages among the Bahamian workforce threaten to keep unemployment numbers high. Greater investment is needed to improve retention rates in the educational system, particularly among boys, and closing the performance gap between public and private educational institutions.

Integration of the SDGs into the Policy Framework

In December 2019, following the submission of the first VNR in 2018, the Government of The Bahamas approved the update and review of the Draft National Development Plan (NDP). This revision takes into consideration: progress made with the achievement of goals contained in the document; the implications of Hurricane Dorian and the global Pandemic on priorities; and the development of action plans and a financial framework for implementation. The completion of the review and update of the document is intended to facilitate a pathway to the adoption of the plan by the GOB. Despite the delay in the adoption of the NDP, various entities have systematically incorporated the SDGs into their organizational strategies. The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development, BDB, the Ministry of Environment and Housing, the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources, the Ministry of Education, and other key entities, have drawn upon the document, to guide institutional plans and programmes.

As it stands, the 25-year NDP: Vision 2040, remains the single comprehensive national document that ensured that the 2030 Agenda, was localised into its national development planning process, thereby providing a roadmap for the implementation of the SDGs.

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The path to reopening The Bahamas relies heavily on effectively vaccinating the Bahamian populace; a task that has proven to be challenging, as hesitation towards vaccinations prevail, influenced by both a lack of information, and the spread of disinformation. As a result, increased efforts to improve public health information campaigns have been of top priority to the GOB.
Institutional Arrangements

The national process for preparing this VNR is led by the SDGU (which assumed the responsibilities of the Economic Development and Planning Unit (EDPU) following restructuring and reprioritization efforts in the OPM. Since the last VNR, the National Sustainable Development Goals Technical Committee (SDGTC) was established. The SDGTC includes representatives from government ministries and agencies, the private sector, civil society, and academia.

Their roles are to ensure full ownership of the SDGs and integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in areas of economic, social, and environmental policy. While the representatives are invaluable contributors to the implementation of SDGs in The Bahamas, there remains a need to strengthen country implementation by, inter alia, establishing a strong, consistent and direct link to parliamentarians and the Cabinet of The Bahamas in this decade. Only then will these actions serve to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.

InSupport Areas for Finance, Capacity-building, Technology, Partnerships, etc.

The GOB continues to take steps to strengthen its public institutions. This includes the introduction of the National Statistics Bill, ƑƏƑƐ, which is to commence on July Ɛst, ƑƏƑƐ. This law establishes The Bahamas National Statistics Institute which will replace the Department of Statistics. Furthermore, the new law would establish a new National Statistical System that would create greater ease of collecting, compiling, retrieving, and analysing data.

The GOB has also made significant headway in digitizing services offered to the public and intends to put as many as ƑƏƏ services online in Ɣ years. This increases efficiency and accessibility. These advancements are instrumental in achieving the ƑƏƒƏ Agenda for Sustainable Development as it creates new possibilities across sectors.

Leaving No-One Behind

Recognizing the centrality of social inclusion in achieving Agenda ƑƏƑƐ for Sustainable Development, groups were identified and invitations were extended to members of under-represented and marginalized groups to serve on the SDGTC. Indeed, the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, followed by the impact of the national COVID-19 Pandemic, emergency response has sharply foregrounded extreme vulnerabilities among low-wage workers, informal workers, persons living in rural areas, irregular migrants, elderly persons, persons living in poverty, unhoused persons, as well as those living in a situation of violence. While the GOB, supported by local and international actors, introduced and modified processes to mitigate adverse effects of such, there are still some areas where improvements can be made.

During the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, many national and international organizations worked to reach those most at risk of being left behind. The GOB, local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and civil society, along with multilateral organizations, ensured that those affected by the hurricane, were provided with the necessities of medical assistance, food, shelter, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services. Similarly, during the most restrictive periods of the COVID-19 Pandemic, throughout ƑƏƑƐ and beyond, the response by the GOB, local NGOs, and civil society, resulted in the provision of unemployment assistance, emergency food assistance, rebuilding funds, and assistance that included the implementation of tax-free zones.
### 4.0 POLICY & ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The Bahamas has a politically conscious and engaged population. Historically, labour unions have been extremely stable and active within the Country. There is an extremely high voter turnout rate of over 80%. Awareness of public policy is gained through widespread newspaper readership, traditional media, social media, and multiple “all talk” active radio stations which discussing topical issues of the day. There is a government information services agency called The Bahamas Information Services, and there is a GOB website that includes information on its programmes.

Creating Ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals: National Level Discussions

The effective implementation of the SDGs requires engagement at both the National and Community levels.

The communications strategy for the SDG implementation at the national level includes:

- Further collaborative sessions with Government Agencies, Ministers, and Parliamentarians.
- A National Civil Society Conclave.
- A National Private Sector Conclave on the SDGs that has members from the Chambers of Commerce, Manufacturers' Associations, Small Business Associations, Tourism, Maritime, and Financial Services Sectors in attendance.
- A National Youth Conclave on the SDGs.
- Nationally televised Town Meetings.
- Traditional (i.e. Radio, Television, Newspapers) and Social Media communications on SDG activities and progress.

The SDG communications strategy builds on previous awareness and community input campaigns that were utilized through the NDP implementation process. In 2019, the SDGU conducted several high-level engagements with various Ministries, Departments, and Agencies.

Creating Ownership of the SDGs: Community Discussions, Public, Private Sector and Civil Society Discussions

While the National level discussions are critical, it is also important to localize communications. This was a key lesson learned through the NDP process. In 2019, SDGU launched its “Reimagine Series”, a virtual engagement educational initiative, focused on sharing insights and implementation strategies, on three dimensions of Sustainable Development - Social Inclusion, Economic Prosperity and Environmental Sustainability. The unit partnered with local activists, filmmakers, artists, entertainers, academia, civil society, and entrepreneurs, to promote their work and its alignment to the SDGs. The guiding pillars:

- **INSPIRE** the audience with relatable ‘SDG In Action’ stories.
- **EDUCATE** the audience with useful information related to the SDGs.
- **ENTERTAIN** the audience by sharing comedic and artistic content, in collaboration with local social media influencers and artists.

In 2021, SDGU launched a 17-week SDG series in partnership with ZNS Radio to increase awareness of the 2030 Agenda, and advance overall SDG localisation efforts. These discussions provided opportunities for stakeholders to discuss mechanisms to further advance the 2030 Agenda, and the realisation of the SDGs at the national level, through public policy and national-level action.
The Bahamas is classified as a high-income economy, with a steadily increasing, per capita, gross domestic product (GDP), which rose from USD 31,562.64 in 2016, to USD 34,863.70 in 2019⁶ - maintaining its position as one of the Caribbean countries, with the highest per capita GDP in the region.

However, relying on per capita GDP as a primary metric for economic well-being, does not capture the national complexities which may render residents and citizens, susceptible to falling into, or remaining in, situations of poverty and other instances of vulnerability. Key insights on poverty in The Bahamas, are usually included in the Department of Statistics’ Household Expenditure Survey (HES) – the latest of which has been postponed to 2022, thereby making the 2013 HES, the most current official report on poverty in the country.⁷

While the Department of Statistics has not produced key labour force data since 2019, and has postponed the date for the next HES, to the latter part of 2022, key proxies were used to provide some insight into the status of those living in poverty, or those at risk of falling into poverty because of lost employment, insufficient savings, illness, change in migration status, or other reasons.

Unemployment rates in The Bahamas were trending downward prior to Hurricane Dorian and the COVID-19 Pandemic (The Pandemic) crisis, with unemployment rates declining from 10% in May 2018, to 9.5% in May 2019, 11% for women and 10.1% for men in 2018; 9.9% for women and 9.2% for men in 2019, respectively). Youth unemployment (ages 15-24) declined from 24.1% in May 2018, to 20.0% in May 2019 - a significant decline from the approximate 30% reported in the first VNR.⁸ Reflecting the sex differences in the broader unemployment data for 2019, the unemployment rate for young women reached 20.7%, compared with 19.5% for young men, (2019 was the first year that youth unemployment data was disaggregated by sex). At the time of this writing, The Bahamas has no official statistics on 2020 unemployment levels. However, projections have been estimated to stand between 38% and 42%, with other sources citing an unemployment rate of 25.6%.⁹

Compounding the sharp and sudden uptick in unemployment, following the national response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, was the absence of sufficient personal financial safety nets by many residents and citizens. Indeed, before Hurricane Dorian and the Pandemic, it was reported that 90% of the deposit accounts held by residents in The Bahamas contained less than $5000 – and many have less than $1000, with consumers opting to borrow, rather than save (perhaps due to low-wage work, trade-offs linked to meeting basic needs, a rising cost of living with no corresponding increase in wages, limited financial literacy, displacement, or a host of other factors).¹⁰

As indicated in the first VNR, challenges with land tenure security, also impacted poverty and included: the lack of a parcel-based cadastral map, uncertainty regarding ownership of land resulting from overlapping land claims, and the existence of generational and commonage land.¹¹
The National Insurance Board (NIB), the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development, and the Ministry of Labour, oversee the country’s social protection system, and the provision of social protection mechanisms. As a result of Hurricane Dorian and the Pandemic, social protection mechanisms were expanded and otherwise modified, to accommodate the needs of newly vulnerable categories of individuals – including unbanked, undocumented, and self-employed persons. In addition to the existing government entities, civil society organizations, the private sector, faith-based organizations, and international organizations, collaborated to meet emerging needs.

The GOB has provided some $90 million in direct cash assistance and income replacement, to nearly 38,000 unemployed Bahamians since March of 2020. These funds have been administered by the National Insurance Board, on behalf of the government, to eligible individuals. This $90 million sum, does not include monies paid out by NIB as part of its 13-week earned unemployment benefits, that are funded as part of employee and employer contributions.

The Central Bank of The Bahamas (CDB) officially launched the “Sand Dollar” digital currency (CBDC), to all residents, in March 2020. The Sand Dollar will allow previously unbanked parts of the population, to participate in digital payments, and enhance the payment system’s efficiency and resilience, considering The Bahamas’ vulnerability to natural disasters. Some 13,500 “informal economy” workers may have missed out on the COVID-19 unemployment benefits, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) noted; adding that, “execution fell short” on some government assistance initiatives. The IMF, in its full Article IV report on The Bahamas, said several thousand shortfalls on some government assistance initiatives. The IMF, in its full Article IV report on The Bahamas, said several thousand persons (self-employed or otherwise), may not have had access to government-funded benefits, because they remain outside the formal economy, and make no social security contributions.

“Only self-employed workers in tourism-related businesses, are covered by the unemployment benefits extension. This means that self-employed, informal workers for other industries (many indirectly linked to tourism), and informal employees, are not included among the unemployment beneficiaries. The GOB will have to register the citizen again, every time a benefit is granted. Since social assistance programmes are application-based, validating information is challenging because of limited digitalised information, and limited information exchange, across relevant stakeholders.”

The authorities plan to pilot a means-tested social program, in New Providence, in 2021. Unemployment Benefit (UEB) payments were nearly 20 times higher in the first six months of 2020, compared to the same period last year. In March 2021, the government extended the UEB duration, and relaxed eligibility requirements for employees under the age of 35, or who were previously enrolled in the Hurricane Dorian UEB extension program.

The 2020/21 social protection programme, implemented by the GOB, through an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) loan, to modernise the delivery of social protection in the country, and accelerate efforts to reduce poverty, was reported to have been under review, at the time of the submission of the first VNR.

In its report on projects undertaken in The Bahamas during the 2010–2017 period, the IDB noted that the “Social Safety Net Program did not achieve any of its planned outcomes”, for a range of reasons, including, 1) the rotation of senior staff (including three Permanent Secretaries); 2) limited initial oversight by the Ministry of Finance; 3) insufficient expertise and slow decision-making, which led to significant procurement delays (of up to two years); and 4) the withdrawal of qualified candidates from multiple consultancies, and retendering.

The 2012 Social Safety Net Reform Programme, referred to as the RISE (Renewing, Inspiring, Sustaining, and Empowering) Programme, implemented by the GOB, through an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) loan, to modernise the delivery of social protection in the country, and accelerate efforts to reduce poverty, was reported to have been under review, at the time of the submission of the first VNR.
Despite the challenges, the report indicates that the loan achieved 5 of its 12 output targets, including: (i) the mobilization of expert technical assistance, to support the design and targeting of the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) component; (ii) the implementation of a public information campaign, to promote the new program; (iii) the introduction of a new payment system, to enhance the flexibility of the CCT stipend; (iv) the completion of the HES; and (v) the design and installation of a Management Information System (MIS), to facilitate program management. These successes were unable to overshadow existing issues with the programme. As indicated in the first VNR, challenges with land tenure security, also impacted poverty and included: the lack of a parcel-based cadastral map, uncertainty regarding ownership of land resulting from overlapping land claims, and the existence of generational and commonage land. As such, in August 2017, the balance of US$3.4 million in undisbursed loan financing, was cancelled and the project was closed. 14

However, elements of the Social Safety Net Programme were reintroduced, and expanded during the COVID-19 response. In 2016, Synergy International Systems, Inc. started the implementation of ProMIS, a web-based information management system. The ProMIS system aims to provide social workers with the tools to organize, evaluate and efficiently manage clients of the system. The ProMIS system aims to provide social workers with the tools to organize, evaluate and efficiently manage clients of the system.

The Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development’s introduction and expansion of a previously suspended system, particularly during COVID-19, was a positive indication of the government’s agility and ability to prioritize social protection.

Job Training

The Ministry of Public Service and National Insurance’s 52-Week Skills Empowerment Programme, aimed at providing jobs for the unemployed youth, was launched in August 2018, as the “National Job Creation and Skills Enhancement Programme”, to curb youth unemployment and reduce poverty. In June 2019, the programme was renewed for another year. The programme is designed to equip unemployed persons, between the ages of 19 and 30, with hands-on skills, aimed at enhancing their ability to find gainful employment. While the programme is led by the Ministry of Public Service and NIB, the programme has seen success, in part, because of its partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI), the National Training Agency (NTA), other government entities, and the private sector. In addition to the soft skills training provided by the NTA, and on-the-job training in government entities, programme participants are afforded the opportunity to engage in paid internships in the areas of construction, plumbing, electrical installation, hospitality, fashion design, business, and information technology, as well as opportunities to attain professional certifications.

As a testament to the success of the programme, many participants have been offered full-time employment in the private sector, and government ministries and departments, including the Water and Sewerage Corporation (WSC), and NIB.

August 2017, the balance of US$3.4 million in undisbursed loan financing, was cancelled and the project was closed.


Access to Land and Housing

The GOB has further committed to offering concessionary rates, for regularizing long-term occupation of Crown Land, developed or cultivated by Bahamas. Since the submission of the previous VNR, under the Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit’s (PMDU) Land Reform Priority, the Government has expressed a commitment to addressing concerns of the Bahamian people, related to land matters, particularly regarding opportunities to own and develop ready-to-build serviced lots and Crown Land, for productive purposes. The stated objectives of the Priority are as follows:

- Provide ready-to-build housing lots to Bahamians.
- Clear the backlog Crown Land applications at the Department of Lands and Survey (which include, not only first-time applicants, but lessees and approved persons with pending decisions and transactions).
- Ease the process and reduce the time it takes to apply for Crown Land.

The GOB included the following targets for 2021: 1) have 3000 ready-to-build housing lots, transferred to Bahamians [currently, only 96 lots have been transferred to Bahamians in the context of this initiative]; 2) an unknown number of leases and Crown grants transferred to Bahamians (73 have been reportedly transferred); and 3) reduce the processing time for Crown Land applications to 30 days (currently processing takes more than five months). Challenges cited for falling behind targets involve, inter alia, the inability to conduct work as usual in the face of COVID-19 restrictions - particularly the work required to render the administrative systems more efficient and effective. 15

The stakeholders responsible for delivering the work scope for Land Reform include, The Ministry of The Environment and Housing (on the ready-to-build serviced lots initiative), the Department of Lands and Surveys, OPM (on the other Land Reform targets), and a working group comprised of a cross-section of governmental agencies, including the Office of the Attorney General and Registrar General’s Department.

15 Ministry of the Environment and Housing (OTH) Nassau, Over-The-Hill Community Development Partnership Initiative (OTHCDPI). The economically depressed areas known as “Over the Hill” (OTH) in Nassau, have been characterized by high unemployment levels, high crime rates, low income, and infrastructure dilapidation. This area is home to many who have been left behind, and was identified as appropriate for this initiative, given the high concentration of poverty in the area.

Support for Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)

The GOB recognizes the important contribution of MSMEs to sustainable economic growth, promoting access to economic resources for all men and women, particularly the poor and vulnerable.

Over-The-Hill Community Development Partnership Initiative (OTHCDPI)
The Bahamas continues to face challenges as a small island developing state, particularly because of its location in the hurricane belt. It has an economy that is heavily reliant on international tourism, having been foregrounded in unprecedented ways, since the submission of the first VNR, in July 2018. The effects of Hurricane Dorian (September 2019) and the current global Pandemic, saw a reversal of key gains.

The following issues are likely to pose challenges to the implementation of SDG 1:

- The application-based and increasingly digital nature of most of the aforementioned social protection programmes, may exclude those most in need of them (particularly persons with disabilities, persons living in extreme poverty, and irregular migrants).

- Insufficient data regarding the landscape of persons living in extreme poverty.

- Progress on SDG 1 continues to necessitate the following changes, largely unchanged since the initial VNR:

  - Screening to identify individuals in need of services should be improved, while efforts to educate the necessary populations on the availability of such services broadened.

  - The sustainability of social protection funds must be prioritized, and social protection guarantees strengthened, through legislation and policies.

The data collection, monitoring, and evaluation systems should be enhanced to reflect the multidimensional nature of poverty.

Greater efforts should be made to increase civic participation and community engagement.13

Effective systems established during the responses to Hurricane Dorian and COVID-19, must be institutionalized and generalized, throughout the social protection ecosystem in the country.

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Under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, persons have the right to an adequate standard of living. This standard of living includes the right to have adequate food. Food security and access to nutritious foods are essential practices for health and wellbeing of individuals. In The Bahamas, 1 out of every 3 persons faces some level of food insecurity. Resolving and mitigating the lack of access to food, becomes particularly difficult in The Bahamas as the country imports 90% of its consumed food, worth $1 million annually.

Importation has an impact on the cost to the consumer; in particular, the consumer’s choice to eat healthy and nutritious. As stated in the 2018 VNR, The Bahamas aims to reduce heavy reliance on imported food by increasing food security, reducing unemployment, and stimulating domestic economic growth. Efforts are being made by governmental, national, and international organizations, to achieve the country’s targets for food security.

There are numerous agencies and governmental organisations that ensure access to food and food security. Government Ministries like the Ministry of Health, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Environmental Health, and the Ministry of Agriculture, are structured so that each sector may take on responsibilities to maintain food security. These responsibilities include surveillance, reporting, and analysis of food-borne disease trends, hazard analysis & critical control point training, and sanitary inspections. Government organisations also carry out initiatives to ensure residents have access to food, and there are sustainable food production systems; The Ministry of Agriculture, may specifically house these initiatives. Due to the impact of Hurricane Dorian and the COVID-19 pandemic, government initiatives concerning SDG 2 have been centred on ensuring persons have access to food at reasonable costs. NGOs, in particular HHH, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), and the World Central Kitchen, amongst others, have carried out initiatives that aim to ensure access to food for Bahamians. NGOs engaged programs that are primarily centred on increasing and sustaining local agricultural production.

SDG 2

**End Hunger, Achieve Food Security and Improved Nutrition and Promote Sustainable Agriculture**

The Bahamas has been seriously affected by the impact of Hurricane Dorian in 2019, and the COVID-19 Pandemic a year later, in 2020. Despite these challenges, initiatives were put in place to cushion the impact of these catastrophes on Bahamian residents, not having easy and affordable access to food. The following are key interventions carried out:

- Prime Minister, Dr. Hubert Minnis, established a National Food Distribution Task Force (NFDT), to work in tandem with The Ministry of Social Services and local NGOs, to coordinate food distribution to those in need in The Bahamas, during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The GOB supported the task force by donating $1 million per week, to assist 110,000 people.

