Creating ideas for a resilient island future
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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SYNOPSIS

How do you tap into the entrepreneurial spirit of a nation to recover from a hurricane? How do you connect talented professionals with ideas to build back better? And how do you use the collective expertise to come up with solutions for a more resilient future? Those were the key questions the Aruba Centre of Excellence (COE) for Small Island Developing States (a UNDP initiative) based on Aruba asked after visiting St. Maarten after the hurricanes. The COE soon joined forces with like-minded organizations; namely EY Dutch Caribbean, the Dutch Caribbean Chambers of Commerce, 360° Innovation, and Present Your Startup, to organize a unique event: The Build Back Better Week SXM.

The goal was to organize an interactive, inclusive event that was focused on putting ideas for rebuilding into action. A format was developed consisting of a hackathon (Do-Tank), together with trade missions from other countries (Do-Trade), a youth engagement (NextGen Session) and deep-dive sessions (Expert sessions). The Do-Tank brought local and international entrepreneurs alike together, to contribute to an inspiring and fun weekend in which new ideas and concepts were created and presented to build back better for a resilient island future. The attendance and support of the Prime Minister was the icing on the cake.

To foster connections between local and international entrepreneurs, Present Your Startup together with the Dutch Caribbean Chambers of Commerce organized a day (Do-Trade) of business networking and matchmaking. The conversations were hard to stop as businesses in renewable energy, sustainable tourism, construction and much more exchanged ideas and opportunities. This sparked initiatives we will hear about in the near future.
St. Maarten is an island located in the Caribbean. It is a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. On the 6th and 7th of September 2017, the Island was hit by a Category 5 hurricane named Irma. The hurricane caused widespread and significant damage to buildings and infrastructure. Irma was followed on September 16th by another Hurricane, named Maria. These storms caused severe damage in a number of countries and territories, including Anguilla, Barbuda, the British Virgin Islands, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Saint Martin, St. Maarten, and the US Virgin Islands.

After the destruction by hurricanes Irma and Maria, St. Maarten and nearby Islands started rebuilding (society, economy and governance) with the support of a multitude of stakeholders. This brought an unprecedented complexity of knowledge flows and expertise needed to Build Back Better (BBB).

Since the core mandate of the Aruba Centre of Excellence (COE) for SIDS (a UNDP initiative) is to facilitate sustainable development through inter-Island knowledge exchange. In an effort to turn the knowledge challenge into actionable insights, the COE wanted to support St. Maarten and other affected islands in the region.

The aim of the COE was to boost knowledge (collecting expertise and connecting experts) around key topics for recovery and reconstruction. The basis was St. Maarten’s National Recovery Plan, but with the intention to be relevant to other SIDS.

St. Maarten's economy has mostly been based on tourism, either from tourists staying on the Island or single day tourists from the many cruise lines that dock in the Philipsburg Harbor. Business recovery deserves a high priority, because a functioning economy will mitigate the negative impact of the hurricane’s damage, and at the same time, incentivizes further growth. The principle of ‘build back better’ should be the leitmotif of all recovery efforts. Economic development must be sustainable beyond the period of recovery.

The following focus areas were chosen to support, from the SXM National Recovery Plan (NRP):

**Sustainable Tourism:** Given the island’s reliance on tourism and related economic activities, swift restoration of business activity is a priority. To achieve a common goal of recovery, projects that galvanize stakeholders and others into rapid and effective action, are preferred.

**Renewable Energy:** The transition to environmentally neutral power generating equipment, and the introduction of renewable power sources needs to be prioritized. Consumers need to also be incentivized towards energy efficiency and adopting clean energy options for their homes and businesses.

**Entrepreneurship and relearning:** Stimulating Entrepreneurship is essential. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME’s) account for 80% of all businesses on the island. Retraining can provide some displaced workers with new skills that are in greater demand which can reduce their
BUILD BACK BETTER WEEK

The COE started to preparing to organize a “Do-Tank” (an action-oriented Think Tank) and soon joined forces with like-minded organizations; namely EY Dutch Caribbean, the Dutch Caribbean Chambers of Commerce, 360° Innovation, and Present Your Startup, ending up with a unique event: the Build Back Better Week SXM. The Build Back Better Week was boosted through connected activities; the Do-Tank and Do-Trade.

