

MAKING LOCAL GOVERNANCE WORK SERIES 1

Local Democracy and Good Governance in the Caribbean

Report of the Regional Symposium
held in Montego Bay, Jamaica, April 2004



COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT



Other publications in this series:

Local Democracy and Good Governance in the Pacific

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Preface

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum attaches the utmost importance to the support of local democracy and good governance throughout the Commonwealth. We recognise that small states in the Caribbean and the Pacific, given their vulnerability, have special needs, and we have been delighted to undertake two major policy symposia in the last 12 months in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat and other partners to address these needs.

The regional symposia, hosted respectively by the governments of Jamaica and Fiji in Montego Bay, April 2004 and in Suva, December 2004, were important occasions, bringing together senior decision makers, including ministers, officials and elected local representatives from each region and beyond. The key message from the two symposia was that the promotion of local democracy and good governance are high on official agendas everywhere. Closely linked are issues such as urbanisation, the role of traditional structures and effective service delivery; it is encouraging that both symposia came up with clear and precise recommendations on how to make progress.

The reports of the Jamaica and Fiji symposia will be drawn to the attention of the third Commonwealth Local Government Conference to be held in Aberdeen, Scotland in March 2005, which we expect to provide a framework for good practices for local democracy in the Commonwealth. The outcomes of the Aberdeen Conference will be formally submitted for endorsement to Commonwealth Heads of Government at their meeting in Malta in November 2005.

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum will wish to take forward the practical recommendations arising out of the symposia, working with its members in both regions and through its regional office in Fiji. It will also promote the symposia outcomes in other fora where it represents the interests of its local government members, such as the ACP/EU. We will continue to work closely with the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation and other key partners such as the Caribbean Community, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and UN-Habitat, and ensure that the special needs of democracy and local governance in small

states are properly addressed. It is our view that democracy and development are intimately linked: promoting local democracy will further key developmental goals and help to ensure that the millennium development goals are effectively implemented at community level.

Carl Wright

Director, Commonwealth Local Government Forum

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Acknowledgements

The organisers wish to acknowledge the support provided by the Minister, Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, the Permanent Secretary, Loraine Robinson, and all the staff of the Ministry of Local Government, Community Development and Sport (MLGCDS) of Jamaica, which contributed greatly to the success of the symposium. The symposium was chaired by Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, with Mayor Robert Montague (Jamaica) as co-chair and the Hon. Alfred Grey (Bahamas), the Hon. Matthew Walter (Dominica), Mayor David Fonseca (Belize) and Mayor Murchison Brown (Trinidad and Tobago) as vice-chairs.

Carl Wright (Commonwealth Local Government Forum), Dr Jos Johnston (Commonwealth Secretariat) and Miss Loraine Robinson (MLGCDS) acted as symposium secretaries.

The four working groups in each session were facilitated by Lucy Slack (CLGF), Juliet Solomon (Commonwealth Secretariat), Dr Randal Smith (CLGF) and Dr Jos Johnston (Commonwealth Secretariat).

Thanks are due to the Commonwealth Foundation for sponsoring the civil society participants at the symposium.

The success of the symposium was also due to the varied contributions from a multitude of others and the hard work and commitment of all the participants.

Foreword

Local government plays an essential role in the development process as it is the closest tier of government to ordinary citizens. Reforms to bring about decentralisation are central to the strengthening of elected local governments, thereby facilitating a transition to good governance through which public sector institutions can respond effectively to the needs and aspirations of both rural and urban people.

The Governance and Institutional Development Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat extends technical assistance to member countries in crucial development areas in pursuance of the priorities of Commonwealth governments. The Division has assisted a number of Commonwealth members in advancing their decentralisation policies; it has instituted training programmes and facilitated the short- and long-term deployment of experts to areas of critical skill shortages.

This publication builds on the symposia organised over a two-year period to assist small island Commonwealth countries to better appreciate the significance of and to devise strategies for advancing decentralisation in their particular situations. It is our hope that the analyses and recommendations it contains will contribute to an understanding of emerging regional issues relating to good governance, grassroots democracy and the role of sub-national governments in Commonwealth countries.

I should like to extend my gratitude to colleagues at the Commonwealth Secretariat and to the organisations and governments that collaborated with us on this project. We are particularly indebted to the Commonwealth Local Government Forum for its continuing collaboration in the work that we do in this very important area.

*Professor Victor O. Ayeni
Director
Governance and Institutional Development Division
Commonwealth Secretariat*

Acronyms

ACP	<i>African, Caribbean, Pacific</i>
ACTI	<i>Association of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions</i>
BANGO	<i>Barbados Association of Non-governmental Organisations</i>
CALGA	<i>Caribbean Association of Local Government Associations</i>
CARICAD	<i>Caribbean Centre for Development Administration</i>
CARICOM	<i>Caribbean Community</i>
CBO	<i>Community Based Organisation</i>
CDB	<i>Caribbean Development Bank</i>
CDW	<i>Community Development and Welfare</i>
CERO	<i>Central Emergency Relief Organisation (Barbados)</i>
CFM	<i>Caribbean Forum of Ministers</i>
CHOGM	<i>Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting</i>
CIDA	<i>Canadian International Development Agency</i>
CLGF	<i>Commonwealth Local Government Forum</i>
CSO	<i>Civil Society Organisation</i>
DALA	<i>Dominica Association of Local Authorities</i>
DFID	<i>Department for International Development</i>
EU	<i>European Union</i>
FCM	<i>Federation of Canadian Municipalities</i>
GDP	<i>Gross Domestic Product</i>
HDI	<i>Human Development Index</i>
MDGs	<i>Millennium Development Goals</i>
MLGCDS	<i>Ministry of Local Government, Community Development and Sport</i>
MP	<i>Member of Parliament</i>
NCLDO	<i>National Congress of Local Democratic Organs</i>
NDI	<i>National Democratic Institute</i>
NGO	<i>Non Governmental Organisation</i>
NSO	<i>National Statistical Office</i>
OAS	<i>Organisation of American States</i>
OECS	<i>Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States</i>
UNDP	<i>United Nations Development Programme</i>
UMP	<i>Urban Management Programme</i>

UN-Habitat United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UWI University of the West Indies

PART ONE

Report of the Symposium

1

Background to the Symposium and the Report

The symposium, 'Local Democracy and Good Governance in the Caribbean', came out of discussions in the region with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF). Its aim was to consider the health of local democracy in the Commonwealth Caribbean, to share experiences and good practices both within the Caribbean and in the broader Commonwealth and to identify steps which could be taken to develop strong and effective democratic local governance structures which deliver quality services to the whole community. It brought together representatives of central and local government and civil society from Commonwealth Caribbean countries (Barbados, Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago – Antigua and Barbuda was unable to attend at the last minute), local government delegates from Australia, Fiji, India, Lesotho, New Zealand, Uganda and the UK, and representatives from CARICOM, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), UK Department for International Development (DFID), National Democratic Institute (NDI), Organisation of American States (OAS) and UN-Habitat. The full list of participants is attached as Annex B.

The preparatory discussions highlighted the variations of practice in the region. At the time only six of the Commonwealth Caribbean countries had systems of elected local government; the others had appointed local councils, or services were provided centrally. However, there was a general wish in most of the countries to move to more local democracy. This desire was further encouraged by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Abuja in December 2003, at which the Heads of Government re-affirmed the value they attached to elected local government as an important foundation for democracy, and endorsed giving constitutional and legal recognition to the sphere of local government. They also welcomed the co-operation between the Commonwealth Secretariat

and the CLGF in the promotion of best democratic practice, so the symposium was convened with these mandates in mind. The situation in each country and the region as a whole was investigated further by Professor Neville Duncan and Dr Bishnu Ragoonath from the University of the West Indies as part of the symposium preparation process. Their papers were presented to the delegates and are included in Part Two of this report.

As well as differences of approach in different countries, the regional discussions also identified a number of issues of common concern, including:

- ◆ *The relationship between national and local government;*
- ◆ *Sources of funding for local services;*
- ◆ *Autonomy, transparency and accountability;*
- ◆ *The relationship between elected councillors and appointed officials;*
- ◆ *Capacity building;*
- ◆ *The role of the broader community and civil society;*
- ◆ *What is best done nationally and what regionally.*

What was made very clear was that the countries of the region wanted to confer and learn from their different experiences, as well as from those of other Commonwealth countries. They did not want to be lectured. This was to be a working symposium with the minimum of speeches and the maximum of discussion, focused on practical outcomes for moving forward.

With this in mind it was planned that the symposium would address four broad themes:

1 Promoting democracy and good governance

This was to be an opportunity for considering what systems of local government are appropriate for small island states, how these can be made accountable and transparent, and how civil society can participate in local decision making.

2 Ensuring effective decentralisation

This theme involved financial decentralisation, sources of funding, the extent of local government autonomy, how the political and administrative sides interface and what partnerships are possible for community development.

3 Effective service delivery for all

This included questions of whether a local authority should provide direct delivery of services or contract them out, what partnerships might be possible and what should be done beyond just service delivery, including issues of planning development and infrastructure controls.

4 An agenda for regional co-operation

This theme gave a chance to review regional co-operation, particularly in capacity building, the strengthening of regional associations and partnerships between the different levels of government.

The symposium was therefore structured round four extensive working sessions dealing with issues within each theme, followed by plenary report-backs. In addition, one afternoon was set aside for ‘caucus meetings’, where delegates from central government, local government and civil society could meet together as sector groups to discuss their common concerns. These groups also reported back to the whole symposium and were important in leading to regional action by each group and ensuring that their individual concerns were reflected in the final Action Programme. Representatives of international agencies took part in the discussions throughout, but were asked specifically to share any comments on the draft Action Programme in a plenary session at the end (see Chapter 8). That document therefore represents a full consensus of all those present.

One novel aspect of the symposium was the use of ‘innovations groups’. In each working session there were three groups considering specific issues, but there was also a fourth group which was charged with brainstorming some aspect of the theme. Delegates were free to choose which group to attend, and some particularly appreciated this opportunity to move away from existing processes and explore novel ideas for tackling issues. Many of the results were incorporated in the Action Programme, but if they were not fully covered there, they have been written up under each theme, together with additional ideas from the other working groups.

This report should be read with the Montego Bay Action Programme produced during the symposium and included as Annex A to this report. The following chapters record discussions and ideas which informed the recommendations but were not incorporated directly into the Action

Programme. Readers may therefore find it helpful to refer to the relevant part of that document when reading the report.

2

Setting the Scene: The Caribbean and the Wider Commonwealth

The symposium opened with introductory speeches by senior representatives of the partners involved in its organisation. These set out their commitment to local democracy and its place in the Caribbean.

CARICOM

Speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Dr Winston Anderson from the CARICOM General Council said that the symposium could not be more appropriate for the Caribbean at this time of deepening regional integration. The revival of strong local government bodies is a critical pillar for accelerating this process. He quoted a previous Commonwealth Secretary-General, Sir Shridath Ramphal, who said: 'Globalisation must not be allowed to run ahead of global governance or it will become like wild horses not harnessed to a chariot of public good'. Facilitating frameworks for empowering communities through sub-national and decentralised systems is challenging but necessary. Central governments alone cannot promote developmental change within a framework of the politics of globalisation. The essence of local democracy is to guarantee a greater and more effective interface between officials and constituent groups, providing mechanisms to eliminate stark inequalities between power groups and to humanise development. There is a good case for increased devolution of central government functions to local authorities and community-based organisations (CBOs). It is at the local level that government has an opportunity to create a style of governance based on co-operation, trust and mutual understanding among social partners. Local democracy can thus create the basis for a sustainable community at the national, regional and even the global levels, and the CARICOM Secretariat stands as a willing partner in this exercise.

Commonwealth Local Government Forum

The Hon. Pontso' Sekatle, Minister of Local Government in Lesotho and Vice-Chair of the CLGF, spoke of the common problems of small states, whether they are islands in the Caribbean or landlocked countries like her own. The CLGF had been involved in the region for ten years and as a membership organisation was able to represent the interests of the countries present at the symposium. Commonwealth leaders had recognised this at the CHOGM meeting in Abuja in December 2003 where the Forum was officially accepted as an associated Commonwealth organisation. They also endorsed the important role of local democracy and good governance. The symposium therefore followed that mandate, providing an opportunity to work together to establish systems appropriate for small Caribbean states which will ensure effective decentralisation and service delivery. She said that the CLGF wanted to build partnership across the whole region and the rest of the Commonwealth, and urged CARICOM to recognise local government as one of its key sectors.

Commonwealth Secretariat

Mr Winston Cox, Deputy Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, recalled the historic ties between the Commonwealth Secretariat and the CLGF. He welcomed the increased collaboration encouraged by the Heads of Government in Abuja. That meeting reaffirmed the Commonwealth's commitment to a set of fundamental values enshrined in the Harare Declaration of 1991, at the core of which are adherence to democratic principles and people-centred development. The Secretariat's role was to ensure that these principles are applied so that democracy is a matter of substance. It is in local democracy that politics and service delivery most closely interact with the population. Winston Cox noted that only six Commonwealth Caribbean countries currently had elected local government, but stressed that the Commonwealth is committed to bringing democracy as close as possible to people. Local government is not a waste of resources in small countries; they can benefit greatly from decentralised management, and he saw the symposium as an opportunity for robust debate of the issues. Over half Commonwealth countries are small states, and the organisation provides significant support for them, so he welcomed the delegate from the Pacific and said that the Secretariat hoped that the results of the symposium would have value in that region as well, with opportunities for each to learn from the other. He also welcomed the

participants from the NGO sector and stressed that it has become increasingly clear at global, regional and national level that civil society has an indispensable role to play in sustaining democratic values and practices.

Ministry of Local Government, Community Development and Sport, Jamaica

The Minister for Local Government, Community Development and Sport, Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, addressed the symposium on the situation of local democracy in the Caribbean – its successes and challenges for the future. She felt that the range of key people present at the symposium should enable it to lead real change, and she stressed the need for a strategic framework and plan of action. There was active interest across the Caribbean with pressure for greater civil society participation, and this had been given impetus by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, regional summits, the Rio Treaty and other fora where Caribbean governments had given their commitment to increased local democracy. She stated:

Regional commitment to local democracy should come from our shared conviction that our model of governance must allow citizens to be involved in policy making decisions which affect their daily lives. Communities must have substantial control over the management of their own affairs and their destiny. There is no other route to achieving our fundamental social, political and economic aspirations.

The Minister added that what was now required was sustained action to ensure decentralisation goes beyond mere words in agreements.

