



CAWI NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 68 | FEBRUARY 2026

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2026: THROUGH A CARIBBEAN LENS

As we observe Black History Month, we reflect not only on the well-known stories rooted in the United States and Africa, but also on the vibrant, complex, and often understated contributions of the Caribbean. For many of us from the islands, Black history is not an abstract commemoration, it is a lived experience, embedded in our landscapes, our languages, and our culture.

The Caribbean's story is one of struggle, resilience, creativity, and transformation. Enslaved Africans who were brought to the region under brutal conditions persevered and preserved our identity, spirituality, and artistry that evolved into the rich and diverse cultural expressions we know today. Our music (reggae, dancehall, calypso and soca), dance, dialects, food, and festivals continue to reflect their ingenuity and endurance.

Caribbean people have long shaped global movements for justice and liberation. The Haitian Revolution, the first successful slave revolt in modern history, redefined the world's understanding of freedom. Visionaries such as Marcus Garvey expanded Caribbean influence through activism and thought leadership, while cultural icons like Bob Marley used music and language to broaden conversations about identity and empowerment.

The region's impact is also reflected in global leaders whose Caribbean heritage shaped their paths, including Malcolm X, Sidney Poitier, Harry Belafonte, Colin Powell, Michaëlle Jean, Alexander Hamilton and Kwame Ture. These leaders are joined by countless others, including Sir Arthur Lewis, the first Black Nobel laureate in Economics, Derek Walcott, a poet and playwright from Saint Lucia who received a Noble Prize in Literature for his exploration of Caribbean history and identity. Their legacies remind us that Caribbean contributions are not peripheral, but they are foundational to global black consciousness.

Caribbean excellence continues to influence politics, culture, literature, and sport. Shirley Chisholm broke political barriers as the first Black woman elected to the U.S. Congress. Jamaican-born Usain Bolt, is widely regarded as the greatest sprinter of all time. An eight-time Olympic gold medalist and eleven-time World Champion, Bolt still holds the world record for both the 100m and 200m. His speed, charisma, and dominance elevated Caribbean athleticism to unprecedented global heights, inspiring young athletes across the region.

Caribbean excellence has also reshaped global perceptions of beauty and identity. Janelle Commissiong of Trinidad and Tobago became the first Black woman to be crowned Miss Universe. Her historic win challenged long-held norms and expanded global representation, elevating the visibility of Black women on the world stage.

This year's theme, **"A Century of Black History Commemorations"**, marks 100 years since Dr. Carter G. Woodson established Negro History Week in 1926 which led to the establishment of Black History Month. It invites reflection on the progress, resilience, and global influence of the African Diaspora, an influence in which the Caribbean has played a central role.

As CAWI joins this centennial celebration, we honor those who paved the way and reaffirm our commitment to uplifting Caribbean voices. Caribbean stories are not only Black history, they are global history. This month, we celebrate our heritage, strengthen our cultural pride, and inspire the next generation of leaders, creators, and changemakers.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 01 EDITORIAL: BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2026: THROUGH A CARIBBEAN LENS
- 02 TASTE OF CARIBBEAN
- 05 DEVELOPMENT NEWS FROM ACROSS THE CARIBBEAN
- 10 ANNOUNCEMENTS

CONTRIBUTORS: Andrea Dore, Jevon Minto, Daniela Peña Lazaro, WB Caribbean CMU, IFC LAC Communications, WB Caribbean ED Office



TASTE OF CARIBBEAN



CARNIVALS: A CELEBRATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

What do Barranquilla, Oruro, Port of Spain and Rio de Janeiro have in common? They all host carnivals known the world over as celebrations of tradition through dances, music and dazzling costumes. But beyond their draw as multi-sensorial cultural displays, they also serve economic drivers and community builders, a potential that is leading an increasing number of government institutions and policymakers to consider and foster the many ways in which carnivals can improve lives in Latin America and the Caribbean.

"Beyond the sequins, the music and invaluable tradition, carnivals are an expression of the enormous potential of the creative industries, an ecosystem that produces revenues of over US\$124 billion a year in Latin America and the Caribbean," explains Helga Flores Trejo, principal specialist for innovation and creativity at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). "When national and local governments bet on them and promote them, they are enhancing their role as an engine of creativity and innovation."

Some of these celebrations, such as the Carnival of Barranquilla, have already been recognized by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage, a recognition garnered by a history dating back to the 19th century and its standing as the second largest carnival in the world. For most people from Barranquilla, the carnival is part of the family traditions and an important source of income. Among them is Adolfo Maury, Director of the Danza del Congo Grande de Barranquilla, (the Congo Grande dance), a 144-year-old institution that is a Cultural Heritage of the Carnival of Barranquilla.

