



# Caribbean Corporate Investment for Resilience

Learning Story: July 2023

DISCLAIMER: The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Note: Data collected through individual interviews and focus groups to produce the case stories have not been vetted due to timeline constraints.

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# Introduction

## Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to synthesize lessons learned from the Caribbean Corporate Investment for Resilience Initiative (CCIR), a project designed and facilitated by the Global Knowledge Initiative (GKI) to identify opportunities for the private sector to invest in solutions that impact community disaster resilience and provide a return on investment and to test a new approach to fostering long-term, sustainable collaboration between the private sector and humanitarian actors. The proposed stakeholder-identified pilot interventions were to build or strengthen a multi-stakeholder network<sup>1</sup> for private and public sector actors to inform and facilitate their engagement during disaster planning and response, and the design and development of a resource tracker for logging and tracking needs and resources while leveraging national bodies.

This report focuses on lessons learned from the implementation phase of CCIR (November 2021–July 2023), which involved co-designing solutions for systems transformation, solution implementation, and ongoing learning and adaptation in partnership with participating stakeholders. The report offers the insights and recommendations that have emerged in response to our<sup>2</sup> four overarching learning questions<sup>3</sup> for CCIR:

1. How can GKI, as an external facilitator/project implementer, support the strengthening of local networks?
2. What approaches, methods, and tools have enabled and/or inhibited the ability to foster meaningful stakeholder engagement?
3. What does the private sector need to identify and implement collective solutions?
4. What incentives and support do the private sector and humanitarian actors need to collaborate?

Four case stories are also provided to complement the insights and recommendations with examples of our work in practice to advance the three primary streams of work: coalition building, resource tracker development, and stakeholder engagement activities.

The goals of this report are to identify and deliver private sector engagement insights for USAID's internal use, as well as to share honest reflection on organizational and technical lessons learned to

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<sup>1</sup> We explicitly worked with network building methodologies, however, the term “network” and “coalition” tended to be used interchangeably by our team.

<sup>2</sup> “Our” and “we” are used to express the viewpoint of the GKI team supporting the implementation of CCIR.

<sup>3</sup> These were iterated from the larger set of questions developed for USAID that continued to hold relevancy for this project phase.

inform GKI's future projects that use systems thinking, human-centered design, network strengthening, and innovation approaches.

## Methodology

Research for this report began with a review of documents, including project reports, slide decks, and stakeholder directories, among other resources. Six stakeholders who participated in CCIR during this phase were interviewed by an external consultant either in one-on-one interviews or a focus group discussion.<sup>4</sup> A facilitated session supporting the GKI team's sense-making and insights analysis also contributed to the learning captured here.

## Learning Questions

### How can GKI, as an external facilitator/project implementer, support the strengthening of local networks?

*Our first learning question reflects our way of working in service to stakeholders and our intention to amplify existing capacity within local stakeholder networks. Below, we provide a summary of the insights we gained from our overall experience with CCIR as the external facilitator/project implementer about how we can strengthen local networks for enhanced disaster response and increased resilience in the Caribbean. Following the insights, a case story highlighting our work with CARICHAM offers an example of how we supported the strengthening of a local network in practice.*

**Foster representative stakeholder participation:** Despite our expansive reach in the discovery and design phases, stakeholder participation in CCIR never felt truly representative of the region's sectors and islands. (A natural deepening happened with stakeholders in Trinidad and Tobago.) This contributed to a dearth of perspectives necessary for developing a nuanced understanding of the political, economic, cultural, and historical context of the region. What we discovered firsthand is the incredible complexity of the region resulting from, for example, numerous distinct governments with different, yet sometimes overlapping, vulnerability to a wide range of natural disasters and resources for preparedness and response.