She then outlined some proposed outcomes which would make this a successful symposium:

- ◆ *Commitment to a regional approach and plan of action to honour all international obligations regarding decentralisation, strengthening of local government and citizen participation;*
- ◆ *Formation of a network of Caribbean Ministers responsible for decentralisation, local government, community development, community affairs and citizen participation;*
- ◆ *A decision to seek official recognition of this network by the CARICOM Heads of Government and the Secretariat;*
- ◆ *Formulation of a plan of action for local democracy in the Caribbean,*

including development of appropriate national and regional policy frameworks;

- ◆ *Promotion of more scholarship and study regarding the subject areas;*
- ◆ *Establishment of a focal point for co-ordinating the network's activity;*
- ◆ *Strengthening of national associations of local government authorities and civil society entities engaged in the field;*
- ◆ *Co-ordination of support from international and bilateral organisations.*

The Minister identified some of the post-colonial characteristics of the Caribbean:

- ◆ *Excessive concentration of power at the centre;*
- ◆ *Authoritarian approaches to governance;*
- ◆ *Inherited prejudices which dictate that a respectable distance be kept between the rulers and the ruled.*

There had been a view that the small size of some states made local government inappropriate, but this has now been largely discredited. Local government is a vital ingredient of all societies, and good governance demands the active and direct participation of citizens and communities in the formulation of policies and decision making which will affect them at the local level. The need is to move democracy from a three to five yearly exercise of the franchise to full participation by citizens to take control of their affairs and destiny, and this symposium should create passion and enthusiasm.

Important developments have taken place across the Caribbean. In the Bahamas there is now local government where there was none before. Belize has introduced several innovations to transform their traditional model of local government. Dominica has maintained a tradition of strong local government, while St Lucia, and St Vincent and the Grenadines, are firmly committed to restoring elected local government. Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica are engaged in transforming traditional systems to more vibrant ones.

The reform in Jamaica since 1994 has given the citizens a strong role in the management of their own affairs. Some of the highlights have been:

- ◆ *The legislation to create municipalities, including the election of the first directly elected mayor and citizens advisory councils in Portmore.*
- ◆ *The unique innovation of official stakeholder groups in parishes through the formation of Parish Development Committees. These provide a broad-based civil society consultative counterpart to the local authority, and break exclusive planning without consultation by these authorities.*
- ◆ *The setting up of the National Advisory Council.*

Jamaica is reforming local government, and similar 'winds of change' are blowing throughout the Caribbean. Minister Simpson Miller urged delegates at the symposium to develop a new model of governance that would release the energies and vast potential for national leadership, creativity and problem solving. Local democracy must become the centrepiece of political debate in each country and everyone involved must build a strong regional commitment in the Commonwealth Caribbean.

3

Promoting Democracy and Good Governance

The first working session of the symposium focused on systems of local democracy in the Caribbean, how to make local government accountable and transparent, and how to involve civil society.

In considering what constitutes local government, it was felt that the roles of different entities should be defined in law, including the responsibilities of each tier of government, the types of services to be delivered and regional boundaries. Physical geography is relevant for service delivery, particularly in a region consisting of single-island states, multi-island states and continental countries. The effectiveness of local democracy is linked to the financial capacity of the local government region, and where central government provides the majority of funding it is significant in determining this. The relationship between central and local government therefore needs to be clearly defined and should be a two-way relationship. There might also be a role for an intermediary or a local government association.

An issue which was raised first in this session and which underlay much of the later debate was whether local government is a creature or mechanism of central government, or whether all democracies are equal. Local government is set up by central government, but this does not imply that it is subservient to central government. In South Africa, the constitution clearly defines 'spheres of government' and the responsibilities of each. Just as no one suggests that local government should drive national policy, equally central government should not drive local policy. The different levels of democracy have their own validity and sphere of responsibility and are equal under the constitution and accountable within that sphere. These two opposite views of the position of local government were at the heart of many of the debates at the symposium and came to a head particularly in the round table discussion on the third day (see Chapter 7).

The groups considered questions of accountability. Financial accountability requires clear rules and transparent mechanisms, and these and methods

of raising funds were discussed further in Session 2. Session 1 concentrated on broader issues: who is local government accountable to, and how does one ensure it happens? There is a responsibility to central government, particularly where funds are provided for specific functions, but local government is also accountable to its electorate, and to its partners such as NGOs and CBOs, to the local community in general, including business; within the council there is also accountability to the various party interests. It was suggested that it is the responsibility of the local authority to establish a local vision which was accepted by the community and then to work towards this.

In looking at upward accountability it was suggested that policies should be set jointly by central and local government rather than just be handed down. There should be greater partnership and dialogue between them. It is not enough for central government to simply devolve responsibilities: it is essential that this is accompanied by capacity and institution building. Where local government performs well, its autonomy and funding should be increased. There were differences of opinion as to whether ministers should retain a veto over local government budgets, but rules for any intervention by the ministry needed to be limited and unambiguous. It was felt that accountability and responsibility go hand in hand. Subventions of funds from central government should also be on clear, open and agreed criteria. Views also varied on whether central government should impose quotas to ensure adequate representation of women and youth at local level.

Many claim to speak for civil society, even politicians, so the group considering civil society and civic education defined civil society for this purpose as 'non-state actors'. It was felt that communities no longer think in the ways they did in the past and that this needed to be reflected in approaches and methodologies for consultation and civic education. The group identified a number of examples of good practices from the Caribbean:

- ◆ *Public consultation and use of the mass media; in Trinidad and Tobago central government provided funding for a public education/awareness programme, and talk shows in the electronic media were used to communicate the outcomes of consultations.*
- ◆ *Effective and timely delivery of services, not hitherto available to other islands – 'show and tell' in the Bahamas.*

- ◆ *National Local Government Month, which included model council meetings for youths (Bahamas and Jamaica).*
- ◆ *Involvement of citizens from the inception in designing the municipal agenda and programmes. In Guyana community groups ensure that municipalities adopt and incorporate the results of public consultations, and Jamaica has established Parish Development Committees. Trinidad has legislation for Citizens Advisory Committees, but has not implemented it.*
- ◆ *Establishment of the National Advisory Council on local government reform in Jamaica; similar legislation has been passed but not yet implemented in Trinidad.*
- ◆ *Live broadcasts of council meetings in Jamaica.*

In Uganda local government legislation provides a power of ‘recall’ by the electorate when local councillors do not act transparently or cannot account for what they have done.

Other possible ways were suggested in which local government can be made more accountable to the people, including:

- ◆ *Creating a vision of sustainable development for its communities;*
- ◆ *Consultations and perhaps a plebiscite;*
- ◆ *Regular face-to-face meetings with communities – quarterly meetings at which councillors can update communities on goals, accomplishments and challenges;*
- ◆ *Participatory budgeting – publicising the budget, allowing the public to participate through the media or other mechanisms, opening the budget meetings, and perhaps broadcasting them live;*
- ◆ *Councils should be held more accountable for administrative overheads;*
- ◆ *Participatory planning – this may require capacity building of local authorities in participatory governance;*
- ◆ *A decision-making Citizens Advisory Council;*
- ◆ *Greater education of citizens about their roles/responsibilities to the process;*
- ◆ *Providing clear monitoring tools for civil society to measure delivery;*

- ◆ *Clear roles and responsibilities for administrators and policy-makers;*
- ◆ *Developing information processes accessible to citizens;*
- ◆ *Establishment of clear guidelines and criteria for allocation of funds;*
- ◆ *Equal funding for councillors;*
- ◆ *Freedom for councillors to access unconditional grants that could be used for funding social projects outside of parochial road maintenance [this applied particularly to Jamaica];*
- ◆ *Organisation of the local council with clear representation of the various interest groups;*
- ◆ *A non-party system for local government as in Dominica;*
- ◆ *The direct election of executive mayors with their own administrations;*
- ◆ *Revenues generated by local government should be returned by central government with the autonomy to determine their allocation.*

4

Ensuring Effective Decentralisation

Session 2 considered issues of autonomy and financial control in decentralised government, the interface between the political and administrative sides of local government, how they can best work together, and the relationship of local government with central government and others, such as the local MP, community development officers and NGOs. The innovations group reviewed existing and new sources of funding for local government. As an introduction to this topic, Professor Neville Duncan from the University of the West Indies (UWI) presented a paper outlining the current situation in each country in the Caribbean (see Part 2). It was agreed that the information on Guyana was out-of-date, and participants were reminded that up-to-date information on Guyana and other countries was available in the Commonwealth Local Government Handbook, the 2004 edition of which was launched at the symposium.

Introducing his paper, Professor Duncan concentrated on the final section dealing with key opportunities and challenges. He argued that the first priority for community revitalisation is to create economic opportunities, particularly jobs and work. Local authorities are crucial to this and it is a fundamental error for either donor agencies or national governments to set up parallel institutions or projects which bypass local government. In some places public health or welfare of the poor is a local responsibility, but the budget goes to a central ministry. Strategic planning at local level tends to be restricted to how to use the limited budget available, but should constitute local development planning as part of national planning. There is a tendency for a 'welfare (redistribution) approach' which is inadequate. When well over 90 per cent of the budget is recurrent, and there is little scope for development. Local government needs access to a stable tax base, but usually when tax revenues increase the extra money goes to national not local government. Local government should be as important as any ministry in national government and needs a matching proportion of the national budget. A 5 per cent consumption tax was suggested, earmarked for local government. The market economy, government develop-

ment programmes and highway construction have all drawn people away from remote areas, thereby destroying their communities. Professor argued that a 'third economics' was necessary, which concentrated on local needs. He urged ministers to reposition local government at the centre of national planning and resourcing.

The working groups considered the relationship between elected councillors who set policy and make decisions and the staff who interpret the policy and implement it. One exception is the Bahamas, where councillors implement their own decisions within the Central Government Policy Framework. The relationship between staff and councillors can sometimes become confused and lead to conflict, particularly at times of a change of government, or if the staff see themselves as answerable to central government rather than the local authority. In some cases specialised agencies have been created to undertake local service delivery but they are not directly accountable to the local council. There has also been concern about politicisation of staff.

To avoid these problems it is essential to have a clear definition of roles and responsibilities of both the elected councillors and the administrative staff, preferably enshrined in a code of practice. In Australia, there is also an annual plan setting out clearly what is to be done. There should be regular meetings between the mayor, councillors and the local administration. The three groups should also undertake joint public consultations. Having council staff employed by the central ministry creates a conflict of interest for the staff concerned. It is an important element of autonomy that local authority staff are employees of the local authority, which should also control their conditions of service. It was recommended that the Caribbean central governments which still employ local authority staff should move to local employment, where necessary building the local capacity for this to happen.

Apart from potential internal differences, local authorities also have to manage the different interests of the various stakeholders. These are not equal in power and influence; the local MP has political influence, business has economic power, central government may retain rights of veto and other groups can exert their own pressures. If an external funding agency is involved it too may have its own agenda, and the question arises of whose priorities are really being set. Discussions must be open, involve all parties, and identify and respect what each brings to the table. The pub-

lic need a better understanding of the process and the roles of the different stakeholders, which will probably require public education programmes. Again clear definitions are needed.

All this presupposes good leadership at the local level, with effective stakeholder management and a strategic plan which identifies the involvement and contributions of all the stakeholders, together with setting out measurable results. There will be a need for a co-operative and open working relationship between stakeholders in both planning and execution, and plans will be required for operation and maintenance of critical resources. This means minimising ‘turf’ protection, and a common commitment to local priorities. Local people are frequently ignored in this process, although their local knowledge can often be essential for a successful intervention and to avoid costly mistakes. In a true partnership, ‘everybody wins’ (see Chapter 7). All this requires research, analysis and consultation, and local authorities may need assistance in developing programmes, identifying relationships and defining needs. Delays over funding can be particularly destructive in dissipating enthusiasm and co-operation.

If decentralisation means that local people take decisions, then fiscal decentralisation is vital, yet this is far from common practice. In the Bahamas all local government funding comes from central government, a mechanism which allows the funds available to be collected and pooled centrally and then distributed according to the individual budgets of the local authorities. The Ministry says that local government is independent and only guided by central government policies. In St Lucia the Castries City Council used to collect and spend its own revenue, but this was not done well so it was taken over by central government. In the UK 75 per cent of local government funding comes from central government, which has raised questions about local autonomy. Jamaica has made progress towards fiscal decentralisation and now 60 per cent comes from local sources. However, it was felt that in many cases the increase in local revenue collection had been more than offset by the reductions in central funding. Belize had weak local government until 1999, but this now generates 90 per cent of its own revenue and has much more freedom. Guyana is working towards fiscal decentralisation, and is looking at the South African system as a model.

Finance follows function and there was concern that where central government provides funding on a sectoral basis it is effectively controlling

the services that local government can provide. The level of devolution will vary from country to country, but for democracy to exist at local level there must be some autonomy. The source of funding, and whether it takes the form of tied or untied grants, seriously affects this autonomy. In other words, if there is no fiscal decentralisation there will be no local democracy.

Central government has very little money of its own; it is almost all raised from local sources. While recognising the potential need to refocus funding between authorities to ensure that poorer deprived areas have sufficient to develop, it was felt that central government should not go beyond this. There is a limit to the traditional ways of raising revenue, so the innovations group looked at local sources that are already used and brainstormed about new ones which might be adopted. Existing and new sources of revenue for local government included:

- ◆ *Central government funds – dedicated funds, grants;*
- ◆ *Property tax;*
- ◆ *Commercial rates;*
- ◆ *Additional rates for specific purposes;*
- ◆ *Sales tax;*
- ◆ *Poll tax;*
- ◆ *Fees for building; billboards; municipal charges; car parking; fines for motoring offences; market fees; places of amusement/alcohol licences; impounding animals; garbage collection charges; service fees; legalised street vending charges;*
- ◆ *Claims for the cost of enforcing compliance;*
- ◆ *Funding from donor organisations;*
- ◆ *business sponsorship;*
- ◆ *Social responsibility funds from large local employers;*
- ◆ *Central government matched contributions for development for the ‘poor’;*
- ◆ *Private sector joint ventures;*
- ◆ *Borrowing on financial markets;*

- ◆ *Voluntary contributions in kind or labour;*
- ◆ *Selling services on the open market – for example the services of local authority architects, engineers, vehicle maintenance, financial services or project proposal writing. The authority might develop some services specifically to sell;*
- ◆ *Renting out tools and equipment to local people;*
- ◆ *Entrepreneurial activities on behalf of local people – for example setting up a canning factory in a farming district;*
- ◆ *Bonds and direct investment in local infrastructure;*
- ◆ *Bonds targeting returning residents who wish to invest in the community;*
- ◆ *Saving on contractors by contracting local organisations to maintain the services they use, for example requiring the local sports club to maintain the recreation fields.*

The group felt that the most promising new approaches would be:

- ◆ *Where the local authority has a niche service, it could consider offering it commercially. Concern was, however, expressed that its position as a regulator and issuer of licences might sometimes give a local authority an unfair commercial advantage; this needs to be avoided.*
- ◆ *The issuing of bonds to invest in infrastructure to attract industry and jobs to the area.*
- ◆ *Entrepreneurial activities for locals.*
- ◆ *The writing of project proposals for sponsorship from various funders.*
- ◆ *Joint ventures with the private sector.*
- ◆ *Contracting local organisations to maintain the facilities they use. This could include the upkeep of estates, and would save money, strengthen the community and build local capacity.*
- ◆ *In Jamaica and elsewhere, tourism and bauxite mining are very large earners of foreign currency, but little comes back to the local authorities concerned, even though mining and tourism both have a major impact on local people. It would therefore be appropriate for some of the funds generated to be returned to local government.*

Most of these suggestions would not only raise or save money for the local authority, but would also have other benefits for the community in terms of jobs, community involvement, capacity building or improved facilities and local environment.

