



# CAWI NEWSLETTER

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## Africa and the Caribbean - A Shared Heritage and a Renewed Partnership

Each year on May 5, African World Heritage Day is a global celebration of the richness of Africa's culture and legacy. It is an opportunity to recognize how profoundly that legacy lives beyond the continent. There is nowhere this is more vivid than in the Caribbean. Today, this connection is no longer defined solely by history, it is being actively reimagined through renewed partnerships, dialogue, and exchange.

The link between Africa and the Caribbean is rooted in a shared past. The transatlantic slave trade carried millions of Africans across the ocean, where their resilience shaped new societies across the Caribbean.

Across the region today, African heritage is alive in rhythms like reggae and calypso, in culinary traditions, and in spiritual practices. These are not just static inheritances but living traditions that continue to evolve. What is increasingly striking is how this shared heritage is now the anchor for a new forward-looking partnership.

In recent years, Africa and the Caribbean have moved decisively to strengthen economic, political, and cultural ties. The Africa-CARICOM Summit, most recently held in September 2025, brought leaders together to deepen cooperation across trade, climate action, education, and cultural exchange, while advancing a shared agenda rooted in solidarity and a common purpose.

The AfriCaribbean Trade and Investment Forum (ACTIF) has emerged as a platform for partnership, generating major investment deals and strengthening business linkages between the regions. Agreements worth hundreds of millions of dollars have already been signed in sectors ranging from infrastructure to tourism to digital transformation.

St. Kitts and Nevis will host ACTIF 2026, positioning the Caribbean at the center of a growing "Global Africa" movement. The forum aims to deepen trade, investment, innovation, and cultural exchange, bringing together leaders, investors, and the diaspora to shape a shared economic future.

Beyond high-level forums, tangible exchanges are taking shape. For example, a cultural agreement between Nigeria and Saint Lucia was signed, focusing on youth and educational partnerships, and

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programs designed to facilitate mobility and collaboration between people of African descent across both regions. The University of the West Indies (UWI) actively partners with African universities and organizations to strengthen academic, economic, and cultural ties between the Caribbean and Africa. African World Heritage Day reminds us that heritage is not only something to preserve, but also something to activate. The Caribbean stands as a powerful extension of Africa's legacy, but also as a partner in its future. Together, they are transforming a shared history into what leaders have aptly called an "Atlantic bridge", linking continents through culture, commerce, and a renewed sense of common purpose.

By Andrea Dore

## TASTE OF THE CARIBBEAN

### HOW CARNIVALS CAN BECOME DRIVERS OF GROWTH, JOBS, AND TOURISM

Source: IDB Blog by Eliana Prada, Tenisha Elizabeth Brown

- Carnivals connect creative industries, tourism, and local economies, generating jobs and income across value chains.
- Such cultural events can have a long-lasting development impact when they are treated as economic infrastructure and integrated into long-term development strategies.
- Strengthening data and measurement is key to unlocking their full potential as part of the creative economy.



### Economic Impact Across the Region

The creative economy is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the world economy. It already accounts for more than 6% of global value added and is projected to reach 10% of global GDP before 2030. Creative services exports reached \$1.5 trillion in 2023, equivalent to 19% of global services exports, nearly doubling their share over the past decade. These figures point to a structural shift in which creative sectors are becoming central to global growth dynamics.

Across the region, carnivals take different forms but operate through similar economic dynamics. In Brazil, Rio de Janeiro's Carnival alone draws 1.4 million tourists each year, generating more than R\$5 billion (approximately \$900 million) in economic activity for the city through tourism, hospitality, and services). In Colombia, the Carnival of Barranquilla, recognized by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, mobilizes around 30,000 direct and indirect jobs across performance, costume design, and local commerce. In Trinidad and Tobago, it attracts over 40,000 international visitors annually and generates approximately \$90–95 million in visitor expenditure.