The COE, EY and 360° of Innovation jointly drafted the concept for a Do-Tank to accelerate the rebuild and recovery of SXM through the exchange of practices and expertise.

The Dutch Caribbean Chambers of Commerce joined forces with Present Your Startup and organized trade missions to St. Maarten. This allowed the entrepreneurs to not only participate in the event and contribute in terms of concrete ideas, but also network with key players and gain more clarity of the business necessities and opportunities in rebuilding the society and economy in St. Maarten.

“Thanks to the support of many organizations and the contribution of local and international entrepreneurs alike, we were able to create an inspiring and fun 5-day event in which new ideas and concepts were created and presented to build back better for a resilient Island future.”
The initial organizers started three months prior to the event with the preparations. These three months were necessary to make the event a success, especially because of the challenging local circumstances.

To inform all the important stakeholders and potential participants, information sessions were organized at the Chamber of Commerce on Curaçao and St. Maarten, at the University of Aruba, in Rotterdam (The Netherlands) and even at the World Bank in Washington. These sessions provided interested parties with the necessary information. An online registration system, which was centrally monitored was essential to follow-up on all the interested parties.

Although the good cause was very well understood and supported, getting the partners and sponsors on board to support the initiative took a lot of time. Using the networks of the organizing organizations made it possible to connect the organizations to the event.

Online presence was essential, especially Facebook is a very important channel in the region. The design and information on the website needs to be consistent with the social media channels. Assigning one media contact who is aware of the interests of key partners, but conveys one consistent would have been helpful. The radio was the most effective communication channel in the weeks before the event. Attending various radio shows made sure that many people knew about the event.

Because the organizers were not based on location in St.Maarten, a trip prior to the event was necessary in order to meet with the key stakeholders. During this trip it was essential to reach the right people, get their commitment and review the local circumstances. All the organizers arrived a couple of days prior to the event to arrange the final details.
The event aimed to be **open, inclusive and collaborative**. The targeted audience of the event was broad, any person or organization willing to contribute to the building back better of St. Maarten and sharing knowledge for other SIDS to do the same was welcome. There was a low participation fee for local participants to join. The fee of US$14 (Nafl. 25) increased the chance of attendance.

Eventually the event was **fully-booked**, there were **166 applications** for the Do-Tank, 60 international ones, and about 100 from St. Maarten.

It was a remarkable achievement, given that all teams had to give up their weekend, work hard and condense their hard work into a timed three-minute presentation of each project before a judging panel. **International interest** was primarily focused on the countries within the Dutch Kingdom, due to the possibilities of doing business with St. Maarten, the region and the Netherlands. Some teams ended up working until midnight! Undoubtedly many of the participants stayed connected. The number of teams was way more than expected. The aim was for 10 teams and have five-minute pitches. But this had to be reduced to three minutes with **21 teams** to get through. The enthusiasm was much higher than expected arrange the final details.

The success of the event highlights the desire for people to be included and welcome international guests to boost collaboration and entrepreneurship during the recovery.

The event kicked-off with drinks where **local young professionals** were invited together with the SXM Trade & Hospitality Association.

**During the Do-Trade, a beach clean-up** was organized by Sea Going Green at which 18 (international) participants volunteered and picked up about 100 kilo of trash in 1 hour.

**PARTICIPANTS**
The estimated cost for organizing the event were estimated at $40,000. The COE partnered with EY Dutch Caribbean who offered to share these costs and be the vendor for COE for the Project Management, Development and Delivery of the event.

The total costs turned out to be higher than expected, but that included the Do-Trade as well. The Location, Food & Beverages, Marketing & PR and the Delivery (Event Coordination and Project Management) are the main cost categories.

