



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

**ACHIEVING STAKEHOLDER-CENTRIC  
DECENT WORK IN THE CARIBBEAN**

# **WORK MATTERS**

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**COLUMN**

# Achieving Stakeholder-Centric Decent Work in the Caribbean

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The industrial relations landscape in the Caribbean region has been rife with countervailing complexities, everchanging workplace dynamics and regional movement seeking to revitalize itself for the betterment of all working class people and citizens alike. An indispensable aspect of this panorama has been the desire to conceptualize and operationalize stakeholder centric decent work, with many initiatives and research efforts being channeled towards this aspirational goal. The concept of decent work has been traditionally rooted in seeking to protect and promote the rights of workers, and in so doing holistically improve living and working conditions and access to income earning opportunities. In this context, when juxtaposed with the heterogeneity and unique labour market dynamics synonymous with the Caribbean region, advancing and achieving stakeholder centric decent work is ever more critical and salient

Taking into account the history of the plethora of labour movements and the historical plight of working class citizens dating back to the first wave of labour riots in mid to late 1930s, it can be argued that the goal of actualizing stakeholder centric decent work can be satisfactorily met through an integrated meticulous, comprehensive and meticulous approach. This approach should be one that places extreme emphasis on prioritizing the wellbeing of all stakeholders such as workers, employers and the broader community. This type of approach is fundamental to ensuring that the voices and perspectives of workers are given a platform through which they are promulgated and substantiated while also meaningfully contributing to sustainable growth and long-term productivity.

The multifaceted and invaluable nature of this integrated approach becomes even more evident through the interrelationship between its indispensable individual

components. One such noteworthy component which has to be considered when seeking to propagate decent work principles across the Caribbean is the establishment of an effective and livable wage. This idea of a livable wage, as opposed to a minimum wage, has often been intended to provide workers with a satisfactory level of income thereby allowing them to afford a decent standard of living and in so doing engendering a sense of dignity and social inclusion amongst workers. This livable wage has garnered significant traction in several countries globally such as New Zealand, Ireland and Ireland who have either formally adopted or actively endorsed it through legislation, civil society campaigns and even collective bargaining agreements. From a Caribbean perspective, a living wage undoubtedly supersedes that of a minimum wage, especially when considering the unique realities and circumstances of workers and their families, the cost of living, and the post COVID-19 economic precarity which has enveloped the region. In light of this, it is paramount that Caribbean governments, workers and trade unions channel their efforts towards the development of a robust and feasible wage structure which not only empowers working class citizens locally, nationally and regionally but adapts and reflects the everchanging socioeconomic and existential realities endemic to the region.

Another vital cog in this stakeholder centric framework is that of effective and impactful grievance mechanisms. In order to ensure that their voices, experiences and even shortcomings are heard and understood, it is imperative that they have consistent and reliable access to transparent and responsive channels of communication. These channels would augur well for the reporting of issues and grievances such as discrimination, exploitation and even unjust and unsanctioned treatment. These functional and productive grievance mechanisms should be grounded, prioritized and promoted through national labour laws where workers are made aware of the relevant authorities responsible for

ensuring that justice and redress is promptly delivered. Through deliberations and exchanges undertaken by practitioners and academics, it has become extremely apparent that many parties have an invaluable role to play in advancing and driving the development and even implementation of evidence-based policies. These policies, in tandem with dynamic training and capacity-building programs, can be rooted in critical research that reflect the best interests of working people in the Caribbean, especially in the areas of decent work, job security and the preparedness for the future of work.

Thus, in reflecting on the progress of advancing and achieving decent work across the Caribbean, the value of adopting an integrated and multidimensional approach cannot be understated. This approach, rooted in establishing a living wage through a robust wage structure, effective grievance mechanisms for the redress of worker complaints and the development of evidence-based policies are necessary for the long-term empowerment of working-class citizens and sustainable actualization of the core principles of decent work. Following this trajectory, it is hoped that the Caribbean region will continue its progress towards holistically embracing stakeholder-centric decent work as the fundamental pillar upon which socioeconomic development takes shape.