"I am lucky to have been born in a family filled with carnival traditions. It is in our blood," says Adolfo. Most of his life's milestones passed during the carnival, like the moment when his first baby tooth fell during the "Batalla de Flores" (Battle of Flowers), one of the first events of the four-day celebration.

It is this essential bond to the tradition that has made him dedicate himself to keeping alive one of the oldest traditions of the carnival, and contribute to its lasting success and appeal for visitors both local and foreign.

Numbers to celebrate: Carnivals' economy

"For us, the carnival is not a 4-day event nor a business: it is a lifestyle," says Adolfo. The carnival generates thousands of temporary and permanent jobs before it formally starts, hiring in the process



hundreds of local artisans, musicians, costume makers and choreographers. Just in 2018, over 2,400 musicians and 852 dancing groups were part of the events.

For four days during the first trimester of the year, Barranquilla hosts massive street parades, music festivals and parties which, in 2018 alone, meant it received 95% of hotel occupancy. This generated approximately US\$18.24 million while benefiting sectors as diverse as food, retail and tourism, according to Professor Rodrigo Miranda, coordinator of entrepreneurship and innovation at MacondoLab, a center for business growth of Colombia's Bolivar University.

These numbers are part of the wider trend of the country's potential: In Colombia, the exports of creative industries alone exceed US \$ 900 million, with a wide margin for growth, according to [The Creative Economy in Latin America and the Caribbean: Measurements and Challenges](#), an IDB publication compiling data on creative industries in the region.

Colombia is not alone in the region in boasting such crowds. In 2019, The Carnival of Rio de Janeiro, often called "the greatest show on Earth" received 7 million visitors. As the largest and best-known carnival worldwide, the city of Rio do Janeiro received US\$875 million in tourism revenues, a 26% increase from 2018.

In the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago hosts the largest carnival, an exuberant two-day celebration that represents the largest cultural sector of the country. There, the carnival is a key component of the economy, backed by policies which since the early 1990's have developed targeted support of the creative and cultural industries. Key initiatives included the creation of the National Carnival Commission of Trinidad and Tobago (NCC), tasked with the management of the carnival as an economic and cultural enterprise. It is an institution meant to preserve, collect and disseminate information and knowledge about the festivities.

How carnivals strengthen communities

Understanding carnivals requires going beyond their economic significance, and taking into account their social role.

"The carnival is not just revelry and music. It is a tool for social impact and cultural promotion," says Adolfo. "We work with children and youth to pass on our values and cultural manifestations, teaching them to appreciate our roots and autochthonous rhythms."

Inclusiveness and diversity are at the core of carnivals. From their very origins, they emerged as celebrations for all: the rich and the poor; women and men; the religious and the non-believers. Today, carnivals make all attendees equal, blurring racial, social and gender barriers. Although they represent traditions and heritage, they are characterized by their ability to evolve with the times, expanding to encompass groups that were historically marginalized.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the carnival is the "very expression of national culture", according to Dr. Kim Johnson, director of the National Carnival Commission of Trinidad and Tobago. These festivities not only highlight the Afro and Indo-Trinidadian cultures of the country, they also help advance the skills of young people by promoting, among others, lessons in Calypso music.

A celebration for development

As times evolve, carnivals – as any other tradition – need to keep up the pace, not only to secure their existence, but to find more ways to benefit the communities they serve and engage greater audiences.



"The carnivals of the future should cease to focus solely on the number of visitors they receive," states Matteo Grazzi, senior specialist at the IDB's Competitiveness, Technology and Innovation Division. "In order to turn them into engines of development of their cities, local governments must strengthen specific typologies of tourism."

While there are many opportunities to integrate carnivals and the creative industries ecosystem, efforts to do so are still incipient. For that reason, in 2018, the IDB hosted the event "Convener to Innovate: Co-Creating the Carnival of the Future" in Barranquilla, Colombia. In it, representatives of the national and local government joined members of the private sector, academics and carnival-related actors in identifying the challenges of the city's main celebration and exploring solutions. Their findings can also benefit other carnivals of the region.

Public policy has a large role to play in increasing regulations over heritage, investment on folkloric groups and entrepreneurship as well as the advent of new economic models to safeguard carnivals. Another variable is sustainability, and the need to decrease these celebrations' environmental impact. Technology, for its part, offers an optimistic outlook: the incorporation of innovations such as facial recognition, augmented reality and real-time translation can make carnivals safer and more accessible to populations who have not enjoyed them until today.