5

Delivering Quality Services to All

Session 3 looked at the use of planning and monitoring for service delivery, the balance between direct delivery and forms of contracting out, the creation of effective partnerships to deliver services and what roles local government has in its area apart from the services it provides. Partnerships are looked at further in Chapter 7.

The introductory panel for this session considered some of the reasons for using local, rather than central, government to provide local services. Everyone wants more services and expects central government to provide them – devolved local government offers a mechanism to resolve the gap between funding and demand, as priorities must be set and local services paid for locally. As they are closer to the people, local government services should be cheaper, quicker and more relevant. Another reason for central government to devolve service delivery to the local level is that it can be very difficult and expensive to deal with local problems nationally. Surveys have found that ministries often use different local boundaries and operate independently, which leads to confusion, duplication and inefficiency. Everyone lives in a local community, no one lives nationally, so services are best provided locally.

Local government is therefore a cost-effective means of providing services, but the main problem is one of capacity at local level. Are there sufficient resources for the agreed services, or skills for effective planning, supervision, monitoring and financial control? Are local government salaries sufficient to attract and retain the best people? There needs to be a legal framework, but central government often passes laws without consultation with local government. In Trinidad, the ministry has overall plans, but each local authority is required to produce its own strategic plan. In New Zealand, the government sets the parameters and standards, but local government has to raise the funds through local charges and taxes and is accountable. Councils in New Zealand are not allowed to set a deficit budget, and so have to carry the public with them in their plans.

The working groups recognised that there is considerable variation in both capacity and practice, not only between countries, but even between parishes within the same country. However, it was felt that the key to service delivery is planning and knowing what the situation is in the area. Such planning must be genuinely participatory. Baseline surveys are expensive; few local authorities have the capacity or resources to undertake them, and central government will usually be unwilling to do so. However, it is vital to know what is available locally and it should be possible to draw up profiles from other sources. Data from the National Statistical Office may enable preparation of population profiles giving health and education needs, for example, though this may require central government to adapt the way the NSO data is presented. It may be necessary to reformulate the information in visual form for the non-statistician. Similarly, there is a need for an infrastructure profile or inventory. Without these profiles it is extremely difficult to assess priorities and needs. In addition, the local authority should try to draw up a database of the resources coming into the area from central government, including its human resources. Central sectoral ministries have outreach workers in many localities, and these can represent a large investment. A database can help to co-ordinate their activities, reducing duplication, waste and competition, and allowing a unified focus on key local issues. It was recognised that probably no local authority yet has all these in place and there will be a need for capacity building to achieve them.

In considering the merits of different methods of delivering services, the groups recognised that circumstances will always differ widely between councils and what they offer. They therefore attempted to prepare a framework for considering how best to deliver a particular service; this is set out in Section C2 of the Action Programme (Annex A). A council needs to take into account several factors, including the cost effectiveness of each option, the capacity of the council to deliver in terms of its staff and resources, the impact that the different forms of delivery will have on the community and other constraints. It can then consider the various delivery options available: in-house facilities, outside contractors, partnerships with other councils or civil society organisations, corporate sponsorships, self-help, etc. Finally, the council needs to take into account three potential problems which could affect the final decision. Is the method of delivery open to corruption, what difficulties will there be in monitoring and could there be political or other interference? Using this three-stage process should help

councils to decide how to deliver the services they wish to provide to their communities. One lesson which New Zealand has learned is that local authorities should not hand over critical infrastructure in total to the private sector. Even though the function may be privatised the ultimate ownership of the assets must remain with the council.

One group looked at some of the characteristics of partnerships for service delivery and identified several key factors. Stakeholders must be brought together into a reporting forum of open dialogue and introspection. There need to be clear goals and a framework for the partnership. Often the partnership will be dependent on the individuals within it, and care must be taken to break down barriers and try to ensure that political divisions do not intrude too far.

Professor Duncan referred to local governments providing 'just service delivery', so the innovations group looked at what valid roles there were for local governments 'beyond just service delivery'. They started by identifying some current activities already being undertaken, grouped these into six categories, and brainstormed some innovative measures under each category.

The current activities included:

- ◆ *Local planning, including integration of planning with other agencies and with neighbouring councils;*
- ◆ *Meeting corporate citizens to plan development;*
- ◆ *Youth development programmes;*
- ◆ *Neighbourhood development;*
- ◆ *Advocacy for the locality;*
- ◆ *Attracting investment to create local jobs;*
- ◆ *Managing functions locally for central government;*
- ◆ *Building social cohesion;*
- ◆ *Programmes to alleviate social 'ills';*
- ◆ *Senior citizens reports;*
- ◆ *Local public health;*
- ◆ *Managing environmental programmes;*

- ◆ *‘Cleanest Town Around’ programme;*
- ◆ *Changing the style of the local authority from a ‘civil service’ ethos to a much more entrepreneurial one, optimising the human resources with greater use of technology;*
- ◆ *Local policing with different roles from the general police;*
- ◆ *Innovative and constructive use of local infrastructure to provide local people with healthy lifestyles – concerts, art, exercise, etc.*

These activities were grouped into planning to meet needs, working to influence, human services, managing central government functions, and public protection and security.

From the above analysis six categories were identified ‘beyond just service delivery’:

- ◆ *Planning*
- ◆ *Development*
- ◆ *Advocacy*
- ◆ *Innovative management*
- ◆ *Public protection/security*
- ◆ *Investment.*

The measures which could be taken under each category are set out in section C4 of the Action Programme (Annex A).

6

Setting the Agenda for Regional Co-operation

Session 4 dealt with what should be done, where it could best be done (regionally or locally), who should do it and how all those present could take the process forward. This session included a paper by Dr Bishnu Ragoonath of the Department of Behavioural Sciences of the University of the West Indies in Trinidad, entitled 'Local Democracy and Good Governance in the Caribbean: An Agenda for Regional Co-operation' (see Part Two). This was followed by a panel discussion in plenary session and two discussion groups which focused on strengthening partnerships across the region, including the Caribbean Association of Local Government Associations (CALGA), and capacity building to strengthen local government. The innovations group for this session looked at partnerships; their findings are included in Chapter 7.

Dr Ragoonath stressed that local government is a foundation stone for good governance and is comprised of three ideals: democracy, development and good public management. Local government is a means of promoting democracy, but every function of local government has a development impact – for example, even cemetery maintenance impacts on health, economics (the provision of employment) and the psychological well-being of members of the community. Good public management should include good strategic planning, good human resource management and proper financial control. The primary goal of local government, though, is development, and this is a challenge in the Caribbean.

Throughout the region, when a crisis strikes, communities come together naturally. Governments help, but it is the local people who have to do things. Thus Dr Ragoonath felt that it is within the people that the genesis of success lies for advancement and for development. Local government must provide an enabling environment for this natural process. There is, however, a high degree of unevenness between local governments, which suggests a need for national co-ordination and co-operation. He felt that this was something that had not been sufficiently stressed in the symposium

so far; beyond the national was the regional. In some cases mutual support is already being provided. Dominica had gone to St Lucia to help review the need for elected local government and Antigua had come to Jamaica for ideas. However, while everyone talks about regional capacity building, the Certificate in Local Government Studies course run by his institution has only had local participants from Trinidad and Tobago.

The presentation encouraged delegates to see the region as having the potential within itself and the capacity to promote local government regionally. One challenge is a lack of political will in some territories. Dr Ragoonath challenged his audience to draft an agenda for regional co-operation. His comments were endorsed by members of the panel, who noted that this was the first time that a group of ministers had been present at a regional conference of this sort.

Concern was expressed over the role of administrators within local government. 'Mayors come and go, but administrators go on for ever!' Administrators are particularly strong in Jamaica and the Bahamas, and should guide the process of local government. They can now also be involved in CALGA. There is a need to recruit more staff at senior level, and the low salaries often paid to local government officers can make this difficult. In Jamaica there is now parity between officials in local and central government which it was hoped would lead to greater interchange between the two.

Good governance requires not only physical development, but also resource growth; policy-makers need training. There was support for the idea of creating a local government training programme which could be studied through distance education. Surprise was expressed that there had been only local take-up of the UWI Certificate course, but it was felt that if a distance course were developed it would be used more widely. There should be regional accreditation for training for local government staff. This would make it easier for them to move nationally between local authorities, between countries (there is free movement of labour within CARICOM), and between central and local government. This last is important because local and central government tend to be in silos and greater interchange between staff would allow each to learn from the other and to gain a broader understanding of how everything fits together. In India staff are given recognition for courses that they take, and this motivates them to undertake further studies in relevant disciplines.

One group developed a table of actions for regional capacity building:

Task	Who should do it
1. National and regional needs assessments.	1-3. Educators at all levels working with ministries/local governments/CALGA
2. Link needs to expertise in the region.	
3. Develop course methodologies to avoid 'classroom environment' and accommodate varying backgrounds.	
4. Develop uniform regional accreditation.	4. UWI/CALGA/Caribbean Forum of Ministers (CFM), Association of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions (ACTI)
5. Standardisation of skills/requirements across central and local government.	5. Local Government Ministries
6. Affirmative action for under-represented groups (women, indigenous), e.g. quotas, mentoring, training.	6. Local government associations, CALGA, CFM, CLGF (can use international experience, e.g. Australia)
7. Build culture of participation including training in participatory methods.	7. Civil society with local government agencies
8. Recognise that management practices and IT are critical to transforming local governance.	8. Ministries. National Service Commissions with professionals from relevant fields to help design courses
9. Creation of a Caribbean Institute for Local Government (based on the Indian model).	9. CALGA/CFM/CLGF/Donors
10. Approach donors regionally.	10. CALGA/CFM

At the caucus meeting for local government participants, CALGA was reformed and a new committee elected with wide representation across the region. One of the working groups reviewed its possible role and the needs it should address. CALGA should provide for:

- ◆ *Sharing of experiences;*
- ◆ *Identification of best practices;*

- ◆ *Provision of basic information (for example country profiles);*
- ◆ *Needs identification;*
- ◆ *Networking, including face-to-face contacts.*

It should do this by:

- ◆ *Defining clearly its own role and responsibilities;*
- ◆ *Meeting regularly and establishing working committees;*
- ◆ *Putting together a work plan;*
- ◆ *Improving relations with national bodies;*
- ◆ *Working with the Caribbean Forum of Ministers (CFM) to promote local government reform;*
- ◆ *Making proposals to member organisations and governments;*
- ◆ *Broadening its networking with other regional bodies, including UWI, OAS and OECS;*
- ◆ *Partnering with CLGF and UN-Habitat to strengthen national and regional local government bodies;*
- ◆ *Involvement in international fora;*
- ◆ *Drawing in support from the international agencies to build capacity.*

7

Partnerships – Including Relations Between Central and Local Government

One issue which came up repeatedly throughout the symposium was the partnership between central and local government. It was first mentioned in Session 1 (see Chapter 3), was discussed in Session 3 (see Chapter 5), was a major topic of debate in the round table discussion on the last morning and was the issue for the innovations group in the final session. It is therefore considered here as a separate theme, although it does not have a separate section in the Action Programme.

In introducing his paper, Dr Ragoonath reminded the symposium that Commonwealth Heads of Government had stated categorically that local government must be promoted and, at their 2003 summit had gone further by suggesting that local government in member countries should be constitutionally or legislatively defined. The table in his paper shows that nearly every country in the Caribbean has such legislation and that the problem is one of implementation. In the round table discussion it was claimed that it was not possible to reform local government without also redefining central government, as the two are inextricably linked. Local government reform is not just reform of local institutions, but implies a reform of the whole system and the relationship between each tier of government. This led to strong views being expressed about the basis of this relationship.

One minister stated his understanding that: ‘local government is a creature by law of central government’. He argued that local government cannot be successful, effective or efficient outside the ambit given it by central government. A group such as those who were attending the symposium could not redefine the role of central government because it was self-defining – central government was there to govern! He said that local government could not redefine the central government which created it: its authority derives from that national government. He argued that no local government has a responsibility to the electorate nationally; we should seek to

harmonise not compete – if there was competition, central government would not allow local government to win. Central government was elected by the same people as local government. He insisted that putting one's head in the sand and suggesting that central government was not the beginning and end of success of local government was a fallacy – it cannot happen.

Another minister fundamentally opposed this view. A country's constitution should represent the will of the people. It was not central government that was sovereign, it was the people. Reforming local government was not about removing power from central government, but for local government to assist because the first point of contact in any constituency are the councillors. He said that local initiatives such as the Jamaican 'workdays', were agreed locally, not nationally. Central government was there to empower, not impede, what is done at local level. For example, addressing problems of crime and violence should be done locally as much as nationally – the strength is in the local community. He declared that we should not be protectors of turf but protectors of the people.

It was suggested that this debate will always be there, but that the relationship will develop over time. Once it is defined and legislation is passed, it is also 'past', and will need further refining. Reform should be incremental. Another minister reiterated that the issue is sovereignty, which lies with the people, not with central government. He said that while it was true that local government can be administratively more effective than central government, there is also the political component. Local government is an aspect of democracy, and so cannot be left at the goodwill of central government. In Guyana, local government is enshrined in the constitution and is there in its own right, not as a creature of central government. Government is a creature of the people, and if the people decide to have local government, it becomes a partner with central government. In Jamaica, Parliament was unanimous that local government should become part of the constitution, and not be seen as a creature of central government.

The same debate occurs in Europe, where the UK national government sees local government not as a partner, but as subordinate. To prevent this one needs a fair robust system of local fund raising (see Chapter 4 above). South Africa's constitution defines national, provincial and local spheres

Local Government Partnerships

By working with local government **central government** can benefit from:

- Removal of duplication of effort;
- Being spared the 'headaches' of providing local services;
- Contributing to capacity building so that others will eventually take on new roles;
- Increased efficiency in handling issues;
- Working with the national diaspora, which can be a source of national resources.

Local government can work with many groups and can benefit accordingly:

- Working with others will help build capacity;
- There can be coherence of delivery if those involved co-operate;
- From corporate citizens it can obtain resources;
- It may be able to get the community to take responsibility for things;
- Co-operation can lead to greater social cohesion;
- From the diaspora it can obtain resources;
- There is a satisfaction in providing a good service which will also lead to re-election;
- Partnership gives an endorsement of independence.

The involvement in local government of **civil society** helps:

- Ease pressure for fund raising;
- Enhance the status of the civil society organisations involved;
- Give ownership and a sense of belonging;
- Build relations with a diaspora keen to 'maintain links at home'.

The **corporate citizens**, the businesses, commercial and other organisations in the area, can benefit from partnerships with local government because this will help:

- Build relationships with the community
- Create goodwill
- Develop economic benefit
- Encourage customers
- Provide an improved environment and infrastructure in the organisation's own location and surroundings.

of government and there is no hierarchy between them. They each exist in their own right with clearly defined spheres of responsibility. In Uganda, there are seven levels of elected governance from the village to the President, but power is seen as devolved from the centre. For local government to survive there has to be a very strong commitment from central government as well as from the people. This has been demonstrated by a recent change of minister in Uganda after ten years.