**Know the players:** We would have benefited from incorporating team members who had a nuanced understanding of the various individuals, organizations, and institutions—including their respective roles

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<sup>4</sup> GKI in collaboration with the external consultant developed an [interview guide](#) to facilitate the interviews and group discussion.

and capacities—involved in natural disaster preparedness and response in our target countries and the region overall. A deeper understanding could have aided us in fostering representative stakeholder engagement and brokering strategic partnerships for building an effective pilot with greater local buy-in. The loss of time in identifying a local backbone organization for the coalition, which would have brought this context knowledge, was regretful from this perspective.

**Reflect on when to defer and when to lead:** During the implementation phase, we experienced the tension between deferring to stakeholders to make decisions to advance various work streams (which often meant waiting for them to give the “green light”) or taking action ourselves. Providing the stakeholders with options (through scenario planning) to validate would have allowed for more precise decision-making and timely action over open-ended questions about their ideas on what and how to proceed.

**Allow for process adaptation:** We didn’t hold on too tightly to our assumptions about how the coalition-building process would unfold. This allowed us to be adaptive and continue our search for backbone support, while at the same convening an advisory group (what we referred to as the “Design Team”) to design the purpose, engagements, and governance structures for the emerging coalition.

**Clarify the factors within *and* outside of our control:** To create greater clarity for participating stakeholders, we could have more consistently reiterated the factors within *and* outside of our control as the facilitator/project implementer. Factors within our control included the specifics of the project plan and approaches, team leadership and management, and—to an extent—resource allocation within the total budget envelope available. Factors outside of our control included, among other things, the project’s broad geographic mandate, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of involvement from intergovernmental agencies, competing priorities of stakeholders, the commitment of future investment by donors, and the existence of multiple resource tracker efforts in varying forms throughout the region.

### **CASE STORY: Caribbean Chambers of Commerce (CARICHAM)**

On the recommendation of several stakeholders, our search for coalition backbone support ultimately led us to CARICHAM, a burgeoning, still informal, network of 23 Chambers of Commerce in the Caribbean. CARICHAM collectively represents over 100,000 businesses distributed across the region and is supported by established governance structures and a representative, volunteer-run executive team.

Cultivating a partnership with CARICHAM in early 2023 meant a significant pivot for CCIR away from developing a stand-alone coalition, and the outcomes toward this effort that were achieved through the Design Team's considerable effort and investment while we attempted to identify a backbone. The question then became: How might we support an existing network (CARICHAM), rather than build one from the ground up to meet the pilot's objectives? Because CARICHAM was already operating with private sector actors at a regional level, representing their interests in disaster response and resilience, and had an established body of members, we realized it would not make sense to transition the coalition infrastructure we had been developing with the Design Team. Instead, we would support CARICHAM in strengthening its existing network model. We soon realized that beyond turning over the communications and engagement supports we had built for the coalition, GKI could strengthen CARICHAM's capacity in other ways, including by providing:

- Funding for a full-time network coordinator;
- Consulting support to develop CARICHAM's mission and vision, strengthen their governance model, and work through current membership challenges; and
- Strategic guidance for communications and engagement activities to create greater institutional continuity and enhance their branding and member experience.

It has been gratifying to support a regional network dedicated to empowering and supporting the private sector in the Caribbean region, fostering economic prosperity, and enhancing the quality of life for its people.

## **What approaches, methods, and tools have enabled and/or inhibited the ability to foster meaningful stakeholder engagement?**

*Our second learning question explores the technical side of one of CCIR's primary goals, which was to support and sustain the engagement of private sector actors in disaster preparedness and response. Below, we provide a summary of the insights we gained from our overall experience with CCIR about what approaches, methods, and tools enabled and/or inhibited meaningful stakeholder engagement. Following the insights, two case stories offer examples of our work in practice to foster meaningful stakeholder engagement through the Design Team and Learning & Action Labs. The case stories include reflection on what fostered engagement and also what inhibited it.*

**The approaches, methods, and tools that enabled private sector engagement in disaster preparedness and response in the Caribbean region include:**

**Communications channels:** We launched a monthly newsletter containing relevant updates and events, as well as a LinkedIn Group that served as a community forum throughout the coalition-building process. The intent of these channels was to support stakeholders in building relationships and exchanging knowledge. Although engagement wasn't very high, these activities helped CCIR stay on stakeholders' radars.