- The GOB injected $1.4 million into the NFDT for Bahamians, during the Pandemic. The NFDT was created by the government, using previous successful distribution models. Zones were used to facilitate coordinating the distribution of the food. New Providence was divided into four (4) zones; Grand Bahama was divided into five (5) zones; and Abaco, Eleuthera, Northern and Southern Bahamas, each had their zones respectively. The NGOs were assigned to each zone to provide for distribution. Examples of these NGOs were: the Lend a Hand Bahamas organization, Bahamas Feeding Network, Bahamas Red Cross, Hands for Hunger, IDEA Relief, the Grand Bahama Food Task Force, and the One Eleuthera Foundation.

The Department of Social Services continued to assist Bahamians in need of food, coupons, during The Pandemic. Food coupons were first distributed in April 2020. By June 2020, 1,099 persons received coupons, valuing $134,050. Separately, from June 2020, the Disability Affairs Unit in The

SDG 2

**Ensure Access to Food**

The Bahamas, to tackle hunger. Many engage in surplus food rescue (particularly from the hospital industry), the storage of non-perishable goods, and food distribution to communities. In 2019, the World Central Kitchen provided 3 million meals to those affected by Hurricane Dorian. They also established programs to help residents prepare food at home, and to reduce the residents’ dependence on the World Central Kitchen’s prepared meals. The World Central Kitchen, “(wea) subsidizing cook stoves for families who are building and have launched a voucher program for families to be able to shop at small businesses [and] launched a series of farmers’ markets, to distribute free, fresh produce, for families to cook at home.”

In April 2020, following Hurricane Dorian and The COVID-19 Pandemic, HHH provided support for hurricane victims and those in need of food. The organization spent $615,000 assisting 400 families, over a period of 3 months. Five percent (5%) of persons were unable to collect food from food stores, because of disabilities and other various reasons. HHH delivered food items directly to the homes of these persons. HHH, along with CIBC First Caribbean, pledged to continually support persons and communities, past March 2021.

NGOs and private businesses were also supplied with food. 137,350 people were given food in these sectors, at a cost of $2.02 million. 41,014 units, parcels and vouchers were distributed among various groups and persons.

Several civil society organisations have emerged in The Bahamas, to tackle hunger. Many engage in surplus food rescue (particularly from the hospital industry), the storage of non-perishable goods, and food distribution to communities.
The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture is an organization that specializes in agriculture of the Inter-American System, for the Member States. The organization supports the Member States achieving agricultural development and rural well-being, by providing international technical support. It has provided support to The Bahamas with the following initiatives:

To increase agricultural productivity and strengthen the sector, the IICA hosted workshops in 2018, on New Providence and Abaco. “Fostering Competitive Value Chains: Capacity Building in the Governance of Producer Organizations” workshop trained agricultural producers on value chain participation, and group governance capacity building by strategic planning and trade. The workshop highlighted Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA), by producing a CSA video, geared towards The Bahamas. Also, the institute organized an aquaponics workshop to train twenty (20) agricultural producers, on methods to develop a system whereby waste produced by sea creatures, supplies nutrients for plants grown hydropodically.

The IICA, reported on The Bahamas’ significant achievement of agricultural food production. In 2019, the Institute assisted The Bahamas’ agriculture sub-sectors after Hurricane Dorian, by supporting rehabilitation efforts for crops, livestock, and bees. The project focused on climate-smart agriculture. The IICA delegation housed a series of capacity-building interventions for farmers and beekeepers. These interventions facilitated the rehabilitation of agriculture, and informed farmers of techniques to bolster resilience to agricultural risks and disasters in areas affected after Hurricane Dorian.

In 2020, the IICA conducted a governance assessment workshop, to provide technical assistance and inputs to the Bahamas Network of Rural Women Producers (BAHNORWP), and the Grand Bahamas Beekeepers Cooperative (GBBC), funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations TACO). The IICA assisted the BAHNORWP with identifying gaps in their organizational structure, and in other areas where their capacity needed to be strengthened. The IICA also assisted the GBBC with their promotional video, to help the group network with buyers through the Backyard Honey programme. The Minister of Agriculture, Michael Pindar, stated that the programme aims to allow Bahamians to ‘produce more of what you are consuming locally...to help families shave cost off their food bill’, to potentially “shave off $200 million of the $600 million spent on imports”. The Backyard Farming Initiative began in 2015; it also catered to economically depressed communities and behavioural schools like the Simpson Penn Centre for Boys, and The Willie Mae Pratt Centre for Girls.

In 2018, The IICA trained eighty (80) persons on livestock management and nutrition, poultry production, and developing proposals related hereto. The seminar also included training for the GBBCs and BAHNORWP, in providing technical assistance and logistical support, through grant writing and agro-processing.

In 2018, The IICA and the BAHFSA, supported the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) system, by providing it with technical assistance on prioritizing, preventing, and managing pathogens, that affect agriculture, food safety, and public health.

In 2019, the IICA trained BAHFSA, veterinarians, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Environmental Health Services, and the Ministry of Tourism, on biosecurity surveillance and the “One Health” approach. The “One Health” approach addresses sustainable solutions to health issues of people, animals, and the environment.

Other initiatives supported by the IICA include, the University of Florida’s Caribbean Bee College (CBC) event, that trained 40 persons on how to utilize beekeeping resources and offered both theoretical and practical instructions on the training.

As part of the IICA’s Significant Achievements of 2020, the organization institutionalized training workshops and webinars on agro-tourism and composting. The workshops entitled, “Agro-tourism Opportunities in the time of COVID-19”, “Composting as a Business”, “Introduction to Beekeeping”, and “Good Agricultural Practices for Producers”, were conducted as webinars, because of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

In 2020, the IICA supported the advancement of the “Green Climate Fund Readiness Proposal (GCF), the project was funded by the global Environmental Facility (GEF) – 7 Project Identification Form (PIF). The IICA’s technical support included, assisting with the development of the grant proposal for the project in 2021, and with the implementation of the project.
**The Maintenance of Genetically Diverse Seeds and Plants**

The Bahamas had signed on to the Nagoya Protocol. This protocol allows for the GOB to access genetic food resources and aim for a fair and equitable sharing of these resources.11

**Food Affordability Measures**

In 2016, the GOB passed a series of legislation, regarding agricultural regulation. The Food Safety and Quality Act, Plant Protection Act, and the Animal Health and Production Act, were passed to strengthen agricultural practices, to be in line with international best practices. To be in line with these practices, BAHFSA, introduced groundwater testing and sanitation procedures to North Andros, to reduce water contamination. BAHFSA also strengthened the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Authority by designing a “Cross-sectional Multi-disciplinary Approach to Surveillance, Detection, Identification, Neutralization and Prevention of Zoonotic Pathogens, along the Food Chain in The Bahamas”.12

In 2017, The Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources, launched a “National Security Policy and Agenda for Action” policy. The policy aims to provide persons economic and physical access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food, to meet their dietary needs and food preferences, for an active and healthy lifestyle.13 The GOB’s immediate initiatives under the policy include:

- **The continuation of the Backyard Gardening Programme** – This programme would provide support to people interested in growing their food.

- **The increase of food production through technology and innovation** – The partnership of Gladstone Road Agricultural Centre (GRAC) and the Caribbean Research and Development Institute (CARDI), aims to develop production practices to increase sweet potato production.

- **The sustainable use of resources in the fisheries sector** – The government partnered with NGOs and the private sector, to support managing marine resources like lobster and conch.

**Strengthening the enforcement of fisheries legislative provisions, to protect marine resources from illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.**

In 2018, The GOB increased Value-Added Tax (VAT) from 7.5% to 12%,14 to combat the increase in food rates. The Government implemented a policy under the VAT Act, for breadbasket foods to have 0% VAT (Zero Rated) added.15

In 2019, The IICA collaborated with the GOB to improve its capacity to manage policies, plans and strategies, and strengthen its institutional framework. The IICA assisted with the development of the Agricultural Health and Food Safety Regulations. The organization also supported The Bahamas’ participation in Codex, World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC), WTO and compliance with their agreed measures. The Bahamas ultimately benefited from the IICA by being provided with training and networking opportunities, in the agricultural sector.16

**Tribune Radio Limited**

In 2020, Tribune Radio Limited, partnered with Showman E Bistro, a local eatery, for a thanksgiving promotion, which provided twelve families in-need, with all the necessary ingredients to prepare a full thanksgiving meal for seven persons.15 This initiative targeted those persons who were most vulnerable, to ensure that they were not left out or left behind on a day celebrated with sharing food.

Tribune Radio Limited, supports HFH’s Paradise Plates fundraisers, with on-air articles, radio commercials, and remote broadcasts and appearances to promote and spread the word about the NGO, its work, and how to get involved.16

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12 Ibid. 2013.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 The IICA assisted with the development of the Agricultural Health and Food “Safety Regulations. The organization also supported The Bahamas’ participation in Codex, World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC), WTO and compliance with their agreed measures. The Bahamas ultimately benefited from the IICA by being provided with training and networking opportunities, in the agricultural sector.
18 The country must strengthen its food security programmes, to better guarantee access to nutritious food regularly.
19 Because of its small size (leading to scale diseconomies), and the high cost of inputs, including labour, The Bahamas relies heavily on food imports.
20 Logistics networks to move agricultural products across the archipelago in a time-effective manner are not well developed.
21 For agricultural development, it is necessary to provide educational and technical support to small and larger-scale farmers.
Hurricane Dorian placed significant stress on the healthcare system in The Bahamas. The primary hospital in Grand Bahama, The Rand Memorial Hospital, was completely submerged during the storm. Ambulances, operating room equipment, and intensive care unit equipment were all lost. There was little to no access to potable or drinking water, and several healthcare workers from New Providence, were flown into Abaco and Grand Bahama, to offer relief.

This spreading of human resources created a strain across all islands. Rapid assessments were carried out by the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), in tandem with the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), and other international organizations, so that appropriate assistance could be offered. The Ministry of Health produced printed guidelines on handwashing, water safety and chronic disease care, while Public Service Announcements (PSAs) were distributed on social media and the radio, to ensure widespread reach. Additionally, the Ministry of Health’s Syndemic Surveillance Guidelines were updated and distributed to healthcare first responders, and Vector Surveillance Training was given by PAHO personnel, specifically for rodents and mosquitoes, which are known to be disease-carrying.

The Samaritan’s Purse, in collaboration with PAHO and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), provided emergency healthcare services by way of a field hospital in Grand Bahama, to offset the strain from the damages to the Rand Memorial Hospital in Grand Bahama, and healthcare services in Abaco. The facilities consisted of a lab, a pharmacy, an operating theatre, an emergency room, a male ward, an intensive care unit, a female ward, and 36 beds in total. Many agencies and organizations assisted with the rebuilding efforts of the Rand Memorial Hospital in Grand Bahama, including Scotiabank Bahamas and Carnival Cooperation. The GOB allocated $21 million, to the rebuilding efforts. The Rand was able to welcome patients back into its facilities, in April 2021 for the first time since Hurricane Dorian.

In March 2020, the first reported case of COVID-19 was recorded in The Bahamas. Shortly after, the country was placed under lockdown by the Prime Minister. These restrictions came in the form of emergency orders, which implemented a curfew and outlined essential workers and essential services. The COVID-19 Pandemic placed further significant strain on the health sector, as healthcare workers became infected, and the system neared capacity, numerous times. To increase the health system’s capacity, the government partnered with SuperClubs Breezes in August 2020, to create a low-risk healthcare facility that offered beds and resources, for low medical care. The SuperClubs Breezes Resort was also used as a quarantine facility, during the early stages of the Pandemic.

In June 2020, the Department of Environmental Health Services (DEHS) issued cleaning guidelines for workplaces, schools, other buildings, and other public and private spaces. The Department also offered training on how to properly sanitize for the staff of the affected spaces, and emphasized the protocols set by the Ministry of Health, which included, wearing a mask and social distancing of at least 6 feet. As of March 2021, the GOB reported a recurring expenditure of $17.4m and a capital expenditure of $0.4m for Public Health Safety, since the budget year began in June. Funds went towards outfitting healthcare facilities with equipment and supplies, including those used for contact tracing, quarantine, and lab work. Princess Margaret Hospital, Sandals’ Rehabilitation Centre, South Beach Health Centre, and the Elizabeth Estates Clinic, also received improvements.

In January 2021, a Vaccine Consultative Committee was appointed by the Prime Minister, to assist with vaccine rollout. The committee consisted of personnel from various specialty areas including healthcare, business development, academia, churches, and the government. The committee conducted baseline surveys to gather data for their distribution plan and identified groups of people to administer the vaccines. The GOB rolled out a vaccine campus to address the hesitation surrounding getting vaccinated. They were proactive in doing so, as they began the campaign before the vaccines landed in The Bahamas, for national distribution. The policy was, taking the vaccine is completely free and voluntary, with healthcare workers given priority for receiving the jab. Later, added to the priority list were persons 60 and older, uniformed branches, persons working in schools,
hospitality workers, persons with physical disabilities, students and athletes studying or competing abroad. However, on islands with smaller populations, a prioritized rollout was undertaken, as unvaccinated travellers. The Ministry of Health, through the healthytogether.gov.bs website, where they share updates and information, are also available.

For travel into The Bahamas, all adults are required to have a Bahamas Travel Health Visa, whether vaccinated or not. Travellers may also opt for COVID-19 health insurance, which is covered in the Bahamas Travel Health Visa application fee. The processing time for the visa is 48 hours, and the price varies depending on the duration of stay. Vaccinated travellers are not subject to the same testing requirements as unvaccinated travellers. The Bahamas Health Visa application process is available online.

Notably, the survey results found that the average Bahamian consumes more than double the daily recommended dose of salt, consumes 64 pounds of added sugar a year, drinks less than the daily recommended amount of water, eats less than the recommended number of fruits and vegetables a day, and is overweight.

Further, there has been an increase in the number of Bahamians who smoke and drink, and 65% of the surveyed population, was reported as not using condoms.

The Ministry of Health launched a website, `vax.gov.bs`, to create greater ease for making appointments, cancelling, rescheduling, and downloading certificates, once vaccinated.

Additionally, the OPM launched a portal on its website, where frequently asked questions and myths about the vaccine are addressed; a vaccine schedule is provided as well as a calculator, to estimate when a second dose of the vaccine would be needed, from the administration of the day, of any first dose. The website also provides a link to the Ministry of Health’s healthytogether.gov.bs website, for additional resources.

On 26 April 2021, the GOB along with the U.S. Embassy, embarked on a joint mission, to distribute vaccines to eight Family Islands, namely, Mayaguana, Acklins Island, Crooked Island, Cat Island, Long Island, Inagua, Bimini, and Eleuthera.

This targeted effort was to ensure that no one was left behind, as The Bahamas continued to tackle COVID-19. The Family Islands are among the most vulnerable, due to their distance from the capital, and the additional time and resources it takes to contact them. The United States also committed $750,000 of healthcare funding to The Bahamas, for assistance with COVID-19 response efforts.

The GOB had also secured a $20 million loan from the IDB, to assist with the procurement and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine, over two years. The project had four components that will tackle, strengthening response leader-

AS OF MAY 2021, OVER 39,000 VACCINE DOSES WERE ADMINISTERED.
The Bahamas National Commission on Marijuana was approved by the Cabinet, in July 2018. Since then, they have conducted research and a survey, to gather information on public attitudes about the growing, selling, and use of marijuana in The Bahamas. The committee’s report was presented in January 2020, which made 24 recommendations to the government. The survey, which was conducted between November 2018 and January 2019, which made recommendations to the government, included “As, videos and Yyers, ran from March 2019 to April 2020. 75% of respondents believed that marijuana legalised for medicinal purposes, would be more accessible, and specialists to share health information, to enhance the quality and precision of care. 75% said that people should not be allowed to grow their medicinal marijuana.

The Bahamas National Commission on Marijuana has been reappointed to run until June 2021, to fulfil its mandate.

The Healthy Bahamas Coalition

The Healthy Bahamas Coalition adopted the regional campaign for front-of-package labelling, led by the Healthy Caribbean Coalition, PAHO, the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission. The campaign titled, “Now More than Ever: Better Labels, Better Choices, Better Health”, calls for easily noticeable, octagon-shaped warning labels, to identify food products that are high in fats, sugars, and salts. These labels aim to help consumers make healthier choices, when making dietary decisions. The multimedia campaign, which included PSAs, videos and flyers, ran from March 2021 to April 2021.

The National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) has enrolled over 100,000 Bahamian citizens and residents in the National Health Insurance (NHI) Program, since it was launched in 2017. This milestone achievement, accomplished in April 2021, represents a quarter of the Bahamian population. The program grants those enrolled, affordable, quality healthcare, with a primary care physician of their choice. A survey that was conducted, revealed that beneficiaries of the program, reported 95% patient satisfaction. Another significant achievement made by the NHIA was the introduction of the Electronic Health Record (EHR), using Telehealth. The EHR provided by eClinicalWorks (etc.), allows healthcare providers to keep digital records of their patients’ health information, to allow comprehensive information to be available to care teams. This can also allow healthcare providers, labs, and specialists to share health information, to enhance the quality and precision of care.

84% of respondents believed that marijuana should be legalized for medicinal use, while 40% support the personal growth of medicinal marijuana.

However, 25% of respondents believed that marijuana legalised for medicinal purposes, would be abused in some way.

Mental Health

A study done by PAHO in 2020, found that mental, neurological, substance use disorders, and self-harm (MNSS), account for between a fourth and a fifth of the disease burden of non-communicable diseases, in 5-year-olds. Up until age 5, these MNSS diseases, which account for the disease burden, are mostly epilepsy (44%) and autism (48%). After age 5, between ages 5 and 15, anxiety disorders, conduct disorders, and headaches, become more prevalent, each comprising about 18% of the MNSS disease burden. The report finds that around age 20, throughout adulthood, disorders such as depression, anxiety, somatic system disorder, and self-harm, are responsible for 37% of the MNSS disease burden. While headaches account for 21%, substance abuse for 20%, and severe mental disorders, for about 9%. Elderly persons most often suffer from a neurocognitive disorder associated with Alzheimer’s disease, which is responsible for more than 50% of the MNSS disease burden at age 80, and more than 70% at age 85 and above. The study also found that men were most affected by headaches, alcohol disorders, dementia, and Alzheimer’s disease, while women were most affected by depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, and headaches.

At the time of writing this report, there are no specific taxes that earmarks funding for NHIA Bahamas. However, in its 2019 Response to Consultation report, the NHIA outlined its intention to make the NHIA program more affordable, accessible, and effective. To do this, the NHIA was recommending options to support financing and expansion of program benefits via the implementation of an employee contribution to 1.5% of income, removing a 50% cap on employee premium contributions, and adding all paediatric cancers to the standard health benefit. Before establishing NHIA, approximately 70% of Bahamian citizens and residents did not have health insurance.

In October 2019, Minister of Health, Dr Duane Sands, expressed concern about the mental health of citizens and residents of The Bahamas, post-Hurricane Dorian. Earlier that year, Dr. Sands had also expressed concerns about the “gaining addiction” in The Bahamas.

In April 2020, The Bahamas Psychological Association, repurposed its help-lines to those who may be experiencing psychological stress during the Pandemic, and the changes brought to individuals and communities. It was able to achieve this initiative through collaboration with PAHO Caribbean, The Ministry of Health, and the Public Hospitals Authority (PHA).

Americas, an NGO, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), with the GOB, which outlined that Americas would provide an array of health services, including mental health and psychological support, as well as primary care for those recovering from Hurricane Dorian.

