



**CIPRIANI COLLEGE**  
OF LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES

**CAN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO'S REVITALIZATION  
PLAN SUCCEED? EXPERTS SAY IT DEPENDS ON  
GOVERNANCE, NOT CONCRETE!**

# **WORK MATTERS**

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**COLUMN**

# Can Trinidad and Tobago's Revitalization Plan Succeed? Experts Say It Depends on Governance, Not Concrete!

Mr. Wesley Bridgemohansingh & Prof. Lavagnon Ika

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The newly elected government of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) has launched the "Revitalization Blueprint" (2025-2035), its most ambitious public investment initiative in over ten years, promising major transformations in infrastructure, justice, and the economy, and projected to create over 50,000 jobs.

The motivations behind the move reflect the powerful appeal that drives governments worldwide toward large-scale infrastructure. These projects signal confidence, promise employment, stimulate key sectors, and aim to elevate national pride through modern, vibrant public spaces, and T&T is no exception particularly at a time of economic downturn and geopolitical challenges.

Research shows that development projects, especially those undertaken in low-and-middle income countries, often fall into governance and capacity traps, which often lead to underperformance, as highlighted in reports like the 1982 Ballah Committee and the 2010 Uff Commission. Pursuing multiple major projects simultaneously can strain national capacity, leading to labor shortages and inflation that undermine benefits.

Therefore, success will depend not just on disciplined planning and sound project delivery but more importantly on strong governance and the adaptive balancing of political, economic, technological, social, and environmental factors during project execution, rather than just on the scale of construction. In other words, for these projects to deliver much-needed public value, T&T should strengthen its institutional capacity to oversee them and ensure.

Large public investment programs operate in "fuzzy"

environments, characterized by political pressure, ambiguity, shifting priorities, and interdependent institutions that accentuate systemic weaknesses in governance, coordination, and learning. T&T's challenge is not building infrastructure but ensuring its organizations can learn, collaborate, and adapt to emerging tensions, overlapping authority, and shifting mandates as they arise. Modern history suggests caution!

Indeed, T&T experienced significant development in the early 1980s and during the 2000-2010 construction boom, building institutional knowledge within state enterprises like UDeCOTT, NIPDEC, eTecK, and the Port Authority. These entities have successfully delivered major public buildings, stadiums, industrial parks, and urban infrastructure, showcasing the public sector's organizational capacity. Yet, reports suggest there is more work to do to deliver public value, learn, create, reshape institutions, and achieve resilience and sustainability. Government-to-government (G2G) arrangements can provide foreign expertise and financing, but they must ensure local skills transfer and trade opportunities for local industries. The design-build (DB) contracting model requires thorough front-end planning and independent oversight to enhance long-term value. This is also vital for public-private partnerships (PPPs), which can drive financing and innovation if they emphasize transparent and fair risk allocation between the public and private sectors, value-for-money, and enforceable performance standards.

The revitalization program offers a chance to build infrastructure and improve SOEs' governance through skills transfer, learning, and transparent risk-sharing for lasting public benefits. Indeed, as Nobel Prize Winner Joseph Stiglitz warns, there is no infrastructure delivery success without a strong underlying institutional infrastructure. To prevent past megaproject underperformance,

T&T must repair the weak interorganizational link between projects and the institutions meant to manage them. Major investments like the Waterfront Towers, Brian Lara Stadium, and Tamana InTech Park were delivered but never integrated into effective interorganizational governance systems, undermining their ability to sustain value over time and resulting in underuse and lost public benefits.

If the past offers any guidance, T&T needs to move from a “build and hand over” approach to a “build, integrate, operate, and learn” model, ensuring projects are linked to the institutions that support their long-term purpose. To enhance the delivery of the revitalization program, T&T may focus on four key institutional measures. First, establishing a cross-SOE Integrated Programme Management Office (iPMO) to coordinate planning, set standards, monitor risks, and align stakeholders like UDeCOTT, NIPDEC, eTeck, ministries, and local bodies through a single system. Second, creating a national digital project dashboard would enable real-time information sharing on budgets, schedules, procurement, contractor performance, and value-for-money indicators, while preserving institutional memory. Third, formalizing cross-agency project delivery teams would facilitate collaboration among engineers, financiers, planners, regulators, utilities, and community stakeholders, ensuring a coherent approach to design, financing, construction, and long-term operations. Lastly, appointing dedicated “value owners” for each major asset would ensure benefits realization by managing commercial strategy, occupancy, maintenance, and community integration to align projects with economic, social, aesthetic, and environmental goals.

The revitalization of T&T offers an opportunity for governance reform, driven by economic stimulus, national pride, and technology. Success depends on organizational readiness, embedding learning in MOUs, building capacity for contracting and monitoring, fostering collaboration within organizational structures, and institutionalizing value throughout project cycles. If the country commits to these measures, the revitalization program can serve as a foundation for a modern, resilient national development system. Success depends on T&T building capacity with the same intensity as it has invested in infrastructure.