



**Outcome Statement and Call to Action of the Youth FIRE Forum 2026
&
Youth Outcome Concept Paper**

**Caribbean Development Bank's 56th Annual Meeting
of the Board of Governors**

**Theme: *Forging the Caribbean's Future: Strategic Solutions for
Uncertain Times***

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Location: Nassau, The Bahamas



Outcome Statement and Call to Action of the Youth for Innovation and Resilience (Youth FIRE) Forum 2026 of the Caribbean Development Bank's 56th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors

Read to the Board of Governors in June 2026

Honourable Leaders, Governors, Policymakers, Youth, and all Distinguished Guests...
We have something to say.

Across the Caribbean, young people continue to navigate an increasingly uncertain world shaped by economic volatility, climate change, technological disruption, social inequities, rising costs of living, and growing concerns regarding safety, wellbeing, and opportunity.

Despite these challenges, Caribbean youth remain resilient, innovative, and committed to building stronger communities, sustainable economies, and a more prosperous future for our region. We are entrepreneurs, students, professionals, innovators, advocates, artists, community leaders, government officials and most importantly changemakers. We are already contributing to national and regional development through climate action, digital innovation, civic engagement, business development, social entrepreneurship, and community transformation.

Recognising that intergeneration partnerships are vital, and that the future of the Caribbean cannot be built for young people without young people; we therefore call for a development agenda that recognises youth not merely as beneficiaries of development, but as partners in shaping it.

Preamble

We recognise the critical role of young people in advancing sustainable, inclusive, resilient, and equitable development across the Caribbean.

We recall the commitments made by Caribbean governments and regional institutions under the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable

Development Goals, the CARICOM Youth Development Action Plan, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, and other international and regional frameworks that affirm the importance of youth participation and empowerment.

We acknowledge the continued efforts of the Caribbean Development Bank and its partners to strengthen youth engagement through initiatives such as the Future Leaders Network and the ongoing implementation of the Bank's Youth Policy and Operational Strategy. We also recall that the Caribbean Development Bank in its Strategic Plan 2026-2035 has outlined investing in youth as one of its operational priorities

We further recognise that meaningful youth participation, regional cooperation, innovation, and inclusive development are essential to addressing the interconnected challenges facing Caribbean societies.

We, representatives of the Caribbean Development Bank's Future Leaders Network and participants of the Youth FIRE Forum 2026, gathered in Nassau, The Bahamas, on the occasion of the Caribbean Development Bank's 56th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors:

1. **Reaffirm** that young people must be meaningfully included in decision-making processes at local, national, regional, and international levels.
2. **Call upon** governments, development institutions, and private sector partners to increase investment in youth entrepreneurship, innovation ecosystems, financial literacy, affordable housing solutions, and sustainable livelihoods.
3. **Advocate** for stronger support for climate-smart agriculture, agro-processing, blue economy industries, green industries, and other sectors that advance economic resilience and environmental sustainability.
4. **Call for** increased investment in climate adaptation, disaster risk management, resilient infrastructure, renewable energy, and community resilience programmes, with dedicated opportunities for youth participation and leadership.
5. **Recommend** the development of regional capacity-building programmes in disaster risk financing and climate resilience, ensuring equitable access for all Caribbean territories.
6. **Advocate** for accelerated digital transformation across the region through investments in digital literacy, digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, digital safeguarding, and Caribbean-owned data systems.

7. **Encourage** the establishment of regional digital platforms that connect young people to education, training, employment, entrepreneurship, and market opportunities.
8. **Call for** increased investment in mental health and psychosocial support, wellbeing services, safe community spaces, sports programmes and youth development initiatives that contribute to violence prevention and social inclusion.
9. **Promote** greater support for civil society organisations, youth groups and community-based organisations that provide opportunities for leadership, skills development, and civic engagement.
10. **Reaffirm** the importance of strengthening regional integration, mobility, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing among Caribbean youth.
11. **Recommend** the implementation of robust monitoring, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms to ensure that youth-focused programmes and policies achieve measurable and sustainable outcomes.
12. **Call** upon the Caribbean Development Bank and its development partners to continue mainstreaming youth engagement across programmes, projects, and investments, ensuring that young people remain central partners in advancing regional development.

As we conclude, we reaffirm that Caribbean youth are not waiting for the future to arrive. We are already building it.

Throughout this Forum, young people have demonstrated that innovation, resilience, creativity, and leadership exist in every corner of our region. The recommendations contained within this Outcome Statement reflect our collective vision for a Caribbean that is more inclusive, sustainable, prosperous, secure, and resilient.

Together, let us move beyond consultation to collaboration, beyond participation to partnership, and beyond aspiration to action.

By investing in young people today, we will strengthen the Caribbean of tomorrow. Thank you.

Youth Outcome Concept Paper

Theme: *Forging the Caribbean's Future: Strategic Solutions for Uncertain Times*

Introduction

We, the youth leaders and participants of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) Youth FIRE Forum 2026, representing countries and communities across the CDB's Borrowing Member Countries (BMC), come together with a shared conviction: the future of our region must be shaped not only for young people, but with young people. Guided by the CDB's Youth Policy and Operational Strategy (YPOS) and the broader framework of national and regional youth policies across the Caribbean, we affirm our role not merely as beneficiaries of development, but as partners, leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators.

Context

Caribbean youth stand as a powerful force for innovation, resilience, and transformation. Across the region, young people are leading climate action initiatives, building businesses, developing technological solutions, excelling in education, and strengthening their communities through service and advocacy. We are a generation rich in talent, creativity and determination, committed to shaping a more prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable Caribbean.