The time (hours), expenses, travel & lodging costs spend, were invested by the organizing parties and are not included in the financial overview of the event.

Thanks to several partner- and sponsorships the total costs of the event were covered. The price for the winners of $2500,- was paid by the Buddy entrepreneurship program St. Maarten. The international guests had to pay a higher participation fee, a total of ~$5,500,- was received on fees.

**Partners** are very important as, in addition to financial support, they helped promote the event, provided critical insights and local participation.

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THE DO-TANK

There are four important reasons why the format of a Do-Tank (an action-oriented Think Tank / hackathon) was chosen:

To strengthen the collaboration between the most important stakeholders in the society of St. Maarten such as the government, the university, the chamber of commerce, utility companies, private sector and most of all: the people.

To create out-of-the-box sustainable solutions for challenges and opportunities St. Maarten faced (is facing) after the hurricane and to create an entrepreneurial spirit amongst the participants, mentors and judges.

To use the Do-Tank as a first step in the sustainable development of St. Maarten. A Do-Tank is a tool in the bigger picture of St. Maarten to rebuild the island in a sustainable way. Do-Tanks are known for their positive impact on challenges and are often used as a stepping stone in creating (reframed or new) economic pillars.

The Do-Tank provided an opportunity to build on basic humanitarian needs like self-expression and creativity. At the same time it offers the opportunity to use perspectives from different backgrounds and skills to solve challenges St. Maarten’s society is facing. A Do-Tank also creates broad support as different people and stakeholders collaborate and constructively think of ways to strengthen the future.
The Do-Tank was organized as a hackathon-like event (48 hours) on **March 17 and 18, 2018 on St. Maarten** in which multi-disciplinary groups created (out-of-the-box) solutions for a challenge / question.

The Do-Tank was based on the idea of a hackathon or action-oriented Think Tank. A hackathon is a marathon of intense work to build solutions from scratch within 48-72 hours. For the participants, a hackathon is a perfect platform to explore new technology, work on a project they are passionate about, and build a working proof-of-concept in a short span of time. It is also an opportunity for them to network and collaborate with like-minded people who are passionate about building products. Hackathons are no longer restricted to just the developer community. Anyone who can contribute to building a product can participate in a hackathon. Often the outcome will be presented to a jury and a winner will be chosen.

The teams (with a minimum of three and maximum of five persons) were selected based on their focus on solutions for the problems that SXM faced after the hurricanes. Food & Beverages were provided during both days. Mentors and experts on various topics were available for advice. The solution needed to focus on one or a combination of the three themes. It must increase the **economy** in St. Maarten in a **sustainable** and **resilient** way and addressing one or more of the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**. The teams had 3 minutes to pitch their concept/product to a jury, using whatever they wanted.

At the finale of the Do-Tank 21 teams presented their idea to the attendees, including the Prime Minister. The winning team **won US$2,500,-**, mentorship and 1 year free advertising on the radio. The runners-up won mentorships and an online payment solution.
SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The Bini Travel all-inclusive app (#1) that tourists can sign-up for and wear like a wrist band and get deals with participating businesses like restaurants and retailers all over the island.

Flamboyant Beach Resort (#7) aims to develop a sustainable luxury resort based on pillars of resilience (i.e. mangroves, dykes, water system), sustainability (i.e. plastic free, solar powered, zero waste, local food) and community (i.e. disaster drills), economic development in a sustainable way.

Ecotech for Ecotourism (#13) aims to enhance eco-tourism by empowering local artists and SME’s, use biodegradable products (instead of plastic), launch an i-Beacon app to inform tourists of their surrounding ecosystem, and make businesses eco-compliant and rewarded by an eco-label.

ShowMe Caribbean on-location videos (#18) provides an interactive, internet-based tour using 360 degree imagery to showcase the island and local businesses through virtual reality tours, in combination with video and google street views to inform tourists.
CONSTRUCTION

Hive five sustainable housing (#3) offers self-sustaining, affordable and hurricane-proof units for the local community to live in, together forming a 'hive' of multi-functional units.

