

# **Common Country Analysis – Update 2022**

## **Turks & Caicos Islands**

This document was prepared by the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator for Jamaica, the Bahamas, Bermuda, Turks and Caicos & Cayman Islands.

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## Table of Contents

Abbreviations .....	4
Executive Summary.....	5
Introduction .....	5
Progress on the SDGs.....	6
COVID-19 Update.....	8
Economic Update.....	9
Emerging Opportunities and Challenges .....	10
Conclusion.....	10

## Abbreviations

BOTC	British Overseas Territories Citizens
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
DOS	Department of Statistics
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MSDCF	Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)
PDU	Premier's Delivery Unit
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
TCCIC	Turks and Caicos Islands Community College

## Executive Summary

In 2022, Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) are well on its way to an economic rebound, despite inflationary pressures endured as a result of the Ukraine war. This update provides a snapshot of progress on the SDGs since the 2021 update, status of COVID-19 in the country and responses thereto, and the economic situation in the country (see Chapter V).



At the time of this update, 87% of the territory's population has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (two doses) while 92% has been partially vaccinated (one dose).<sup>1</sup> In light of these developments, the territory has eliminated travel restrictions for fully vaccinated travelers since 1 May 2022.<sup>2</sup>

Progress on the SDGs are difficult to capture in a systematic way given limited access to standardized and timely data. As such, this update relies on readily available public data and information linked to significant policy changes since 2021.



With respect to the impacts from climate change, some islands of TCI were battered by Hurricane Fiona (Category 3) in September, but sustained no long-term, severe damage to infrastructure, injuries or loss of life. However, this remains a concern. An additional concern in TCI has been the



extreme uptick in gang violence in the country.

## Introduction

The CCA is a key instrument designed to reflect the United Nations integrated, forward-looking and evidence-based joint analysis of the context for sustainable development, in view of achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. It forms the basis of UN programmatic support through the Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (MSDCF).

This document is the second CCA update of the newest cycle, with the first CCA update for TCI completed at the end of 2021. This document provides that overview of major changes that have taken place in 2022 and highlights the data that has become available since then.



At the time of this update, the global inflationary crisis and its attendant impacts have become as much a priority as managing recovery in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Chapter III will outline policy efforts which simultaneously address the effects of these crises as well as their links to SDG achievement. Chapter IV will highlight the economic outlook and effects of the crises in TCI.

<sup>1</sup> Rose, O. (2022, 19 August). Massive vaccine dump imminent as uptake remains low. Available at <https://tcweeklynews.com/massive-vaccine-dump-imminent-as-uptake-remains-low-p12663-127.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Read, J. (2022, 27 April). Turks And Caicos Lifts All Covid Entry Rules For Vaccinated Travelers. Available

at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/johannaread/2022/04/27/turks-and-caicos-lifts-all-covid-entry-rules-for-vaccinated-travelers/?sh=22a694db5798>

Chapter VI delves into the upcoming threats and opportunities as identified by the Agencies, Funds and Programmes that contribute to programming in TCI. For this report, the inputs of the different UN entities will be sought.

## Progress on the SDGs

TCI is ranked as a high-income territory. However, it has a 22% overall poverty rate with a 35% poverty rate among the Haitian population. Haitians constitute the largest



immigrant group in TCI with a population of more than 10,000 and approximately 50% of Haitians are either poor or at risk of falling into poverty, as they experience high levels of unemployment, irregular work and low wages.<sup>3</sup> No data has been provided on the way in which TCI is working to prevent migrants from falling further into poverty as a result of the global pandemic and inflationary crisis.