PAHO donated tablets to help with mental health support, amid the COVID-19 Pandemic, in January 2021. The tablets were donated to the Ministry of Public Health and the Public Hospital’s Authority. Complete with memory cards, the tablets can keep track of the demographic information and number of persons who use the English and Creole hotlines. The tablets will also be used to track what kind of mental health conditions are experienced, and harmonize services from various healthcare providers, carry out virtual psychology sessions, and measure the effectiveness of session conductions, virtually.
Tribune Radio Limited

Tribune Radio Limited held their fourth annual "Dunkin for Boobies" fundraiser in 2019. The event gave the public an opportunity to dunk The Tribune Radio's radio personalities in dunk tanks, for a small fee. The proceeds were donated to the Cancer Society. Corporate sponsors donated about $6,000, while the total amount raised was $9,000.

Tribune Radio Limited also held a fitness challenge for its employees to encourage wellness. They partnered with The Sports Centre, Cooperative Credit Union, and Evolve Functional Fitness. Evolve Functional Fitness offered the participants free membership and classes.

SDG 3

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 3 PROGRAMMES

| Public attitudes towards COVID-19 vaccine |
| Public fatigue surrounding mobility restrictions |
| Eating habits |
| Economic strain on the healthcare system |
| Healthcare worker burnout |
| The stigma surrounding mental health |
| Sustainable financing of health care services |
5.0 PROGRESS ON GOALS & TARGETS

Enhancing capacity for research and innovation has positive implications for improving education quality and educational attainment, contributing to increased productivity and subsequent economic activity. There is a heightened need for programmes that focus on both hard and soft skills, as employers often cite a lack of well-qualified workers as one of their primary business challenges. Investment in education and training has been a key priority for the government, during the period under review.

The Ministry of Education has ventured beyond merely using the ‘SDG’ language, to actualize its goals. The Ministry aims to provide Pre-primary Education on the SDGs, to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development. The Ministry of Education’s policy statements and budgetary priorities, suggest its official position on having a keen awareness of the importance of achieving an internationally agreed agenda, whilst simultaneously contributing to sustainable national development.

In accordance with the government’s growth and fiscal austerity measures, cuts were made across national budgets. However, there was a significant increase in the Ministry of Education’s recurring and capital budgets, respectively. Twenty percent of the government’s total Education’s recurring and capital budgets contribute to sustainable national development.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for more than 50,000 students, spread between approximately 170 educational institutions and 14 districts, on the major islands. In addition, there are 77 independent schools and tertiary entities, including UB. Education is compulsory for children between the ages of 5 and 16, and is free of cost in public education schools. Primary school enrolment is practically universal, and net enrolment in secondary education is almost 85%. In the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019/2020, spending on education accounted for about 3% of GDP. To ensure access to tertiary level education, the GOB has introduced a tuition waiver scheme and has reduced entry requirements for students wishing to pursue higher education at UB. Undergraduate degrees are also free of charge, for Bahamian citizens who are enrolled in a minimum number of courses. In an effort to leave no one behind, Family Island students are provided with additional financial support, to ensure that the Ministry of Education’s capital works.

The education system is not producing graduates with the skills required by the business sector. Additionally, there are significant concerns about the education system. These concerns include the following:

1. There is a significant gap in identifying key skills needed.
2. There is a significant gap in the process to ensure that the education system delivers those key skills.

Many of these young people join the labour force but do not have the skills necessary for employment - both soft skills (punctuality and attendance) and hard skills (appropriate literacy and numeracy level). A 2014 study by the World Bank on Youth Unemployment in the Caribbean, noted that 34.5% of employers in The Bahamas, cite the need for experience as a critical determinant of employment. Additionally, the inadequacy of the workforce’s education was seen as the single largest obstacle to doing business in The Bahamas. These inadequacies are seen in both public and private sectors, and large and small businesses.
KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 4

Interventions explained in the previous VNR will not be elaborated upon here, as there has been no evidence of significant changes thereto. Such interventions include the Student Achievement Unit, Providing Access to Continued Education (PACE), Success Ultimately Reassures Everyone (SURE), and Transitional Alternative Programme for Students (TAPS) programmes. It is worth mentioning that since the last VNR, no known progress has been made on the Multi-Service Centre for Adults with Developmental Disabilities – i.e., a facility intended to provide a safe, nurturing, learning, living and supportive environment for such adults. One of the facility’s goals is to provide opportunities for the training and development of persons residing in the facility. 25

That said, improvements to the educational system and outcomes have been listed among the eight (8) priorities monitored by the Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit. The five (5) areas of focus and its current status are highlighted in the image below.

Notwithstanding the digital divide that manifested in the early months following the GOB’s response to COVID-19, the following graphs show that the login activity of students, as of October 2020, was rather robust – equalling a total number of 46,834 students, using the Ministry of Education’s virtual learning platform.

The Ministry of Education’s Virtual Learning Portal

Notwithstanding the digital divide that manifested in the early months following the GOB’s response to COVID-19, the following graphs show that the login activity of students, as of October 2020, was rather robust – equalling a total number of 46,834 students, using the Ministry of Education’s virtual learning platform.
Environmental Stewardship Education

The Bahamas National Trust (BNT) continues to collaborate with the GOB and partners, to ensure that relevant biodiversity information is integrated into formal and informal educational programmes. These programmes include the inclusion of Conservation Issues into the National Curriculum, and Teacher Training Workshops to help support this; the development of the National Park System throughout the archipelago, to work as outdoor classrooms; implementing After-school Environmental Clubs, “Discovery Club” in over 60 schools, and Environmental Education Camps on several Family Islands.

SDG 4 Partnerships during Hurricane Dorian & COVID-19 Responses

In addition to government initiatives, other entities are working to ensure that no one is left behind. Financing for most of the Ministry of Education’s efforts is sourced mainly from the consolidated fund. However, in 2019, the recent Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics “STEM for Oceans Education Initiative” by the Pan-American Development Foundation and Royal Caribbean Ltd., is of particular significance to small island-big ocean states and demonstrates ways in which partnerships can address the specific needs of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Other NGOs provide essential services in raising awareness of the SDGs through experiential learning activities. Notable organizations in this regard include, BREEF, CICI, and CEI, to name a few.

The IOM, following its Objective 4.2, supported 200 children (100 Female, 100 Male) with remote education, via the distribution of tablet computers and internet access. In coordination with the Ministry of Education, IOM prioritized students with a migration background, while others supported the core groups of students. The organization plans to continue to advocate, and conduct training for, migrants and marginalized groups. One of the entity’s ideas is to provide English language courses for adults.

Indeed, one of the key challenges to SDG 4 implementation was the limited progress on retaining boys in the educational system, as well as limited progress on closing the performance gaps between public and private schools. To contribute to levelling the playing field in this regard, the Lyford Cay Foundation spearheads an educational enhancement programme (FOCUS), for public school students.

Tribune Radio Limited

Tribune Radio Limited engages work study students each year, from St Anne’s High School. They have also engaged students from other schools and learning institutions such as, C. R. Walker Senior High School, Queens College, and The Learning Resources Section. In addition to work study, Tribune Radio Limited has also engaged college interns to allow those pursuing an education in related disciplines, an opportunity for on-the-job experience. This experience helps to shape candidates of quality, for employment and entrepreneurship.

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 4 PROGRAMMES

Achieving SDG 4 will depend on the following:

- Increased and sustained funding for education and training at all levels, with specific emphasis on Early Childhood Education and Vocational Training.
- Investment in Research and efforts to reduce the gap in School Enrolment between girls and boys.
A 2019 UB study titled, “Learning Gender-based Attitudes in The Bahamas”, found that among mostly university students between the ages of 18-24, heavily stereotyped gender attitudes were prominent. These attitudes included, that a man should be the head of the household and that a woman should submit to her husband; however, findings also revealed that respondents disagreed that a woman’s place is in the home and that a man expresses his love to his partner by hitting her.

The study found that attitudes about gender roles are formed at a young age in the home. A significant majority (82.3%) of all respondents came from a home that had a mother figure present, while less than half (48.6%) of all respondents came from a home that had a father figure present. These findings support the idea that the Bahamian society is matrifocal in nature, as other scholars have also found. The study also found that respondents were typically more receptive to messages received from their own sex. Conclusions of the study noted that, to promote gender equality in The Bahamas, faith-based received from their own sex. Conclusions of the study noted that, to promote gender equality in The Bahamas, faith-based

women and men equal rights, when passing on their nationality to their children. A child born to a Bahamian mother and foreign father, still does not automatically inherit Bahamian citizenship. However, a child born to a Bahamian father and foreign mother, does.

During COVID-19, the IDB acknowledged that domestic violence was on the rise in the region and beyond, due to lockdowns and restraints placed on movement, to slow down the spread of the virus. A separate IDB study conducted in April 2020, surveyed 910 people from The Bahamas and revealed that 11.3% of women surveyed, expressed a rise in domestic violence in their homes, since the start of the Pandemic. The study also noted that there may be an instance of under-reporting, and the actual numbers may be higher. Overall, the burden of unpaid-care work such as home-schooling, entertaining children, caring for elders in the family, and cooking and cleaning, is performed by women. The Department of Gender and Family Affairs (DGFA) in the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development, along with UB, administered a survey in 2020, to gather information about family safety and the prevalence of Domestic Violence, during COVID-19. Initial findings from the survey found that Domestic Violence was up 2%. The Bahamas Crisis Centre also reported a 30% uptick in domestic violence related calls, and The Bahamas Christian Council also noted the rise in domestic violence, while calling for planned relief measures.

There is a thirty-three percent (33%) gender pay gap between women and men, and most persons living below the poverty line are women. Further, poverty is more prevalent in homes headed by women, as opposed to those headed by men. Rural households experience the highest rates of poverty, making rural women among the most vulnerable in the population.

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) measures the disparities between women and men in empowerment, reproductive health, and the labour market. A score of zero (0) would reflect no disparities in equality between men and women, and a score of one (1) would indicate strong disparities. The 2019 GII data reflects The Bahamas as having a GII of 0.341.

The Department of Gender and Family Affairs (DGFA)

The DGFA within the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development, maintains a relationship with NGOs and regularly hosts monthly meetings where NGOs receive updates, network, and may access additional resources through the DGFA. The DGFA allocated over $150,000 to NGOs in 2018, to support their ongoing work and programmes in various communities, particularly those communities that are most vulnerable and are at risk of being left behind.

In September 2018, the DGFA, using information gathered earlier that year via survey, hosted a Janes Preservative-making Workshop for women in the rural community of South Andros, focusing on local fruits such as guavas, mangos, sapodillas, and seagrapes. The Department also hosted straw plaiting workshops for women, men, and school students, in the rural islands of Acklins and Crooked Island. Both workshops provided skills that can be used to make goods for sale, thus enhancing economic empowerment.

Women farmers in Cat Island were presented with eight generators and eight water tanks in 2018, to support farming activities and to ensure the opportunity for continuous production, during periods of drought.

A program officer from the DGFA attended the “10th European Development Regional Crime and Violence Prevention and Social Development Capacity-Building Train the Trainers Workshop, for Persons Working with the victims and perpetrators of Domestic Violence Trinidatopt in January 2019. The program officer conducted training sessions, with the knowledge gained at the Train-the-Trainer Workshop, for the staff of The Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development.

The National Women’s Advisory Council, along with the DGFA, held an Economic Empowerment Expo for NGOs and interested individuals, in November 2018. Over 50 NGO’s and 200 people benefited.

The DGFA is on the steering committee for NEMA, to ensure that a gender dimension is built into the formulation of plans, strategies, programmes, and policies, on matters of national emergencies. In 2019, the Department was a participant in the National Disaster Baseline Assessment, after Hurricane Dorian. This was the first exercise of its kind. The launch of the assessment included a year-long workshop in which data, disaster management experiences, and best practices are shared.

In April 2020, the DGFA launched a survey online, titled “Family Safety Survey – COVID-19 Bahamas”, to collect data on households to indicate how the Pandemic affected the prevalence of violence in homes.
Women and girls are among the most vulnerable groups affected by natural disasters. Following Hurricane Dorian, an NGO CARE conducted a Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) using secondary information which predicted that:

- 40,238 women and girls (51.4%) and 38,047 men and boys (48.6%) were directly affected.
- Re: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) - 21,407 women and girls require support with menstruation
- Re: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) - 3,131 women and adolescent girls will be pregnant (4%) while 470 will face life-threatening complications in pregnancy
- Re: Gender Based Violence (GBV) - 40,238 women and girls are at risk of gender-based violence

It was also found that 9.7% of households that were headed by women, were living in or experiencing poverty, compared to 7.9% of the households headed by men. This made households led by women, 1.8% more likely to be experiencing poverty.

As a response to this, the DGFA in The Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development, partnered with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to provide dignity kits to women and girls in shelters. The dignity kits included menstrual management products, soap, towels, essential toiletries, a comb, and a mirror. The kits were provided in durable buckets that could also be repurposed. The DGFA with UNFPA, also conducted focus groups in the main community when it came to childcare and care of the elderly. Relief efforts, even during the storm, through community organizations and utilizing their social networks.

Despite women being more vulnerable than men to the devastating effects of Dorian, they were essential in the community when it came to childcare and care of the elderly. Women were also instrumental in managing their households post Dorian. The almost exclusive burden of care work, serves as yet another barrier to women’s ability to be mobile, and access rebuilding resources.

Women and girls served as important actors in recovery and relief efforts, even during the storm, through community organizations and utilizing their social networks.

According to a 2019 World Bank study titled "Women, Business, and the Law 2019: A Decade of Reform", The Bahamas was ranked 62 out of 187 countries and fourth in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. The report sought to shed light on the ways legal discrimination affects women, in areas of employment and entrepreneurship. The Bahamas scored 100 in five of eight categories. Those categories being, going places, getting married, getting a pension, managing assets, and starting a job; The Bahamas scored 75 in running a business and getting paid, and 20 in having children. The category "going places", speaks to the ease of mobility of a woman’s free will, while the category of "starting a job", measures how laws played a role in women becoming entrepreneurs. The section “getting paid”, seeks to measure how laws affect the gap in wages between women and men, and the types of jobs they hold employment at, while the category “managing assets”, seeks to measure the way laws affect the difference in how property is, in men and women. The section on “getting a pension”, looks at laws that influence the amount of pension a woman receives while “having children”, and zones in on laws that influence the way women can work, after being pregnant. Finally, the section on “running a business”, focused on measuring those things that serve as barriers to women successfully running a business, as opposed to men successfully running a business.

In 2021, the Minister of National Security announced that the sex offenders registry would be fully established, complete with resources, personnel, and infrastructure, by July 2021. The registry is to keep a list of all sexual offenders, including their places of residence. The offender has three days to report to the registry, after being released from prison, and must also provide identification so that a report can be made in the register.

The Sexual Offenders Registry

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), is also often called the International Bill of Human Rights for Women. The convention explains what is considered discrimination against women and provides an agenda for how countries can end those forms of discrimination.

In October 2018, The Bahamas presented at the 71st session of CEDAW, with a delegation led by the Minister of Social Services and Urban Development. The delegation consisted of persons from the DGFA, The Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, and The Ministry of Education and Foreign Affairs. The Bahamas appeared for the constructive dialogue and consideration of the country’s 6th periodic report. The Minister of Social Services and Urban Development invited the UN to partner with the Ministry, to provide technical assistance to better protect women and girls. The Minister also reaffirmed The Bahamas’ commitment to the journey to achieve Gender Equality.

The Sexual Offenders Registry

CEDAW

Equality Bahamas, an NGO that advocates for the rights of women through public education, community engagement and advocacy, presented a shadow report in response to the CEDAW report prepared by DGFA. Shadow reports allow the voices of civil society to be heard, while allowing them to offer critiques and recommendations on record to the government. Oral submissions were also given by NGO advocates.
The Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership (CIWiL) chapter in The Bahamas, was established on 22 November 2019. CIWiL is an NGO that monitors, increases, and strengthens women’s political participation and leadership in the Caribbean region. Since its establishment, the organization has held numerous trainings, symposiums, workshops, and meetings, to engage and educate the Bahamian population and grow its membership. CIWiL consistently works across all political party lines with politicians, other NGOs, civil society, and the GOB, to fulfill its mandate.

The Sustainable Development Goals Unit (SDGU)
The SDGU hosted an interactive webinar by Gabrielle Hosein, the Director of the University of The West Indies St. Augustine’s Campus Institute for Gender and Developmental Studies. In November 2020. The lecture, titled “Unboxing Biases”, tackled toxic masculinities, and broke down the stereotypes assigned to different genders. The webinar, hosted on Facebook live, allowed for viewers to interact, and ask questions to better tailor the learning experience.

Equality Bahamas
Equality Bahamas is an NGO that promotes women and other human rights issues, by way of community engagement, public education, and advocacy. Equality Bahamas has a focus to help the most vulnerable communities, in line with ensuring that no one is left behind.

Equality Bahamas hosts monthly “Women’s Wednesdays” sessions, where the community is invited to engage in open dialogue on various topics. The sessions are also recorded and streamed on Facebook Live, to extend the reach and allow people to participate virtually.

Equality Bahamas also has an expo each March, in celebration of International Women’s Day. Other organizations are invited to come and share about their work in the community, and information about how to get involved is provided. There are also interactive activity sessions and women-owned business vendors.

The Dignified Girls Project
The DGP is an NGO that provides menstrual hygiene products to girls in need. Dignity kits are packaged by the organization, which donates the packages to distribution centres that work with girls in marginalized communities. Additionally, The DGP hosts an annual, “My Period My Pride” seminar, where girls can hear from an array of speakers on all things menstruation related. The interactive sessions allow the participants to gain a better understanding of their cycles and boost their confidence. The “My Period My Pride” seminar is the educational segment of the NGO. The organization also has a “Period Management & Hygiene” booklet which is available for sale as a PDF or physical copy, as well as other menstrual hygiene products, whose sales go towards the continuity of the organization.

The Citizen Security & Justice Programme
In 2019, trainers of the Citizen Security and Justice Programme (CSJP), trained hundreds of community residents in how to identify, address and find resolve in challenges relating to gender-based, violence, conflict resolution, parenting, and sexual assault. The sessions were made free to the public and were made accessible to various communities.

Male Perpetrators Programme
In 2018 and 2019, the Roman-Catholic Archdiocese in The Bahamas, held a 26-week programme for male perpetrators of GBV. The programme seeks to change the cognitive behaviours of men through teaching them various skills that they can apply every day, inclusive of how to better manage their emotions and conflict resolution.

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<tr>
<th>CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 5 PROGRAMMES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>HARMFUL STEREOTYPES</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>LIMITED PUBLIC EDUCATION ON GENDER EQUALITY</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>LACK OF DATA</td>
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</table>

According to a 2011 IDB report, 38% of properties in New Providence rely on WSC for water, while many households and businesses use personal well water and wastewater treatment facilities. The often untreated and contaminated nature of well water in The Bahamas, however, has led to the normalization of using well water, primarily for washing, while relying on purchased water for cooking and drinking. Still, some households lack access to running water, relying solely on water from public water pumps. Water and sanitation infrastructures have also suffered water loss rates as high as 58% in previous years, caused by years of inadequate maintenance. Aided at improving the lives of individuals in the OTH Community, the OTHCDP/OTH Initiative is emerging as a good practice for partnering between sectors, to achieve sustainable national development. Indeed, the private sector, civil service, civil society organizations, the media, and other stakeholders, are mobilizing to restore social vitality, economic wealth, and environmental health to the community. The OTH initiative comprises 6 Pillars, with its current focus being placed on Rejuvenation – coupled with elements of the Economic Empowerment Pillar. Furthermore, under SDG 17’s emphasis on partnerships, the OTH Foundation was created as a vehicle through which interested private donors could contribute to specific pillars of the project. Thus far, $300k has been donated and allocated toward the Rejuvenation Pillar.

### SDG 6

#### Water for All Strategy

To ensure modern indoor sanitation and access to piped water to all residents of the Zone by 2025, the government, through its OTH project, established the Water for All Strategy, that is comprised of the refurbishment of 77 standpipes in the zones, the retrofitting of 100 homes for indoor plumbing, and the design of a household prepaid smart metering system, for water resources.

In June 2018, the WSC announced a $75 million project to expand the sewerage system, to cover over two-thirds of OTH households.