Super House emergency shelters (#5) are 25 hurricane-proof concrete buildings that provide shelter, water, energy and communications after natural disasters and otherwise function as a community center with a community roof garden.

E-hub self-sustaining housing box (#11) provides housing units that generates its own power, water, connectivity and rental income, thereby providing safety and relief after a hurricane.

C-D’Home resilient homes (#14) offers hurricane shelters by way of dome-shaped multi-purpose, commercial and community shelter inspired by turtle shells in areas that are lacking shelters.

DAM better window frames (#20) offers innovative solutions for construction openings (doors, windows) through wind and waterproof buildings, reduced construction time, and based on traditional skills.

3P-Power (#21) focuses on optimizing spaces through a collective impact initiative, for example by modular housing solutions and installing renewable energy systems.
SOCIAL

RUNNER UP 1 - Philipsburg Cultural Community Center (#2) to be turned into an iconic building that houses the movement and programs for promoting the arts, social cohesion and economic viability in the center of the capital, and engaging tourists with the cultural heritage of the island.

RUNNER UP 2 - The Force social innovation network (#4) supports and invests in community leaders through capacity building, skills-matching, seed and crowd funding thereby catalyzing job opportunities and economic growth.

Community Innovative Technological Solutions (#9) aims to bring year-round socio-economical solutions to the community and tourists through entrepreneurship by way of a road show, mobile experience museum, creative entertainment, pop-up markets, information sessions, and related events.

Discovery platform for sustainable solutions (#10) is an online platform that links people with ideas to relevant events, actionable data and people with expertise and resources, thereby moving them from unemployment to self-employment.

RUNNER UP 3 - Maatin (#19) provides free internet hotspots across the island for tourists and local community to inform them, help them post their experience on social media, to collect data on their movements, provide communication after hurricanes, and to protect the environment.
ENVIRONMENTAL

**Algae Harvesting** (#6) aims to use algae micro-organisms in the St. Maarten’s salt pond to produce products (biofuels, cosmetics, food, etc) and become a tourist attraction in collaboration with local universities.

**Slow Mill Wave energy** (#8) captures ocean’s energy through an underwater flyer attached to the seabed, thereby lowering energy costs and simultaneously protecting the coast and boosting aquafarming economy and fishing.

**WINNER - Green Box recycling rewards program** (#12) aims to raise awareness around recycling, and stimulate citizens to recycle waste through an online app and waste pick-up service by which they can earn points that can be redeemed at retailers and restaurants.

**Solar Flamboyant Park** (#16) is an initiative to recycle waste by turning the existing waste dump into a park for the community including a recycling plant and an arts center.

RECOVERY

**The Better Bunker Box** (#15) is a concrete bunker that houses a container for critical communication for use directly after a hurricane and for emergency response units to use until regular services return.

**SMX AX disaster response app** (#17) provides an online mobile solution including drones for continuity in communication before, during and after a natural disaster.
Resilience is the ability to respond, grow and thrive in the face of shocks, such as hurricanes, and stresses, but also in times of unaffordable housing and pressure on public services. Much of the burden is borne by infrastructure – including everything from an Island’s water, energy, and waste systems, to its transportation, telecoms and buildings. **Innovation is a true driver for resilience**, development of talent and sustainable economic growth.

Innovation cannot be driven by individual companies or the government. It requires cooperation among several players, and not only businesses but also government and knowledge centers. Sharing knowledge and ideas stimulates the innovative power of people.

In the approach to the event, people and experts from all over the world joined. They were asked if they were willing to contribute, by sharing their knowledge.

During the Do-Tank, sessions were organized in cohesion with the focus areas. World Bank consultant Paloma Zapata shared her insights on **Sustainable Tourism**. TNO, the Dutch National organization for Science and Technology gave a presentation on **Sustainable Energy**.

Also important topics, like **Digitalization** and **Entrepreneurship** were discussed, to boost the ideas and underlying business cases of the solutions the teams were working on. An expert session on **storytelling and communication** helped the participants preparing for their pitch.