It was pointed out that Commonwealth Heads of Government had recognised the common status of local and central government by bestowing the same political mandate on both the Commonwealth Local Government Forum and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. However, there is a need to square this circle, and ultimately the key is partnership. Unless a participatory culture is developed, the different spheres of government will squabble for ever and nothing will be done.

The final innovations group considered the nature of partnership. In a true partnership, 'Everybody Wins' (see Chapter 4); so the group reviewed local government partnership and what was in it for the different bodies concerned. In seeking to encourage such partnerships these are points which can be stressed to the various potential partners.

8

International Response and General Outcomes of the Symposium

In the final sessions, the Montego Bay Action Programme was drawn up summarising the conclusions and recommendations of the symposium. The version finally agreed is included as Annex A to this report. The Programme was endorsed by the international agencies represented at the symposium, who expressed their support for the discussions that had taken place and gave an ongoing commitment to the process of promoting local democracy in the Caribbean.

The representative of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States said that while the OECS does not at present interface with local government institutions in the region, he felt this could bring benefits and was willing to explore opportunities to do so. The OECS is involved at national level with nine states in the empowerment of local communities, an area where local government is clearly important to ensuring sustainability. It has, for example, entered into a dialogue about how to ensure that local communities benefit from fisheries and marine reserves, from tourism, and from access to justice and the legal system. Thus, while the OECS does not currently interact with local government entities in the countries of the Eastern Caribbean, it should perhaps consider more direct contact as part of its work with local communities on the ground.

UN-Habitat's mandate is human settlements and urban development, and it strives to work always through partnership and through existing institutions, including private enterprise, civil society and all levels of government. Governance, as opposed to government, involves process, and the reconciliation of priorities and actors is at its heart. Habitat works within the context of Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on environmental sustainability and is focusing specifically on the following targets:

- ◆ *To halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015;*

- ◆ *To achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.*

The Caribbean and Latin America have the world's highest rate of urbanisation, so many of the issues discussed at the symposium are of great relevance to UN-Habitat and its two global programmes, which deal with secure tenure and urban governance. Habitat's Director General has said: 'An inclusive city promotes growth with equity'. Its Secretary General maintains that 'good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development'. Habitat has produced a local government toolkit, which contains tools for monitoring and assessment, such as the urban corruption survey and the public services scorecard, together with tools to improve access, such as oversight committees, one-stop shops and independent audit functions. The toolkit is available at www.unhabitat.org.

The only Caribbean country in which the National Democratic Institute for international affairs operates is Guyana, and it is now about to pull out. The NDI supports local government reform and decentralisation programmes; it provides comparative information and experts, and always operates with local partners. It has run training programmes on fiscal decentralisation, capacity building and conflict resolution, and has promoted exchanges of local government officers. It has organised programmes to increase women's participation and citizens' involvement in local government, and provided local government education to the indigenous groups which make up 10 per cent of Guyana's population. NDI also works with UN-Habitat and CLGF, and endorses the Commonwealth approach to sharing experience between member countries.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has also been working in Guyana at the request of local government, mainly to strengthen the capacity of municipalities and heighten community participation. People have been given the chance to work through the process of agenda setting from community to national level, and FCM hopes this pilot will be replicated in other Caribbean countries. There will also be some funding for 'enabling institutions', among which it would expect to class the renewed CALGA, which it would be keen to work with.

The Organisation of American States, and particularly its Unit for Promotion of Democracy, saw the symposium as building on and developing its work in the region and its collaboration with CLGF. In 2001, the

OAS called the first meeting of ministers responsible for decentralisation, with the twin objectives of renewing the commitments of central governments and developing common parameters for decentralisation through dialogue, co-operation and information exchange. This process must continue, particularly the hemispheric co-operation, decentralisation of local government and promotion of citizen participation. The OAS welcomed the Action Programme and felt that it had several important components. In creating the Forum of Ministers, the Caribbean is the first 'sub-region' to take this forward. Local government associations are essential to building dialogue between central and local government. The OAS will study the recommendations in the Action Programme for effective decentralisation and views the participatory process as going to the heart of democracy, and particularly local democracy. In answer to a question about access to OAS assistance, it was explained that the organisation has to work through its permanent missions and that governments need to make their mission aware that local government is a national priority.

Over the past four years, CIDA has been involved in two local government reform projects in Jamaica – one supporting the reform process and the other enhancing civil society. CIDA is committed to the promotion of good governance in the Caribbean and is currently developing its next ten-year investment programme in governance in Jamaica and the region. Its intention is to move from funding small projects to a programmatic approach, and it is committed to working with other international donors. Programmes will be country driven.

While not a donor organisation the Commonwealth Foundation is a grant-making body, working with and for civil society across the Commonwealth, with a long record of promoting citizen participation in the Caribbean. Because of the way it is set up the Foundation cannot fund people involved in government, but it can bring civil society organisations to the table. Its representative said that the Foundation was glad to have been able to sponsor the civil society participation at the symposium, something which had worked well and which it hoped to be able to do again. Discussions over the three days had suggested that perhaps the Foundation, in its work, should make more explicit the role of local government and local democracy, particularly, for example, in its 'Framework for action on maximising civil society's contribution to development and democracy', which was then in draft.

In the final session, Minister Portia Simpson Miller spoke of the event as 'a most successful, exciting and exhilarating symposium', one which would come to be recognised as an important milestone in the journey towards local democracy, good governance and the empowerment of the people of the Caribbean. She said that she had been delighted to find the same vision and passion for this in the other participants, but the emphasis now must be upon action. The three key outcomes from the workshop were:

- ◆ *The creation of a Ministers Forum;*
- ◆ *The re-creation of the Caribbean Association of Local Government Associations;*
- ◆ *The Montego Bay Action Programme.*

The participants must now implement the recommendations made in the Action Programme.

However, these three outcomes were not the only achievements of the symposium. The evaluation conducted with the participants revealed not only an overwhelming enthusiasm for the symposium's conclusions, but a commitment to issues which participants wished to pursue individually. These included:

- ◆ *A commitment by several central government participants who said they were going home to re-energise efforts for local government reform, to work to develop a harmonious relationship between central government, local government, civil society and the private sector, to increase community consultation and to spearhead the formation of a local government association.*
- ◆ *Pledges by local government participants to encourage participatory decision making; several spoke of working more closely with their national associations to foster partnerships with all stakeholders, to revisit local government reform and to fast-track this using the lessons learned. At a local level one spoke of 'making the literature available at a desk at the council in my parish', and another planned to 'develop the concept of an independent funding stream for local government'.*
- ◆ *A civil society participant was going to 'follow up pressure for a regional mechanism for Caribbean civil society collaborative action'.*

- ◆ *One of the regional organisations was going to ‘push to get the Certificate in Local Government Studies online’.*
- ◆ *Participants from the international organisations said they would work to strengthen CALGA and the national associations, and join with other international organisations to promote local democracy and share information. One planned to ‘create a group e-mail and exchange information with other delegates’, and another said, ‘I will use the excellent handbook for learning’.*

During the symposium one participant quoted from The Economist:

Of all the ills that kill the poor, none is as lethal as bad governance.

In her final speech, Minister Portia Simpson Miller urged all those present to take forward what had been agreed during the three days. She reminded them of Jesus’ parable of the talents where each person was to take what they had been given and use it to create more. The participants should take and use what they had received during the symposium, so that they too might be commended with the words: ‘Well done, good and faithful servant’.

PART TWO

Background Papers

1

Local Government and Governance for the Twenty-first Century: The Anglophone Caribbean

Neville C. Duncan

*Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic
Studies, University of the West Indies*

Government Commitment to Public Sector Reform

During the 1980s various attempts at public sector reform were made but the results were less than pleasing. Initially, most of these efforts were directed at reducing significantly the number of public sector workers. The destabilising effect of this was considerable. The Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD) was set up by governments, with financial and technical support from international agencies to give support to national efforts at training and to provide critical research. Reform units and ministries of public service were established in several countries. At the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government, held in the Bahamas on 6 July 1993, a proposal was endorsed for a working group on public sector reform and administrative restructuring. The working group conducted a series of country missions, workshops, case studies and two ministerial consultations and symposia during the period July 1993 to November 1994. Four major studies were carried out: on constitutional and administrative reform; on human resources management and development; on policy, management and implementation strategies for privatisation and divestment; and on financial management in the public sector.

It is now fully accepted by all Anglophone Caribbean governments that comprehensive, concerted and sustained attention must be given to public sector reform. Based on the major report submitted to the CARICOM Heads of Government Conference in July 1995, the Report on Public

Sector Reform and Administrative Restructuring in the Caribbean Community, sponsored by the Caribbean Development Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the CARICOM Secretariat, sufficient research and political commitment are now available to make it possible to move to the technical aspects of reform.

With regards to Guyana, the World Bank produced a series of reports on the public sector¹ and for the region as a whole it produced Public Sector Modernization in the Caribbean.² This process was recently strengthened in relation to the Anglophone Eastern Caribbean states by the submission of a detailed report on Public Sector Management and Reform in OECS Countries in March 1996. The Executive Summary was made available to those attending the inter-sessional meeting of CARICOM Heads of Government in Guyana on 2 March 1996. The reports are detailed and form a basis for the devising of action plans with an appropriate financial package to achieve significant public sector reform.

These and other reports are extremely valuable but they are very weak on issues of social sector participation and local government. Indeed, the social sector has received better treatment in development prescriptions arising out of reports commissioned by international financial and aid agencies in relation to individual Caribbean countries. The Anglophone Caribbean governments would agree with Dunshire that: 'we shall simply not cope with social change now, let alone in the future, if we rely on the railway for transport, the telegraph for communications, and bureaucracy for government'.³ The local government and local community development structures currently in place either exist in name only or they are insufficiently part of the national reform dynamic.

The Caribbean Socio-cultural Environment and Local Government

In general, the Anglophone Caribbean socio-cultural environment is favourable to local government, community development and poverty reduction measures. Most of these polities are marked by a commitment to liberal democratic policies, providing in each country a critical core of people with the knowledge and skills capable of providing guidance and leadership to individual and community efforts. The ethic of service is deeply embedded and arises out of the general religiosity of the population.

Whether they are Christian, Hindu or Muslim, thousands of people are motivated to take part in a variety of group actions and activities. This has served to moderate racial and ethnic tensions in countries such as Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana where there are very large East Indian populations. Given the hardships caused by natural disasters, in particular hurricanes and flooding, and by man-made disasters, such as economic recession and structural adjustment, Caribbean peoples are accepting a greater responsibility for their well-being and well-being. This is manifested in the rise of thousands of popular organisations as instruments for collective survival and strength.

Since the Human Development Index (HDI) utilises life expectancy at birth, the adult literacy rate, mean years of schooling and real GDP per capita, Caribbean countries, in general, have a good HDI profile.⁴ They are, therefore, well-positioned to lead the productive involvement of civil society in governance, poverty reduction and community development.

Current Levels of Local Democracy and Local Government

Some form of local government exists in most Caribbean countries. The administrative structures in the Anglophone Caribbean are derived from the British system.⁵ Local government authorities are subordinate partners within the unitary state systems that characterise the political structures of most of the Anglophone Caribbean states. They are in a subordinate relationship with central government in delivering services and formulating policy. For these reasons (and not because of the subordination) they are well situated to be important agencies for promoting community participation in civic affairs and community development – especially to relieve and reduce poverty and its generational transmission. Furthermore, as part of the structure of government (although some authorities do not have statutory or constitutional status) it should be easy for international donor agencies to interface with them without breaking the requirement to participate with and through governments.

Anglophone Caribbean authorities vary in many ways, from those which are established by the constitution to the informality characteristic of pre-local government formations. Although, with the exception of Guyana and Belize, the Anglophone Caribbean is made up of small island states, it is hugely diverse. For example, the Bahamas has over 700 islands and islets in its archipelago; while Dominica is very mountainous, Barbados is relatively flat; and population sizes vary.

Table 1: Status of Local Government in the Caribbean (2004)

Entire Island a Local Government System	No Local Government System	Informal Local Government System	Constitutional/ Legal Local Government System
Nevis Tobago	Barbados St Kitts	St Lucia St Vincent and the Grenadines Grenada Antigua and Barbuda	Belize Dominica Jamaica Guyana Trinidad The Bahamas

Of the constitutional/legal local government systems, the most articulated model is that in Guyana, where the local government system has a National Congress of Local Democratic Organs (NCLDO). All the members of the NCLDO and all the members of the National Assembly comprise the Supreme Congress of the People of Guyana, a central state organ. The most autonomous, at least on paper, is the decentralised local government system of Trinidad, where municipal councils and district councils have statutory status.

Caribbean models of local government should include the following features:

- ◆ *Constitutional or legal status – municipal and district councils;*
- ◆ *They should be statutory corporations so that local authorities can act fully as development agencies;*
- ◆ *They should be full elected;*
- ◆ *They should have well-defined financial autonomy;*
- ◆ *Local authorities should be explicitly established as community development and empowering agencies as part of their constitutional and legal mandate.*

The most desirable system is one in which local government councillors are elected representatives, operating under constitutionally enshrined authority, which identifies the boundaries of the areas of jurisdiction of a local government authority, its areas of competence and autonomy vis-a-vis central government and with sources of revenue which are substantially independent of central government. The responsibilities of local government are wide and ideally include the provision of basic public services; a

duty to foster economic growth in communities; action in collaboration with central government agencies and in co-operation with NGOs; and responsibility for establishing and maintaining welfare facilities and programmes. Finally, though not exhaustively, local government authorities should try to ensure the empowerment of the people they serve in their cities, towns, boroughs, villages or regions.

These features also serve to identify areas which need to be further strengthened, since these are only partially reflected in each country. It is evident that a political commitment to make revitalised and expanded local government more significant in each country, irrespective of its size and population, would advance the cause of equity and democracy. The low status of local government systems is illustrated by the fact that only about 1 per cent of national budgets is directly assigned to local government functions and that functions are anyway insignificant.

The efforts of the poor and disadvantaged have often been limited or stifled by the lack of adequate technological support. In addition, there needs to be a significant upgrade of the availability of administrative personnel. Local government, through its connections with central government, through its ownership and control of vital equipment and facilities, and in some cases through its elected status, is well-placed to help ensure food security, the creation of economically productive environments and improvements in the quality of people's lives.

Local government should not be bypassed in a context where the rapid growth of civil society organisations has generated numerous parallel organisations and popular institutions. It should be helped by constitutional, legal and institutional changes promoting decentralisation, devolution and democratisation of authority and power to be an integral part of the community development process. Increasingly, local government is demonstrating its willingness and capacity to move in this direction.

Local Government Systems in Selected Caribbean Countries

Barbados and St Kitts

Barbados and St Kitts do not have any type of representative or administrative local government system.

Barbados once had a strong tradition of local government, starting with

the vestry system and then the establishment of a more formal system. There were two very important reports on the reform of the system. However, the decision to abolish the local government system was made in 1967, after the new government felt that it could not tolerate the independent power that was exercised by local councils. Services which had been previously assigned to local government were transferred to various ministries of the central government. In 1969, public assistance was placed in the hands of a reformed and expanded welfare department.