While it is known that agricultural activities have declined over the past 30 years, TCI has a fairly reliable food supply. TCI is heavily dependent on food imports, as over 90 per cent of food consumed domestically is imported, leaving the territory particularly exposed to the impacts of the war in Ukraine on food prices and international supply chains.<sup>4</sup>



Since 2021, as part of a broader response to gaps in the health system and the health impacts of COVID-19, the government of TCI has undertaken several initiatives. One of these was the opening of a mental health group home to accommodate individuals with, inter alia, long-term mental health conditions.<sup>5</sup>

The government of TCI has also embarked on educational reforms to ensure that it achieves its human capital development priorities. In this regard, as of September 2022, TCI citizens and British Overseas Territories Citizens (BOTC) are now able to access tertiary level education at the BOTC at the Turks and Caicos Islands Community College (TCICC). Scholarships and access will no longer contain age-related conditionalities.<sup>6</sup>



As it relates to public primary and secondary schools, the government has implemented a learning recovery and enhancement programme called "Let's REAP!" in Turks and Caicos Islands schools.

Focused on developing numeracy and literacy skills, the programme was commissioned by The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), CARICOM, and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECs) "to address the learning loss caused by the unprecedented disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic which



<sup>3</sup> Relief Web. (2022, 20 September). Turks and Caicos: Overseas Territory Profile (as of July 2022). Available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/turks-and-caicos-islands/turks-and-caicos-overseas-territory-profile-july-2022>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> TCWeekly News. (2022, 13 May). TCI's first mental health group home to open this year. Available at

<https://tweeklynews.com/tcis-first-mental-health-group-home-to-open-this-year-p12435-127.htm>

<sup>6</sup> TCWeekly News. (2022, 18 March). Tuition-free college education for TC Islanders. Available at <https://tweeklynews.com/tuitionfree-college-education-for-tc-islanders-p12304-127.htm>

resulted in a widening of the academic gap for the most vulnerable students.”<sup>7</sup>

The government is also seeking to address the needs of students with disabilities through the proposed establishment of a special needs school which would house “60 or more students.”<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the efforts, the government has overseen the rollout of the free school meals programme, and the provision of free devices to students.<sup>9</sup>



Notwithstanding the government’s efforts to address health and education issues, TCI is currently facing a scourge of gang violence which necessitated support from the United Kingdom who deployed ship and specialized police.<sup>10</sup>

The country has reportedly become ground zero for “warring crime groups seeking to dominate the local drug market” and TCI is now set to have one of the highest murder rates in the region by the end of 2022. The government has indicated that it will be allocating an additional \$4m for the police force, and \$2m to install and run CCTV in hotspots.<sup>11</sup>

In October 2022, the TCI House of Assembly passed legislation to tackle gangs including increased sentences for possession of illegal

firearms and for threatening law enforcement.<sup>12</sup>

The first CCA update for this MSDCF cycle shared key findings about the Turks and Caicos Islands Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) which was carried out in 2019-2020 by the Department of Statistics (DOS) in collaboration with the Department of Social Development and the Ministry of Health & Human Services, as part of the Global MICS Programme. Along with government funding, technical and financial support were provided by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).<sup>13</sup> Given that findings of the 2022 census have not been released, the data contained in the MICS remains the most comprehensive current source of information for key SDGs at the time of this update.

It is noteworthy, however, that the government of TCI intends to introduce green and gender-budgeting in the 2023/2024 financial year. In its simplified 2022/2023, the government elaborates that these focus areas, respectively, integrate climate and environmental considerations such as mitigation and adaptation into budget planning and decision-making while

<sup>7</sup> The Sun. (2022, 1 November). 'Let's REAP' Programme Introduced To TCI Schools. <https://suntci.com/lets-reap-programme-introduced-to-tci-schools-p8404-129.htm>

<sup>8</sup> TCWeekly News. (2022, 22 July). Government looking to establish special needs school- says Education PS. Available at <https://tcweeklynews.com/government-looking-to-establish-special-needs-school-says-education-ps-p12588-127.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> Brendel, P. (2022, 27 July). One year on, checking the PACT’s progress on education goals. Available at <https://www.caymancompass.com/2022/07/27/one-year-on-checking-the-pacts-progress-on-education-goals/>