**Participatory facilitation practices:** Our work is supported by strong facilitation practices that encourage inclusivity, collaboration, active engagement, and learning. Throughout the implementation phase, we designed and facilitated participatory processes that supported stakeholders in better understanding their shared challenges, co-creating solutions to address them, and making collective decisions together. Examples include carving out time in meetings for check-ins and breakout groups to encourage relationship building and adapting meeting agendas to respond to participants' real-time needs. Stakeholders made special note of our team's aptitude and skill with participatory facilitation practices.

**The approaches, methods, and tools that inhibited private sector engagement in disaster preparedness and response in the Caribbean region include:**

**Lack of local representation on our project team:** A lack of sustained local representation on our project team challenged our legitimacy and ability to gain a more nuanced understanding of the local context, foster representative stakeholder participation, and expand our outreach efforts. We relied on committed stakeholders—who were not paid for their labor or time—for insights, but those were insufficient without local team members who could validate those insights.

**Lack of public sector involvement:** We struggled both with credibility and impact without the involvement of public sector stakeholders. Being on the ground may have helped with getting more buy-in from regional/national/local governments, such as CDEMA or the national emergency management organizations, as well as having USAID facilitate those types of relationships to get us the conversations we needed as a small, unknown entity.

**Numerous operational pivots:** Numerous operational pivots throughout the implementation phase and across all three streams of work—including, for example, the loss of CDEMA as an option for backbone coalition support, which led to the creation of the Design Team—resulted in a lack of clarity for participants in terms of both direction and purpose and may have also affected their participation rates.



**Limited in-person time with stakeholders:** A lack of greater in-person time with stakeholders may have become a barrier to cultivating current and new relationships, deepening cultural understandings, and clear communication. The two trips we conducted, both to Trinidad and Tobago, offered us the chance to gather with stakeholders for the first time after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, develop new relationships, and vet our work plans. Emerging insights from the May 2022 trip informed our next steps across all three work streams.

**No compensation for stakeholders' time:** For stakeholders who served in a frequent and high-touch capacity, a stipend (appropriate to their labor market) may have provided greater participation value. At least one stakeholder disengaged from the initiative due to a lack of compensation, which may have also resulted in inconsistent participation among others.

**Sequencing missteps:** At the beginning of the implementation phase, the Resource Tracker working group we assembled had the energy to pursue that solution, which led us to prioritize it as the first “test pilot” for collaboration between private and public sector actors in parallel to the coalition development. In hindsight, focusing on coalition development and securing backbone support first would have provided a supportive home for the resource tracker and ensured its sustainability beyond the scope of the pilot.

**Staffing changes on our team:** In the summer and fall of 2022, we experienced several staffing changes that led to capacity constraints and leadership transitions. Our CCIR Program Lead left the organization, and our Innovation Advisor, who had been facilitating the Resource Tracker working group, went out on maternity leave. These internal shifts resulted in a loss of institutional memory, slowing our momentum and overall direction, thus presenting an added challenge for stakeholder engagement.

### CASE STORY: Design Team

In the spring of 2022, we invited participating stakeholders to join an advisory group called the Design Team. This team would function as an interim backbone for the CCIR coalition as our search for formal backbone support continued. We developed a simple list of participation criteria in the hope of attracting a diverse group with relevant experience and the following characteristics/roles:

- A weaver – who enjoys connecting with others and is willing to leverage their networks as an influencer
- A leader – who has credibility, trust, and social capital with private sector representatives
- An innovator – who sees possibilities and can push the group
- An achiever – who brings energy to implementation and seeks accomplishment

Eight stakeholders joined the Design Team and agreed to a time commitment of six to eight hours per month, including attendance at meetings facilitated by our team. In addition to designing governance structures for the coalition, Design Team members were also responsible for network weaving, preparing recommendations for the coalition, and pushing the speed, scale, and innovation of the emerging network. Notably, participating stakeholders didn't always meet the expectations of their role, due primarily to capacity limitations.