While there was talk on political platforms about re-introducing local government, and two constitutional review commissions, no formal effort has been made to do so. Instead, a number of initiatives were taken which attempted to meet local needs. Community councils were created in every parish; they are voluntary bodies whose functions are to identify community needs and co-ordinate local activity. This structure currently embraces community councils, planning committees, management committees, residents' associations and action committees. Related groupings include neighbourhood watches (community protection against crime) and local branches of the Central Emergency Relief Organisation (CERO), called district emergency organisations.

All these work in concert with the Community Development Department, through community development and welfare (CDW) officers. A Youth Service has been set up with youth commissioners responsible for certain communities, again working through the CDW officers. In October 1994, the community councils created an umbrella body, the Association of Community Councils. The government has also established a Rural Development Commission. In 1999, a network of NGOs, the Barbados Association of Non-governmental Organisations (BANGO) was established. It has been working closely with the Ministry of Social Transformation, established in 1999, which now co-ordinates all these structures and has the objective of eradicating poverty and achieving social development. This is in fulfilment of the government's promise that nobody will be left behind in the drive for development. This pulling together of nearly all the units that deal with welfare and community development could constitute a nucleus for the development of a local government administrative system, with the possibility of allowing for elected representatives. There is still a need for a strategic planning workshop to broaden its mandate and be truly involved in social development.

St Kitts does not have local government, although Nevis, its sister island in the 'federation' of St Kitts and Nevis, is a local government ward within the federation. Peculiarly, St Kitts is governed by the federation. It has no national or local government. Nevis has no national government – that is to say, it is not a state.

It is obvious that it would be better if St Kitts had its own national or local government, with the federal government being separate from this. Nevis has revealed centripetal tendencies, probably because of the peculiar constitutional arrangements of the federation. A new model of government and governance is clearly needed.

Such a model should be simple and effective. A voice would then be given to Kittitians apart from the federal government. What is needed is a model in which each country in the federation has an equal opportunity to share, contribute to, hold state autonomy and reap the rewards of that unity.

In 1976 there was no difficulty in achieving a majority of over 90 per cent of Nevisians who voted for separation from St Kitts. In 1998 this support was importantly modified but was still very strong. Again in 2003 there was a referendum on the status of Nevis but in a low turnout the vote fell just short of the requisite majority. Due recognition should be given to the fact that the high degree of autonomy possessed by the Nevisian Assembly helped. Perhaps there was also a recognition that international realities are not easy and can be especially dangerous for micro-states, even within the framework of a larger federation. Additionally, the present government of the federation has made it clear that it favours even more autonomy for Nevis on transparent and equitable terms.

The current government of St Kitts and Nevis, elected in 2000, is willing to continue the negotiations for a new political arrangement which began in earnest under the previous administration. It seems to be of the greatest importance that St Kitts (and its representatives) finds an effective formula to separate itself from the efforts of the Federal Government in this process. Otherwise, credence may be given to the Nevisian view that the Federal Government of St Christopher/Nevis was all along the true government of St Kitts only.

A new Federal Government would act as a true intermediary, presiding equitably over its own transformation in a manner satisfactory to the electors of both countries. It should be fully understood that all parties repre-

sented in the legislative assemblies will be full partners in this process and that there will be a full national consultation.

Out of every disappointment comes good. The failure to secure the required percentage to formally and legally secede from the federation should put the Premier of Nevis and his colleagues in the right frame of mind to work towards an effective solution. Prime Minister Douglas, on the other hand, cannot take comfort from the failure, since a high percentage of Nevisians voted for secession. In any case, the situation gives the Federal Government the opportunity to prove that it is seriously committed to achieving a win-win outcome. This outcome should satisfy both Nevisians and Kittitians, without destroying the federation. This is a critical moment for the people of St Kitts and Nevis.

Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, St Lucia, and St Vincent and the Grenadines

These countries have local government administrative arrangements but council members are not elected by the people.

Antigua and Barbuda

Antigua and Barbuda has a local government administrative framework, with local government staff and 17 district councils. The councils are grouped into four zones under the supervision of a local government officer. At a lower level, voluntary village councils are encouraged to promote the widest possible participation by citizens. These are then grouped into district councils, which reflect national constituency boundaries. The island of Barbuda has a special status and is empowered to raise funds to provide services for its residents.

Each district council comprises at least five members, from whom a chairman and secretary/treasurer are chosen. The local Member of Parliament sits as an ex officio member. One local government officer and his assistant are responsible for servicing three councils.

Councils submit annual reports to the local government officer. The district councils meet once a month and zonal meetings are held quarterly. The local government officer holds a general meeting once or twice a year with all the members of the councils. The councils are obliged to raise all the funding, under greater restriction than in Barbuda, for their programmes. Members are nominated.

Few of the stated objectives are achieved, hardly any resources are mobilised and there is very little community participation. There is practically no opportunity for participation in the workings of the governmental machinery or involvement in decision making.

Grenada

For 103 years, Grenada had a formal local government system (1889–1969). After its abolition, its functions were carried out by a committee on local government. This in turn was replaced with a new structure in the period 1979–83. Since the restoration of constitutional government in December 1984, successive governments have promised local government. At present there is no elected local government system and what exists administratively is virtually non-functional.

Three bills were proposed for the establishment of local government for the islands of Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique. The St George Borough bill sought to establish a municipal borough council for St George City, with an elected mayor. The District Council Bill sought to establish eight district councils for the island of Grenada based on parishes, with a chairman chosen by the elected councillors. In Carriacou and Petit Martinique there were to be county councils with elected chairmen, including a zonal agency for Petit Martinique. The proposed structure was thus made up of ten councils, consisting of a borough council, eight district councils and a county council. There were to be three categories of members: elected councillors (one for each ward – 135 in all, with each ward roughly equivalent to a polling division; three co-opted councillors in each council; and the sitting member of parliament or his or her nominee. A national local government review committee and a standing co-ordinating forum was to be established, with members drawn mainly from among the councillors.

Regrettably, these proposals never came to fruition. General elections were held in 1999 and 2003, but local government is still merely a promise. The 1999 elections produced a Parliament without an officially elected opposition. In a context such as this a local government system giving voice to people in localities becomes more than ever necessary. Central government needs to be counterbalanced by functioning, vibrant and relatively autonomous local government councils, especially in mini- and micro-states.

St Lucia

Local authorities for town and villages in St Lucia were established by an ordinance of 1947. Compared with other Eastern Caribbean states, this was a late development. This may have been because the Anglican Church, through whose agency the vestry system was set up, was weak in St Lucia which was primarily Catholic. In addition, the island changed colonial rulers very frequently.

St Lucia was then divided into ten districts. The districts, urban, village and rural, came under the jurisdiction of town, village and district councils, respectively. The town councils had seven to nine members who were either wholly elected or a mix of nominated and elected members. The village and district councils had five to seven members, who were all nominated. In practice, the political party which formed the government dominated the councils. This system became virtually non-functioning.

In 1985 a more participatory system was introduced and the island was divided into eight regional divisions with a community development officer appointed by the central government assigned to each. Council membership was made up of both elected representatives and government-appointed personnel. Regional clerks were assigned the task of co-ordination, assisted by town and village clerks. A regional technical co-ordination committee, drawn from central government, was formed to work along with these divisions. But this change never came into effect.

Maintaining a local government framework was a task assigned in 1989 to the Ministry of Community Development. A community development officer was assigned to each region to integrate the central government's decentralisation programme and the community development programme.

The formal position today is that, up to the change of the national government, local government authorities were nominated by the minister responsible for local government. The electoral process is yet to be reinstated. Most of the authority and power once vested in the councils is now held by central government and administered through various ministries and other agencies, including quasi government and non-governmental structures. There is hardly any consultation with the local authority and financial resources are limited.

The present government has been working to put in place local government reform. In 1998, with funding from the Caribbean Development

Bank (CDB), a research consultancy was undertaken. High priority was given to this process by the government. The aims were explicitly stated: to ensure the participation of citizens in development planning and management of their respective communities; to make effective the basis for facilitating the exchange of information on local needs as well as the channelling of political demands from communities to national ministries; and to ensure efficiency and equity in the allocation of public resources, as a means of alleviating poverty at community level. So the new governance arrangements, embracing a reformed and revitalised local government system are intended to mobilise the human and material resources within communities, permit regional decentralisation and local autonomy, and promote local responsibility for designing and implementing developmental programmes.

The remit is to carefully explore alternative local government systems and structures and consult with all stakeholders to ensure that the system and structure adopted is relevant and compatible with the wishes of the communities they will serve. This process has been surprisingly attenuated, although it seems possible that a new local government system may come into effect in 2004.

St Vincent and the Grenadines

Until 1975, an elected local government system was in place in St Vincent and the Grenadines, with 12 elected councils. These consisted of five small town boards, five district councils, two village councils and the Kingstown Board. The elected councils were abolished in 1975. Aspects of the old structure were continued through a clerk, who reported to the local government officer appointed by central government. This officer was responsible to the ministry responsible for local government. The main functions related to dealing with sanitation, upkeep of government buildings and other physical infrastructure. The previous government, which had been in power since 1985, set up a commission to review local government but the process was never completed. The Kingstown Board operates independently of this process, reporting directly to the ministry. It is responsible for collecting taxes, general licences, fees and property rates in the Kingstown area. The purpose is limited to the delivery of services.

Civil protests in St Vincent by growers of marijuana have further highlighted the need for structures which give a voice to the people and allow for peaceful resolution of issues and the development of local communities.

Prime Minister Gonsalves has outlined a vision for local government reform and has launched a campaign in this regard. But the implementation process has still not really begun.

Dominica

Dominica stands out from the rest of the Eastern Caribbean because of the antiquity and continuity of its local government system and its vibrancy.

In 1996 the Commonwealth of Dominica celebrated the centenary of the Roseau City Town Board which was set up in 1896. Village boards for Portsmouth and several other areas were also established in 1896. Over time, legislation was approved which upgraded these boards to councils. Dominica now has Roseau City Council, Portsmouth Town Council, the Carib Council and the Canefield Urban Council, together with 34 village councils. Another decisive development was the creation of seven district councils comprising delegates from each village council within their areas. This multi-tiered system has allowed village councils to focus on matters pertaining exclusively to their particular village. Through the district councils it provides a framework within which issues which overspill village boundaries can be addressed.

A third and vital tier is the umbrella organisation, the Dominica Association of Local Authorities (DALA). This body oversees and gives general direction to local government structures and seeks to avoid duplication of activities. Notwithstanding the important role played by the local government commissioner and his office in the ministry, DALA seeks to self-regulate and achieve efficiencies and greater effectiveness. Its term of office is for a year and it is made up of three delegates from each district council, and one delegate each from Roseau City Council, Portsmouth Town Council and the Carib Council. The executive is elected at an annual general meeting at which a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, public relations officer and one committee member is elected. The executive meets as often as is necessary, but must meet at least once every three months.

DALA has been deemed a very effective body and has offered considerable support and advice to district councils, individually and collectively. It appears to effectively supervise and co-ordinate the activities of the councils and assists with strategic planning.

Essential questions relate to the strengths, weaknesses and future prospects

of developing local government to play a full role in a new and dynamic governance structure in Dominica. The purpose is to meet the complex, diverse and exciting challenges of restructuring. Local government have a bigger role, with more authority and autonomy, and greater effectiveness and efficiency, within a truly participatory and democratic framework involving all the social partners. Dominica already has a good base and is committed to the introduction of a more comprehensive framework to strengthen the state at local and central levels.

The Commonwealth of Dominica is comprehensively covered by local representative councils which provide real opportunities for local participation. With much justification, Dominica is regarded as having a vibrant local government system. The decision to create the office of local government commissioner, which heads the administrative arm of local government affairs in the Ministry of Community Development and Social Affairs, was an important development. The commissioner is assisted by district development officers and community development assistants.

There thus exist credible structures upon which to build a truly participatory democratic system with a renewed and reconceptualised local government system as a decisive partner with central government and other non-state organisations and actors. Regrettably, financial challenges facing successive administrations have negatively affected local government development, based on a report commissioned by the Caribbean Development Bank in 1998.

Nevis⁶

Nevis is part of the federation of St Christopher/Nevis. However, it is not a state. It only achieved the considerable degree of autonomy it now enjoys with an island legislature after a struggle. Yet it is in a federation, which is normally an arrangement between states of equal status. It is, by association with St Kitts, part of an independent and sovereign federal state, but is not itself independent. The fact that it is a local government ward and has a deputy governor general means that it has most of the trappings of an independent state. In contrast, Tobago, which also has an autonomous island legislature, is part of the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago. If Nevis had really wished to, it could have acknowledged two governments – the island legislature in Nevis and the federal government. The Nevisian government has chosen to see the federal government as the government of St Kitts. This has been so even when it required a coalition

between a Nevisian party and a St Kitts party for a federal government to be formed. This makes the local government system of Nevis special.

The Nevis island legislature is comprised of five elected members representing the five parishes in Nevis, plus three nominated members (two appointed by the government and one by the opposition). The Nevis local government has powers to make laws, which are styled ordinances, for peace, order and good governance in the island.

Belize

The existence and operational structure of local government is not acknowledged in Belize's constitution. Nevertheless, there have been official governing bodies at local level. Acts of Parliament describe the election, powers and functioning of municipal governments, but there are no clear criteria or processes for deciding which population areas are to become towns or cities. In 1998 the House of Representatives passed the Village Council Act which legalised and defined the role and powers of village councils (Belize has over 130 villages). Unlike the municipalities, village councils have historically received no public funds and have very limited authority to manage village affairs. A minimum population of 200 has been set for villages to qualify to come under the Act. There are four forms of local government – city councils, town boards, village councils and the alcalde system. In 1999 key amendments were made to the Belize City Council Act and to the Town Board Act that govern city and town councils. The alcalde system in southern Belize is the traditional Mayan equivalent of the village council system.

Belize City is presently the only city in the country, with Belmopan scheduled to become one in March 2000. There are seven town boards – Corozal, Orange Walk, San Ignacio, Benque Viejo, Dangriga, Punta Gorda and San Pedro. Councillors are elected every three years to city councils (ten councillors and a mayor) and town boards (six councillors and a mayor) in a highest vote system. Recent amendments made to the Belize City Council and Town Board Acts allow for the direct election of mayors. Both cities and towns have very limited legislative powers and operate by receiving subventions from central government and by collecting a limited number of taxes and fees. Historically, the major political parties have competed for control of Belize City and of the towns. The election turnout in local government elections is lower than that for national elections and have been falling steadily since independence.

A recent constitutional commission report argued that greater autonomy for local government bodies would enhance democracy, effective government and people's participation.

The Bahamas

Local government was introduced into the islands of the Bahamas with locally elected officials being charged with certain local responsibilities.

Local government in the Family Islands falls administratively under the Department of Local Government in the Ministry of Transport and Local Government. The Family Islands are divided into 19 districts administered by 23 commissioners appointed by the government and supervised from Nassau. Several of the larger islands, which have relatively larger populations, have been split into several districts. In addition to the commissioners, elected House of Assembly members often deal with local matters, filling the void created by the absence of an elected local government.