By Daniela Peña Lazaro



DEVELOPMENT NEWS FROM ACROSS THE CARIBBEAN

RESTORING HAITI'S NORTHERN REGION HISTORIC CITIES



Today, residents of Milot, a city in the north of Haiti, are more than excited. Several high-level delegations arrive in this historic city of the country's northern region to participate in the new municipality office's inauguration. This new 300-square-foot building will replace the old one, built 40 years ago.

The construction of the new Milot Town Hall started approximately two years ago. This strategic initiative is part of a broader effort to modernize local governance and strengthen the institutional resilience of local authorities.

It aims to provide the municipality with modern, functional, and sustainable administrative infrastructure capable of improving the quality and efficiency of public services.

"Providing modern infrastructure and adapted working materials to local authorities remain one of the government's priorities as municipalities constitute an entry point for service delivery toward the population", said Paul Antoine Bien-Aimé, Haiti's Minister of territorial collectivities. [Read more.](#)

SOLVING CARIBBEAN POVERTY STARTS WITH SEEING IT: NEW DATA REVEAL HIDDEN VULNERABILITIES

Poverty in the Caribbean looks very different from country to country. It is widespread in fragile and conflict-affected contexts such as Haiti, but even in higher-income countries like Barbados, pockets of poverty persist and many people are vulnerable to falling into poverty when shocks strike.

These contrasts are compounded by differences in how and how often poverty is measured, with many countries relying on outdated estimates that no longer reflect current economic, social, or climate realities.

[This webpage](#) brings together the latest regional and country-level poverty data, analytical insights, and project results that are helping close data gaps and inform more effective policy responses across the Caribbean—ensuring poverty reduction efforts reach those most at risk.



REIMAGINING WATER SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE CARIBBEAN: FROM INFRASTRUCTURE TO IMPACT

In many parts of the Caribbean, households now have access to piped water and basic sanitation, and utilities have made substantial investments in infrastructure. Yet for many communities, reliable and responsive service remains out of reach. Intermittent supply, low water pressure, and concerns around water quality—particularly in areas that support the tourism industry—are fueling growing dissatisfaction.

This challenge isn't unique to the Caribbean. Around the world, utilities which once focused heavily on infrastructure development are now struggling to meet rising expectations. With systems in place, customers increasingly expect services that are consistent, high-quality, and responsive—delivered not just occasionally, but on demand.



Historically, water utilities have prioritized infrastructure expansion—constructing treatment plants, laying pipelines, and developing new water sources—to meet rising demand. These investments were necessary. However, a singular focus on capital development often came at the expense of system maintenance, operational efficiency, and customer service.

Today, expectations have evolved. Citizens no longer seek access to water alone—they demand reliable, safe, and responsive services. This shift calls for a transformation in how utilities are managed, emphasizing performance, user satisfaction, and accountability.

This is where the World Bank's increased global focus on results-based financing, such as the Program-for-Results (PforR) lending instrument, offers a critical shift in approach. Unlike traditional financing, PforR links disbursements directly to the achievement of verified results. If targets aren't met, funds are not released. The model emphasizes outcomes—such as reductions in non-revenue water, improved service continuity, increased billing, collection and customer satisfaction metrics—rather than inputs.

Crucially, PforRs are not just about financing; they also deliver targeted technical support. The World Bank works closely with utilities to build capacity, strengthen governance, and develop performance-based systems that enable sustainable, customer-centered service delivery. In addition, PforR operations rely on the country's own systems for implementation—including procurement, financial management, and environmental and social safeguards—reinforcing national institutions and promoting long-term sustainability. [Read more.](#)

WORLD BANK GROUP MOVES TO A NEW, RESOURCE-EFFICIENT OFFICE IN JAMAICA



On January 29, the World Bank Group officially opened its new physical office space in Kingston, Jamaica, a resource-efficient workspace that brings its Caribbean-focused team together in a single location.

This modern facility is designed to support daily operations and long-term sustainability in a small island context where efficient use of resources is essential.

The new office has earned EDGE Advanced green building certification, a global standard for measuring energy, water, and material efficiency in buildings developed by the World Bank Group. The office operates with 65 percent lower energy consumption, 42 percent lower water use, and 25 percent lower embodied energy than comparable buildings. Embodied energy refers to the total energy required to produce, transport, and install construction materials — meaning the reductions begin long before the building is even built.