These events boost tourism arrivals, increase demand for cultural products and services, and mobilize a broad ecosystem of creative professionals, entrepreneurs, and small businesses, reinforcing their role as economic multipliers that extend beyond the festival period. [Read more.](#)



## DEVELOPMENT NEWS FROM ACROSS THE CARIBBEAN

### IMF REACHES STAFF-LEVEL AGREEMENT WITH BARBADOS ON A PRECAUTIONARY STAND-BY ARRANGEMENT

Source: IMF Communications Department

- IMF staff and the Barbadian authorities have reached a staff-level agreement on a 36-month precautionary Stand-By Arrangement (SBA). The agreement—which is subject to approval by the IMF Executive Board—will enable Barbados to access SDR 189 million (about US\$ 260 million). The IMF Executive Board is expected to consider the request in June.
- The new SBA will provide Barbados with insurance in a shock-prone external environment, while helping preserve macroeconomic stability and supporting reforms under the homegrown Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation Plan 2026 (BERT 2026). BERT 2026 marks the next phase of Barbados' reform journey, moving from stabilization and growth toward long-term transformation into a high-performing, inclusive, and climate-resilient economy.
- Barbados enters the proposed arrangement from a position of strengthened macroeconomic credibility. Growth remains solid, fiscal performance continues to be strong, public debt remains on a declining path, international reserves remain ample, and Barbados successfully returned to international capital markets in 2025. However, the outlook remains subject to downside risks, including heightened global policy uncertainty, commodity price pressures, and Barbados' vulnerability to natural disasters. [Read more.](#)

IMF Executive Board concludes 2026 Article IV Consultation with the following countries:

- [Trinidad and Tobago](#)
- [St. Kitts and Nevis](#)
- [Antigua and Barbuda](#)

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### NOURISHING FUTURES: HOW SCHOOL MEALS ARE BUILDING RESILIENCE AND TRANSFORMING LIVES IN HAITI

Source: IDB Blog by Mohamed Yassine, Marie Evane Tamagnan



Haiti's commitment to expanding school feeding across public schools is a national priority, proving to be a powerful engine for social and economic transformation. This initiative is helping communities not only withstand but also adapt to the overlapping shocks of political instability, economic crises, and natural disasters.

With support from [GPE](#), the [World Food Programme](#), the Inter-American Development Bank, [Education Above All](#), and other partners, Haiti is driving results at scale. This intersectoral approach cleverly combines education, nutrition, protection, and local development to create a holistic impact. The benefits are clear: expanded meal coverage has significantly increased student attendance and ensured children continue learning, even during crises. [Read more.](#)



## DEVELOPMENT OF THE SARGASSUM INDUSTRY IN THE CARIBBEAN: THE WRONG KIND OF ABUNDANCE

Source: IDB Blog by Santiago Junior Bucaram Villacis, Tatiana Valeria Watson Murcia

Each year, on Caribbean shores, a resource arrives in growing quantities and with no extraction cost. It requires no exploration, drilling, or cultivation. It is called sargassum, a type of seaweed that forms in large mats in the ocean and accumulates on shorelines. It has not become an industry. In any other sector, a free and abundant raw material would generate investment, competition, and scale.

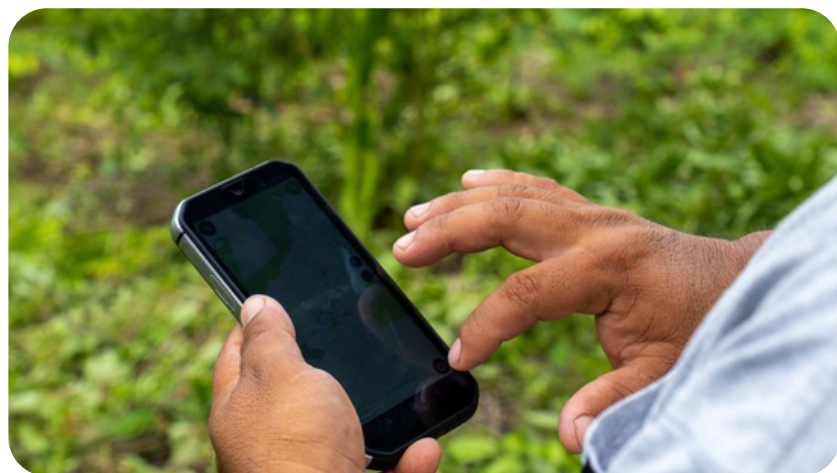


With sargassum, the opposite is happening: its abundance is not driving growth in the sector that is supposed to take advantage of it.