A Local Government Act came into effect in 1996. Town areas and district councils were established with their committees established as bodies corporate with perpetual succession and common seal. The first elections were held in 1996 beginning with 23 local government districts. Elections are to be held every three years. Financial resources are provided by Parliament and as the Minister of Finance may, by order, direct.

Guyana

Guyana's 1980 constitution divides the country into ten regions, each with a regional democratic council and a regional chairman. Regional councillors serve five-year terms concurrent with the term of the National Assembly, and councillors from every region elect from among themselves one member to sit in the National Assembly and two members to sit on the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs. The executive president may suspend or dissolve any regional democratic council at will. The local government system was designed to decentralise government and place greater political power in the hands of the people. Resistance by the President to sharing power, and the regional governments' fear of dismissal without recourse have, in effect, severely limited the capability of regional government to enact policy.

Six towns in Guyana are incorporated: Georgetown, Corriverton, Linden, New Amsterdam, Bartica and Anna Regina. Each town has a mayor and

town council, which are responsible for maintenance of the municipality. However, city officials lack a political mandate or any real power beyond the exercise of municipal duties and are usually political appointees of the People's National Congress.

Jamaica

The English vestry system introduced in Jamaica in 1655 was based on elected members and a regional governor or custos. The latter was directly responsible to the governor and can be considered a form of decentralised authority, having powers as head of the local magistracy and titular head of the parish. From as many as 22 parishes in 1841, Jamaica finally settled for 13 parishes. From 1947 local government elections were based on adult suffrage, and by 1956 the boards were replaced by parish councils comprising fully elected members with responsibility for administration of the parish, but subject to overriding central government control.

Like Trinidad, Jamaica has spent a considerable amount of time considering the introduction of significant local government reform. There have been frequent, and sometimes important, new legislation or regulations on the operations of the local government system. The most recently published statement was on the provision of a regional framework for local government and development. Local government dates back to the seventeenth century. The major parties had opposing views on the place of local government in Jamaican political life. In 1985, the Jamaica Labour Party, which at that time took a more limited view of local government's role, amended the Parish Council Act to reduce the powers and authority of local government and apportion its major functions to central government agencies and institutions. Local government languished for a while but some measures helped to revitalise it: provision of autonomous sources of funding for local authorities; a capacity-building programme, the establishment of development committees, the streamlining of commercial services and the establishment of the principle of parity between local government staff and their counterparts in central government. Nevertheless, more far-going recommendations arising out of several local government reports from the local government ministry are yet to come to fruition. There is now an interesting situation where most parish councils are controlled by the opposition party; the question now is whether this will in any way slow progress towards transformation of local government and its elevation within the structures of governance.

Trinidad

In 1994, the first local government elections were held in Trinidad after more than two decades. Since 1979 the island had been divided into ten regional administrations based on a Local Democratic Organs Act. A restructuring of the regional democratic councils and rationalisation of functions by the municipalities have been given special attention with the establishment of a ministry for local government. However, the process has been stalled. These changes would have made the local government system the most autonomous, at least on paper, in the Anglophone Caribbean among those which have statutory status. This status has been conferred on municipal councils and district councils. The introduction of regional corporations in 1990 contained the potential for further decentralisation by granting revenue-raising powers to the local authorities, but so far the necessary legislation has yet to be enacted. As in Jamaica, very little substantial devolution of authority and power has occurred, especially in relation to the devolution of decision-making authority and the provision of relatively strong self-financing modalities for local government.

Key Issues

These sketches provide a picture of wide variation in local government arrangements in the Caribbean. Should St Kitts and Barbados consider a local government system? Certainly in St Kitts it would probably help to separate the Kittitian government from the federal government and allow for a proper federal arrangement between Nevis and St Kitts. In Barbados, the government has engaged in many activities, issuing from the Ministry of Social Transformation which should probably be consolidated in a local government system and which would then allow for more local democracy and empowerment in towns and localities.

Tobago may one day prefer to be a full state as part of a federation with Trinidad. Trinidad itself has seen the need for an effective and empowered system of local democracy and governance.

Commentary

Some countries have a local government electoral process and others have striven to achieve a measure of democracy and good governance at local level. The vertical relationship with central government is one of strong subordination of local government arrangements to central government

direction and financing. Horizontal integration with central government and its decentralised structures and agencies has been weak, at best. Fiscal and governance decentralisation and devolution have not been achieved, although they have been promised in some of these countries by the political directorate. Caribbean governments have appeared to acknowledge the failure of existing modes of service delivery (by both central and local government) and new concepts of local development and alternative services delivery have been discussed. Nevertheless, a high degree of inaction occurs, especially when a new political party takes power at national level.

At the regional integration level, the local government association has been struggling to participate in Heads of Government and inter-sessional meetings on the same basis as the Caribbean Congress of Labour, the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce and the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (an NGO network). This failure to secure real participation in the various activities of CARICOM also means effective non-participation in negotiations related to the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the Regional Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union, and in several bilateral negotiations and agreements with countries in the region. This is unfortunate. The activities of local governments are severely affected by international agreements and local government has lost out on opportunities for direct international technical and financial support.

Key Opportunities and Challenges

The single most important opportunity for local government is for it to develop a model for local development and systematically seek to implement it within the framework of national development strategies. This would considerably increase the role, position and importance of local governance within the national governance system. This national system would then experience a significant reform, strengthening local participation, democracy and the effectiveness of service delivery.

Given the differing socio-economic, political and cultural features of Caribbean societies, models of development will vary. However, it is posited that the model should contain the features identified above. The status of local government as a corporation is necessary if the institution is to be enabled to be truly relevant to community needs. Such an authorisation, designed to allow communities real opportunities for growth and

revitalisation should be based on the following guiding principles:

- ◆ *Economic opportunity;*
- ◆ *Sustainable community development;*
- ◆ *Community-based partnerships; and*
- ◆ *A strategic vision for change.*

The first priority in revitalising communities is to create economic opportunities – jobs and work. The creation of jobs, both within the community and throughout the region, provides the foundation on which residents will become economically self-sufficient and communities can regenerate themselves. Opportunities for entrepreneurial initiatives, small business expansion and training for jobs that offer upward mobility are other key elements in providing economic opportunity and direction.

This process must not ignore the fact that disadvantaged communities are in that condition partly because, in various ways, they have been drawn into the global order. A set of activities must be designed to fit within this context of a globalising world, as insulation is not feasible at this time. Much infrastructural and economic work needs to be carried out throughout the Caribbean region. This indicates that a development policy for crisis regions that transcends the provision of emergency aid or ‘niche economy’ practice, which currently exists, is an essential requirement.⁷

At a previous OAS Caribbean consultation an argument was presented for a new economic system expressly designed for this ‘third economic sector’. This third sector distinguishes itself as much as from the traditional market economy as from the state (central government)-directed economy. This sector would be designed to achieve what traditional concepts of economic policy have not achieved, since they merely ‘refurbish’ individual parts at the cost of the whole. A change of perspective is required. This must involve the following five elements:

- ◆ *A new economic dimension;*
- ◆ *Social investment;*
- ◆ *Employment rather than unemployment;*
- ◆ *Adjacent markets; and*
- ◆ *Sustainable development.⁸*

These elements are relevant to the Caribbean situation and explain why a significant role in giving voice to people in localities must be assigned to a revitalised and refashioned local government system, with a strongly enhanced civil society component.

In addition, there is the concept and practice of sustainable livelihoods. This is a complementary concept as it acknowledges the existence of crisis regions often cut off from the benefits of mainstream economic growth and development strategies. As Birkholzer has stated, paradoxically, crisis regions reveal no lack of work, despite the prevalent high unemployment figures.⁹ Consequently the objective of labour market policies must be to finance the necessary work, instead of financing unemployment.¹⁰ Long-term joblessness has been provided for neither in the principle of unemployment insurance, nor in the traditional tools of job creation policies.¹¹ Long-term unemployment is, on the contrary, an inadequacy of the economic system itself, not of the individual affected.¹² A development so pervasive and so high-level needs institutional arrangements more deliberate and permanent than civil society participation or decentralised agencies and central government projects. It needs a reformed system of local governance in which local government plays a more official and central role.

The key to the achievement of a 'third economic sector' is obviously renewed and revitalised local government as a vital pillar in a new structure of community governance. Local government should become the primary official institution, at the level of localities and communities, which is invested with the authority and power to act in the collective interests of those residing in the area. It is therefore vital that radical and urgent reform of the local government system is undertaken within the framework of a new system of governance, and an additional model of economic development, in order to achieve these major new tasks.

Sustainable Community Development

The creation of jobs is the first critical step toward the creation of a vibrant community where human initiative, work and stable families can flourish – a community where streets are safe to walk in, the air and water are clean, housing is secure and human services are accessible, and where a vital civic spirit is nurtured by innovative design. This is the sort of community that can be a source of strength and hope to its residents.¹³ A vibrant community is one where learning is a commitment for life, which

in turn can foster the skills, habits of mind and attitudes that will make work rewarding and families nurturing.¹⁴ These expectations are all reasons why citizens set up the state. They represent the responsibility of the state to ensure these collective and public goods. Leaving this achievement to private business and civic action would therefore be a serious dereliction of statal duty. To be sure, in a liberalised world, partnerships with the entire non-state sector may prove efficacious. But ultimately it is the state's responsibility to provide public goods; it should do so in a highly devolved system in the contemporary and future Caribbean.

Community-based Partnerships

People in their communities and localities are the most important elements of revitalisation. The fundamental error would be for the political and administrative leadership of central government to believe that the road to economic opportunity and community development is theirs alone. This road must be traversed in partnership and collaboration with wide participation by all segments of the population in each community or locality. Central government, through a reformed and revitalised local government, should ensure that the process occurs simultaneously throughout the realm (that is national in scope and not merely a set of scattered projects). Central government needs to recover, for state action, through a new governance arrangement at the local/community level, the responsibility for the collective good while permitting significant participation by non-state actors in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of such a programme. Part of the reason for this is the certainty that in this world marked by complexity, diversity and dynamism¹⁵ private and non-profit support and involvement are critical elements for success and sustainability. The selection of a style of governance based primarily upon co-operation, trust and mutual understanding among multi-sector social partners is now a preferred option for many.¹⁶

The Role of the State

The central government should require a comprehensive and strategic plan that is able to achieve real change in localities and communities supervised and authenticated by reformed local governance structures. Once the community manifestly designs and drives the strategy and implementation plan, the government should commit to remove burdensome regulations and work to ensure compatibility with national strategic plans and

actions. These should be accomplished, discussed and revised before the national budgetary exercise each year and should compete with ministries on an equal footing.

Central government should also be prepared to mainstream ‘third economy’ activities in the national budget. In most Caribbean states rural poverty exceeds urban poverty. This produces constant population movements away from rural areas into the sprawling poverty-stricken shanty towns around major cities and towns. This calls for a deliberate reallocation of significant amounts of national revenues away from cities and major towns to townships, villages and remote areas. It requires bold but necessary political action, incorporated into the national planning and budgetary processes. Of course, this mainstreaming of local government would occur through a ministry of local government.

A major call to central government is for fair funding for local government. The present tax-sharing arrangements are unfair and yield vertical fiscal imbalance. Local government needs access to a stable tax base with real levels of growth. Central government allocations should be around 5 per cent of the returns from the consumption tax. Such an allocation would be used for:

- ◆ *Roads and transportation (goods and persons);*
- ◆ *Water, environment and national heritage;*
- ◆ *The development of long-term strategies to overcome the problems of ageing populations and orphaned children;*
- ◆ *Ensuring regional development equity, especially for crisis regions;*
- ◆ *The creation of special learning opportunities in disadvantaged regions;*
- ◆ *Implementation of strategies to resolve the shortage of doctors in remote, rural and outer metropolitan areas, including funding local government to provide specific packages to attract doctors to communities where demand is not being met.¹⁷*

Of course, if central governments are not prepared to move in these directions, then there is a fall-back position. This would be to establish community and locality empowerment funds and agencies, integrating as far as possible the varied programmes and projects undertaken by the state, business, labour, NGOs, CBOs, charitable and professional associations

and groups, in and across communities. But this is a less desirable choice and would represent merely a marginal improvement on the current situation.

Other aspects of a fall-back position would be for central government to facilitate flexibility in the roles and functions of local and central government. This could lead to improvement in the exchange of information between spheres of government, the adoption of flexible administrative and fiscal requirements, and the improvement of vertical and horizontal programme integration between and across local and central government.

While some administrative and technical improvements might thus be achieved, no significant change in people's empowerment and community empowerment would be attained. Sustainable development for all would become extremely difficult to achieve and both environmental redress and democratic participation would be marginalised.

Conclusion

Local government empowerment is about insisting that the Third Millennium must provide for rule by people and communities. In the Caribbean, our governments point with pride to the ultra-modern airports, seaports, highways, high-rise offices, growing services industries and apartment/condominium buildings as signposts of our emergence into the twentieth and twenty-first century. Yet everywhere rural economies and urban inner cities and towns have been devastated. In the face of rapid environmental degradation and the unravelling of once value-laden and powerful communities, most people are getting poorer, the quality of their lives is deteriorating and outward migration is speeding up. Even these communities are not immune from high levels of violent crime.

We can make a choice against corporate globalisation and for people and communities. This is the right time to deepen national commitment and resistance to the forces that are weakening and marginalising Caribbean economies. Getting all localities and communities involved at points at which they can meaningfully act strengthens democracy and the capacity to go beyond merely surviving and functioning in the changing world order. It should become the main way of responding to many of the negative changes occurring at the regional and global levels that have an impact on the quality of well-being of households in communities and localities, especially those marginalised by the divisive modernisation of economies.

Notes

- 1 *For example, Guyana Public Sector Review, Country Report No. 11753-GUY, Washington DC, May 1993; and Guyana Public Administration Staff Appraisal Report, Report No. 11258-GUA, Washington DC, March 1993.*
- 2 *World Bank, Public Sector Modernization in the Caribbean, Report No.15185 CRG, Washington DC, April 1996.*
- 3 *Andrew Dunshire, 'Modes of Governance', in Kooiman, Jan (ed.), Modern Governance, Sage Publications, London, p. 23.*
- 4 *Human Development Report 2003. Millennium Development Goals: a compact among nations to end human poverty, UNDP, Oxford University Press, New York.*
- 5 *Although Trinidad can point to Spanish tradition and Guyana to Dutch inheritance, it was the British influence that has determined how local government is now organised.*
- 6 *See also section on St Kitts above.*
- 7 *Birkholzer, Karl (1996). 'Promoting Community Self-Reliance in Europe', Development, Journal of the Society for International Development.*
- 8 *Centre d'Etude et de Promotion des Relations entre les Pays de la C.E. et de l'Amérique latine Bruxelles, le 26 mars 2003 (CERCAL) cercal@ulb.ac.be*
- 9 *Birkholzer, op. cit., pp. 60–63.*
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 *Centre d'Etude et de Promotion des Relations entre les Pays de la C.E. et de l'Amérique latine Bruxelles, le 26 mars 2003 (CERCAL) cercal@ulb.ac.be*
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 *Kooiman, op cit., pp. 36–37.*
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 *These are similar to calls made by the Canadian Association of Local Government Authorities, alga@alga.asn.au*

2

Local Government and Good Governance in the Caribbean: An Agenda for Regional Co-operation

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At the 1997 Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, the Committee of the Whole 'recognised that effective, elected local government is an important foundation for democracy' and expressed 'encouragement and support for local government's role in ensuring sustainable development, including the promotion of trade and investment'. It may be instructive to note that notwithstanding the attendance of several Heads of State at that meeting, few reforms have been effected in the local government systems of the Caribbean and there has been no significant extension of local democracy in the region. In fact it could be argued that there has been a decrease in elected local government since, in Guyana, local government elections which were due in 1997 have not been held to date. With respect to reforms of existing local government systems, Belize and Jamaica are the only two states that have substantively reformed their systems in the intervening period, thereby helping local governments to promote some degree of sustainable development. Consequently, in spite of the position affirmed in 1997, as a region the Commonwealth Caribbean cannot boast of having significantly promoted effective, elected local government; nor have the majority of member states supported local government in ensuring sustainable development.