In addition to the water for all strategy, several other initiatives were launched. An example of this project, along with other initiatives, is the Water for All Strategy. An inspection and a workshop were held with PAHO officials and consultants in October 2018. A pilot programme for installation was expected to commence, but it was not until the end of 2020, that efforts to install key infrastructure were introduced in the target community.

#### Climate Resilience of the Water Sector in the Bahamas

As part of the Green Climate Fund project which aims to ensure the resilience of the water sector in The Bahamas, it was noted that the resulting impacts of climate change, including extreme weather, rising sea levels, increasing temperatures, etc., could have a profound effect on prospects for sustainable development throughout the region, and particularly in The Bahamas. Stronger hurricanes, longer dry seasons, and shorter wet seasons will have particularly serious impacts on the water sector in The Bahamas. This can potentially drive supply-side deficits, while also undermining the integrity of the country’s water storage and distribution infrastructure. In sum, climate change threatens to undermine decades of progress and effort.

Climate change poses severe threats to the water sector in The Bahamas. Projections suggest that temperatures in The Bahamas are likely to increase, rainfall may decrease, storms may intensify, and sea levels are likely to rise in response to these challenges, the Climate Resilience of the Water Sector in The Bahamas project aims to enhance the resiliency of the water sector in The Bahamas, to safeguard the country’s water security in a changing climate. The project will accomplish this by: (i) strengthening the foundations for more evidence-based policy and decision making on climate change and the water sector; (ii) supporting relevant stakeholders to apply this knowledge to the development and implementation of a more coordinated and coherent policy and governance framework; and (iii) scaling up investment on highly vulnerable islands to enhance the resilience of the water system and services. In so doing, the project will deliver tangible climate change adaptation benefits, while also equipping government and non-government stakeholders to work together to continue strengthening the resilience of the water sector project closure. The project will be coordinated by the CDB as the Accredited Entity and executed by the WSC of The Bahamas, as the Executing Entity.

#### Partnerships

The Water and Sewerage Corporation recently signed a MOU with IsraAID for the development and implementation of a Sustainable Groundwater Management Project (SGMMP) in Abaco, following the passage of Hurricane Dorian in 2019. IsraAID is an Israeli-based non-governmental organization, founded in 2001. Since its inception, this organization has worked in over 50 countries, providing post-disaster assistance and utilizing an extensive roster of Israeli and international experts. During this project, IsraAID will be working closely with Corporation personnel to develop and implement a groundwater management system for Abaco.

The project is utilizing a series of monitoring wells equipped with sensors to provide data to a central Microsoft Access database that will guide our management of the Abaco aquifer system. The project commenced in December 2020 and is expected to be completed by late 2021. The Corporation has identified staff from Abaco, along with New Providence,
Andros, and other islands to participate in this project, with the view of expanding the project to other islands, utilizing the skills and technology acquired. A similar project is being implemented in Grand Bahama involving the Grand Bahama Utility Company and IsraAID. The long-term goal is to ensure that our natural resources, in this case, groundwater, is properly and sustainably managed, now, and into the future, for the benefit of all Bahamians and visitors to our shores.139

The Ministry of Environment and Housing noted the following key challenges facing the water sector in The Bahamas. These include the following:

- Declining freshwater availability
- Increasing contamination of (already scarce) freshwater
- Negative impacts on critical water infrastructure
- Lack of coordinated national water policy or plan that considers the needs of, and guides, other sectors and sectoral stakeholders

129 CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 6 PROGRAMMES
5.0 PROGRESS ON GOALS & TARGETS

SDG 7

Much of the country’s efforts to ensure a future characterized by access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy, have been mapped out in the 2013 - 2023 National Energy Plan (NEP) from which strategic initiatives have been drawn forth. At its crux, The NEP focuses on diversifying the country’s energy mix, and achieving a long-run target of up to 30 % Renewable Energy (RE) penetration by 2030.

Throughout the 2019 - 2021 period, the country’s main electricity provider - Bahamas Power and Light (BPL), has invested in multiple renewable energy projects in New Providence and other islands, including solar car parks, microgrid facilities, and enhanced energy infrastructural capacity. Policy efforts have included subsidies on imports containing renewable energy components, and increasing engagements with stakeholders and civil society, to raise awareness of the importance and urgent need for energy reform.

The impact of Hurricane Dorian reinforced the need for comprehensive reconstruction, and resilient infrastructure programs that address climate change challenges. While much progress has been made, successful efforts to achieve the targets set out in SDG 7 demands the enhancement of political will, and prioritization of the country’s transition to renewable energy. Access to clean, affordable energy has significant impacts on indicators of wellbeing, including health, education, food security, gender equality, livelihoods, and poverty reduction.

According to the IDB Country Strategy 2018-2022, The Bahamas ranks lowest in the region for renewable energy penetration, relying nearly 100% on imported fossil fuels to meet its energy needs. The lack of diversification in the country’s energy mix has increasing negative implications for Bahamians. The GOB aims to achieve a significant renewable energy penetration by 2030 to replace expensive generation from fossil fuels, and reduce dependency on fuel imports. According to the 2013-2023 NEP, the target is to achieve 30% of electricity generation from renewable sources of the total generation portfolio. Given that the current renewable share is less than 1% of the overall generation, an ambitious and fast-track programme is required to achieve this target.

SDG 7

ENSURE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, SUSTAINABLE AND MODERN ENERGY FOR ALL

SDG 7

leveraging The Bahamas’ natural resources by seeking clean energy solutions will create opportunities for reducing energy costs for consumers, while preserving the environment.

### TABLE 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY DATA &amp; INFORMATION - ENERGY SECTOR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP (USD) Per Capita</td>
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<tr>
<td>Debt as % of GDP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Development Index (2018)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Renewable Energy (RE) Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>RE Target</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of Persons Employed in Energy Sector (Bahamas Power and Light)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Oil Import (BOI) per day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Oil Export (BOE) per day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Installed Capacity (MW)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Installed RE (MW)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electricity System Losses (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Energy Use (kWh) Per Capita</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fuel and Oil Imports as % of GDP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Climate Change Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electric Vehicle Stock</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Determined Contributions (NDC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Repository for Energy Data</td>
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</table>

Since establishing Energy Reform as a key priority in 2018, stakeholders continue to focus on five strategies including; raising public awareness and education, solarizing public buildings, and improving the regulatory environment to expand renewable energy consumption. To encourage the use of RE, the government’s 2018/2019 budget included a reduction on duty for electric and hybrid vehicles, valued at $50,000 and under; electric motorcycles, rechargeable and conventional car batteries, to 10%. The GOB engaged in several energy reform efforts over the 2019 - 2021 period. Between May 2018 and May 2019, up to eleven government buildings underwent Solar PV (Photovoltaic) feasibility...
assessments, and over 2 megawatts of renewable energy installed capacity was registered via the Small Scale Residential Generation (SSRG) program from residential and commercial renewable energy systems. In 2019, a 250kW Solar PV system was installed at Anatol Rodgers High School; a 925kW solar car park and an electric vehicle charging station at the National Stadium Complex; and several feasibility studies were carried out across Abaco, to determine sites for microgrid facilities, post hurricane Dorian. The country was awarded “Best Distributed Generation Project” for its solar car park project, at the Thomas A. Robinson Stadium and “Best Energy Efficiency Project” for the Anatol Rodgers Solar PV System, at the Caribbean Renewable Energy Forum, 2019.

In August 2019, the Family Island Solarization Program was launched and spearheaded by BPL, in partnership with the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) and Carbon War Room’s Islands Energy Program; with a focus on energy transformation projects on Andros, Bimini, Eleuthera and Inagua, initially.

In December 2019, at $95 million and 130-megawatt, BPL’s Station A at Clifton Pier Power Plant, went online as the largest single power plant in The Bahamas. The Plant’s seven Wartsila tri-fuel engines can burn both natural gas and heavy fuels. Improving the reliability and efficiency of the local energy infrastructure is key for the sustainable future development of the Bahamian economy. Performance measured against the 2018 baseline (renewable energy share of total energy produced/used at .22%) increased from .33% to .55% in 2019.

As a part of the government’s ongoing efforts to revitalize Ragged Island, post hurricane Irma, which ravaged the island in 2017, the Green Island Initiative was launched, prioritising the implementation of infrastructure resilient enough to withstand the impacts of natural disasters. In March of 2020, the government partnered with BPL to install The Bahamas’ “first hurricane-proof solar microgrid” and battery storage facility on Ragged Island. According to the Report, the new RE facility is resilient, and also reduces diesel usage on the island by 90%, promising positive long-term benefits for consumer costs. In December 2020, a ground-breaking ceremony for a 500-kW solar car park at the Office of the Prime Minister was held, when completed, this would add to the inventory of Government Facilities retrofitted with renewable energy components. Performance in RE production measured against the 2019 baseline (renewable energy at .55% of the total energy produced) increased by .31% to .86% in 2020.

In February 2021, BPL’s first renewable energy plan was approved, aiming to install 119 megawatts (MW) of solar generation by 2023, so that more than 6% of energy demands in New Providence are met by Solar PV, and more than 10%, in the Family Islands. The plan highlights the implementation of renewable generation, island by island until 2023, ultimately accounting for up to 31% of BPL’s total energy generation.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7: Total RE Installed Capacity &amp; RE Share (2019-2020)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Month</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| July 2019 | 6,000 | 1.00%
| August 2019 | 5,000 | 0.90%
| September 2019 | 4,000 | 0.80%
| October 2019 | 3,000 | 0.70%
| November 2019 | 2,000 | 0.60%
| December 2019 | 1,000 | 0.50% |
Partnerships

In 2019, the IDB also provided $80m in the funding of the $170m long-run (3 phases over an eight to ten-year period) approved for the GOB to assist with, post Dorian electricity infrastructure development projects. In July 2020, the IDB partnered with the government to launch a first of its kind, fuel hedging solution, focused on protection against the price volatility of oil, in global markets.

In 2021, the European Union (EU) granted a near $90m financing line, to transform the energy sector. Most of the funding will be allocated toward “the installation of a 4 MW Solar PV plant and energy storage”, and to subsidize rooftop installations in New Providence.

In March 2021, the U.S. Embassy, in partnership with California-based Primo Energy, donated state-of-the-art renewable energy technology devices, and a project-based STEM curriculum to St. John’s College, through which more than 900 students will be able to learn about sustainable energy and STEM subjects.

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Women and girls served as important actors in recovery and relief efforts, even during the storm, through community organizations and utilizing their social networks.

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 7

The Energy Reform Stakeholders will continue to implement their identified strategies to achieve the set targets. Moving forward, the focus will be on assessing and identifying any additional investments or strategies that would be needed to facilitate an increase in the rate of renewable energy penetration in The Bahamas. Strategies currently being considered include:

- Working with direct investors of major project developments to have a minimum of energy generated from resources.
- Facilitating the creation of financing opportunities for residential and small commercial customers who wish to participate in existing renewable energy programs.
- BPL expects to complete the roll-out of its $30m nationwide Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) on New Providence in 2022, encompassing the replacement of manual meters with advanced, real-time meter technologies that could promote more efficient identification and rectification of system issues.

Challenges

Effective implementation of SDG 7 depends on the following:

- Sustained political will and consistent policy momentum is required to aggressively strengthen the capacity and transformation of BPL, in reliable and renewable energy products.
- More investment is required in grid stability and renewable energy framework studies, as well as sustainable financing models to implement renewable energy programmes throughout the country.
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KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 7

The Energy Reform Stakeholders will continue to implement their identified strategies to achieve the set targets. Moving forward, the focus will be on assessing and identifying any additional investments or strategies that would be needed to facilitate an increase in the rate of renewable energy penetration in The Bahamas. Strategies currently being considered include:

- Working with direct investors of major project developments to have a minimum of energy generated from resources.
- Facilitating the creation of financing opportunities for residential and small commercial customers who wish to participate in existing renewable energy programs.
- BPL expects to complete the roll-out of its $30m nationwide Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) on New Providence in 2022, encompassing the replacement of manual meters with advanced, real-time meter technologies that could promote more efficient identification and rectification of system issues.

Challenges

Effective implementation of SDG 7 depends on the following:

- Sustained political will and consistent policy momentum is required to aggressively strengthen the capacity and transformation of BPL, in reliable and renewable energy products.
- More investment is required in grid stability and renewable energy framework studies, as well as sustainable financing models to implement renewable energy programmes throughout the country.
- Greater efforts must be made to ensure public awareness of energy efficiency practices and renewable energy adoption, as well as increasing technical capacities of experts in the renewable energy field.
SDG 8 targets have been significantly hampered by the increase in unemployment caused by the hurricane Dorian-related displacement in 2019, and further worsened by the economic crisis which has accompanied the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. The fiscal deficit increased by 6.1% GDP in 2019/2020, as efforts were made towards post-Dorian reconstruction and to mitigate the negative implications of COVID-related economic contractions, via social welfare schemes, mass purchases of medical supplies, and funding for quarantine facilities.

In The Bahamas, economic growth is mainly driven by the tourism industry and related services. In 2019, the tourism industry celebrated, exceeding a record-breaking seven million visitors. The effects of the Pandemic on the country’s economic growth, have highlighted the cost of relying on a singular industry. While the country has enjoyed a steady rise in GDP over the past 3 decades, a lack of economic diversification remains a major vulnerability factor, especially in the face of exogenous risks such as, climate change, shocks to the global travel market, and their impacts on tourism-related resources and activities.

According to The Bahamas 2020 Fiscal Strategy Report, the economic outlook for the Bahamian economy, during the fiscal year 2019/20, was shaped by two devastating external shocks. In September 2019, Hurricane Dorian, the strongest storm in recent history, interrupted economic activity in Abaco and Grand Bahama, causing an appreciable loss in output and unplanned fiscal costs to address revenue losses and expenditures associated with recovery and restoration efforts. An analysis of the economic outlook for 2019 shows that, despite the loss of output attributed to Hurricane Dorian, the performance of the economy in 2019, was much stronger than originally anticipated. According to official estimates released by the Department of Statistics in July 2020, real GDP expanded at an annual rate of 1.2% in 2019, which exceeded the revised estimate post-Hurricane Dorian of 0.4 percent, but is below the original 1.8 percent estimate used in the government’s 2019/20 budgetary framework.

The more favourable outlook was attributed to the incorporation of new, and more detailed and comprehensive sources of data, leading to revisions across the GDP series, for the previous six years, commencing 2013. The impact of COVID-19 in March 2020 resulted in the most severe economic crisis in the history of The Bahamas, and was characterised by persistent lockdowns that halted the Bahamian economy for four months. The Bahamas’ deficit in the 2019/2020 fiscal year, missed its 5.3 percent target, falling to 6.5 percent.

The 2020/2021 budget, forecasted a decline in revenue at an estimated $1.3 billion deficit, and debt levels at 82.8% of GDP. As “one of the hardest-hit countries in the Caribbean”, International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) publications conclude, GDP in 2020 fell at an estimated 16.3% and is projected to increase by 2% in 2021, while suggesting that recovery of pre-COVID-19 economic output losses in 2020, could take up to 4 or 5 years. The Ministry of Finance continues to emphasize its focus to build economic resilience in the post-COVID-19 Bahamas, with a focus on macroeconomic stability, and fiscal and debt sustainability, through economic growth and diversity. Areas such as education, health, and social programs, will continue to receive priority.
The World Health Organization (WHO) first declared COVID-19 a world health emergency in January 2020, and on March 11, announced that the viral outbreak was officially a Pandemic, the highest level of a health emergency. During the nine months, from March to October 2020, the government spent over $177m, providing the following forms of COVID-19 related social assistance:

- $167.2 million in public health, sanitation, and other related expenditures
- $106.7 million to fund essential food support programs aiding approximately 140,000 families with the assistance of NGO partners.
- $83.7 million in the government’s unemployment assistance, and the extension to the NIB unemployment benefits program, which aided approximately 7,000 businesses, many of which are sole proprietorships. Nearly 37,000 persons benefited to the tune of over $63 million through end-September.
- $44.4 million was provided in tax credit/tax deferral, as part of the government’s payroll support programme, to assist companies in meeting their payroll expenses. To date, more than 60 businesses have availed themselves of this programme, protecting nearly 7,000 jobs.
- $47.3 million was allocated in small business continuity loans and grants, supporting approximately 1,000 beneficiaries and nearly 4,500 employees, thus far.

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 8


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**TABLE 9: MACROECONOMIC FORECASTS - SOURCE: MINISTRY OF FINANCE 2020 FISCAL STRATEGY REPORT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GDP GROWTH AT CONSTANT PRICES (%)</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
<th>2024</th>
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<tr>
<td>OCT 2019</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOV 2020</td>
<td>-16.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GDP DEFLATOR (%)**

| OCT 2019 | 1.2  | 3.7  | 3.4  | 3.4  | 3.4  |
| NOV 2020 | -17.3 | 3.4  | 10.6 | 6.1  | 5.9  |

**INFLATION RATE - PERIOD AVERAGE (%)**

| OCT 2019 | 2.6  | 2.3  | 2.2  | 2.2  | 2.2  |
| NOV 2020 | -0.2 | 1.5  | 2.2  | 2.2  | 2.1  |
Taxation Measures

The GOB aims to boost economic growth, via taxation optimization (mitigating incidences of tax evasion and avoidance) by capitalizing on and enhancing big data testing techniques; improving revenue collection; strengthening investigation intelligence capacity of revenue monitoring units and investing in legal and administrative reforms.\(^\text{103}\) The government allocated $12,000 to the tax credit and Tax referral employee retention programme, in response to COVID-19 related job losses. Employers in the private sector were able to access tax deferrals for business licenses and VAT, ensuring payroll requirements were met, once 80% of employees were retained.\(^\text{104}\)

In 2019, several disaster recovery areas on the Islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama, were designated as VAT-Free Recovery Zones, following hurricane Dorian, meaning that VAT-registered businesses were able to waive VAT for approved goods sold. Under the Doron Special Economy Recovery Zone (SERZ) Order, select items were extended until June 2021. In addition, VAT import duty and excise tax, were eliminated on construction materials and goods brought into the zones.\(^\text{105}\)

In August 2020, the government rolled out a tax relief measure, aiming to reduce the costs of back-to-school shopping for parents, while encouraging local shopping, to spur economic growth. The relief measure covered both traditional and digital learning tools.\(^\text{106}\)

Labour Programs

COVID-related job losses have exacerbated the gap between individuals in high-income and low-income brackets and threatens to erase considerable gains in human development. Efforts to sustain and boost employment through labour-related programs have continued, with several new initiatives introduced, during the period assessed.

Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP)

The National Tripartite Council (NTC) continues its efforts to boost employment in The Bahamas through the enhancement of relationships between the private sector, public sectors, and labour unions. Moreover, NTC aims to integrate key issues into national policy development: the creation of decent employment and jobs, ensuring fundamental rights at work, social protection, and social dialogue.\(^\text{107}\) NTC is in the process of developing The Bahamas’ new DWCP, a planning and programming tool, aiming to create decent work in The Bahamas.