In the fall of 2022, our team took stock of CCIR's three primary work streams and adapted our work plan to better fit the then-current context. In early 2023, we presented renewed work streams to the Design Team and updated expectations for their participation over the next six to seven months. Six stakeholders renewed their commitment to participate.

In both "phases" of the Design Team, our team benefited greatly from providing facilitation, as it offered us a way to maintain consistent contact with stakeholders and learn from their evolving perspectives. We relied on the Design Team for local context since the emerging coalition lacked formal backbone support and our project team lacked local representation.

Overall, the Design Team offered participating stakeholders the chance to influence the coalition's development and provided space for relationship-building that wouldn't have existed otherwise. Convening the Design Team and facilitating the coalition design process helped us clarify what to look for in a backbone organization and ultimately underpinned our work with CARICHAM. The Design Team also provided invaluable advice in finding our way to CARICHAM, piloting the resource tracker, and participating in the member engagement efforts both as participants and facilitators.

### **CASE STORY: Learning & Action Labs**

As part of the stakeholder engagement envisioned through the coalition, Learning & Action Labs were designed in the spring of 2023 as creative and participatory spaces for bringing together diverse stakeholders across the CCIR community. The Labs would allow participants to tap into existing knowledge, find new collaborations for shared impact, and build their capacity and experience in collaborative design, while creating an opportunity for us to test a structured engagement tactic that could be integrated into a coalition's strategy to support new solutions development.

To cultivate local leadership, we invited any stakeholder who completed an engagement survey to join our project team and serve as a co-facilitator of the Labs. Two stakeholders from Trinidad and Tobago

accepted the invitation, and by building their facilitation capacity, we sought to set off a ripple effect fostering a participatory mindset across the region.

The need for adaptation arose when we learned that Lab participants would not be able to convene as a full group due to schedule conflicts. Our facilitation team adapted the planned engagement process by hosting some of the seven sessions in smaller groups. Sessions were held roughly every three weeks, a timeline that allowed the team to maintain momentum but may have decreased opportunities for more relationship-building and collaboration between sessions.

Participants were divided into two teams: one focused on “Knowledge Exchange Activities” and another focused on “Community Activation Events,” both of which emerged from several Lab sessions. The two teams committed to building an activation plan for their respective topic area, elaborating on the problem area, project idea, target audience, budget, and how the idea addresses one of CCIR’s two primary inquiry questions, which were solutions identified by stakeholders in the previous phase but not elevated to the top as solutions to pursue, unlike the coalition and the resource tracker had been:

1. How might we create common protocols and standard operating procedures in advance of disasters?
2. How might we enable joint recovery plans with both the public and private sectors?

Each team received \$2500 to resource their project and has committed to activating their plan. We have also invited each team to present their progress and gather feedback in a final call with their respective facilitators in late summer/early fall 2023.

In hindsight, the engagement process reflected innovation challenge methodologies. If we had initiated this workstream earlier on, we could have supported greater sense-making throughout and offered more clarity on how the process could have supported the broader goals of CCIR. It’s challenging to determine what meaning the Labs hold for the objectives of CCIR, given the short timeframe and lack of clarity around how the project work may or may not live on beyond CCIR’s scope. Even so, we have heard from the local facilitators that they have benefited greatly from the capacity-building opportunity and have begun to see ripple effects throughout their work due to new participatory facilitation practices.