Against this backdrop, six years later at the 2003 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting held in Abuja, Nigeria the Edinburgh position was reiterated. On this occasion, Heads of Government not only re-affirmed the values attached to elected local government as a foundation of democracy, but went further and suggested that constitutional and legal

recognition should be given to the sphere of local government. Several Caribbean Heads of State participated in this conference, including the President of Guyana (where local government is constitutionally entrenched, but where elections are long overdue) and the Prime Minister of Barbados (where no formal form of local government exists), and the question now arises as to what support can be offered to Caribbean states to facilitate their adherence to the position adopted in December 2003. It is in this context that this paper seeks to make a contribution.

The paper takes as its point of departure the argument that effective, elected local government is a foundation stone for good governance. The first section focuses on explaining good governance and illustrates how it can be facilitated by local government. The paper then looks at local government systems in Caribbean Commonwealth countries. Placing local democracy in context, the paper will illustrate that while existing local government systems in the Caribbean have begun to evolve, they are still largely emergent. Moreover, there remain various challenges that serve to restrain and restrict the further development of these local government systems; these are discussed and elaborated upon.

As noted above, although local government systems in the Commonwealth Caribbean can be described as emergent, there have been significant developments in some of them. These advances have largely been the result of initiatives of central government or of local council actions undertaken under the auspices of either a national local government association or the Caribbean Association of Local Government Authorities. The paper describes and discusses some of these activities before looking at future perspectives.

With the understanding that there have been some advances in local government systems in the Caribbean, it is noted that they have not been uniform across the region. One reason for the lack of uniformity is that apart from CALGA there have been no real successes in facilitating regional co-operation to strengthen local government. Put differently, local government reforms have largely been viewed as an internal, rather than regional, issue. However, cognisant of the fact that 'elected local government is an important foundation for democracy' it is the responsibility of the entire Caribbean community to ensure that this bastion of democracy develops and is sustained. Accordingly, this paper will explore the possibilities of regional co-operation and conclude with a possible agenda

for regional co-operation as it relates to strengthening local democracy.

The paper is presented as a point of departure for further discussion on issues of regional co-operation to strengthen local government within the context of good governance in the Caribbean. It therefore illustrates successes in co-operation and sets out a framework in which further sustained co-operation can lead to a system of local democracy of which the Commonwealth Caribbean can be proud, and which can be used as an example of best practice in other parts of the world. It can therefore be said to be a work in progress, as additional issues may be identified in the discussions it provokes. It must be emphasised that the paper is not intended to be exhaustive. It is hoped, however, that it raises critical concerns in relation to the strengthening of local democracy via co-operation in the promotion of good governance for the countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean.

Good Governance and Local Democracy

Within the Caribbean region the concept of good governance has now become part of everyday jargon. However, the concept is often misused and misunderstood. Many people have simply started to use the term 'governance' when they mean government, effectively suggesting that governance means the same thing. Such use of the concept reveals a misunderstanding of the concept of governance within the region. In this context this paper seeks to put the concept of governance into a useful perspective for the Caribbean region, as well as illustrating why local democracy can be viewed as the foundation of good governance.

Good governance should represent a combination of three ideals: democracy, development and public management. From a governance perspective, democracy usurps the principles and considerations that were previously defined through the more familiar political concepts of the 'civic culture' as well as law and order and even liberal democracy. Democracy is therefore perceived in its widest sense, so much so that legitimacy of governments based on free and fair elections is an inadequate description in the modern conceptualisation of governance. The contemporary interpretation of democracy involves consensus building among all groups, and even individuals, within a society, participation with a focus on citizen empowerment and concerns related to the interplay of actors within the realm of civil society: these are all concerns of democracy. There

are also concerns about of the facilitation of an enabling environment in which citizens can mobilise their economic, social and political resources in the quest to ensure that all legitimate demands are heard, justice is administered with equality, and that all government policies and actions are adequately monitored in the interests of citizens. From this latter concern stems the notion that principles of integrity and morality, in the execution of public affairs, should be paramount.

The second ideal of governance is development. Within the context of governance, development is geared to improving the social, economic, political, cultural and even psychological quality of citizens' lives, integrating them into society while at the same time empowering them to live fulfilled lives. Empowerment includes the right to participate fully in the decision-making process as it affects people's lives, as well as having economic and social security. Governance from a developmental perspective puts people first, so that policies and processes are people focused.

But in putting people first, government, both central and local, but operating under the umbrella of governance, must operationalise its activities with a public management focus. The public management focus of governance, the third compound ideal, is based on strong principles of management including proper human resource management as well as strategic management. Within the context of governance, governments, with the consensus of their citizens, must determine developmental goals and purposes, and design and implement systems to pursue them. Proper management, principles and practices inclusive of accountability, transparency, integrity and morality must be adopted and instituted in the quest to achieve total quality management.

Based on its democratic, developmental and managerial elements, governance can be defined as a composite doctrine which seeks to operationalise the careful and healthy management of a nation's affairs within a framework of national consensus and participation with the end of facilitating people-centred development. Such a perspective of governance fits well with local government. It is on this basis that attention can now be shifted to the relationship between governance and local government.

Critical to the pursuit of governance is the need for the effective and efficient management of the public sector, which is to be pursued through various means among which is the principle of decentralisation. Local government is a means of decentralisation, whereby power is devolved or

delegated from the centre to lower tiers of government, in the hope of facilitating faster delivery of goods and services. Local government as a mode of decentralisation facilitates efficiency and effectiveness in public sector management and is thus central to the notion of governance.

Local government is also critical to the process of governance, particularly as it relates to ensuring legitimacy and accountability in governmental systems, through the use of elections. Local government also gives people freedom to associate and participate in the process of government. Moreover, through the aspect of participation, there is likely to be greater scrutiny by the citizenry and greater transparency and accountability. In terms of consensus building, local government is the one governmental institution that is supposed to allow local initiative in conceiving and implementing programmes and projects within the community. Furthermore, the institution of local government encourages entrepreneurship and the emergence of voluntary groups, NGOs and other civil society organisations which can work together to procure social, economic and cultural development. Local government is the cornerstone of good governance.

Challenges of Caribbean Local Democracy

Central governments of the Commonwealth Caribbean generally have no problem in accepting that local democracy is the foundation of good governance. This proposition is based on the fact that elected local government is already either constitutionally entrenched or legislatively defined in several nation states of the Commonwealth Caribbean. Table 1 illustrates this.

Elected local government is constitutionally entrenched in three countries of the region: Grenada, Guyana, and St Kitts and Nevis. Legislation relating to local government also exists in Antigua, the Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Jamaica, St Lucia, St Vincent, and Trinidad and Tobago. The only country where there are no laws that facilitate elected local government is Barbados.

Table 1: Constitutionally Entrenched or Statutory Local Government in the Commonwealth Caribbean

	Constitution	Legislation	Remarks
Antigua-Barbuda	✓		Island council for Barbuda, but no local government for the island of Antigua
Barbados			No local government exists
Bahamas		✓	Legislation for councils in some islands
Belize		✓	City, Towns and Village Councils Acts
Dominica		✓	City, Towns, Urban District, Village Councils and Carib Council Acts
Grenada	✓		Entrenched provision for a council in Carriacou and Petit Martinique – non-functional
Guyana	✓	✓	Entrenched and legislatively defined regions, municipalities, neighbourhoods and Amerindian village councils
Jamaica		✓	KSAC and other Parish Councils Acts
St Kitts and Nevis	✓		Provision for island council in Nevis
St Lucia		✓	Castries Corporation Act and Local Authorities Act
St Vincent and Grenadines		✓	Kingstown Board
Trinidad and Tobago		✓	Municipal Corporations Act and Tobago House of Assembly Act

When, therefore, Caribbean Heads of Government re-affirmed the value of elected local government and added that local democracy must be constitutionally or legislatively defined, they were merely restating that their respective countries already had systems in place. However, the question must be raised as to what extent such laws are implemented and what, if any, mechanisms are being put in place to strengthen local government for good governance.

The actual implementation of laws on local government in the Commonwealth Caribbean leaves much to be desired. In two of the four states where local government is constitutionally entrenched, there are serious shortcomings. In the case of Grenada, the islands of Carriacou and Petit Martinique currently have no local government. In 1994 legislation was drafted to create such authorities, but it never got beyond draft stage. It may be instructive to note further that while no local government councils exist in Grenada, there is still officially a position of commissioner of local government.

In the case of Guyana, in spite of the notion of entrenched local government, since independence in 1966, the country has had only two local government elections, the first in 1968 and the second in 1994. Following the 1994 elections, it was expected that elections would be held in 1997. However, in 2004 there is still no sign as to when elections will be held. The constitutional provisions remain but implementation is seemingly difficult.

The situation, when viewed from a broad spectrum, is generally better in those states where local government is defined. Of the remaining eight states where local government is legislatively defined, seven have some form of local government council/authority to oversee the affairs of the local community. Only in St Vincent and the Grenadines are there is no local government councils. Instructively however, it must be emphasised that in the cases where councils exist, elections are not always held. Elections have not been held in St Lucia since 1978 and elected local government is non-existent in there. From the perspective of local democracy as a facilitator of good governance, concerns about the Caribbean remain.

Such concerns are not limited to the existence of legislation, but extend to the arbitrary manner in which legislation relating to local government is treated. Again the case of St Lucia can be used as an illustration. The Castries City Corporation Act was enacted in 1967. This Act underwent various amendments in over the following 13 years. In 1980, the Corporation was suspended, and the 1980 Castries Corporation, (Termination of Council) Act was proclaimed. In 1982, this Act was repealed. In reinstating the Castries City Corporation, the 1982 Act stated the need for elections. However, these elections never took place, in spite of the fact that in 1992 there were further amendment to the Act. The central government in St Lucia still appoints council members to the Castries City Council as well as to the other local government authorities in St Lucia.

Apart from shortcoming in terms of electoral democracy, legislatively defined local government in the Commonwealth Caribbean faces various other challenges. One is the role or functions of local government. Central governments in the Commonwealth Caribbean operate without real restraint or constraint by Parliament in relation to developing or amending local government legislation. With simple majorities, central govern-

ments can emasculate local government by taking away all its powers and functions. In the case of Roseau City in Dominica, the Roseau City Council has been reduced largely to cleaning the streets and maintaining the cemetery. All its other functions have been removed. This state of affairs has meant that other local government authorities in Dominica are more critical to good governance than the council of the capital city. Any affirmation which gives local government legal status is not sufficient to ensure that local authorities play an effective role in facilitating good governance. What is needed is some system to restrain central governments from emasculating local government; depending on the politics of the various states in the region, this mechanism may very well have to be at a regional/international level. We shall return to this issue and elaborate on it later in the paper.

Apart from the capacity of Caribbean central governments, regardless of constitutional or legislative considerations, to redefine and rearrange local governments as they see fit, central governments also have the power to stifle local government by withholding capital and human resources. Apart from in Jamaica, and to a lesser extent Belize and the Bahamas, where central government has gone along with existing legislation and ensured that local authorities have a stable revenue base, local governments are highly dependent upon central government for revenues. A possible explanation for this is that most local government legislation contains no clear financial provision for local government, and even when it does, the legislation may be breached. An example of this is the case of the Tobago House of Assembly, where concerns remain about to the quantum of revenues the assembly is to receive from central government and its distribution. In accordance with the legislation, subventions to the assembly must be disbursed on a quarterly basis, at the beginning of each quarter. This does not normally happen. With respect to the amount that the assembly is supposed to receive from central government, it was only after invoking the dispute resolution clauses of the Tobago House of Assembly Act and securing adjudication that the assembly became clear as to the limits on its central government funding. Setting up elected local governments without giving them the financial wherewithal to enable them to function, serves merely to undermine the capacity of such institutions to facilitate good governance.

The issue of lack of finance is related to human resources; local government authorities are unable to recruit staff (where the legislation permits

this) unless they have the funds to remunerate them. With a high dependence on central government for staffing, and with staff controlled, manipulated and appraised by central government ministries or institutions, local government authorities in the majority of states fail to exercise real control. Their capacity to promote good governance is thus severely undermined. The presence of a legal framework and/or constitutional entrenchment can, therefore, fail to protect local government structures.

The fact that weak legislation, coupled with central government interference, has served to undermine local government cannot be overstated. More critically, because of this state of affairs, citizens in the Commonwealth Caribbean seem to have lost faith in local government as a foundation of democracy and good governance. From the perspective of good governance, participation is critical to facilitating democracy, and a measure of participation is the turn-out at elections. In most states where local government elections were held in the last decade, turn-out was very low. Table 2 gives a sample of the election turn-out at elections in several states.

Table 2: Turn-out in Local Government Elections in Commonwealth Caribbean Countries*

	Turn-out (%)
Trinidad 2003	37.94
Jamaica 2003	40.10
Belize 2003**	77.39
Bahamas 2002 [†]	25 (estimated)
Trinidad 1999	38.72
Bahamas 1999	31
Trinidad 1996	43.95
Bahamas 1996	43.0
Guyana 1994	39.67

Notes:

*The table shows cases where all local government elections are held on the same day.

**In 2003 in Belize, for the first time all city and town council elections were held on the same day. Also for the first time general and local government elections were held on the same day. This may have meant that more people voted in the local government elections since in previous elections there was a much lower turn-out, on a council by council basis .

[†]While the electorate is given as 46,977, no official turn-out rate was available at the time this paper was written.

But as was noted above, turn-out at elections is an insufficient measure of participation in local government. Concerns about this involve the empowerment of citizens to participate in the process of problem identification,

resolution and implementation of solutions. From this perspective there is need for inclusion and consensus building, all of which must be based on awareness, information and enlightenment. Citizens' capacity, both as individuals and as part of civil society, to enter into dialogue with councils, councillors and officers employed in local government, must be facilitated within the framework of participation. On their side, councils, councillors and officers must be open, involved and enlightened. There must be a willingness to serve, rather than serving as an imposition, by a political party, on the community. From such a standpoint the calibre of representatives is critical to facilitating participation and ensuring that democracy prevails. Training and capacity building are thus important in achieving these objectives.