The expert sessions parallel to the ongoing hackathon created a great vibe and the transfer of knowledge.
The NextGen session was a special youth side-event of the “Do-Tank”. To ensure the voices of the next generation -youth and young professionals- were heard. The session was organized to gather their input for how St. Maarten can build back better.

The NextGen of St. Maarten shared what their Disposables (what they do not want anymore), Recyclables (what they want to see more of) and Visions (new initiatives) are for Building Back Better of St. Maarten. The Caribbean Global Shapers platforms from Dominican Republic, Suriname and Aruba showed their solidarity and shared their ideas with the St. Maarten NextGen through virtual video recordings on initiatives related to topics such as food security and waste management.

The Minister of Education, Culture, Youth & Sports of St. Maarten joined the session and afterwards pledged to provide full support to set up a Philipsburg Global Shapers Hub to empower the youth of St. Maarten in implementing impactful projects for the community!

A "Social Commitment Contract" Wall, otherwise called the “SoCoCo” Wall was given as a gift to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth & Sports. The "SoCoCo" Wall will be placed in an accessible public space where all of St. Maarten’s NextGen are now given the opportunity and encouraged to come and express their vision as well as personal commitments to Building Back Better St. Maarten!

The NextGen side-event was a collaboration between the youth platform Global Shapers Oranjestad of the World Economic Forum, the World Bank Group Youth to Youth (Y2Y) Community and Global Storytelling for Development - Claudia Köbler
The Do-Trade was an initiative of the Association of Dutch Caribbean Chambers of Commerce (DCC) together with Present your Startup Caribbean. The director of the St. Maarten Chamber, Mr. Anastasio Baker together with Board member of the Curacao Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Arthur Rosaria both representing the Association of Dutch Chambers as well, opened the Do-Trade by welcoming all local and international entrepreneurs to a fruit full day of networking and workshops. The DCC’s mission is to foster cooperation amongst its members in order to create economic growth for the individual islands. The Build Back Better Week was the perfect platform!

Entrepreneurs and company representatives from St. Maarten, other Caribbean Islands like Curacao and Aruba, the Netherlands, Suriname, USA and Canada were present.

During the morning hours entrepreneurs were matched based on their professional background and services they have to offer and were set in groups of 6 for 3 rounds of speed dating. After 20 minutes of each round they were requested to rotate tables and join other entrepreneurs. During each round table of ‘speed dating’ session, each entrepreneur got 5 minutes to introduce him/herself, their company and types of services they have to offer. Majority of them set up a 1-one-1 meeting and talked about possible business opportunities throughout the afternoon.

The Do-Trade event closed with free workshops for the local entrepreneurs by CXpay on payment solutions for e-commerce, EY Dutch Caribbean about administration and finance and ActionCoach, “How to make your business work so you don’t have to”.

It was a very successful day, many fruitful contacts were made during the Do-Trade!
MOU TO STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC TIES

The government of Curacao signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the organizers of the Build Back Better Week, the Dutch Caribbean Chamber of Commerce and Industry, EY Dutch Caribbean (Ernst & Young), Present your Startup, the COE and 360° of Innovation.

The MOU states that the parties from the Dutch Caribbean Islands will work together to strengthen and stimulate the collaboration between knowledge institutions and organizations as well as citizens.

This means that parties will stimulate and initiate public-private partnerships to strengthen the commercial ties between the Caribbean Islands in the Kingdom, with the aim to help the economy of St. Maarten back on its feet.

The MoU aims to facilitate this cooperation and should be seen as a first step to further strengthen the cooperation between the various stakeholders within the Islands in the Kingdom. The MoU also indicates that all parties involved will continue to exchange their expertise. Moreover, the parties have indicated that they will continue to work for the cooperation between the government and the business community. Attention will be paid to logistics, financial arrangements and programs for effective business operations.
LESSONS LEARNED

The Build Back Better Week SXM was organized to help St. Maarten, to rebuild trust and confidence in the region for the benefit of the local communities, supporting inclusive economic growth for the societies and to help build an ecosystem where start-ups and entrepreneurship will thrive.