The evidence shows that the problem with sargassum is not a lack of resources, but rather the absence of public goods: reliable information, quality standards, regulatory frameworks, and regional coordination. In this regard, it is essential for the countries in this region to work hand in hand to build the enabling conditions that no private actor can provide on its own. Understanding this distinction is key to transforming sargassum into a real opportunity for a functioning market. [Read more.](#)

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## WHEN GOVERNMENT GOES DIGITAL, WHO GETS LEFT BEHIND?



Source: IDB Blog by Cristina Pombo Rivera, Benjamin David Roseth, Julieth Andrea Santamaria Bonilla

In Latin America and the Caribbean, in-person government transactions still vastly outnumber fully digital ones (48% versus 14%), even though completing a transaction offline takes around six hours on average, compared to just 40 minutes online.

These gaps closely mirror existing inequalities: citizens with lower education levels, older adults, rural populations, people with disabilities, and historically excluded groups are all significantly less likely to use digital public services.

As a result, policymakers need to think the problem beyond access to technology. Limited awareness, low digital confidence, and persistent preference for in-person interactions remain major barriers to the adoption of digital public services. [Read more.](#)

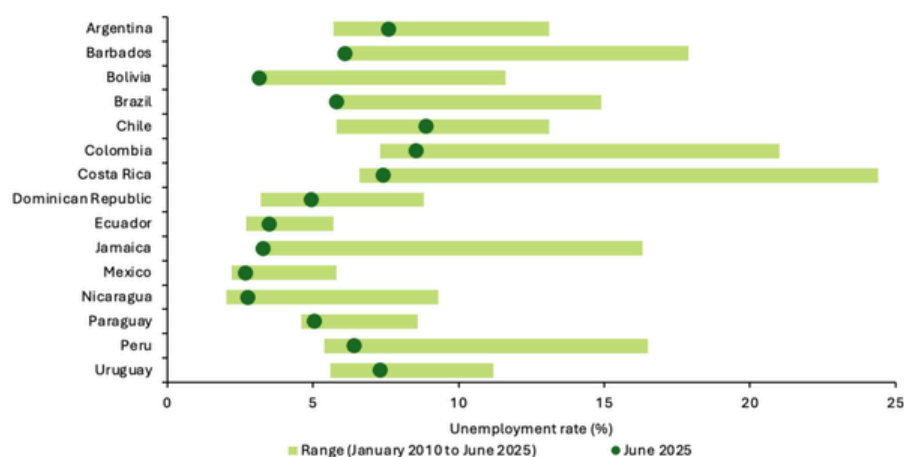


## BOOSTING RESILIENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN AMID GLOBAL UNCERTAINTY

Source: Laura Alfaro Maykall, Joao Luiz Ayres Queiroz Da Silva, Valeria Sofia Devoto, Luciana Juvenal

Amid a backdrop of global uncertainty, Latin America and the Caribbean has remained resilient. Unemployment is at or near historically low levels, and so are sovereign risk premia, reflecting strong investor confidence. Exchange rates have appreciated against the US dollar in many countries, and inflation has largely been contained.

Growth, while modest and heterogeneous across countries, is expected to remain near its long-term average, with projections for the region as a whole for 2025 and 2026 at 2.2% and 2.1%, respectively. Years of institutional strengthening are paying off. [Read more.](#)



UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, JUNE 2025 VERSUS RECENT EXPERIENCE

## WORLD BANK APPROVES NEW STRATEGY FOR BELIZE TO SUPPORT GROWTH, JOBS, THE ENERGY TRANSITION, AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Source: World Bank Group Press Release

The World Bank Group's Board of Executive Directors have approved a new Country Partnership Framework for Belize. The strategy focuses on expanding economic opportunity and creating more and better jobs for Belizeans by spurring private sector-led growth, improving energy reliability, and building a better skilled workforce while strengthening the country's resilience to natural hazards.

