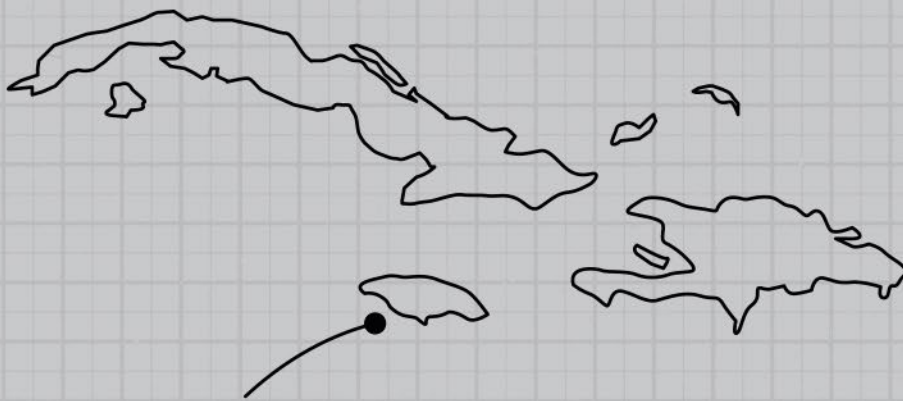


# POLICY TRANSFORMATIONS

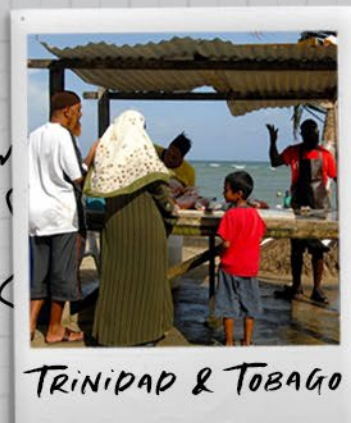
IN TIMES OF COVID-19



BARBADOS



JAMAICA



TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

REGION *The CARIBBEAN*



# BARBADOS



- 1.** The study focuses on two key policy responses in the context of COVID-19: the Adopt Our Families Programme and the increase of the minimum wage for specific job categories.
- 2.** The minimum wage increase policy stands out as a progressive initiative with transformative potential, but it was not informed by research and evidence on women's economic realities. For example, it did not account for the effects of women's unpaid care work and their ability to engage in paid work during school closures, and the fact that they are heavily concentrated in the informal sector.
- 3.** The economic shock affected low-income households, which are primarily single-parent, women-headed homes with dependents (51 percent reported job losses) compared to middle and high-income ones (40 and 28 percent, respectively).
- 4.** In the process of debt restructuring and austerity policies, women's rights and the care crisis is not receiving the attention it urgently needs. The burden of care falls heavily on women while jobs traditionally held by women were hardest hit.
- 5.** Barbados' social protection response in the context of COVID-19 is path-dependent but has transformative potential due to the government's innovative approaches and progressive positions in multilateral spaces.
- 6.** The case of Barbados shows that even progressive governments are constrained by global economic policy. However, there is hope that future policies will include intersectional feminist policy responses.





# JAMAICA

**1.** Domestic Workers (DWs) in Jamaica work under informal arrangements not covered by labour laws. The majority are women of Afro-Jamaican descent, that live in poverty and have a low level of formal education.

**2.** During the COVID-19 crisis, live-in DWs were confined to their employers' homes, banned from going home to their families. Those who worked per day were often not allowed back in their places of employment.

**3.** DWs experienced job losses, reduced working hours and reduced wages, and an increased workload. They also faced additional expenses incurred to minimize exposure to the virus, like the use of private transportation.

**4.** In response to the pandemic, one of the government's measures was a one-time cash transfer to DWs. Still, it did not consider their situation, as people had to apply online and be registered in the national security system in order to access this benefit. These preconditions meant that only a minimal number of women were able to access assistance.

**5.** Colonial legacies of discrimination based on gender, race, and class added to the exclusion of domestic workers and the social stigma around them. This structural discrimination was compounded by a growing digital divide affecting people who live in poverty, especially women, and have limited to no access to internet or digital devices.

**6.** A key support for DWs in the context of the crisis was the Jamaica Household Worker's Union (JHWU) which provided technological support to domestic workers in their online application to access cash transfers. The JHWU also organized several initiatives including the provision of food packages to families of DWs, the acquisition and distribution of tablets to domestic workers' children and financial assistance to those most in need.







# TRINIDAD & TOBAGO



- 1.** Cash Transfers (CTs) were the primary measure response in the context of COVID-19, including grants for food support, income support, senior citizens, public assistance, disability assistance, rental assistance, etc.
- 2.** Previous CTs adapted to the pandemic in coverage and kind. Even though new CTs were also created, the general social protection programme remained “business as usual”.
- 3.** In order to access these CTs, people were expected to be registered in the National Insurance Scheme (NIS). This meant that the policy was biased against informal workers, which include a significant proportion of women.
- 4.** The government did not provide any support or recognition to the increased load of unpaid care work affecting women, especially in the context of school closures. A looming concern in that emergency CTs depend on new debt and aren’t sustainable.
- 5.** There is a deep-felt need to effectively address the burden of care on women with policies that redistribute and compensate this form of work.

# POLICY TRANSFORMATIONS

*IN TIMES OF COVID-19*

Using a feminist intersectional and interlinkages approach, this project closely examines policy changes that have taken place during the period of exceptionality produced by the pandemic, exploring how they may impact the future.