## What does the private sector need to identify and implement collective solutions?

*We listened closely to stakeholders throughout the initiative, as well as during closeout interviews, and yet our third learning question remains difficult to answer based on our experience with CCIR. What follows is a short list of recommendations for what support the private sector needs to identify and implement collective solutions, including context for where we saw the need arise within CCIR. Following the recommendations, a case story highlighting the resource tracker's development offers an example of how we supported private sector actors in building a collective pilot solution.*

### What the private sector needs to identify and implement collective solutions is:

- **A clear ROI** – *to earn the support of stakeholders' home organizations.* Stakeholders were vocal about the need for a clear ROI from the beginning of CCIR to justify their time investment to their home organizations. However, emergent processes like stakeholder-led collaborative design, mean that it is not often known ahead of the process what solutions may emerge and what ROI-driven partnerships can be built around them.
- **Consistent, clear reminders about purpose, objectives, and roles** – *to foster clarity and alignment on purpose and the path forward, as well as transparency around everyone's roles and commitments (ours and all stakeholders).* In closeout interviews, some stakeholders expressed a lack of clarity around both the direction and purpose of the work streams and the role of other participants. Consistent reminders could have better supported participants in understanding CCIR's scope, aligning with other stakeholders, and advancing collective pilot solutions.
- **Inclusive spaces** – *to offer environments where all stakeholders feel their voices are heard and valued.* During closeout interviews, we learned that some stakeholder voices were heard more than others during facilitated sessions. There may have been times when we could have invited loud voices to step back and quieter voices to step forward to create a more inclusive container.
- **Funding and technical support** – *to boost stakeholders' capacity for acting on their ideas and/or advancing their activities.* Through CCIR, we offered both funding and technical support to participating stakeholders. For example, we supported all three work streams with some financial resources and technical support, both of which supported stakeholders' collective efforts.

## CASE STORY: Resource Tracker Working Group & Concept Note

The CCIR Resource Tracker was envisioned as a digital platform to aid in coordinating resource “needs and offers” between the public, private, and nonprofit sectors in the wake of disasters in the Caribbean region. Approximately twelve interested stakeholders were invited to join a working group to co-develop a concept note of the resource tracker solution that they reviewed and validated after regular convenings between October 2021 and April 2022. We provided facilitation and some research support for these working group meetings.

In the spring of 2022, GKI identified Needslist as a potential solution provider but the group did not want to engage with Needslist as a software provider out of desire to build a solution that could meet all of the identified needs in the comprehensive concept note. By March 2022, participating stakeholders had not yet taken ownership of the tracker’s development, and momentum became difficult to maintain without a coalition in place to support and sustain the working group’s progress. Moreover, the GKI team member who had been leading the resource tracker work and best knew the working group members and other stakeholders went on maternity leave in the fall of 2022. Despite these changes, the key question remained: How might we best support CCIR stakeholders in coming together to advance this pilot solution?

After efforts to realign the work plan with inputs from a local consultant and experts in the region, in December 2022, we asked the working group to vote on how to move the concept note forward. This time stakeholders went with Needslist, the option that received the majority of votes. (“*Option 3: Re-engage the provider; Needslist, who did a presentation on its resource tracking solution in September 2021.*”) We scheduled a meeting with Needslist to begin scoping a potential partnership and securing buy-in from local stakeholders through user testing and simulation.

As we look back on this work stream, we’ve questioned our deference to stakeholder leadership at the time of their original decision against Needslist since it is the solution they ultimately chose. Would it have been appropriate to step more into our leadership as the external facilitator and move forward with Needslist in 2021 even if we didn’t have all of the stakeholders on board in the beginning? We acknowledge that there is no “right” answer here and that we moved forward in the way we felt most appropriate at the time.

In the end, our momentum waned again, in part due to possible duplication in the field. Importantly, we did not have a full picture of USAID’s projects in the Caribbean to support us in understanding if there was overlap or complementarity with the resource tracker solution identified by CCIR stakeholders. Not long after the April 2023 Needslist simulation, we learned about the imminent

launch of a resource tracker by CDEMA to support both the public and private sectors with natural disaster preparedness and response. We were also unable to gain further clarification from CDEMA, especially without USAID's social capital to open doors.

While stakeholders may have hesitated to push the CCIR Resource Tracker forward for fear of duplication with other regional trackers, such as CDEMA's, we believe our pilot sparked new thinking around what kind(s) of resource tracker(s) are needed for disaster planning, preparedness, and response. The CCIR Resource Tracker created dialogue, and possibly action when other actors perceived it as a competitor.