With a GDP of US\$3 billion and a population of roughly 420,000, tourism in Belize contributes 45 percent of GDP, but the country is among the most exposed in the region to climate impacts. The government's ambitious reform agenda has resulted in public debt being cut from 103 to 62 percent of GDP, unemployment standing at a historic low of 2.1 percent, and growth rebounding. [Read more.](#)

## JAMAICA JOINS AGRICONNECT: PUTTING SMALLHOLDER FARMERS AT THE CENTER OF AGRICULTURAL GROWTH

Source: World Bank Group Press Release



When a farmer gets connected to a market, to a reliable buyer, or to financing for efficient operations, the difference shows up in income, stability and whether children stay in school or families have enough food. That connection, however, remains out of reach for most smallholder farmers worldwide.

On April 29, the World Bank Group and the Government of

Jamaica officially launched [AgriConnect](#) Jamaica, part of a global initiative designed to transform smallholder farming, create jobs, and strengthen global food security. [Read more.](#)



## BARBADOS TO STRENGTHEN WATER SECURITY WITH WORLD BANK SUPPORT

Source: World Bank Group Press Release

The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors has approved the Barbados Water Security and Sector Performance Program, a new project that will strengthen water security in Barbados, helping to reduce water losses, expand sanitation services and protect livelihoods which depend on reliable water services.

Barbados is one of the most water-scarce countries in the world. The island relies on groundwater for 86 percent of its water supply and is already extracting nearly as much groundwater as can be safely removed each year without causing permanent damage to its reserves, while water demand is projected to grow by 30 percent by 2050. The Barbados Water Authority (BWA) currently loses about 50% of all water produced before it reaches consumers – through leaking pipes, inaccurate meters, and billing gaps. Approximately 80 percent of the island's land area is vulnerable to groundwater contamination from poorly managed sewage disposal. Untreated waste reaching coastal waters impacts marine ecosystems which tourism and jobs depend on.

The US \$54.7 million program addresses these challenges across three areas. The first focuses on modernizing the BWA's operations – deploying a private sector partner to work alongside utility staff, improving billing and metering systems, reducing pipe losses, and increasing revenues. The second expands sanitation services, supporting 2,000 new household sewage connections and introducing regulations for the safe collection and treatment of waste. The third strengthens governance, establishing a national groundwater monitoring system and a high-level coordination body linking water management to agriculture, energy, and climate planning. [Read more.](#)

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## WORLD BANK SUPPORTS BELIZE IN EXPANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JOBS

Source: World Bank Group Press Release

The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors has approved the new Belize Early Childhood Development and Female Empowerment Project, which will generate opportunities for women and future generations by boosting women's employment and expanding the access of quality, inclusive early childhood education.

Belize faces significant gaps in early childhood education. During the school year 2023-24, only 39 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in preschool, and access to formal childcare is limited, with just 24 registered daycare centers, all located in Belize's main cities. Evidence confirms that early learning is associated with improved school readiness, lower repetition and dropout rates, and higher academic achievement – laying foundations for a more skilled and productive workforce.

The lack of affordable, accessible childcare weighs heavily on women: the female labor force participation rate in Belize is 43.6 percent, below the Latin America and Caribbean average. The 2022 census showed that 65 percent of women in households with children aged 0-4 left employment to take up family responsibilities; more than double the rate in households without young children, and with even higher rates in rural and Mayan communities. [Read more.](#)



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### CARIBBEAN FILM FESTIVAL



In recognition of Caribbean American Heritage Month in June CAWI, CPN, ICS, AFI and AWWNP presents the 24th edition of the DC Caribbean FilmFest showcasing the best in contemporary Caribbean cinema. The festival hosted at AFI Silver will take place from June 5-11 at AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Centre, 8633 Colesville Road, Silver Spring, MD.

Please see link below for schedule, tickets and trailers at the AFI website:

<http://tinyurl.com/DCCaribbeanFF26>