The COE and EY Dutch Caribbean both provide services to the Caribbean region, and both have a global reach. By promoting knowledge on resilience, the recovery of islands in the region can be accelerated. For example, the expert sessions parallel to the ongoing hackathon created a positive ‘vibe for the transfer of knowledge.

The organizing team - from abroad - had the advantage of not being involved or connected to local politics. However, to ensure local ownership, St. Maarten locals opened and closed the event, and gave others the essential recognition for what the inhabitants of St. Maarten had already done. The combination of international and local participants worked very well. Putting ‘strangers’ in groups based on their submitted profiles and interests worked well because there was a common goal and the conditions were appealing (space, food & beverage, general positive vibe). The experienced entrepreneurs from abroad, combined with the local knowledge, created a lot of energy and opportunities. The informal, interactive format was a great way to give everyone a voice, both individuals and organizations.

The government plays a key role in rebuilding. They have to be informed about the event from the start, and actively engage closer to the event. In St. Maarten government officials joined the Do-Tank where they could share their perspective and interact with the bottom-up initiatives presented.

The event is not intended to be a one-time event, but must be seen as a kick-off to a longer term rebuilding process. Follow-up is essential.

Feedback from participants:

“It was an amazing event! What’s next? :)

“Was an amazing experience, proud to have been part of it and enjoying all the follow up connections after the event!”*
The Do-Tank boosted creative ideas and actionable insights. To sustain and stimulate this energy and leverage the power of entrepreneurship, a **task force** has been set up consisting of local Build Back Better (BBB) champions, who also liaise with the Government, World Bank, UN agencies and other local stakeholders, supported by an advisory group from the organizers UNDP, COE, EY, 360° Innovation.

Healthy **entrepreneurial ecosystems** require that entities work in conjunction with, and mutually supports, each other because their needs are interdependent and success is co-created. The changes necessary to reinvigorate the regional economy by developing and building a critical mass of start-ups and scale-ups to attract innovation, talent and capital need to be catalyzed. As already mentioned: Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME’s) account for 80% of all businesses on the Island. Entrepreneurship that attracts foreign direct investment, creates value and adds to export growth. However, (starting) entrepreneurs face serious challenges in making their business a success.

As a follow up, efforts will be made to intensify the available public and private subsidies and funds to invest in companies pursuing innovation, export, renewable energy and hospitality. **Risk capital need to be provided for start-ups** focusing on these sectors and participating firms will be guided with extensive expertise.

Interest from other Islands has been shown to replicate the Build Back Better event. Preparations are underway for a Do-Tank on Dominica.
The organizers would like to thank all those involved in organizing the event that offered the opportunity for starters, entrepreneurs, business professionals, and students, to develop ideas in just two days and make meaningful connections.

This event was possible thanks to the involvement of sponsors, contributors and partners. The organizers appreciate their support and want to say a big THANK YOU!

**Mentors & Experts:**

**Judges:**

**Sponsors:**
UNDP, EY, HBN Law, 7Seas Waters, Ictual, C3, St. Maarten Development fund, COSME, St. Maarten Pension fund, Windward Island Bank, and the Buddy Entrepreneurship Program SXM.
“It’s a great initiative, because you have a proper balance between millennials, X and Y generations, baby boomers, all coming together and coming up with creative and sustainable ideas that will help develop St. Maarten...now we must take this energy and put it into actual projects. A list of projects can be presented to Government responsible for the projects we are doing with the World Bank to see how they can fit in to our early recovery projects.”
- Prime Minister Leona Romeo-Marlin

Congratulations to all winners!

Build Back Better SXM
Creating ideas for a resilient future

Arno Boersma – Aruba Centre of Excellence for SIDS
(Ano.Boersma@undp.org)

Axel de Vries – EY Dutch Caribbean
(Axel.deVries@an.ey.com)