The NTC has also proposed National Productivity Legislation, and the establishment of a National Productivity Council; proposed transferring of the functions of The Bahamas Industrial Tribunal, to the Civil Division of the Supreme Court; implemented The Bahamas’ Second-Generation DWCP, with the International Labour Organization (ILO) providing $170,000 in Technical Assistance; submitted the Final Report and recommendations on the National Child Labour Policy.\(^\text{108}\)

Figure 12. Photos of the virtual contract signing between the University of The Bahamas, the Bahamas Technical & Vocational Institute, & the Ministry of National Security

Citizen Security & Justice Programme (CSJP)

The CSJP, a Ministry of National Security initiative, is a social programme aiming to reduce crime and violence, with a multi-faceted approach, targeting youth and community development, employment, and employability, strengthening the Justice System and implementing prison reform, to reduce rates of recidivism.\(^\text{109}\) The CSJP is funded by a $20 million loan from the IDB. Several initiatives launched under the programme are as follows:\(^\text{110}\)

In December 2018, the first cohort of 100 inmates, graduated from a training and certification programme at BTI. The inmates received certification in a wide array of areas, including electrical installation, hair dressing, information technology, garment manufacturing, and auto mechanics.\(^\text{111}\)

Figure 13. The National Divers Training Programme Launch

SDG 8

In November 2019, CSJP launched a Job Corps training initiative that offers free courses for young Bahamas between 15 to 29, in up to four disciplines including Technical Trades, Hospitality and Retail, and Numeracy and Literacy.\(^\text{112}\) In November 2020, UB, BTI, and the Ministry of National Security, signed a contract to deliver numeracy and literacy, and soft skills training to 1,000 at-risk youth, over a period of 12 months. The program is intended to benefit and improve the prospects of at-risk youth, who will undergo critical skills training intervention to increase employability and employment, thereby assisting in decreasing crime and improving lives.\(^\text{113}\)

In July 2019, the Government’s National Job Creation and Skills Enhancement Programme (or 52-week programme), which was started in August 2018 and meant to end in June 2019, was renewed for another year. The initiative was established to enhance hands-on skills for the unemployed, by providing opportunities for professional certification, classroom instruction, and paid internships in several areas including construction, plumbing, hospitality, business and informational technology.\(^\text{114}\)

NATA launched a fully interactive online platform called Brightspace, where trainees can register and receive training, and be assessed throughout The Bahamas, from the singular digital space. In July 2019, 232 individuals from thirteen (13) islands, were trained during the Summer Cohort In-Office Procedures, Information Technology, Microsoft Office, Graphic Design, and Web Design. NATA also partnered with Doctor’s Hospital, to launch a Skills Enhancement Programme, from which, top graduates were to be offered full-time employment, with Doctor’s Hospital.\(^\text{115}\)

In June 2019, 200 youth were trained in soft, practical, and technical skills as part of NATA’s 14-week programme, in the fields of Allied Health Care, Information Technology, Housekeeping, Microsoft Office, Food and Beverage, Web Design, Diving/Fishing, and Butler Service.\(^\text{116}\) The same month, the National Divers Training Programme was launched with an aim to promote access to work on board commercial vessels. The program was established as a collaborative effort between the NTA, the Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF), the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources, and the Department of Marine Resources. The Program, targeting youth between 15 and 30, focused on training Bahamians in Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) certification skills, first aid, and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).\(^\text{117}\) As of August 2019, 44 Bahamians were enrolled in the programme.\(^\text{118}\)

The NTA is a competency-based agency, focused on workforce development, with a particular focus on youth populations. The agency partners with industry leaders, through its Job Placement Unit, and remains a “Go-To Agency” for employer sourcing employees.\(^\text{119}\) Six Thousand (6,000) Bahamians have been trained in NTA programmes, with 60% of individuals successfully placed in full-time employment.\(^\text{120}\)

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In December 2019, bolstering its efforts to reduce youth unemployment, the Ministry of Labour launched a $50m National Skills-Building Program - Skills for Current and Future jobs in The Bahamas - in partnership with the IDB. The program, a five-year initiative, targets individuals from 16-40 and emphasizes “building skills through a nation-wide apprenticeship program, investing in improvements in software, hardware, and infrastructure, to assist job-seekers with finding the best-matched employers; and investing in a robust labour management information system, which can monitor the progress of the program, and provide enhanced labour market data.”117 At its launch, the program focused on training 1,100 pre-apprentices and 1,350 apprentices, across the maritime, medical services, and information communication technology sectors.

### Micro-small & Medium Sized Businesses (MSMEs)

20-30% of The Bahamas’ gross domestic product comes from the activity of MSMEs, with 98% of some 23,000 business licenses issued, representing MSMEs.118 The importance of MSME sustainability has been a key priority, recognized by the government and actors in the private sector.

#### Access to Financial Capital

The BDB is the main institution that provides the GOB with the promotion of agricultural, commercial, and industrial development. The BDB began its rebranding efforts in 2004, fully promoting agricultural, commercial, and industrial development. The BDB is the main institution that provides the GOB with the promotion of agricultural, commercial, and industrial development. The BDB was formed in 2004, in agreement between the Ministry of Finance, UB, and the Bahamas Chamber of Commerce and Employers Confederation (BCCEC). Through the program, the GOB has committed $250 million dollars over 5 years, to support Bahamian entrepreneurs and small businesses.119

By March 2020, up to 616 MSMEs had registered for assistance via the SBDC.120

Access Accelerator, Small Business Development Centre

The SBDC was formed in 2018, in agreement between the Ministry of Finance, UB, and the Bahamas Chamber of Commerce and Employers Confederation (BCCEC). Through the program, the GOB has committed $250 million dollars over 5 years, to support Bahamian entrepreneurs and small businesses.121

By March 2020, up to 616 MSMEs had registered for assistance via the SBDC.122

Program, backed by a government allocation of $20m, was launched in March 2020, aiming to cushion temporary losses in business, resulting from COVID-19 challenges. The initiative provides loans ranging from $5,000 to $300,000.

**Figure 14.** 218 staff members, training providers and assessors who successfully completed City & Guilds certification as internal verifiers and assessors were awarded certificates.

**Figure 15.** Small Business Development Centre Investment Partners, February 2018 - Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, as well as the Financial Secretary, featured with SBDC’s partners from Scotiabank, The Bahamas Entrepreneurial Venture Fund, RBC Banking and The Bahamas Development Bank, who are working together to make credit available to small businesses.

**SDG 8**

**Progress on the Ease of Doing Business**

In the World Bank’s Doing Business 2019 Report, The Bahamas was ranked 118 out of 190 economies, with an ease of doing business score of 58.90. Positive changes were recognized including: the improvement of the regulatory framework for credit reporting through the introduction of regulations governing the licensing and functioning of credit bureaus in The Bahamas, and enhancing the ease of filing and paying taxes, via the implementation of the Inland Revenue online taxation system.114 Additionally, in the Doing Business 2020 Report, The Bahamas’ ranking fell slightly to 119 out of 190 economies, with an ease of doing business score of 59.91.15

Several changes impacting the ease of doing business score were highlighted in the report. Positively, the economy enjoyed a reduction in registration processing time for business licenses, VAT, and the elimination of business registration fees. Posting electricity tariffs online, improved access and transparency to electricity; minority investor protections were strengthened, as disclosure requirements for conflicts of interests and greater corporate transparency were prioritized. Negatively, the report highlighted the negative impact that the increasing costs associated with property registration, would have on the ease of doing business.116
In ƑƏƐѵ, the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF), approved the technical cooperation grant of U$535,450 for the project ‘Revitalization of the Sponging Industry’. The project aims to foster the sustainability of the sponge population and has directly benefited ƑƏƏ spongers, and indirectly helped ƓƓƏ beneficiaries in Mangrove Cay, on the island of Andros. Training includes developing the supply chain, improving marketing, and accessing foreign markets; furthermore, several other Family Islands are organizing sponging associations, with expressed interest for assistance and training in Long Island and Abaco.

In ƑƏƑƏ, Tribune Radio Limited, which is home to various radio stations, assisted some of their staff members with flexible working environments, due to COVID-19. The company allowed their staff to bring their children to work with them, during the COVID-19 Pandemic, throughout the school year, as all schools were being conducted virtually. This allowed parents the ability to continue to earn a living, through difficult circumstances.

While it is too soon to quantify the full impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on The Bahamas’ efforts to achieve decent work and economic growth, we note that higher unemployment, increasing skills shortages and existing inequalities, were exacerbated as a result of the Pandemic. As such, many of the existing challenges persist. Progress will rely on:

- Continued reform (inclusive of reskilling and upskilling) of educational and training systems to ensure a workforce that is better positioned for the future labour market.
- Broadening the relatively narrow tax base to effectively fund development-enhancing infrastructure.
- Reforming Policy and regulation supporting the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem (i.e., ease of doing business, human capital, market access and connectivity, access to capital, and infrastructure).
- Increased cross-sectoral stakeholder engagement between the public sector, private sector, and civil society, to enhance productivity and efficiency of doing business.

Revitalization of the Sponging Industry

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Tribune Radio Limited

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The GOB identified an operator for the country’s first credit bureau, “allowing financial institutions to make better informed credit granting decisions”. Legislative reforms expected to improve The Bahamas’ Ease of Doing Business ranking include, the introduction of the Business License (Amendment) Act 2018, allowing for the granting of provisional business licenses for low-risk businesses, and automatic renewal, and the following legislation that significantly enhances the protective measures available to minority investors in the country:

- The Companies (Amendment) Act 2019
- Securities Industry (Amendment) Act 2019
- The Securities Industry (Takeover Rules) 2018 (presently being enforced)

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 8 PROGRAMMES

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- Increased cross-sectoral stakeholder engagement between the public sector, private sector, and civil society, to enhance productivity and efficiency of doing business.

37% decline in the time it takes to get Business Licenses approved.

77% decline in the time it takes to get Business Licenses renewed.

44% decline in the time it takes to get a property conveyance registered.

12 % decline in the time it takes to get construction permits approved.

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Budgetary strain caused by efforts to rebuild residential communities and public infrastructure, even amidst financial assistance from bilateral and intergovernmental donors, was further mounted with the increased social assistance demands of the Pandemic.

While infrastructural needs have increased, projected capital expenditure is set to decrease concomitant with the projected loss in GDP, and shift in priority spending towards health and education. According to the IDB, projected capital expenditure in 2022/2023, is expected to decline to 2.0% of GDP. This reality has implications for the robust recovery of the tourism sector, as budget constraints have resulted in the side-lining of tourism-related infrastructure projects. Notably, however, the government has prioritised several ports of entry transformation projects, financed by intergovernmental loans and private-public partnerships, including the main cruise port at Nassau’s Prince George Wharf, and airport upgrades in Exuma, North Eleuthera, Long Island, and the Berry Islands.

The telecommunication industry continues to maintain a reasonable standard, in terms of pricing and service delivery. According to a report by the Commonwealth Secretariat on the “State of the Digital Economy in the Commonwealth,” the Bahamas scored a high 90% internet penetration rate, and also positively highlighted the country’s legal framework for electronic transactions and electronic signatures; legal framework for data protection and privacy online; legal framework for consumer protection when purchasing online; and also positively highlighted the country’s legal framework for cybercrime prevention.

The IDB has urged a bolder approach to infrastructure investments, including doubling the projected spending to ensure the expansion of economic output. The GOB intends to implement a Sovereign Wealth Fund which will, in addition to managing earnings for budget surpluses and payments from the exploitation of natural resources, manage funds to enhance the infrastructure for transportation, healthcare, education, commerce, etc. in The Bahamas.

Progress to successfully implementing SDG 9 continues to depend on increased research capacity; increased funding and partnerships; continued investment in the country’s Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure, education; enhanced trade opportunities for digital exports; growth and diversification.

**SDG 9. BUILD RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE, PROMOTE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIALIZATION AND FOSTER INNOVATION**

In October 2020, the Ministry of Disaster Preparedness, Management and Reconstruction, launched the Guide to Housing Standards for The Bahamas – Build Back Better, a joint initiative with the Ministry of Public Works. Assistance was also given by the UN’s Development Programme, Engineers Without Borders, Shelters Sector Bahamas, NEMA, the Building Control Department of the Ministry of Public Works, the UB’s School of Architecture, and private-sector engineers, architects, and contractors. The Guide will illustrate the details of the minimum standards required for residential building construction as set out in the Bahamas Building Code, 3rd Edition, and the Construction Manual for Small Buildings within the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

**KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 9**

**Building Codes**

In 2018, The GOB obtained a $30 million loan from the IDB, to boost competitiveness by reducing the time and cost of carrying out administrative procedures with the government. In November 2019, the Department of Transformation and Digitization (DTD), in the OPM, launched a workshop on Government-Digital Transformation, to Strengthen Competitiveness organized in conjunction with the IDB.

The government’s Department of Transformation and Digitalization (DTD) has made progress in enhancing existing online facilities and is piloting several digital projects aiming to boost innovation and competitiveness, for which some $11.4 million was budgeted for related activities, for the 2020/21 period. $13.5 m in 2021/22, and $10.8 m in 2022/23. The GOB plans to have at least 200 government services online, within five years.

**KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIS).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</th>
<th>BASELINE 2018</th>
<th>PERFORMANCE 2019</th>
<th>PERFORMANCE 2020</th>
<th>TARGET 2021</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Government Services Delivered Online</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.75%</td>
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<td>and # of Government Services Delivered Online by the digital Transformation Unit</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td># of Government Institutions connected to the Interoperability platform</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td># of Government Procedures Mapped in BPM Tool</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Transformation & Digitization

Bahamians can now request services from the Registrar General’s Department, Road Traffic Department, and the Passport Office, online. The following government services are delivered online:

- The first iteration of The Bahamas Travel Health Visa
- Driver’s license renewals, marriage certificates, death certificates, birth certificates and passport renewals for adult e-passports
- In 2021, the launch of the Electronic Cabinet Management Information System—E-Cabinet, was announced. It aims to improve business processes, operating procedures, and communication between stakeholders. Moreover, it will increase efficiency with Cabinet approval processes and reduce the nation’s carbon footprint, via the switching over to online approvals and e-distribution of Cabinet documents.
- In October 2020, the Sand Dollar was deployed as a digital version of a country’s hat currency. Project Sand Dollar is the initiative embarked on by the Central Bank of The Bahamas, to issue a digital representation of the Bahamian dollar (BS). It is an undertaking to promote more inclusive access to regulated payments and other financial services, for unbanked and underbanked communities and socio-economic groups within the country. Additionally, through the introduction of this retail Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), the Central Bank expects to reduce service delivery costs and increase transactional efficiency for financial services, across The Bahamas. As a result of online competition, this initiative acquired the name Project Sand Dollar, with Sand Dollar also being the name assigned to the CBDC.
- In December 2020, The DARE ACT came into force, delineating the regulation, issuance, sale, and trade of digital assets through the auspices of the Securities Commission of The Bahamas. This landmark legislation allowed The Bahamas to join the few jurisdictions which have legislation to regulate the sale and purchase of digital assets. The Sand Dollar will significantly contribute to the modernization of the country’s monetary landscape, payment, and financial infrastructure.

**Family Islands Solarisation Project**

During the 2020/21 Budget Agenda, the government obtained a borrowing resolution approval for an $80 million loan with IDB, to progress the solarisation in the Family Islands. This is a part of the $170 million Contingent Credit Line for Investment Projects (CCLIP) facility, over eight to ten years. A key element of Phase 1 of the CCLIP program will be the introduction of rooftop solar installations in public buildings, as well as the start of commercial solar installations across the Family Islands. Once completed, this will achieve fiscal savings for the Government, by lowering the monthly electric bill for public buildings, as well as decreasing the level of subsidization required by New Providence, to power the Family Islands. Furthermore, street lighting accounts for more than 30 percent of the country’s electricity consumption, and roughly three percent of the country’s overall energy consumption. As such, the government will launch a $17.1 million Street Light Retrofitting project, which is being spearheaded by BPL. This will also support our green energy efforts with its use of LED lighting.

In March 2020, the government received its first natural disaster resilient Solar Microgrid and Battery Storage Facility in Ragged Island. Once installed, it will be the first hurricane-proof solar microgrid in The Bahamas. This initiative forms part of the government’s strategy to transform Ragged Island into a Green Island.

**SDG 9**
KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 9

Redevelopment of the Nassau Cruise Port

In August 2019, the GOB entered into a $250 million heads of agreement with Global Ports Holding, to transform Nassau’s Prince George Wharf. It is estimated that the project will result in 2 million more cruise passengers to Nassau every year, and thousands of direct and indirect new jobs. Between 2020 through 2022, 1,000 construction and permanent jobs will be created. Additionally, due to COVID-19, more outdoor space was incorporated into the design and project scope. The redesigned waterfront is expected to be completed in 2022.

Airports

The GOB is undergoing a $165 million Family Island Airport Upgrade. Exuma’s airport redevelopment will be funded through the $35m loans with IDB. The redevelopment of the remaining Family Island Airports, i.e., North Eleuthera airport, Deadman’s Cay airport in Long Island and the Great Harbour Cay airport, will be financed through the use of Private-Public Partnership (PPP).

SDG 9

Strengthening Cyber Security Landscape

In November 2020, the GOB entered into a partnership agreement with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), for a national cybersecurity project. The project will provide technical support by analysing the country’s current cybersecurity capacity and developing a cybersecurity strategy. Resultantly, the government established a national Computer Incident Response Team (CIRT) that will serve as the primary contact for cybersecurity. The project also aims to support related cybersecurity platforms including, the National Public Key Infrastructure (PKI), e-government services. Full implementation is set for 2022.

The key barriers to achieving SDG 9 for The Bahamas relate to:

- Overcoming the challenge to increase the provision of clean and modern energy services.
- Structural reform to ensure greater ease of doing business to unlock innovative entrepreneurial activity.
- The need for a greater emphasis on climate resilient buildings and other infrastructure.
- Better aligned and funded capital and infrastructure plans to support economic growth and diversification.
- The need for global partnerships to mobilize financial resources and facilitate knowledge and technology transfer.
- The development of research and innovation capabilities at UB.

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 9 PROGRAMMES

On March 30 and 31, 2021, the GOB held CIRT Assessment sessions, which formed part of the government’s overall digital transformation strategy. Key IT government and private sector personnel professionals participated in the session, to evaluate the national cyber threat landscape. Representatives also included oil and gas industries, energy sector, health, banking, electricity sectors, transport, ports, and aviation. Furthermore, civil society groups, internet governance representatives, professional associations, cybersecurity, and leaders in higher education, participated.

Overcoming the challenge to increase the provision of clean and modern energy services.

Structural reform to ensure greater ease of doing business to unlock innovative entrepreneurial activity.

The need for a greater emphasis on climate resilient buildings and other infrastructure.

Better aligned and funded capital and infrastructure plans to support economic growth and diversification.

The need for global partnerships to mobilize financial resources and facilitate knowledge and technology transfer.

The development of research and innovation capabilities at UB.
THE IMPORTANCE OF BRIDGING INEQUALITY AND INEQUITY GAPS TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE BAHAMAS, HAS BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED. MIGRANTS AND THE CHILDREN OF MIGRANTS BORN IN THE BAHAMAS, FACE VULNERABILITIES. ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS IS THE IMPACTS OF HURRICANE DORIAN, A UNITED NATIONS REPORT FOUND THE CATEGORY FIVE HURRICANE’S IMPACT ON WOMEN, “ESPECIALLY WOMEN OF HAITIAN DESCENT, WAS GREATER DUE TO PRE-EXISTING INEQUALITIES.”

In addition, male and female Haitian migrants lived in “informal settlements that were destroyed by the hurricane, losing their documents, jobs and belongings.”

Children born in The Bahamas to non-Bahamian parents, are sometimes unable to obtain the nationality of the parents, nor Bahamian citizenship, until they reach the age of 18 years. Some face considerable challenges meeting the requirements for citizenship, because of a lack of requisite documentation.

Discrimination against persons with disabilities and the limited environment which allows them to participate fully in society, remains a concern. The Department of Statistics’ 2010 Census of Population and Housing determined that there were 10,138 people with disabilities in the country, and that men accounted for 51.8% of that population. The Census report also found that only 17% of persons with disabilities 15 years of age and over were employed and that 72% of persons with disabilities had no form of health insurance. The population of persons with disabilities is rapidly growing, due to the prevalence of non-communicable diseases, which are a major cause of preventable disabilities. There is, therefore, a continuing demand to ensure that people with disabilities have a voice, are afforded access to health care and employment, and that laws are enforced. In 2014, the government enacted the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act, 2014, and in September 2015, ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to ensure that people with disabilities are treated equally under the law, and can participate fully in society.

Cases of elder abuse and neglect are on the rise. The forms of abuse include: verbal, physical and financial abuse.

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SDG 10
REDUCE INEQUALITY WITHIN & AMONG COUNTRIES

**Persons with Disabilities**

The GOB ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (P WD’s) in 2015, prioritising the equal treatment of persons with disabilities, and their full participation in all spheres of society. While most provisions of the P WD’s (Equal Opportunities) Act, 2014 came into force between 2015 and 2018, the requirement for all public facilities to be equipped with disability access, has been quite difficult to enforce considering that many, including government establishments, remain inaccessible to persons with a range of disabilities.