<sup>10</sup> Associated Press. (2022, 11 October). UK dispatches police, ship to fight gangs in Turks & Caicos. Available at <https://apnews.com/article/violence-puerto-rico-turks-and-caicos-islands-ae7d174c25f126baf5b0b504f28e3efe>

<sup>11</sup> Bird, R. (2022, 8 November). ‘Barbaric’ homicides surge in Turks and Caicos amid drug-related violence. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/08/turks-and-caicos-homicides-surge-gang-violence>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Government of Turks and Caicos. (2021). TCI MICS Report. Available at <https://www.gov.tc/stats/latest/reports>

the latter can help promote gender equality.<sup>14</sup>

The Government of Turks and Caicos Islands also committed to establishing the Premier’s Delivery Unit (PDU) that will monitor, track, and facilitate the delivery of prioritized projects. The Delivery Unit is intended to accelerate implementation and “bring about impactful timely outcomes, in addition to knowledge transfer and fostering a transformative work culture focused on delivery and results.”<sup>15</sup>

One of the issues highlighted in the previous update was the absence of a plan to address climate change in TCI. The government took a positive step in April wherein they signed and secured the signature of a newly created Climate Change Charter which outlined, inter alia, the following commitments by the government and the private sector: “promote better cooperation and the sharing of knowledge, experience, and expertise between the Turks and Caicos Islands Government, private sector, other Overseas Territories and other states and communities which face similar Climate Change problems; invest in renewable energy and sustainable building and operational practices; invest in and promote ecotourism, tree planting, and other environmentally friendly projects;

reduce wholesale land clearance, eliminate infilling or destruction of wetlands, mangroves and seagrass beds.”<sup>16</sup>

Following the April launch of the Charter, in June, TCI became the first UK Overseas Territory in the Caribbean to join the UK Government’s Blue Belt Programme – which will support TCI in the following ways: monitoring and conducting research into tackling coral diseases, such as Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease, that is impacting reefs across the Caribbean; creating a new Marine Protected Area (MPA) covering over half of TCI’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ); and preventing illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing; and monitoring, managing, and minimizing the impact of human activities such as tourism and marine pollution.<sup>17</sup>

## COVID-19 Update

As at 29 October 2022, the total number of recoveries was six thousand three hundred and sixty-four (6364). The number of active confirmed cases in the TCI stood at sixteen (16). The total number of hospitalizations remains zero (0). The public health team continues to implement aggressive contact tracing and control measures in relation to all active cases.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Turks and Caicos Islands Government. (2022). Turks and Caicos Islands Citizen's Guide to Budget, 2022-2023. Available at <https://www.gov.tc/tcigbudget>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Turks and Caicos Reef Fund. (2022). TCRF becomes signatory to TCI Climate Change Charter. Available at <https://www.tcreef.org/news/2022/4/26/tcrf-becomes-a-signatory-to-tci-climate-change-charter>

<sup>17</sup> TCWeekly. (2022, 24 June). TCI officially welcomed to Blue Belt Programme during UK event. Available at <https://tcweeklynews.com/tci-officially-welcomed-to-blue-belt-programme-during-uk-event-p12524-127.htm>

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Health and Human Services. (2022). Ministry of Health’s Covid-19 update #747. Available at <https://www.gov.tc/moh/coronavirus/news>

## Economic Update

Figure 1. Projected Economic Growth in TCI (by percentage)

	2022	2023	2024
US GDP	1.5	0.2	1.7
OECD GDP	2.5	0.4	1.8
World GDP	2.8	1.6	2.6
World trade	3.8	1.8	3.5

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit

The Government of TCI cited the following among the positive direction taken in terms of economic growth during the 2021/2022 fiscal period: 10% growth in the economy; Operating surplus - \$87.5M; an increase in cash reserves from \$74M to \$195.7M; an increase in revenue collection by \$195.8M over 2020/2021.

