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CARIF 2018 Takeaways

Lauren Thomas, Founder InCarib.net, December 7, 2018



A major theme of #CARIF2018 was the establishment of public private partnerships in the region, yet there was very little representation from developers, contractors and consultants from the private sector in attendance. While acknowledged that the

Caribbean, historically, is a challenging region to do business, the issue of climate change has highlighted the need for regional collaboration and improved communication, and P3's are now a priority in the region. Many Countries are taking action to review and revise procurement methodology, which will improve business transactions and speed the pace of project development. The lack of representation from the private sector (developers, contractors, consultants and other service providers) was specifically acknowledged by the Caribbean Development Bank.

The Bahamas is one of the top 10 Countries in the world in danger of experiencing a natural disaster. In October 2018, the Government released a new policy and framework on Public Private Partnerships for public infrastructure that sets out clear definitions and terms to govern the process of identifying, screening, procuring and managing PPPs, including how to treat unsolicited proposals. Dr. the Hon. Hubert Alexander Minnis, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, confirmed that the Country is modernizing procurement activities, and currently has a pipeline of \$5B USD in infrastructure projects. Some projects mentioned: Goodman's Bay development, New Providence landfill remediation, an airport hotel in Nassau, and the Prince George Wharf cruise port. The Bahamas has access to \$35M USD for airport construction on 4 family islands, and an additional \$35M USD to build up resilience and coastal protection. Other priorities include construction or rehabilitation of modern schools, hospitals and clinics, digital infrastructure, airports and docks.

To support the agenda of collaboration in the region, Prime Minister of St. Maarten, the Hon. H.E. Leona Romeo-Marlin, expressed that although the Country had backing by the Netherlands after Hurricane Irma in 2017, there were enormous gaps in the recovery efforts, particularly with the Kingdom being 8000 miles away. Emphasis was placed on the fact that the region needs to come together, establish regional partnerships and institute procedures to rely on one another in the event of a natural disaster. St. Maarten has access to \$580M USD in

a World Bank Trust Fund that has basically gone un-touched, that will only partially fund the projects that fall under their 7-year National Recovery and Resilience Plan, established after the 2017 hurricane season. Projects falling under the plan include housing, tourism, Government and Public buildings, sanitation, airport and education facilities.

The British Virgin Islands are focusing on recovery with resilience, and the VI Recovery Development Agency was established immediately following hurricane's Irma and Maria. It is estimated that \$500M USD is required (but could be nearer \$1B USD) to implement the plan that includes 300 projects to be initiated over the next 5-7 years. One half, to one third of the projects will be funded but there is a need to partner with the private sector to bring all the projects to completion. Mr. Paul Bayly, CEO of the Virgin Islands Recovery and Development Agency, identified a major objective in the BVI is to build capacity as much as it is to build resiliency, as the development of the people is what is required to ultimately thrive. The CDB is assisting the BVI in developing procurement rules which will facilitate a procedure in identifying where the funds are going during project roll-out and delivery. Smaller projects will first be identified for the local contractors to build skills and experience, followed by the larger projects for the international contractors who can then utilize the local workforce. Currently there are only 5 large contracting firms who can operate successfully in the British Virgin Islands, the hope is to have 20-30 more firms bidding on projects and winning business. The BVI are still in clean up and recovery mode, with the following on the agenda; schools – temporary are classrooms under consideration, debris clean up – massive amounts of debris (1800 automobiles, 300 boats, for example) and how to remove this from the island, social housing – several families are still in shelters, rebuilding of the police station and government buildings. The BVI contract for fossils fuels comes up for renewal in the next 5 years, considerations for renewables is on the agenda with Anegada being the first at going off grid.

Barbados has established a Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Blue Economy. The Hon. Minister Kirk Humphrey is charged with responsibility for “establishing value and preserving coastlines, the marine environment, the health of the reefs and the habitats of marine plants and animals. It will ensure sustainable use and development of fisheries, and marine assets, resources, minerals and species for sustainable recreation and decent livelihoods for those who make a living from the sea.” Under the new Ministry there is consideration for the design/construction of a 2nd Terminal dedicated for tourism, a discussion about berths and jetties around the coastline, and motivation to procure fish tracking equipment to modernize the fishing industry. Plans are underway for the construction of 2 islands with the expectation for PPP RFP's to be issued soon. Treatment of wastewater is also on the agenda with consideration for realizing the value in wastewater thru tertiary treatment and reuse applications.

Hon. Joseph Hew, Minister of Commerce, Planning and Infrastructure, expressed the number one area of concern for the Cayman Islands, which were affected by Hurricane Ivan 14 years ago, is the improvement of communication. Government is investing heavily in satellite technology and a National Emergency Communication System. The Cayman Islands are struggling with Renewable Energy planning and making the option affordable. They are also considering alternatives for Solid Waste Management – waste to energy vs. recycling. A National Infrastructure Plan is currently under development in the Cayman's and is expected to be released soon, as well as a National Energy Policy that will be put into law with a mandate of 70% renewables by 2037.