Overseen by the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development (and included in the P WDs national legislation), the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) and its secretariat, alongside the Disability Affairs Division of the Department of Social Services, have been collaborating closely to ensure that both the needs of regular and new clients, who are persons with disabilities, are being met during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Officials at the Disability Affairs Division have also collaborated with The Bahamas Red Cross to ensure that persons with disabilities are part of the Red Cross’ Meals on Wheels Programme. Meanwhile, officials at the NCPD, and its secretariat, have established a 24-hour call and WhatsApp line, as part of the measures it has implemented to ensure that the needs of persons with disabilities are being met, and with a view to bringing any outstanding matters to a speedy resolution. The commission and its secretariat have also been liaising with the relevant non-governmental organizations to ensure that persons with disabilities have sufficient food, medical supplies, and protective equipment, to ensure their safety and protection, during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Other initiatives have included working closely with members of the blind community and the association of banking and clearing houses in The Bahamas, to enhance and improve members of the community’s banking experience, and ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to, and receive the benefits and assistance due them, and that they remain safe, protected, and have the necessary items for their continued well-being.

Additionally, they have ensured that persons with disabilities, who are deaf or hard of hearing, have access to information being disseminated from the media, through the participation of a sign interpreter, on all national broadcasts; and have assisted persons with disabilities and other able-bodied persons, to obtain wheelchairs by liaising with The Bahamas Association for the Physically Disabled.

Administrators have ensured that the NCPD website, is frequently updated to reflect information relative to the COVID-19 Pandemic while performing the general administrative duties of the secretariat, by assisting the 13 commissioners of the NCPD, who ensure that the provisions contained in the P WD’s (Equal Opportunities) Bill, 2014, are adhered to.

**Migrants Rights**

The revised draft Nationality, Immigration, and Asylum Bill, 2018, is currently under review and if enacted, it could regularize individuals who are at risk of statelessness until they reach the age, for which they are entitled to apply for citizenship.

The importance of fulfilling the rights of all in The Bahamas, including irregular migrants, has been foregrounded by the twin shocks of The Bahamas – i.e., Hurricane Dorian and COVID-19. That is, the state of displaced irregular migrants has led to responses by humanitarian organizations, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which (among other local and international organizations) has assisted this group in the aftermath of Dorian and during the pandemic. With IOM’s assistance, 52 migrants (38 female, 14 male) received financial and technical support with obtaining the supporting documents required to obtain legal status in The Bahamas.
After a nationally published ‘call for applications’, an independent committee selected the “redocumentation” beneficiaries. There are many more people in need beyond this project, also due to the declining economic situation because of the economic impacts of COVID-19.

To foster social cohesion, IOM launched the 2-month Bahamas Kind media campaign, with a key message and 5 interview programs. The Bahamas Kind campaign, in conjunction with IsraAID, was supported by “influencers” from the wider range of vulnerable and marginalized groups. The COVID-19 emergency restrictions delayed the program because the main institutions were closed. The COVID-19 Pandemic distracted and reduced the impact of the key messages of the BahamasKind campaign. IOM is planning to continue to assist undocumented migrants. IOM will also support the government with Migration Governance training for government officials. IOM is planning to continue and expand the BahamasKind social cohesion program with, community-driven sports, art, and training activities.

**Pro-Poor Policies**

Please see SDG 1’s discussion on the OTHCDPI.

**CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 10 PROGRAMMES**

The challenges associated with the implementation of SDG 10 relate to the following:

- Limited public awareness on the needs of vulnerable groups in the country.
- Negative stigma and persistent stereotypes associated with being a migrant – although there is significant variation depending on migrants’ national origin.
- Enhancing the quality of, and access to, education and training so that the most economically vulnerable, can benefit from economic activity.
- Limited data and research that highlights challenges and context of marginalized communities.
5.0 PROGRESS ON GOALS & TARGETS

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

MORE THAN 70% OF THE BAHAMIAN POPULATION RESIDES IN NEW PROVIDENCE, THE COUNTRY’S MOST URBANIZED ISLAND.211 IN NEW PROVIDENCE, PUBLIC GROUND TRANSPORTATION IS LIMITED TO PRIVATIZED-OWNED BUSES, REFERRED TO AS “JITNEYS” OPERATING ON GOVERNMENT-DEFINED ROUTES AND GOVERNMENT-REGULATED FARES.

There is limited bus coverage for unprofitable routes and during the evening hours. This has led to over-reliance on personal vehicles and traffic congestion. Additionally, there are no designated cycling lanes which also leads to an over-reliance on automobiles.212

Access to a proper waste management system is an ongoing concern throughout the country, and particularly in New Providence. The Department of Environmental Health Services (DEHS) estimates that in The Bahamas, 660 million pounds (300,000 tonnes) of solid waste, is discarded from packaging, waste food, and other thrown away items, each year.211 Currently, the country has limited recycling practices. Dump fires in The Bahamas have become a recurring event, with as many as 17 acres burned in January 2015.212 Several dump fires have occurred since the 2018-2021 periods. There is a need to address sanitation and housing challenges, particularly in urbanized areas. Moreover, there has been a steady increase in informal settlements, usually found on Crown or Public land in New Providence, Abaco Island, Exuma Island and Eleuthera.211

The housing structures in these towns are generally informally organised, overcrowded with illegally constructed structures built with non-durable hazardous material, without proper sewage disposal systems and access to water.214 The results of a 2018 survey of informal settlements in New Providence, revealed that 1,410 residents were residing in the Shanty Towns and a total of 428 households. Thirty-eight percent (536) of the residents were under the age of 16, and sixty-two percent (874) are adults. Among the 428 heads of households who were interviewed, 71% had legal status in The Bahamas; 23% unknown and 6% were undocumented. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of the adult population, reported working in the last six months, and 76% of the households reported a total weekly income of under $400.217

SDG 11

MAKE CITIES AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS INCLUSIVE, SAFE, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE

SDG 11

There is also a need for more green and public spaces in New Providence, particularly in the historical and often marginalised communities. Green and public spaces will not only incentivise community strengthening but provide an enabling environment to enhance the quality of life of residents, and encourage physical activity, creativity, and innovation.

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 11

Public Bus Unification

The previous VNR reported that, in March 2016, the IDB confirmed that the Government would start the implementation of the bus unification process, through a pilot project funded by the Bank, to demonstrate how the bus unification scheme will work.218 Unification of the bus system is intended to streamline public bus transport and inter alia, upgrade the buses to make them more energy-efficient, and ensure that there is a good routing system, so that areas in New Providence not currently serviced by buses, are covered.219

However, there were several delays with the Ministry announcing, in August 2019, an estimated cost of $600,000 to undertake a study of the bus system to determine the value of a bus franchise.220 Following this announcement, Hurricane Dorian struck the country. The study eventually commenced in January 2020, to collect data that would be pertinent to determining schedules, bus stop placement, bus fare payment methods, and other key data points. Again, before the six months set aside to conduct the study was completed, the national response to COVID-19 resulted in a lengthy cessation of bussing.

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 11

New Providence Ecology Park221

The New Providence Ecology Park, Ltd. (NPEP), is a 100% Bahamian-owned business that currently is contracted with the Ministry of Environment and Housing, for the remediation, upgrade and operation of the NPEP (former- ly the Harold Road Landfill).

The company was engaged by the Ministry of Environment and Housing in late 2018, to address the persistent issues with the former Landfill’s solid waste system. Among the issues faced by the Landfill were, “yearly raging fires, groundwater contamination, gas emissions, mosquitos and other vectors, all of which threatened the health of the surrounding residents, the waste collection company employees, and the lifeblood of the local economy – the Tourism Industry.” The company began work in March 2019, and has achieved, among other things, the following:

Consolidating and capping over 80 acres of waste.

Implementing modern best-management-practices for maximum protection of human and environmental health.

Commencing recycling and recovery activities for construction demolition debris and vegetative waste.

IMPLEMENTING SDG 11

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR

PUBLIC BUS UNIFICATION

Consolidating and capping over 80 acres of waste.

Supporting community strengthening and social cohesion, in particular with the youth.”

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SDG 11

The NPEP states that it intended to construct the following elements over the next few months and years:

- A new Residential Drop Off Facility
- A new Material Recovery Facility (recycling centre)
- Landfill Gas Collection and Recycling Infrastructure
- A public Green Space developed on reclaimed landfill property.

Local Government Initiative for New Providence

In 1996, Local Government was introduced to several major populated islands, outside of New Providence, and in 2017, the GOB committed to bringing Local Government to New Providence by the 2020 cycle of local government elections. A committee was established to successfully carry out the project and the 2018/2019 budget communication committed $100,000 to support this initiative. However, since the government’s pronouncement in April 2019, that the Committee’s report had been finalized and would be submitted to the Cabinet, no further commitment has been made to establishing a local government in New Providence.

Shanty Town Action Task Force (SATF)

The SATF was established in 2018. A survey of all ten Shanty Towns in New Providence, was conducted over four weeks with a view of assisting residents in finding alternative accommodations and closing these informal settlements by 31st July 2018.

Access to Affordable Housing

In 2018, the GOB introduced a landmark bill to provide affordable housing for Bahamians titled, Access to Affordable Housing Bill, 2018. (Please see SDG 1’s discussion on Access to Land and Housing).

City Clean-Up Efforts

The GOB launched a clean-up initiative for New Providence and the Family Islands in October 2017. The scope of the clean-up will involve the removal of derelict vehicles and waste within neighbourhoods, and the incorporation of rodent control mechanisms.

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG 11 Programmes

The acceleration of urban sprawl in The Bahamas has led to an increase in energy consumption, pollution, water and waste management, and a consequent need to improve related public services. Effectively implemented SDG 11 requires the following efforts:

- Enhancing participation of local actors in and efficacy of decision-making, via the devolution of governance.
- Strengthening the capacity of the country’s urban planning institutions to ensure that cities are inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable, with disaster planning at the forefront.
- Resolving issues of overlapping and unclear property claims, particularly in New Providence, to allow for the upgrading of residences in economically depressed communities.
- Better funding and policy reform to address the challenges of the public transportation systems.
- Allocating fiscal resources to invest in much needed infrastructural works such as, drainage and innovative solid waste management solutions, for urban centres.
 monkately given the country’s tourism-based economy. Meeting the economic, social, and aesthetic demands of the tourism sector could have negative implications on the environment and natural resources, if not carried out sustainably. Our impact on the environment and human health is inextricably linked to production and consumption activities.

Achieving many of our aims, [i.e., poverty alleviation, food security, and infrastructure-based development], also depends on productive activities and their economic output. While some government interventions promote more sustainable and efficient use of natural resources [i.e., the Styrofoam ban and other key legislative reforms], considerable work remains to be done.

SDG 12 can only be achievable when sustainable production frameworks are coordinated with sustainable business practices, public procurement for the government, and a shift in consumer attitudes and behaviours towards sustainability. Furthermore, its transversal supply chain, the tourism sector is best poised to advance sustainable consumption and production practices. Therefore, extensive multi-stakeholder engagement and robust educational awareness-raising are essential to policy coherence for sustainable development.

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The Ministry of Environment Act, 2019
A bill for an act to establish the Ministry of the Environment to oversee the integrity of the environment of The Bahamas, to make the minister responsible, therefore a corporation sole, to establish the Environmental Administration Fund, and the Environmental Trust Fund and for matters connected thereto.

The Environment Protection (Control of Plastic Pollution) Act, 2019
A bill for an act to prohibit single-use plastic food ware and non-biodegradable, oxo-biodegradable, and biodegradable single-use plastic bags; prohibit the release of balloons; regulate the use of compostable single-use plastic bags; and for connected matters.

The Environment Planning and Protection Act, 2019
A bill for an act to establish the Department of Environmental Planning and Protection to provide for the prevention or control of pollution, the regulation of activities, and the administration, conservation, and sustainable use of the environment, and for connected purposes.

In October 2019, key legislations to address wide-ranging environmental protections, and ban single-use plastics, were passed, which include:

- The Ministry of Environment Act, 2019
- The Environment Planning and Protection Act, 2019
- The Environment Protection (Control of Plastic Pollution) Act, 2019

Plastic Ban
In July 2020, the government of The Bahamas successfully implemented a full ban on single-use plastics and Styrofoam. Complete implementation of the ban came after a grace period of six (6) months, which allowed the banned items to be sold locally, but no new importation of these prohibited items was allowed. There are four (4) items banned that can no longer be imported. These are: single use plastic bags, plastic utensils, plastic straws, and Styrofoam containers.

Addressing Waste and Promoting Recycling
In February 2019, the government signed an agreement with the New Providence Ecology Park (NPEP) [which comprises the Waste Resources Development Group and Providence Advisors] for a $45 million multi-phased redevelopment of the New Providence Landfill.
SDG 12

**Promoting Sustainable Tourism and the Cultural and Natural Heritage**

The GOB approved the Public-Private Investments Limited (PPL) group’s multi-million-dollar proposal to restore and revive sites, which include Nassau’s three forts, the Queen’s Staircase (66 Steps) and Water Tower, and the Pompey Museum. It is projected that the venture could generate $1.5bn in gross revenues throughout a 25-year lease, along with several hundred jobs.227

The GOB implements and executes restoration works on public property and rehabilitation initiatives within the main local historical urban contexts.

There are also other ongoing initiatives, like the implementation of special campaigns and local and international observances, in the public and private sectors, that aim to raise awareness for sustainable development. Some of those initiatives include:

- Scotiabank joined MasterCard on the expansion of the Priceless Planet Coalition to generate climate change awareness and to impact four Caribbean countries: Jamaica, Barbados, The Bahamas, and the Dominican Republic.228

- The Eden Farms company was launched in 2021 and marks the future of farming and sustainable food production in The Bahamas for residents and the millions of tourists who visit The Bahamas year-round.

The Eden Farms company relies on repurposed shipping containers to create the ideal environment to nurture the farming process from beginning to end. This process then allows for maximum control over crops, at every stage, from germination to harvest, which translates to optimum yield with minimum loss. Eden Farms’ technology methods aim to fill gaps in the agricultural supply chain.

**SDG 12 PROGRAMMES**

The key challenges for The Bahamas in implementing SDG 12 relate to:

- Limited public awareness on the importance of sustainable consumption and production practices.
- Lack of a sustainable consumption strategic plan and accompanying policies to govern economic actors.
- Limited business models not suited to the circular economy.
- The need to consider an integrated whole-supply-chain approach to stakeholder engagement, inclusive of Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and the private sector.

**NEW PERMIT required for All Researchers, Research Facilities & Ships**

All Researchers and Scientists are now required to apply for an Annual Registration Identifier in order to conduct research in The Bahamas.

A final list of facilities and research vessels operating in The Bahamas are required to obtain an annual Research Operating Licence.

Applications for the research facility operation permit can be obtained from The Department of Environmental Planning & Protection.

The Biological Resource and Traditional Knowledge Act and other environmental laws are available for download at the dep.gov.bs website under Publications.

The Bahamian government worked along with the local government and the Israeli Non-Governmental Organization - Volcani International Partnerships to open a Caribbean-wide agriculture workshop. The workshop has, so far, registered more than 2,000 persons across the Caribbean.

The Eden Farms company was launched in 2021 and marks the future of farming and sustainable food production in The Bahamas for residents and the millions of tourists who visit The Bahamas year-round.
In October 2018, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published the report, "Impacts of 1.5°C Global Warming on Natural and Human Systems". This report highlights that lower temperatures have a more severe impact on climate than predicted. This threat is even more serious to vulnerable Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like The Bahamas. The Bahamas is currently experiencing the impacts of climate change. These impacts include rising sea levels, declines in coral reefs, and the increasing intensity of hurricanes: changes that affect every area of life in The Bahamas and require real action.220

In September 2019, Hurricane Dorian made landfall in The Bahamas, wreaking havoc on the islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama. The category five winds and storm surges of over 20 feet destroyed entire communities, churches, medical facilities, and more. Dorian was a cataclysmic natural disaster that undoubtedly was the product of the intensifying effects of climate change in the region and the world. Repeated disasters, such as Dorian, are harsh reminder of why climate action is vital.

The United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, visited The Bahamas immediately after Hurricane Dorian. During this visit, he highlighted that countries that produce the least amount of greenhouse emissions or are the poorest or most vulnerable communities are more severely impacted by the effects of climate change, and that the international community must band together to ensure that we are all actively planning towards climate action.221

The Bahamas demonstrates its continual commitment to climate action through:

**The University of The Bahamas**
UB established a Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Research Centre in 2019 after Hurricane Dorian. The centre aims to address how climate change affects societies and people in SIDS and coastal communities. The centre also focuses on adaptation, comprehensive disaster management, and loss and damage. These three areas are key elements in climate research and will be instrumental in building resilience to climate change.221

**The Perry Institute for Marine Science**
The Perry Institute for Marine Science (PIMS) is an organization that conducts research in The Bahamas and throughout the region. The institute also conducts educational, conservation, and science programs to spread awareness and protect the oceans.

PIMS has coral nurseries where they allow corals to grow in a stable environment until they are mature enough to be transported back to coastal reefs where they can thrive. Coral reefs protect the coastline from erosion and damage from storms. This restorative and preventative measure taken by PIMS safeguards The Bahamas from the effects of climate change. PIMS partners with local entities to train participants to conduct this exercise to extend their reach. The institute also conducts extensive research which helps to inform and direct their work.225

**Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)**
In 2019, IICA responded to Hurricane Dorian by implementing actions related to Agricultural Health and Food Safety (AHFS), climate smart agriculture, and resilience. This was done through interventions for capacity and resilience building, provision of tools, and small equipment needed for farming and recording. Forty (40) farmers and 20 beekeepers participated in these activities in total.234

During 2020, the IICA implemented a project which trained over 80 farmers in organic waste management and composting. Farmers trained were from Grand Bahama, New Providence, Eleuthera, Abaco, and Cat Island. In addition to the training, compost sites were set-up on each island. The webinar entitled “SDG 13: How can Agriculture Tackle Climate Change Effects in The Bahamas and the Caribbean?” was showcased. The webinar stressed the importance of climate action and touched on strengthening climate resilience, integrating climate action into policies, planning, and strategies, and the technicities of participating in national and regional high-level fora. The webinar was made accessible through IICA’s social media pages and platforms.467

**The Green Climate Fund**
The Green Climate Fund (GCF) was created in 2010 by Member States signed on to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The fund’s commitments include: helping developing countries and vulnerable societies to lower their greenhouse gas emissions and conserving and helping them to adapt to climate change.238 In November 2020, the GCF launched two (2) projects which target The Bahamas, among other countries. The Sub-national Climate Fund Global aims to effect and increase climate investment on a long-term basis for adaptation and mitigation solutions at a sub-national level by way of a transformative finance model.239 While one project focuses on Equity, the other project centres on the Technical Assistance Facility. The GCF has also engaged in 5 readiness activities,240 one of which included an awareness building video highlighting what is climate change and how it affects The Bahamas.466

**The Global Environment Facility**
The Global Environment Facility (GEF) provides grants and co-financing options to countries to address and deal with pressing environmental problems in line with the Paris Agreement. The GEF has had 17 projects with The Bahamas, with 5 of them tackling climate change, specifically totalling over $8 million GEF grant funds, and over $28 million co-financed.490

**The Bahamas Protected Areas Fund**
In 2019, in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, The Bahamas Protected Areas Fund (BPAF) launched a call for concept proposals that would focus on the islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama, while targeting the ecosystem, water purification, or renewable energy. The BPAF is a national conservation trust fund that ensures that national marine parks have enough revenue to provide the efficiency of staff, equipment, community support, monitoring, and visitor facilities.
SDG 13
Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)
The IDB approved the project “Recommendations for the Implementation of Sustainable and Climate Resilient Tourism Certifications in The Bahamas” in November 2020. It is a Technical Cooperation project to support to the Ministry of Tourism and Aviation, by listing recommendations and providing a governance framework. The IDB is also implementing the project “Climate Resilient Coastal Management and Infrastructure Program”, which was approved in 2017. The program aims to enhance resilience to coastal risks, including risks related to climate change. Methods of program implementation include the use of coastal protection infrastructure and integrated coastal management. Selected coastlines of the islands of Grand Bahama, New Providence, Andros, and Long Island are to be affected.