Energy savings were achieved through a combination of thoughtful layout and efficient systems. The office is intentionally designed to maximize natural daylight, thereby reducing reliance on artificial lighting during working hours. Where lighting is needed, energy-efficient LED systems are used throughout, supported by motion sensors that automatically limit energy use in unoccupied areas. Specific ventilation and air-conditioning systems were selected to deliver stable performance in tropical conditions while keeping energy demand low.

Water efficiency was addressed through low-consumption fixtures and the installation of water-free urinals, significantly reducing freshwater use as well as operating costs. These measures are particularly important in island environments, where water resources can be both limited and costly. [Read more.](#)



ENSURING THE FUTURE: LESSONS FROM HURRICANE MELISSA & JAMAICA'S DISASTER VULNERABILITY REDUCTION EFFORTS



Myton Gully, Jamaica Before and After. Once prone to heavy rainfall and flooding that devastated nearby communities, the upgraded crossing withstood Hurricane Melissa—safeguarding homes, livelihoods, and critical transport routes.

The Caribbean is highly susceptible to natural disasters, which pose an existential threat to the lives and livelihoods of its citizens. The increasing frequency and intensity of weather events, driven by external factors like climate change, place the region at significant risk of losing billions invested in development goals.

The payout from Jamaica's Catastrophe Bond, triggered by Hurricane Melissa, provided crucial immediate financial relief, underscoring the vital role of sovereign risk-financing tools. But Hurricane Melissa also highlighted the tangible value of Jamaica's forward-looking investments; areas upgraded under the Disaster Vulnerability Reduction Project (DVRP), such as the Myton Gully crossing, withstood the heavy rainfall and flooding that historically devastated the Big Pond community. These improvements did not just prevent road closures, they safeguarded homes, livelihoods and critical transport routes, demonstrating that prevention before disaster strikes is as critical as financing after the fact.

This compels a bold, forward-looking question: Can a country not only insure – but also ensure – its safety through long-term, smart, preventive investments? The success of the Myton Gully improvements suggest Jamaica is on that very path.

"Jamaica has a proven track record of proactive investment in risk management," shares Artessa Saldivar-Sali, World Bank Senior Infrastructure Specialist and Task Team Leader for the project. Between 2016 and 2022, the Government of Jamaica (GoJ), through the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF), implemented the DVRP. This US\$30 million project was designed to enhance Jamaica's resilience to disaster and climate risk, focusing on risk identification, risk reduction infrastructure (adaptation) and improved institutional capacity for climate and disaster resilience.

One of the many impactful infrastructure investments under the DVRP was the Myton Gully – Old Harbour Road Crossing project. This area, known as 'Big Pond – Myton Gully,' stretches from over 6km upstream all the way to Old Harbour Bay. Historically, heavy rainfall caused widespread flooding, inundating hundreds of homes upstream.

As resident Kaya Brian shared, before the project, the road was inundated during heavy periods of rainfall, which would flood her sister's home on the lower side of their property, forcing her sister and children to seek safety at Kaya's house. She recalled, "They would lose fridges, furniture and other things outside would wash away." She noted that, thanks to the upgrades, even during Hurricane Melissa, their homes remained safe, and the community avoided the losses they faced in previous storms. [Read more and watch videos.](#)



RIISING FROM THE ASHES: HOW SAINT VINCENT IS REBUILDING AFTER A VOLCANIC ERUPTION



In April 2021, explosive eruptions of the La Soufrière volcano forced more than 22,000 people to evacuate their homes on mainland Saint Vincent. Ash blanketed communities and even reached as far as Barbados in the east. The ash fall disrupted daily life and economic activity almost overnight. Critical infrastructure was damaged, farms and fisheries were severely affected, and thousands of households lost their main sources of income, as well as their roofs.

The economic shock was profound: preliminary estimates placed recovery needs at around US\$175 million – almost 20 percent of the country's GDP – compounding the strain of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Swift evacuations helped avert loss of life. But as the immediate crisis stabilized, the scale of what lay ahead became clear. Households needed support to regain income and stability, essential services had to be rebuilt with greater resilience, and core emergency response and monitoring systems needed to be strengthened.

In response, the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, with support from the World Bank, launched the US \$42 million Volcanic Eruption Emergency Project (VEEP), which benefited from a US \$2 million grant from the European Union Caribbean Regional Resilience Building Facility, managed by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery.

The project was designed to support recovery on multiple fronts: providing short-term income support to affected households, restoring critical services, and strengthening emergency preparedness to reduce future risk. [Read more.](#)

BUILDING BACK BETTER—AND STRONGER— IN SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

On Union Island, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Malaika Watt had just invested her savings in restocking her small convenience store, Lika's Outlet.