Yet, to fully realise this potential, significant barriers must be addressed. Across the Caribbean, 24% of youth are not in employment, education, or training (NEET). Yet the challenges we face are not abstract. Ours is a generation taught to pass examinations but not to build wealth, manage money or create opportunity. We face housing costs that place homeownership out of reach, job markets built on precarious contracts rather than sustainable employment, and mental health systems that are insufficiently resourced to meet a growing regional crisis. The region's vulnerability to climate change further threatens livelihoods, infrastructure, food security, and economic stability. Rural communities, young women, persons with disabilities, indigenous populations, and other underserved groups face compounding barriers. We name these realities not as grievances, but as the foundation from which our recommendations are built.

Despite these challenges, Caribbean youth continue to demonstrate resilience, innovation, and leadership; leading climate action initiatives, building businesses, creating technological solutions, and strengthening communities.

Our Vision for the Caribbean

By 2030 and beyond, we envision a self-determined, sustainable, resilient, equitable and united Caribbean where every young person can learn, lead, create, innovate, and thrive without having to leave home. Specifically, we aspire to see:

- Economies that create meaningful employment and sustainable entrepreneurship opportunities for youth.
- A region that embraces innovation, digital transformation, and knowledge-based industries, with affordable and universal access to digital infrastructure.
- Strong climate resilience and environmental sustainability across all communities, including in public health, education, and work settings.
- Quality, affordable mental health, psychosocial and wellbeing support systems appropriate for our regional and national social contexts, recognised as a core development priority.
- Enhanced regional security, integration, and mobility for Caribbean citizens.
- Governance structures that institutionalise youth participation and leadership.
- Inclusive societies that apply an intersectional lens, recognising that young women, persons with disabilities, rural communities, indigenous populations and other marginalised groups face compounding barriers that broad-stroke policies routinely fail to reach, and that genuine inclusion requires designing systems with these groups, not merely for them.

This Outcome Statement reflects our collective vision, priorities and recommendations to governments, regional institutions, development partners, civil society, academia, and the private sector.

Priority Area 1: Future-Ready Livelihoods, Skills, and Entrepreneurship

Economic insecurity is a present reality. Across the Caribbean, rising costs of living, limited access to affordable housing, low levels of financial literacy, and economic instability continue to affect the wellbeing and opportunities of young people. We call for:

- Increased investment in youth entrepreneurship and innovation hub development and provide tailored training opportunities.
- Greater support for agro-processing, climate-smart agriculture, agri-tech, green industries, and blue economy initiatives.
- Actions to address the state of cost of living, economic stability, financial literacy, and the lack of housing within the region.
- Improved dissemination of information related to entrepreneurship through public repositories, outreach, and strengthened public-private partnerships.

- Investment and formal recognition of the creative and cultural industries as both economic and social drivers, generating sustainable livelihoods.

Priority Area 2: Climate Resilience, Community Action, and Youth Leadership

Energy insecurity is not a future risk; it is a present reality. Across our communities, weather-related power outages routinely disrupt access to education, employment, healthcare and digital participation for hours and, in many cases, days at a time. We call for:

- Increased funding for climate change and environmental programmes with allocations provided for youth participation in these initiatives.
- Increased investment in disaster management solutions at all levels - prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.
- Increased capacity-building programmes in disaster risk financing and regional dialogue aimed at ensuring overseas territories have equitable funding access.
- Increased investment in climate-safe infrastructure that is resilient to hazards including earthquakes, hurricanes and tropical storms, flooding, and landslides.
- Increased funding for renewable energy programmes, alongside targeted investments in rural infrastructure and sustainable livelihood opportunities, to strengthen resilience, economic security, and long-term sustainability of vulnerable communities.

Priority Area 3: Digital Transformation for Inclusion

Caribbean data, data about our people, our economies, and our communities, currently flows outward, benefiting systems and actors outside our region. We are not simply users of a digital future that others are building. We are the architects of our own, and as such, we call for:

- Development of inclusive digital literacy programmes for both youth and the elderly to bridge the digital divide and empower all generations.
- Establishment of Caribbean-owned data infrastructure and management systems e.g. (Data Centres and Data Embassies) to strengthen digital sovereignty, protect regional information and ensure ethical governance of Caribbean data.
- Investment in AI, AI safeguarding, and digital innovation, as well as regional digital platforms that connect youth to training and employment opportunities.
- Investment in digital platforms that connect youth to trainings, jobs, markets, and regional opportunities.

Priority Area 4: Preventing Violence, Building Peace, and Supporting Wellbeing

In the context of Caribbean resilience, we note that much of what our communities have been required to endure and to survive is rooted in histories of colonialism, systemic exclusion, and inequity. A truly resilient Caribbean must invest in:

- Increased funding for youth clubs, civil society organisations and social groups that provide safe and productive spaces for learning, and personal development.

- Expanded access to employment initiatives and equip Caribbean people with the skills needed to generate sustainable income.
- Development of meaningful programmes for youth to reduce vulnerability to crime and violence while promoting economic empowerment and social inclusion.
- Strengthened investment in sports programmes which in turn will support crime prevention, community building and physical, mental, and social wellbeing.

Youth Innovation, Solutions and Conclusion

The recommendations in this statement are not aspirational in isolation, Caribbean youth are already driving transformative change across climate resilience, energy innovation, entrepreneurship, creative industries, and grassroots community development, proving that innovation is not a future possibility, but a present reality. These diverse perspectives have converged throughout this forum around our shared desire for stronger economies, meaningful employment, digital transformation, and safer, healthier communities.

Accordingly, the youth leaders and participants of the Caribbean Development Bank's Youth FIRE Forum 2026 encourage governments, development institutions, and regional stakeholders to invest in young people, strengthening systems and expanding opportunities toward a Caribbean that is inclusive, resilient, and future-ready, where every young person is empowered to learn, lead, and thrive without leaving home.