Public Private Sector Activities Retrofitting of the Anatol Rodgers High School Project
The Ministry of the Environment and Housing, through a project funded by the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea (IMELS), incorporated renewable energy technology and Energy Conservation Measures (ECMs). The project reduced the carbon footprint of the Anatol Rodgers High School by installing a 250 kW-Dc rooftop solar PV array, exterior lighting control systems, vacancy sensors, lounge, programmable thermostats, and low-flow lavatory aerators. The project also reworked the entrance’s interior lighting system and refrigerant lines.

To spread awareness about the initiative, the Ministry of Environment and Housing, along with the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, premiered a short film about the initiative and its outcomes.

The Ministry of Disaster Preparedness Management, and Reconstruction, the Disaster Reconstruction Authority, and the National Emergency Management Authority
The Ministry of Disaster Preparedness Management and Reconstruction, was created in September 2019, days after the passing of Hurricane Dorian. The ministry was tasked with recovery coordination for Abaco and Grand Bahama. NEMA, and the Disaster Reconstruction Authority (DRA) were moved to the new Ministry of Disaster Preparedness Management and Reconstruction. NEMA led aid relief efforts during the aftermath of the hurricane. The agency organized the collection and disbursement of donations and collaborated with various international organizations that offered technical support on the ground. The DRA worked with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to conduct hurricane damage assessments and to rebuild more resilient communities. The DRA identifies seven (7) priorities that it centres on. These are economy, health, education, systems improvement, environment, housing, and infrastructure.

NEMA has since been working on a comprehensive hurricane response plan for The Bahamas. The Pacific Disaster Centre was contracted to perform a baseline assessment in 2019. The assessment results found that if a Category 5 hurricane hits New Providence, 70% of the island would be underwater. The Meteorological Department and The Bahamas National Geographic Information Systems (BNGIS) are other partners used for a category 5 response recovery plan. The comprehensive hurricane response plan should consider the amount of shelter space needed, the functionality of the government, and the provision of food and water supplies across the archipelago.

The DRA has since outlined 14 projects it aimed to execute. These projects included: debris collection and debris management sites, Grand Bahama, Small Home Repair Programmes in Abaco and Grand Bahama, construction of dome and modular temporary housing in Abaco and Grand Bahama, airport development in Treasure Cay, Abaco, construction of semi-permanent homes for public offices and teachers in Spring City, Abaco, and planning for comprehensive schools in High Rock, Grand Bahama, and Treasure Cay. The DRA also plans to build permanent housing in Central Pines, Abaco, and roll out landfill redevelopment in Snake Cay; develop two 60-acre subdivisions in Spring City and Wilson City, Abaco; reconstruct Abaco’s port facilities and rebuild the police and fire stations in Marsh Harbour, Abaco. In these efforts, the DRA partnered with the Grand Bahama Power Company, WSC, BPL, the Grand Bahama Utility Company, The Bahamas Telecommunications Company, and Aliw, working across sectors to make the rebuilding of these Bahamian islands a reality. NGOs, private institutions, churches, and the international community also lent a huge hand in assessing needs on the ground and providing assistance.

In April 2020, the DRA provided eight families, whose homes were destroyed by Hurricane Dorian, with temporary housing in Spring City. The dome-style homes can hold up to 6 people and are built for extreme environments. Forty (40) domes are to be given to residents of Grand Bahama, and one-hundred 100 more domes are to be shipped to Abaco to assist more families who were left homeless, due to Dorian. The domes are the property of NEMA and cannot be rented or sold by residents.

Given the increasing threat of hurricanes, the domes serve as a short-term solution for those who may be displaced due to disasters and emergencies.

The DRA also gave out over 800 vouchers for home repair up to June 2020. The vouchers were in the amount of $2,500 to assist with home repair efforts to ensure that homes were made more resistant to hurricanes and flooding. Up to June 2020, at least 4,600 people applied, and more than 2,600 of them were approved.

Tribune Media Group
The Tribune Media Group publishes an annual Hurricane Supplement, which provides a hurricane tracking map, and safety and shelter information, for the Bahamian Community. In addition to the Hurricane Supplement, the Tribune Media Group also offers daily Eco-Friendly tips on the radio station KISS 96.1FM. Further, during the implementation of the Plastic Ban, The Tribune Media Group partnered with the Ministry of Environment and Housing to disseminate information on the ban and the negative impact plastic has on our environment. The Tribune Media Group also runs articles on Climate Change regularly, and provides weather reports sponsored by BPL during hurricane seasons.

Challenges to achieving climate action:
- The Bahamas relies on tourism; a sector with many associated activities that contribute to high greenhouse gas emissions
- Efforts to sustain the sector may conflict with interest in combating climate change.

Recommendations for addressing the challenges:
- Establishing a standardised system that would allow for the project reports, compiled by the relevant profession- als, to be archived in a publicly accessible government repository, is one way researchers and government representatives can perform assessments and identify local trends, that would enable a more efficient response to climate change issues.
- Increase the resiliency of infrastructure.
- Enhancing warning systems, upgrading the structural integrity of hurricane shelters, and ensuring citizen compliance with evacuation protocols, are lifesaving actions.
- Bolster citizen engagement in disaster preparedness and response.

SDG 13

Weak Food Security
High levels of economic inequality
Vulnerability to climate events
Lack of human capital with expertise
5.0 PROGRESS ON GOALS & TARGETS

LIFE BELOW WATER

The aims of the project are to:

- Design a new set of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) so that The Bahamas has at least 20% of its marine habitat protected by 2020.
- Increase the effective management of Protected Areas (PAs) within the MPA Network.
- Increase sustainable funding dedicated to PA management.
- Strengthen public awareness and support for MPAs.

The document was written after stakeholder consultations, and it suggests important maritime areas that require protection. The project was written after stakeholder consultations, and it suggests important maritime areas that require protection. The aims of the project are to:

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- Strengthen public awareness and support for MPAs.

The new Biological Resources and Traditional Knowledge Act, 2020 functions to ensure that the country benefits in a just way from its own natural resources and from organizations and institutions that conduct research with and on our natural resources. The act has catalysed the creation of new protocols to ensure that the legislation is being properly executed.

SDG 14
CONSERVE AND SUSTAINABLY USE THE OCEANS, SEAS AND MARINE RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Bahamas’ Protected Project, consisting of TNC, BNT, and BREEF, produced their “20 by 20 White Paper” in September 2018, which sought to meet The Bahamas’ 2020 Declaration. The Bahaman’s 2020 Declaration was born from The Bahamas’ commitment to the Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI), launched in 2008. The 2020 declaration outlines The Bahamas’ plans to: (i) Exceed the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) goals by effectively conserving at least 20% of the near-shore marine resources across The Bahamas, by 2020; (ii) Achieve the “20 by 20” Goal, to have in place fully functioning sustainable finance mechanisms that will provide long-term and reliable funding, to conserve and sustainably manage the marine and coastal resources of The Bahamas; (iii) Preserve the country’s marine and terrestrial environments to long-term and reliable funding, to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, to meet the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) - Life Below Water, which came into force in January 2016. The document was written after stakeholder consultations, and it suggests important maritime areas that require protection. The aims of the project are to:

- Design a new set of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) so that The Bahamas has at least 20% of its marine habitat protected by 2020.
- Increase the effective management of Protected Areas (PAs) within the MPA Network.
- Increase sustainable funding dedicated to PA management.
- Strengthen public awareness and support for MPAs.

The Inter-American Development Bank

IDB approved the first operation of the modality titled, Programmatic Policy-Based Loan (PBL), through a $200 million loan to increase the resiliency of the environment, as well as MSMEs. The loan supports The Bahamian’s Marine Protected Areas, as well as the private and public sectors. Another loan for $140 million was later approved in 2021, as the second part of the PBL.

Fisheries, Conservation in the Wider Caribbean Region through FAO’s Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission

The Bahamas continues to be a partner country to the Fisheries Conservation in the Wider Caribbean Region through FAO’s Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECACFI). The Commission serves to encourage the management, conservation, and development of marine resources. The commission also serves to tackle fishery related issues experienced by commission members. There are 35 states, and 16 of them are SIDS. The commission works to form recommendations which may be considered by the countries and NGOs that participate.

Fisheries Act, 2020

In December 2020, the GOB passed the Fisheries Bill, which repealed the Fisheries Resources (Jurisdiction and Conservation) Act 1977. The Fisheries Bill was passed in the Senate days later, creating the Fisheries Act 2020. The Minister of Agriculture and Marine Resources noted that the new legislation would call for new regulations, including Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) on commercial fishing boats, the licensing of foreign sport and commercial fishers and their vessels, fishing management plans for every fishing asset, and resources for the development and management, using best practices, of the aquaculture sector. The new Act also allows for the creation of a National Fisheries Stakeholder Forum, a Fisheries Advisory Council, and a clear outline of the powers of the director and the Minister. The new legislation enacts the UN/FAO Port State Measures Act into local law and bans foreign involvement in commercial fishing.

Biological Resources and Traditional Knowledge Act, 2020

The new Biological Resources and Traditional Knowledge Act, 2020 functions to ensure that the country benefits in a just way from its own natural resources and from organizations and institutions that conduct research with and on our natural resources. The act has catalysed the creation of new protocols to ensure that the legislation is being properly executed.
Given that The Bahamas is a coastal nation it is important that our efforts towards conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity are made with terrestrial and coastal resource targets in mind. Indeed, a recent study predicted that storm-related damages could be tripled if protective ecosystems such as coral reefs and mangrove forests are degraded or lost.\textsuperscript{10}

**The Bahamas Development Bank**

During the period since the submission of the previous VNR, The Bahamas enacted the Environmental Planning and Protection Act of 2019. This Act established the Department of Environmental Planning and Protection, a department which would focus on preventing pollution and would regulate activities and administer the conservation and sustainable use of the environment. Some of the key objectives of the Act are to ensure the establishment of an integrated environmental management system; to protect the environment of The Bahamas while providing for development in a way that maintains ecological integrity and the social and economic welfare of local communities; and to provide a legal framework for the protection, enhancement, and conservation of the environment, and for the sustainable management, use, development and enjoyment of the environment by the people of The Bahamas, including present and future generations.

Other regulatory regimes which were also implemented are The Ministry of Environment Act 2019 which established the Ministry of Environment to oversee the integrity of the environment of The Bahamas, to establish an environmental trust fund and to make the Minister a corporation sole for the retention of lands. Other laws which have implications for the environment are: Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations and Extension Act of 2020 which legally identified the requirement for public consultation and the dissemination of information to the public regarding development projects.

**SDG 15**

**PROTECT, RESTORE & PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE USE OF TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS, SUSTAINABLY MANAGE FORESTS, COMBAT DESERTIFICATION, & HALT AND REVERSE LAND DEGRADATION & HALT BIODIVERSITY LOSS**

The July 2018 VNR, outlined the rich biodiversity of The Bahamas, and highlighted the role of the country’s terrestrial ecosystems, in providing protection and nourishment to flora and fauna which inhabit them. Additionally, healthy terrestrial systems are critical to protecting coastal areas from the impacts of Climate Change.

Other undertakings for this goal are the sustainable master plan for Andros, which is to be funded by the IDB. The implementation of this program will accelerate sustainable development, through the following strategies highlighted in the previous VNR: identification of public and private investment opportunities, policy recommendations, land and sea zoning guidelines, and other management actions to guide sustainable development of the island.\textsuperscript{10} While the previous report indicated the government’s intention to create similar plans for more islands, this remains the goal.

The BNT continues to pursue its goals of protecting and restoring marine and terrestrial ecosystems. To build resilience using natural solutions to address the adverse effects of climate change, civil society organizations and The BNT, Friends of the Environment, local bonefish fishing guides, the Bonefish Tarpon Trust, are working together to replant mangrove forests on both Grand Bahama and Abaco, to address the Hurricane Dorian-induced destruction of 74% of mangrove cover on Grand Bahama and 40% on Abaco. Not only are these programmes focused on climate action, but also on renewable energy and sustainable food systems.\textsuperscript{12}

Through these collaborative efforts the BNT and its partners have identified a multi-year initiative to restore the mangrove forests that were severely damaged in Grand Bahama and Abaco.\textsuperscript{12} In fact, following Dorian, it was estimated that there were as few as 232 square kilometres (2019) of healthy pine forests, compared to the 400 square kilometres documented by Global Forest Watch in 2014.\textsuperscript{23}

While there is no readily available information on forest expansion, deforestation, and net change throughout The Bahamas, the Ministry of Environment and Housing’s Forestry Unit intends to conduct a National Forest Inventory (NFI) to address this issue.\textsuperscript{24}

**CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 15 PROGRAMMES**

The specific challenges for The Bahamas in implementing SDG 15 include:

- Economic trade-offs which result in the importation of destructive invasive species and the direct weakening of terrestrial ecosystems.
- Capacity for ecosystem services valuation and modelling.
- Capacity to access funding mechanisms which support research on biodiversity and ecosystems.
- Development and maintenance of a central data system for monitoring and tracking environmental changes.
The Ministry of National Security has, and continues to use, a three-pronged approach to advance safety and security, inclusive of investments in human capital, the introduction of technologies, contemporary legislation, and increased partnership.

With reference to human capital, the Ministry, and the agencies under its remit, continue to recruit, as it is essential to strengthen the agencies to carry out the mandate of safety and security. Simultaneously, our personnel engage in professional development, as it is pivotal to predict safety and security priorities, instead of being reactive.

**Strong Institutions**

Strong institutions are necessary for a prosperous country. The Bahamas has, in the past, had limited central planning and coordination capacity, within Government. Another area of concern is a reported lack of coordination around budgeting for initiatives, and limited planning that occurs at the level of individual ministries. Certain key skill sets, such as engineering and technical skills, policy analysis, economics, accountancy, and programme management, must be strengthened within the Public Service.

The limited use of strategic and operating plans and performance metrics, and the historic absence of integrated and programme-based budgeting, pose operational challenges and represent important gaps in reporting to parliament, and ultimately the public. Formal monitoring systems have not been institutionalized, although systems do exist for externally funded projects, using externally generated tools.

The existence of the Auditor General and Public Service Commission (PSC), as independent guardians of the integrity of key public functions, adds to the capacity of parliament to hold the government accountable; but the Freedom of Information Act would be less vulnerable and more resilient, to the government transparency and less red tape.

**SDG 16**

**Rule of Law**

The realization of sustainable development depends greatly on the existence and efficacy of just, peaceful, and inclusive institutions at all levels. Goal 16 addresses priorities that are aligned with the Ministry of National Security’s mandate for safety and security.

A November 2018 assessment of the Bahamian Public Service highlighted that there is much room for improvement. That is, using 38 critical areas for which to generate an aggregate score, regarding the level of civil service development, the report revealed that The Bahamas scored an overall 19 out of 100 – with issues ranging from the absence of ministerial level strategic plans, the hollow middle between senior and mid-level public administrators, a reportedly overstuffed civil service, absence of employment assistance programmes, perceived ineffectiveness of the Ministry of Public Services, and a host of areas for improvement.

**KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG 16**

**THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSFORMATION & DIGITIZATION**

A year after the assessment of the Bahamian Civil Service, the DTD was officially launched by the Government of The Bahamas, in November of 2019. It is an initiative to transfer and make all major government services accessible via online platforms, thereby creating a more effective and seamless process for business to be conducted, both locally and internationally. Funded by a $30 million dollar loan by the IDB, the project will be completed in phases over the course of six (6) years. The project’s goal is, “to foster the competitiveness of The Bahamas by reducing the costs of conducting business with the Government”, in effect, this will remove and reduce the costs associated with red tape and delays, attract local and international business, contribute to the country’s GDP through the financial service sector, increase the transparency of Government activities, strengthen the auditing and control mechanisms of the government for better governance of the country, and improve The Bahamas’ ranking on the World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business Report. Moreover, the day-to-day operations of the government would be less vulnerable and more resilient, to the issues that arise with paper trail, such as the mismanagement and misplacement of documents, from natural (hurricanes) and happenstance disasters (fires).
Establishment of Fiscal Responsibility Council
- Assess and report on government’s compliance with fiscal objectives

PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT ACT (PFM), 2021
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities.
- Strengthened financial management requirements. Improved accounting, reporting & publication requirements for Govt.
- Comprehensive sanction provisions—administrative, criminal, and institutional; and provisions for recovery of losses.
- Improved accountability for Ministries, State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), and Local Govt.
- Distinction between commercial and non-commercial government entities, with tailored reporting and publication requirements.
- Clear role for Minister of Finance in reviewing commercial SOE plans, along with Responsible Minister.
- Strong policy framework for commercial government entities.

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT ACT, 2021
- Aligned with best practices for transparency.
- Openness in solicitation and award of government contracts.
- Electronic procurement system
- Comprehensive coverage—includes all ministries, departments, statutory agencies, and local government entities.
- New Institutional arrangements
- Public Procurement Department | Public Procurement Board | Public Procurement Units
- Defined processes for bid preparation, publication, submissions, and final selection activities.
- Establishment of Procurement Review Tribunal, to adjudicate disputes and complaints from suppliers/contractors, relating to government contracts.

Anti-Corruption Programme
The following anti-corruption bills proposed in 2017, have not yet been enacted:
- Anti-Corruption Commission Bill 2017
- Ombudsman Bill 2017
- Corruption Investigation Bureau Bill 2017

Immigration and Border Control
The Government continues to implement its Immigration and Border Management System (IIMS) discussed in the previous VNR comprising:
- Ministry of National Security Interventions

To strengthen institutions through SDG 16, the Ministry of National Security acquired technology (e.g., CCTV, Gunshot detection software, etc.) to combat crime. In addition, the Ministry oversaw the introduction of a national neighbourhood watch council, to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. Two years ago, the Ministry identified only 10 groups that were in existence for years. In March 2019, the Ministry of National Security shared, that the number has grown exponentially, to 80 groups in New Providence, and that ‘some 15 groups have been started in Grand Bahama, and two groups have been formed in Abaco’, because of the higher density of these islands’ populations relative to other Family Islands, and an in effort to increase community engagement and participation. A snapshot of the Ministry’s interventions is as follow:

With reference to the introduction of technologies, the Ministry has assisted the agencies under its remit, as technologies improve effectiveness and efficiency in our efforts to protect a nation and its citizens. Some of those technologies include:
- Marco’s Alert, which is a platform to provide real-time alerts for missing children, to improve their chances of returning to their loved ones. The technology will also be used to update the public, during states of emergencies such as hurricanes.
- Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) installation continues and, to date, approximately 221 of 507 cameras have been installed, and it increases surveillance capabilities to detect, prevent and prosecute offenders.
- Dash and Body Cams were introduced in July 2020 and, to date, 200 are being used by Police Officers.
- The Real-time Crime Centre was launched on the 14th of July, and it integrates and centralizes all police technology.
- The National Drone Programme will allow all law enforcement agencies to work collaboratively and increase intelligence gathering.

A Bridge Simulador was commissioned in September 2020, for the Defence Force to conduct the ship’s evolutions, under simulated conditions. It also assists ship’s company bridge resources management and assess bridge equipment proficiency.

Radar installations have been ongoing, and to complement the installation in Inagua, a second coastal radar installation is occurring at the Coral Harbour Base.

The National Crime Intelligence Agency Juries and Bail Bills is a contemporary legislation, which passed in both the upper and lower houses.

With reference to improved partnerships, the Ministry, and the agencies under its remit, continue to foster and improve cooperation with national, regional and international partners in an effort to advance safety. The Ministry is keenly aware that all persons within The Bahamas’ borders, have the fundamental right to live in a safe society. Therefore, focus has been placed on ensuring that some of the most vulnerable in society are afforded opportunities for equal participation in society. The Ministry’s priorities are reflected in the following:

The Citizen Security and Justice Programme: This Ministry lead initiative, focuses on our youth, inmates, judicial sector, and communities. To ensure the successful implementation and integration of project outputs, the project has been extended to August 2022. Our youth are provided with safe spaces (community centres), in some of the most vulnerable communities, and at these centres, our youth will be trained.
with technical skills to improve their well-being. In addition, the programme, in conjunction with BTVI, seeks to train inmates to reduce the prospects of them returning to a life of crime. To improve the efficiency of the judicial system, investments have been made to digitalize the courts process.