During 2022, the Government of TCI has taken several policy measures to alleviate the burden of the increasing cost of living. Among these is the Citizen Inflation Adjustment Stimulus which was intended to be a short-term relief effort “to aid Turks and Caicos Islanders in meeting their immediate obligations including household expenditure such as utilities and food basket items.”<sup>19</sup>

Additionally, Government is also in the process of establishing a network of

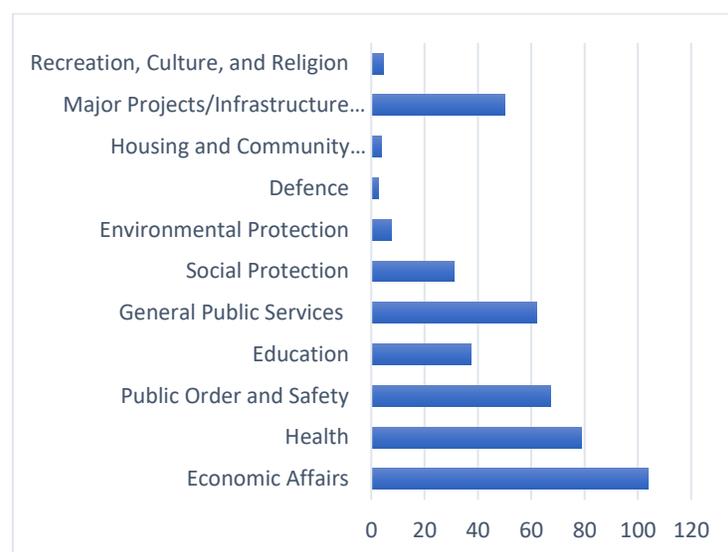
<sup>19</sup> Defralien, T. (2022, 24 October). \$12 Million injection into local economy through citizen inflation adjustment stimulus programme. Available at <https://suntci.com/million-injected-into-local-economy-through-citizen-inflation-adjustment-p8372-129.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Rose, O. (2022, October 28). Minimum wage set to increase. Available at

daycare centres to offset childcare costs of working parents. The government has also reviewed and reduced its customs tariffs to reduce costs of breadbasket items.<sup>20</sup>

Despite these expansionary policy efforts, revenue has surpassed pre-pandemic levels and experts expect a return to fiscal surplus in 2023-24.<sup>21</sup>

Figure 2. Government of TCI Budgetary Priorities 2022/2023 (in millions of dollars)



Source: Government of Turks and Caicos

In contrast to the 2021 CCA update, this government budgetary period reflects a much greater focus on economic recovery. While COVID-19 remains a reality, it has been effectively managed. As such, the new expenditure on health is focused more broadly on public health and hospital services, mental health, research, health

<https://tcweeklynews.com/minimum-wage-set-to-increase-p12798-127.htm>

<sup>21</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit. (2022). Turks and Caicos Islands. Available at <https://country.eiu.com/Turks%20and%20Caicos%20Islands>

emergencies, dental, laboratory services, the promotion of healthy lifestyles, and policy planning.

## Emerging Opportunities and Challenges

Reflecting on the developments in TCI during 2022, there is ample opportunity for UNCT and other development partners' contributions. While the territory is not a signatory to the MSDCF (and no Country Implementation Plan has been developed for TCI), this has not impeded efforts by the UNCT to provide support – as demonstrated by the administration of the MICS as well as the previously proposed inclusion of TCI into an SDG Fund Project.

Establishing new connections in relation to the realization of the MSDCF 2022-2026 could ensure that the territory is receiving support in major areas of concern, including the sharp increase in violent crime.

Groups described as vulnerable in the previous CCA update are expected to face compounded difficulties should the trajectory of violence continue.

TCI remains vulnerable to the increasing occurrence of emergencies, such as storms and hurricanes of seemingly increasing intensity, as well as health emergencies. This threatens the achievement and sustainability of the SDGs.

## Conclusion

TCI has seen the introduction of promising initiatives since the 2021 CCA update. These

demonstrate a positive step by the Government of Turks and Caicos to advance progress on a range of SDGs. That said, it is important to ensure that groups at risk of being left behind in development processes be more explicitly foregrounded, especially in data.