### **What incentives and support do the private sector and humanitarian actors need to collaborate?**

*Just as with the previous question, our fourth learning question remains difficult to answer based on our experience with CCIR. Stakeholders seemed to assert their needs from an individual perspective, rather than asserting what they need from each other. Moreover, we struggled to maintain engagement with key humanitarian actors in the region represented primarily by government and multilateral institutions. What follows is the short list of recommendations for what incentives and support the private sector and humanitarian actors need to collaborate, including context for where we saw the need arise within CCIR. While these are bigger-picture insights, there are specific learnings from the resource tracker implementation that are relevant to highlight (see the [Annex](#)).*

- **Entry points to local governments** – *to open up opportunities for relationship building and engagement.* Without an on-the-ground CCIR representative, we would have benefited from more of USAID's support in creating entry points, especially for local and national governments. For example, we could not solidify a long-term relationship with CDEMA—which may have aided our efforts with coalition development and provided clarification on the purpose of their resource tracker—without USAID's social capital to open doors.
- **Clarity around roles** – *to build trust, promote collaboration, support effective communication, and inform decision-making.* During closeout interviews, stakeholders suggested that they would have benefitted from greater clarity on how their organizations were expected to contribute, what USAID's goals and objectives were beyond the program, and around which organizations would take on leadership roles (e.g., the optics of aligning with certain organizations) and in general to improve their collective collaboration.

- **Collective transparency around priorities and projects in the ecosystem** – *to foster alignment and avoid duplicating or competing efforts.* In spring 2023, we learned about a new resource tracker produced by CDEMA to support both the public and private sectors with natural disaster preparedness and response, and our landscaping identified multiple, similarly placed network activities in the region hosted by the UN, and co-funded by USAID. Having a full picture of USAID’s projects and relationships in the Caribbean would have supported us in understanding if there was overlap or complementarity between those efforts and the solutions identified by CCIR stakeholders.

## Annex

The below points were provided by the NeedsList Program Manager for the Caribbean, who was based in Trinidad and Tobago:

- **Linguistic diversity** is essential for successful regional operations. A multi-language interface ensures accessibility across different regions, particularly in areas with diverse linguistic communities.
- Ensuring the resource tracker provides a **strong return on investment** for the organizations bearing the costs is essential. This means that the tracker should improve efficiency, provide valuable data, and lead to better outcomes for these organizations.
- **Comprehensive stakeholder engagement** is critical. The platform should cater to various users, including governments, private sector organizations, and NGOs. We can increase buy-in and usage by ensuring the platform is versatile and valuable for all these stakeholders.
- The right **finance strategy** would share the load on a host organization. Alternative ways to share the cost include:
  - Core stakeholders that share the cost in equal partnership
  - Stakeholders that share the cost in a tiered approach
  - Donors that share the cost through platform sponsorship
  - All users pay for access
- **Large Scale Partners:** Build resilient infrastructure that can withstand natural disasters, such as backups and the ability to function outside of internet capabilities. Live updates during and after disasters are difficult in the region. This can be remedied by partnering with a regional network provider who would, at the minimum, be able to give coordinators of aid access to the platform without delays or lost connectivity. Partners could be Digicel, GT&T, and others.
- **Localization:** Foster community engagement and participation in disaster preparedness and response efforts. There is a need to encourage the local emergency committees or community-based organizations that play a role in disaster response and recovery within the system and use the work done through the platform as positive case studies.
- **Communications Campaign:** Social media and the power of word of mouth in the region is huge. Most people have smartphones and so any communication through that route will reach the individual. Major communication platforms such as Loop, Caribbean News Now, and major print and radio stations in each country are necessary for sharing press releases and ads. Major social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok are great for mass outreach and information sharing. WhatsApp is a platform on which news travels quickly and is a great way to manage individuals with high social importance, such as Mayors or Councillors and champions like celebrities. WhatsApp Communities is also useful for large broadcasts or community-specific sharing of information.