Victims of human trafficking: The TIPS Unit continues to improve awareness on human trafficking via billboards, and training law enforcement personnel and civic organizations. This partnership can assist in thwarting persons from becoming victims of human trafficking, and for those who have been identified, rehabilitative opportunities are provided.

The Neighbourhood Watch Programme operates with community partners, local businesses and national security officials, all teaming to prevent crime through public interaction and education. Youth programmes are also facilitated in conjunction with law enforcement to provide mentorship for young people.

The Keep Children Safe Programme is being developed to facilitate dialogue and coordinate efforts to develop a comprehensive and integrated platform to prevent, protect and defend the nation’s youth, against violence.

Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit

With respect to supporting attempts to shore up the accountability and transparency of institutions, the Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit (PMDU) achieves this in several key areas of national development. That is, the PMDU is a component of an IDB-loan agreement (entered into in 2016) and focuses on eight priority areas: Education, Safety & Security, Ease of Doing Business, Over the Hill Community Development Partnership Initiative, Land Reform, Energy Reform, Infrastructure, and Modernization. The PMDU’s development of the Prime Minister’s priorities was informed by the SDG-aligned draft NDP (2016). As such, the priorities’ targets align partially/completely, with the relevant SDGs.

Tribune Radio Limited

Tribune Radio Limited partnered with Crime Stoppers to hold a “Jail-a-thon” event at the Marathon Mall, in 2019. Tribune Radio Limited provided radio ads, print articles, a live broadcast remote, and radio personalities, to be “jailed”. Money was donated by listeners to bail radio personalities out of jail. All money raised was donated to Crime Stoppers. Crime stoppers is a community action programme, that allows persons to call in with information that may be helpful, regarding crimes that have been committed. The callers remain anonymous, which helps to ensure their safety, given the small population size of The Bahamas.

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 16 PROGRAMMES

The specific challenges for The Bahamas relate to:
- Strengthening government’s internal decision-making processes to better deliver results.
- Strengthening the public service’s capacity to execute programmes.
- Improving transparency and accountability within government services.
- Using ICT to better deliver services.
- Strengthening the integration of government decision making with the business community, non-governmental organizations, civil society, and academia.
- Strengthening of local government, of state-owned enterprises, and facilitating the use of business development zones and associations, and other innovations, to involve more citizens in governance.
- Designing effective interventions for youth.
- Rehabilitation programmes in the correctional facilities and support for those who leave those facilities.

SDG 17 Calls for strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, by encouraging and promoting effective public partnerships, public-private and civil society partnerships, and building on the experience and resource strategies of partnerships. The Bahamas continues to strengthen its multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development.

Partnerships are considered an important cross-cutting goal and effective instrument for realizing the SDGs. The issues confronting The Bahamas today, which the SDGs aim to tackle, are so complex that it requires a multi-disciplinary approach to development. Working in silos will not assist in implementing and achieving the goals and targets. Through cooperation, we can collaborate with all actors involved at various levels of government, as well as local, regional, international, and multi-lateral partners, for resource mobilization.

Similarly, given The Bahamas’ high-income status, based on GDP per capita, the country does not qualify for concessional development finance, which further exacerbates our vulnerabilities and development challenges. The Caribbean community has long advocated for qualifying and quantifying the vulnerabilities of small island developing states, through the adoption of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index approach, that factors-in the physical, economic, social, environmental, and institutional characteristics.102

Additionally, civil society plays an important role, as a source of information advocacy, and a means through which the government can be held accountable. Yet, we recognize that it’s not just about responding to pressure from external stakeholders, finding solutions to the SDGs also present a huge opportunity for us to work towards development, through an integrated approach. Partnerships are crucial for capacity building in developing countries. Through capacity building, we can position and empower individuals and organizations with the knowledge, tools, and other resources that they need, to reach their goals.

**Challenges Specific to Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**

The Bahamas is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), which also has the unique structure of an archipelagic nation. This status is fundamental to our development progress, and is ingrained in our “Vision 2040,” draft National Development Plan. Though SIDS make up a small percentage of the world’s population, the effects of environmental, social and economic challenges such as, Climate Change and the vast challenges of this COVID-19 pandemic, impact these nations significantly.

It is expected that Antigua and Barbuda, Cabo Verde, Cuba, Dominican Republic and the Marshall Islands will present their VNR at the 2023 HLPF. Cabo Verde and the Dominican Republic would be presenting their VNRs for the second time, while Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba and the Marshall Islands, are presenting for the first time. The Bahamas is set to present its VNR in 2022 for the second time.

While each nation is different, they have come together to co-create a common section, to highlight shared challenges and vulnerabilities. The Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway) is recognized as the framework that guides the acknowledgement of SIDS, as having specific challenges and vulnerabilities.

These vulnerabilities include: increased vulnerability to Climate Change, limited economic resources, small size, and dependence on external markets, creating increased vulnerabilities to external shocks, high costs of infrastructure, transportation and energy. The Bahamas also supported the draft statement below, which was presented by the SIDS at the 2021 at HLPF.

We, the six Small Island Developing States (SIDS), who this year, presented our VNR (Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Cabo Verde, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Marshall Islands), have decided to come together to highlight our common vulnerabilities and development challenges, as well as opportunities, in our respective VNR, through this common section. We come from different regions of the world, we are from different income groups, we have different national priorities and sustainable development paths, specific to our national contexts; nonetheless, we are in line with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The Principle of National Ownership is central to our common pursuit of sustainable development. As a result, each of our VNRs, is, of course, country-specific, as are the achievements presented therein. However, no matter how varied this progress has been so far, we all face unique structural and exogenous vulnerabilities that are shared by all SIDS countries, and that are specific to us.

**SDG 17**

**STRENGTHEN THE MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION & REVITALIZE THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The Declaration of Accelerated Modalities of Action for SIDS SAMOA Pathway, recognizes that SIDS continue to be a special case for sustainable development, given their unique and common vulnerabilities. Well-documented, common development challenges specific to SIDS include: small land mass; small populations; geographic isolation, and spatial dispersion; high cost of transport, communications and energy; low-lying areas and extreme vulnerability to climate change and natural hazards; fragility of island ecosystems and high level of endemism; small resource-based and un diversified economies; remoteness from markets and heavy reliance on trade, travel and remittances; high sensitivity to international fluctuations and limited trading partners; and, lack of access to concessional financing. These unique and specific challenges are highlighted, for example, in the SAMOA Pathway, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the SDGs, the Paris Agreement, as well as the 2018 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, “Making Development Co-operation Work for Small Island Developing States”, and the 2021 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) Financing for Sustainable Development report, for example. These complex, exogenous and underlying conditions undermine the sustainable development gains of SIDS and undermine progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

The endemic vulnerabilities of SIDS linked to their unique characteristics and sensitivity to external shocks and natural hazards, for example, have now been amplified by the current COVID-19 global pandemic and subsequent economic consequences.

The structural limitations of SIDS, represent several aggravating factors and obstacles to recovery. As a 2020 OECD study demonstrates, SIDS with higher levels of Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, are no longer resilient to the current crisis (“Mapping the Economic Consequences of COVID-19 in Small Island Developing States” OECD, 2020). Lessons from the 2008 financial and economic crisis, point to a slower socio-economic recovery in SIDS, compared to the global level. Whatever the level of growth achieved, whatever develop-
ment gains achieved, the sustainable development pathways of SIDS will always be relatively more volatile and fragile than average, due to their unique exogenous factors.

However, the extreme vulnerabilities of Small Developing Islands put the leaders of SIDS countries and their determination, at the forefront, to turn their unique challenges into opportunities, to accelerate the transformative sustainable development of SIDS.

Despite these vulnerabilities, SIDS are leading by example in several areas. As stated in our respective VNRs, our six countries have achieved, in their own way and through their own route, remarkable results in our progress towards the SDGs, despite the parallel crises - health, economic, climate, natural-biodiversity and pollution, that we continue to experience, even in the context of COVID-19.

In the SAMOA Pathway, together with the other SIDS, “we reaffirm our commitment to taking urgent and concrete steps to address the vulnerability of Small Island Developing States, including through the sustained implementation of the Barbados Program of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, and underscore the urgency to find additional solutions to the major challenges, faced by small island developing States, in a concerted manner, in order to support them in sustaining the momentum achieved in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. With renewed political will and strong leadership, we are dedicated to work in meaningful partnership with all stakeholders, at all levels.”

Given these perspectives, this joint section reflected in the six SIDS VNRs for 2021, is taking stock and summarizing the main challenges, vulnerabilities, opportunities, and common best practices, reported by those six countries, in accordance with the SAMOA Pathway.

As reflected in our six VNRs for 2021, we, SIDS, are dealing with competing priorities in the face of pandemic-induced crisis, Climate Change, and other exogenous factors. Parallel crises expose our collective vulnerability. Due to the scale and complexity of our unique challenges, a wide range of local, national, and regional actors from our countries have joined forces, to produce significant sustainable development outcomes, as highlighted in our different VNRs.

Despite the disproportionate vulnerabilities we face, we have demonstrated global leadership and pioneered innovative solutions through partnerships. Strategic partnerships for integrated approaches and innovative solutions are more than ever needed, to support our leadership in achieving the SDGs. COVID-19 amplified the need for unprecedented collaboration to build better, greener, and blue again. With necessity being the mother of innovation, the recovery of COVID-19, represents a unique opportunity to catalyze transformative sustainable development.

From these perspectives, and to echo the 2019 Interim Review of the SAMOA Pathway, we call for “escalation and development of genuine and lasting partnerships with all stakeholders nationally, regionally and internationally”. SIDS are poles of innovation and evidence shows that by turning unique vulnerabilities into opportunities, strategic partnerships can support SIDS in leading transformative solutions and accelerate the transformative sustainable development of SIDS.

These innovative solutions and transformative paths to sustainable development, will need to be fuelled by public and private investments that require better access to development finance, increased investments for economic growth and diversification, including in Ocean-based Economies and Creative and Cultural Industries, to reduce vulnerability and build resilience.

At a time when challenges become increasingly intertwined and exacerbated by multiple crises occurring in parallel, the multifaceted vulnerabilities common to SIDS, can be turned into shared integrated solutions and opportunities. Thus, we commit to improve inter-regional and intra-regional cooperation and collaboration among as Small Island Developing States, to drive sustainable development at scale, and accelerate the achievements of the SDGs.

KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE SDG 17

Financial Management, Policy Coherence and Statistics
Since the establishment of a joint agreement with the GOB and the SDI in February 2016, for a $3 million Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) to fund the Public Financial Management/Performance Monitoring Reform programme (IFMIS/PMR), several initiatives were undertaken, namely:

Introduction of a National Statistical System
Stakeholders from the government, private sector, academia, and civil society, were engaged for a detailed analysis of current (as-is) processes, identification of gaps, benchmarking with existing standards and best practices, and design of future (to-be) processes to enable a seamless, integrated, effective, and efficient National Statistics System (NSS). The implementation of the NSS will ensure that the government is using quantifiable evidence to select projects, develop human resource capacity, and ultimately meet developmental goals. National Statistical Reform is a key step towards the modernization of the information infrastructure and improves the government’s ability to make evidence-based decisions about the allocation and management of financial resources.

Reform of the Public Financial System
The implementation of the new IFMIS will modernize and organize public financial information, under the new Chart of Accounts, to provide timely, coordinated, and comprehensive data on the fiscal position of the country. The government is in the process of transitioning from the modified cash basis of accounting that it currently employs, to an accruals-based accounting system, in compliance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). The transition to a full IPSAS reporting is anticipated, by the end of the 2022/2023 fiscal year.

Launch of the Prime Minister’s Deliver

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Highlights

**EDUCATION**
Pre-school availability has expanded. The Government has recorded an improvement in Grade 3 literacy. The 2019 Language Arts GLAT results indicate the MOE exceeded its target or 60% of students achieving grades A-D by 3%, recording a 63% pass rate. The Government also made huge advances in providing a virtual learning platform.

**SAFETY & SECURITY**
The number of murders and armed robberies decreased significantly. 300 inmates at DCOS acquired a skill through successfully completing courses and programmes offered by BT&. Having a skill means that the Inmates’ opportunities for employment after leaving prison ought to improve, leading to a decrease in the relapse into criminal activity and a reduction in crime generally.

**EASE OF DOING BUSINESS**
The process of renewing a business licence has improved substantially; the number of working days it required has decreased from a high of 61 in March 2020 to a low of 6 in October 2020.

**OVER-THE-HILL**
Revitalization of Over-the-Hill continues apace: a multi-pronged approach ranging from the restoration of parks to tax breaks to the creation of the Over-the-Hill Entrepreneurial Training Programme has resulted in steady progress for the social, cultural and economic renaissance of this historic area.

**LAND REFORM**
The Government has created more opportunities for people to own their own land and build their own homes through initiatives such as the provision of ready-to-build serviced lots and crown land grants.

**ENERGY REFORM**
Construction of the Ragged Island solar micro-grid project was completed. Once connected, it will provide 90% of the Island’s energy needs. Small Scale Renewable Generation across The Bahamas continues to increase at a moderate pace.

**INFRASTRUCTURE**
The traffic experience is set to improve. Government is to create a Traffic Management Centre in New Providence and has engaged in contract negotiations for the acquisition of a Road Maintenance Management system. A number of road and bridge repair projects are underway in a number of the Family Islands.

**MODERNIZATION**
Digitization means time and energy savings, in short greater efficiency. More government services have been piloted and will be available online as of February 2021, specifically marriage, birth and death certificates, and drivers’ license renewals.

**RE-CONSTRUCTION**
2645 homeowners in areas designated disaster zones post hurricane Dorian received assistance through the Small Homes Repair Programme. Abaco and Grand Bahama received assistance through the Special Economic Recovery Zone Act which provides tax breaks and waivers on a multiplicity of items needed for the reconstruction efforts in progress.

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**SDG 17**

**Partnerships through Trade**

**ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries) Trade Capacity Building TradeComm II Programme**
As part of The Bahamas’ efforts towards economic diversification and supporting the development of new sectors, the government recently became a beneficiary of the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries) Trade Capacity Building TradeComm II Programme, under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF). The objectives of the ACP-EU Trade Comm II Programme are, to reduce poverty, improve sustainable economic development, and encourage regional integration through capacity-building programmes, in ACP countries. The programme aims to strengthen trade-related infrastructure by partnering with national and regional organizations, to diversify the economy through agriculture and the private sector. The Technical Assistance Component allows Bahamian companies to compete in the European Commission tender process, and allows approved services to be procured, directly under the Rapid Response Facility (RRF), while the Grant Component provides direct funding to beneficiaries.

Under the TradeComm II RRF, the EU-approved technical assistance for two projects for the BDB, that aim to improve food security and food quality, while stimulating local economies, creating employment, and supporting livelihoods on Long Island and New Providence.

**Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)**
The GOB met with the British High Commission in Nassau, in July 2020, to discuss increasing trade between the United Kingdom (UK) and The Bahamas, primarily through the domestic ratification of the CARIFORUM-UK Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). The CARIFORUM-UK EPA was signed in agreement.

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**SDG 17**

**Adoption of an E-tendering System**
In February 2018, the GOB launched the eProcurement and Supplier Registry (ePSR) which facilitates the execution of online procurement activities. The ePSR system is web-based and user-friendly, thereby allowing for a more efficient procurement process for users. It also permits easier access to opportunities and contracts offered by the Government, as all offers will be displayed on the ePSR website. Resultantly, entrepreneurs and companies can register their businesses through the online Vendor Registry. Since the system launched in 2019, 1,629 of the 5,330 or 30% of VAT registered businesses have signed up as ePSR suppliers – enabling them to bid on, and secure, government contracts, through the online portal, and more than 300 government opportunities have been posted on the portal.118

**KEY LEGISLATIVE REFORMS**
In February 2021, the following suite of new legislation related to modernizing and transforming public finance management, procurement and statistical operations were tabulated:

- Public Debt Management Bill, 2021 (anticipated to come into effect, July 1st, 2021)
- Public Finance Management Bill, 2021 (anticipated to come into effect, July 1st, 2021)
- Statistics Bill, 2021 (anticipated to come into effect, July 1st, 2021)
- Public Procurement Bill, 2020 (anticipated to come into effect, September 1st, 2021)

The GOB will embark on an education campaign with internal and external stakeholders, to ensure that new roles, procedures, and responsibilities outlined in each act, are explained.
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS TECHNICAL COMMITTEE (SDGTC)

In January 2019, the Cabinet of the Government of The Bahamas approved the establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals Technical Committees. The overall purpose of the SDGTC Technical Committees is to collaborate in order to effectively and efficiently:

- Monitor The Bahamas’ progress with implementing the SDGs.
- Identify and reduce duplication to create and optimize synergies across sectors.
- Provide timely, relevant, and specific inputs to inform policy development and organizational priorities.
- Encourage the inclusion of women, children, youth, migrants, minorities, persons with disabilities, and Family Island residents.
- Host and coordinate efforts to promote sustainable development in The Bahamas.

The SDGTC comprised the three groups according to the three dimensions of Sustainable Development i.e., Social Inclusion, Economic Prosperity, Environmental Sustainability and included representatives from government, civil society, private sector, and academia. The committees were chaired by representatives of the SDGU, OPM. The SDGTC drafted SDG Informed Policy Recommendations for COVID-19, which were submitted to The Bahamas Economic Recovery Committees during the consultative phase.

Civil Society Partnerships

During the 2021 Bahamas Business Outlook, Prime Minister, The Most Honourable Dr. Hubert Alexander Minnis, referred to the Abaco and Grand Bahama’s recovery post efforts as, “one of the most ambitious and dynamic public-private partnership initiatives in Bahamian history”. NEMA, with responsibility for coordinating disaster response, worked with over 100 regional and international partners.

Gina Knowles, founder of HeadKnowles said, “I feel like this time we’re working so much smoother with the government and proud to say we are bound to get our country together”.

National Food Distribution Taskforce (NFDT)

Following the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), The NFDT, multi-stakeholder partnership, led by the private sector, government and civil society, was established and more than 76,000 people received assistance. The NFDT stands as an unprecedented public-private partnership, with a shared commitment to aid the most vulnerable members of our community. June through September 2020, a combined $18.8m was spent on the programme, with the government bearing 85 percent of the cost, and task force NGOs contributing the remainder, with a total investment in food security of $30,320,000. The unique public-private partnership was the largest ever public/private social care initiative, in the history of The Bahamas, and combined the resources and expertise of the government and a network of NGOs around the country, to provide food assistance to those most in need. Weekly, more than 150,000 people across The Bahamas receive assistance in the form of food parcels or vouchers.

THE NATIONAL FOOD DISTRIBUTION TASK FORCE

Distribution Days MONDAY-WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY

Northeast sector: The Bahamas Feeding Network
Southeast sector: The Bahamas Red Cross
Nassau City: Lend a Hand Bahamas
Western End: Hands for Hunger
Eleuthera: The One Eleuthera Foundation
Abaco and surrounding Cayes: Idea Relief
Grand Bahama: Multi-sector committee
Other Family Islands: The Bahamas Feeding Network and the Bahamas Red Cross

CHALLENGES FACED IMPLEMENTING SDG 17 PROGRAMMES

The key challenges for The Bahamas in implementing SDG 17 relate to:

- Access to financing for development and capacity-building.
- Post implementation evaluation, with attention to change management process, to ensure ICT readiness, project management capability and human resource capacity.
- Continued prudent fiscal management from both the revenue and expenditure perspective, to mobilize significant resources for development, in the face of vulnerability to external shocks.
- The absence of a coordinated framework to effectively coordinate and seek out international technical cooperation.
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