Boxes of goods arrived to refill the shelves – stationery, food items, and everyday essentials. As a new business, the store had gone through months of uncertainty, but it was finally starting to take shape. For the first time in a while, she felt steady enough to think ahead.

That sense of stability lasted only a short time. A week later, Hurricane Beryl hit. Overnight, her shop was gone. The stock she had just invested in was swept away. "It was horrific and terrifying," Malaika says. "I realized it wasn't just me in this position," she says. "But mentally and financially, it has put me completely off track."

Malaika's experience reflects the scale of devastation caused by Hurricane Beryl. The Category 4 storm passed through Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with sustained winds of up to 150 miles per hour, affecting an estimated 56 percent of the population. The impact was most severe in the Southern Grenadines, where over 90 percent of buildings were heavily damaged or destroyed, with economic damage estimated at US \$230 million or 22% of GDP.

Critical infrastructure and basic services were hit hard. Electricity transmission and distribution networks were almost entirely destroyed in parts of the Grenadines. Water supply in the Southern Grenadines terminated for several months, requiring the daily shipment of water trucks. Schools, fisheries facilities, roads, and ports sustained significant damage. More than 1,000 people (20 percent of the population) were evacuated from Union Island within 48 hours, many relocated to the mainland by emergency ferry services. [Read more.](#)



IMF EXECUTIVE BOARD APPROVES A US\$ 415 MILLION DISBURSEMENT TO JAMAICA TO ADDRESS THE IMPACT OF HURRICANE MELISSA

The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a disbursement in the amount of SDR 306.32 million (about US\$415 million, 80 percent of quota) for Jamaica under the Rapid Financing Instrument's (RFI) large natural disaster window. These resources will help meet the urgent balance of payment needs stemming from the devastation caused by Hurricane Melissa, complementing the resources currently available under Jamaica's disaster risk financing framework.

Jamaica's established track record of economic reforms has created buffers that are helping to address the economic fallout and reconstruction needs after Hurricane Melissa. Nevertheless, the widespread damage caused by the hurricane together with the resulting fiscal pressures and sharp decline in tourism receipts have generated a sizable balance-of-payments need in the short term. The Government of Jamaica is committed to supporting the most vulnerable segments of the population in hurricane-hit areas and rebuilding of damaged infrastructure. While recognizing that the hurricane shock justifies a temporary easing of the fiscal stance, the authorities remain committed to fiscal responsibility and debt reduction once the hurricane shock has receded. The authorities also continue to prioritize achieving their inflation target and ensuring financial stability.

Following the Executive Board's discussion today, Mr. Bo Li, Deputy Managing Director and Chair, issued the following statement:

"Hurricane Melissa has caused unprecedented destruction across Jamaica and is projected to have a significant negative impact on growth and create an urgent balance of payments need. Despite Jamaica's multi-layered disaster risk financing strategy and sound macroeconomic policies over more than a decade, the financial resources available for disaster recovery are insufficient. Consequently, emergency assistance under the Rapid Financing Facility would help to support relief efforts, particularly for the most vulnerable, and accelerate the recovery. Strong collaboration with international partners remains important.

"The authorities' policy response is helping to mitigate the economic and social impact of Hurricane Melissa. Fiscal policy appropriately aims to provide relief and recovery in the hurricane-affected areas, with a focus on supporting the most vulnerable and rebuilding infrastructure. In this context, the temporary suspension of the fiscal rule is appropriate. The authorities' commitment to prudent fiscal management and public debt reduction, once the hurricane shock has receded, is welcome. Increased public investment necessitates adherence to procurement best practices and strong coordination to support rebuilding efforts.

"With severe damage to agriculture, the hurricane has caused a significant negative supply shock, which is creating inflationary pressures. The Bank of Jamaica's commitment to its inflation target remains essential to anchor inflation expectations and contain second-round effects. Limiting foreign exchange interventions to the prevention of disorderly market conditions is appropriate. Continuous supervisory vigilance to ensure financial stability is warranted.

"Building on their demonstrated commitment to credible policy frameworks and economic reforms, the authorities aim to continue prioritizing measures to ensure medium-term macroeconomic stability." [Read more.](#)



ANNOUNCEMENTS



Join CAWI Communications Committee!

- CAWI Communications Committee is looking for creative volunteers with designing skills to help support our engagements.
- Your ideas can make our monthly newsletter and other communication materials more engaging and informative.
- Bring your enthusiasm and contribute to our community efforts.
- If you would like to join our team, contact us at cawi@worldbank.org.