The need to build capacity extends also to the area of management. For local democracy to be beneficial to the community, not only must there be participation and consensus building, but there must be effective and efficient implementation of activities. Critical to the promotion of good governance is the ideal of good public management. Good public management means that the operations of the local authority must be in accordance with contemporary managerial practices to facilitate accountability, transparency and cost-effective delivery of services in a timely, equitable and reliable manner. Consequently, modern managerial practices such as strategic planning, human resource and information management, and financial and project management practices must be utilised by local authorities. In advocating the need for this, it is necessary to underscore the point that the present failure to use these methods is a result of lack of capacity within the authorities. Accordingly, there is an urgent need for Commonwealth Caribbean local authorities to embark upon capacity building in relation to management skills.

Strengthening Local Democracy

Even before the concept of good governance became the watchword for activities within the public domain, Commonwealth Caribbean local and central government admitted that there were shortfalls in the operations of local democracy. Various activities and exercises were initiated to strengthen and/or reform local government while at the same time building capacity within local democratic institutions. Bearing in mind the many constraints and limitations of local and central government, in many instances such

activities involved third sectors, local, regional or international. This next section of this paper reviews some of the past attempts to strengthen local government in the Commonwealth Caribbean on a state by state basis. In focusing on the state, emphasis will be placed on the role of central government, local government authorities and civil society.

Trinidad and Tobago

From a central government perspective, there has always been a concern to increase community participation in local government. In 1983, a White Paper was produced which created a framework for discussion. With a change in central government in 1986, a ministry of decentralisation was established; this ministry reorganised local government in the island of Trinidad through the Municipal Corporations Act of 1990. With respect to Tobago, the central government, in consultation with the Tobago House of Assembly and after wider national consultation, reviewed the Tobago House of Assembly Act and created what today can be described as a piece of legislation which comes close to devolution.

With respect to local government attempts at increasing participation, the City of Port of Spain joined with the Urban Management Programme (UMP) to work on a city consultation project focused on solid waste management. The project involved consultations with citizens and CBOs to find a solution to the problem of solid waste management in East Port of Spain.

From a civil society perspective, the Network of Non-governmental Organisations initiated a project entitled 'Engendering Local Government'. Training and assistance was provided to women firstly to better understand the concept of local government, and secondly to support their further involvement in the process, i.e. encouraging them to participate as candidates.

Guyana

In the case of Guyana, in 1993 the central government took the bold decision to reinstate elected local government, which had been abandoned since 1968. In setting up an election structure, the government was ably assisted by the National Democratic Institute of Washington, DC, which facilitated the training of officers and elected councillors. Since 1994, the NDI has had a resident office in Guyana and has embarked on various capacity-building programmes focused on strengthening local govern-

ment. One such programme relates to the facilitation of the New Amsterdam Action Group, which seeks to strengthen the notion of citizen participation in the community. The programme also sought to build capacity by conducting workshops with community leaders to facilitate greater levels of citizen empowerment and involvement. It is understood that the NDI will close its operations in Guyana later this year.

The New Amsterdam Municipality is also engaged in a city consultation project in conjunction with the UMP, similar to the UMP project in Port of Spain, Trinidad. This project is geared to build capacity as well as involve local people in resolving community problems.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), with financial support from the Canadian International Development Agency has embarked upon the Guyana Municipal Governance and Management Program. This programme has five outcome areas: municipal leadership and management, municipal services, participatory governance, policy development and enabling institutions. Accordingly, within this programme, projects are designed to encompass consensus building, capacity building, application and institutionalisation.

Jamaica

In 1993 the Government of Jamaica initiated the Local Government Reform Programme. The reforms actually started in 1995, and although generally complete with the revised legislation that granted local government significant levels of autonomy, including financial autonomy, there are several ongoing projects which have guided the reform and will continue to guide the evolution of local democracy in Jamaica. For instance CIDA is supporting the CIDA Jamaica Local Government Project. This project has as its goal the deepening of democracy by increasing civil society input into decision-making. Parish development committees have been established in the parishes of Manchester and St James which have served to strengthen and define the role of civil society in local democracy. At the same time, the project aims to strengthen the management and planning capabilities of the parishes, and facilitate project management, performance measurement, networking and co-ordination.

CIDA also supports a Local Sustainable Development Planning Programme in Portland Parish. This also aims to involve citizens in the work of the parish council, via the Portland Parish Development Committee, but with

a focus on building capacity to support and enable local initiatives.

Dominica

The Government of Dominica has obtained financing from the Caribbean Development Bank to support a review of local government in the island to set the stage for reform of the sector. A report has been submitted and local consultants are being engaged to carry the process forward.

St Lucia

In St Lucia also, the Caribbean Development Bank has supported a consultancy on local government reform. Following the submission of a report in 1999, a green paper on local government reform has been produced.

The Caribbean Association of Local Government Associations

While the various attempts at reforming and restructuring local government are of critical significance for the evolution of local democracy in the region, they relate to the internal dynamics within states. In an effort to go beyond the individual state, and with the aim of promoting and facilitating the advancement of local government in the region, the Caribbean Association of Local Government Authorities was formed.

Although the idea of an association of Commonwealth Caribbean local government authorities was first mooted in 1985, the scheme was only concretised in 1991 at the first Conference of Caribbean Local Government Authorities. Following the conference, CALGA was formally launched in 1992.

Since its launch, CALGA has been instrumental in convening various capacity-building workshops and seminars for local government practitioners throughout the region. At every CALGA general meeting, workshops were also mounted for regional participants as well as a wide cross-section of local government practitioners. So far there have been workshops in Dominica (1993), Trinidad (1994), St Lucia (1998), Bahamas (1999) and Belize (2000). CALGA has been ably supported by the University of the West Indies, which supplied facilitators without any remuneration. In many cases CALGA activities were made possible by financial support from various organisations, mainly the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. CALGA has also supported various international organisations which have mounted local government workshops

and conferences in the Caribbean. For example, it supported the UMP in hosting two regional seminars, in Jamaica in 2000 and Dominica in 2002. The NDI/UG/GALA Conference in Guyana 2002 also received critical support from CALGA. CALGA has played a significant part in capacity-building across the Caribbean, at least from the perspective of facilitating programmes to assist in the development of local government practitioners.

As well as supporting programmes that bring practitioners from across the region together to take part in workshops and other capacity-building activities, CALGA has also been instrumental in ensuring that a Certificate in Local Government Studies was developed at the St Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies. Local government practitioners can now avail themselves of formal training in the region.

The ability of CALGA to assist in the strengthening of Caribbean local government, particularly as it relates to serving as a point of contact by which non-Caribbean based institutions can channel resources to build capacity, is a small illustration of what can be done in terms of wider regional co-operation. Many other international organisations have attempted to make interventions in Caribbean local government; while they have recognised the need to develop regional approaches, they have nevertheless focused largely on one particular country. There have, however, been some regional approaches; the next section reviews some past examples of regional co-operation to bolster local government in the Caribbean.

Regional Co-operation in the Strengthening of Local Democracy

Apart from the need to bring local government practitioners from across the Caribbean together in training workshops, there has also been a need to promote institution-building programmes. Due in the main to its limitations in terms of financial resources, CALGA has not been able to directly implement such activities and to some extent has worked in co-operation with other organisations to contribute to the process of institution building. The 1996–98 Capacity Building Project involved all of the states of the Eastern Caribbean. With the help of the CLGF, funding was obtained from the British Development Division in the Caribbean to run an eighteen-month project to capture data on appropriate organisational

models for local level participation, and to establish capacity-building needs which can inform the development of local government in the Caribbean. The Practical Project Skills Training Workbook was one of the outcomes of this project.

In addition, the CLGF initiated another regional programme, 'Building Local Democracy and Municipal Administration'. This sought to build capacity in three Commonwealth Caribbean countries, Belize, Guyana and Jamaica. While the project had not achieved the same success in Belize as in Guyana and Jamaica, it was nonetheless a regional effort and should be viewed as seeking to facilitate institution building across the region.

Another CLGF initiative, the Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme, also has scope for facilitating regional co-operation. Under this scheme practitioners and officials from Belize were to benefit from a study tour and training in Jamaica. Finally, in regard to the CLGF, it may be noted that the CLGF is currently working with CALGA to make representations on behalf of the Commonwealth Caribbean as a region for it to benefit from the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) platform on local government. Although the CLGF is located outside the Caribbean, it has promoted Commonwealth Caribbean Co-operation in strengthening local democracy for good governance.

Other international and regional institution and organisations have also played a part in promoting regional co-operation in strengthening local democracy. The Organization for American States has attempted to play a role in regional co-operation with respect to strengthening local democracy, although its activities have concentrated on creating an enabling environment. In 1997, the OAS sponsored a conference in Barbados that dealt with the general issue of good governance in the Caribbean. As a follow-up to this conference, in 1998 in Jamaica the OAS sponsored a workshop entitled 'Local Government Communitarianism and the Citizen: Opportunities and Challenges'. The workshop was led by technical/academic papers from UWI faculty members, and the participants were practitioners, including senior administrators, in local government in the Caribbean. In 2002 the OAS returned to Barbados to focus on constitutional reform in the Caribbean, emphasising the role of local democracy. This was followed in 2003 by a forum in St Vincent on 'Local Governance in Small States: Issues, Experiences and Options'. In conjunction with various partners, including the UNDP and UWI, the OAS has been attempt-

ing to promote the notion of regional co-operation as a mode of building local government.

The UMP has also attempted to promote local government across the Commonwealth Caribbean, though it has pursued a rather different approach. The UMP has sought to bring together local government and civil society to promote the notion of good governance. It has convened two regional symposia focusing on local democracy. It has also promoted city consultations in the region; four cities in the region are currently engaged in UMP-related activities, Belize City, Montego Bay, Port of Spain and New Amsterdam. The project has the capacity of being converted into a full-scale regional effort and has created a framework for co-operation.

There is a need, as well as the capacity, for regional co-operation in the quest to achieve good governance via local democracy. The last section of this paper will point to possible directions in which that effort can be channelled.

An Agenda for Regional Co-operation

In attempting to chart a course for the future as it relates to regional co-operation, it should be emphasised that this paper is not about prescribing what should be done and by whom, but rather about identifying areas in which regional co-operation can benefit the development of local government and, in turn, good governance in the Commonwealth Caribbean. Put differently, and utilising the local government philosophy that the community must determine its own course of activity to pursue its development, this section of the paper is not a prescription, but rather seeks to present suggestions as to what can be considered in the quest to strengthen Caribbean local government. Bearing in mind that this is the Caribbean, clearly the issue of regional co-operation rests with institutions such as CALGA, CARICOM and UWI. The focus is placed on these institutions, although other institutions, regional, local and international, may assist in promoting a regional agenda.

Starting with the existing institutions and activities, a case needs to be made for the strengthening of CALGA. With the possibility that the revised CALGA Constitution will be ratified, there is hope that CALGA can be broadened and its activities focused on building capacity within Caribbean local governments. CALGA must also be helped to develop as

a regional information centre on Caribbean local government. It may be instructive to note that Clause 33 of the Communiqué from the 1999 CHOGM noted that the Committee ‘encouraged the establishment of local government information centres at regional level ...’. CALGA is well placed to fulfill this need and serve as a base which other states can use in setting up systems of local government that can facilitate good governance. In the early days of CALGA, even without such a facility, various requests came to CALGA to assist in this process, and CALGA responded as best it could. What is recommended now is to fully develop CALGA’s capacity to achieve this objective.

In suggesting that CALGA should be developed in this way, there is the implied suggestion that CALGA may have to work in conjunction with various other institutions, one of which is UWI. UWI can be more fully utilised in the process of strengthening Caribbean local government. From the standpoint of research, there is already a small database at the St Augustine Campus relating to Caribbean and international local government systems. The campus also offers the Certificate in Local Government Studies. The existing database could be used as the basis for a CALGA information centre.

As stated above, UWI currently offers a Certificate in Local Government Studies. This programme, however, has served to cater largely for the needs of Trinidad and Tobago. The programme needs to be expanded and offered to all states within the region. It can be offered via distance education and/or as face-to-face modules, assisting all states in offering a similar programme. Both approaches can be used; all that is needed is for the request to go to UWI to start the process of developing either modules or a distance learning package.

Beyond building capacity, there is a real need for attention to be paid to the whole process of decentralisation and strengthening local government. Clearly, governments in the Commonwealth Caribbean have never really been pushed or even supported in developing or sustaining good local government systems. For example there has been no attempt by local government ministers to meet their counterparts from other Commonwealth Caribbean territories or to discuss any issue related to local government. It may be noted that ministers of education or health or even planning and finance meet under the auspices of CARICOM. However, CARICOM has never seen fit to facilitate local government in a similar fashion. It is prob-

ably for this reason that CALGA is not accorded observer status in CARICOM. A regional approach must be adopted and CARICOM must be called upon to play its part in strengthening local government within the region if only to give citizens ownership of good governance strategies to be implemented in their communities. The question that can then be posed is who or which organisation can push CARICOM in this direction, since it seems that attempts from within the region have not yet borne fruit. Caribbean local government has therefore depended on international organisations such as the CLGF, OAS and other international organisations, who may be able to impress upon the leadership in CARICOM the benefits of local government. Once there is general acceptance by CARICOM and governments of the Commonwealth Caribbean, more than half the work has done in strengthening Caribbean local government. The other half will relate to the internal arrangements within states for developing and sustaining systems of local government that can facilitate good governance.

In noting that states may need to develop legislative and administrative frameworks so as to facilitate local government, it may be suggested that there is no need to reinvent the wheel when promoting local government in the Caribbean. Put differently, throughout the region there are many good practices, but there is substantial ignorance of such practices outside the communities in which the practices have been implemented. CALGA, or even CARICOM, could serve as a clearing house for information about good practices which could be adopted or adapted in other parts of the region. Again, however, this depends to a large extent on one or more organisations taking the initiative; once such an initiative has been instituted, there will be a need for sustained co-operation, if only to reduce te cost implications.

However, the notion of sharing information and practices goes beyond what is being organised and implemented by local authorities within the region. In several states international or regional institutions are organising and implementing programmes to strengthen good local government. The challenge for the Caribbean is to ensure that as many societies as possible benefit from such programmes. In other words, notwithstanding the internal dynamics which ensure competition amongst local communities, cities and towns within states or even in the wider region, the region as a whole must be considered. Systems must be developed regionally to review and promote the more equitable sharing of international resources as they

relates to local government. CALGA, CARICOM, UWI and central and local governments must therefore work together to develop an agenda for regional co-operation and lay the framework for mechanisms to be developed to implement such an agenda.

Annex A

Montego Bay Action Programme

Preamble

Local and central government leaders and officials and representatives of civil society from Jamaica, Australia, Barbados, Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Fiji, India, Lesotho, New Zealand, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda and the UK met in Montego Bay, Jamaica, on 19–21 April 2004.

The symposium was co-organised by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) and the Commonwealth Secretariat in collaboration with the Government of Jamaica and with support from the Commonwealth Foundation. It was attended by members of the CLGF Board from Australia, India, Lesotho, New Zealand, Uganda, the United Kingdom and the region, and senior members of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Representatives of the following international organisations and development agencies attended: CARICOM, OECS, CIDA, DFID, NDI, OAS, and UN-Habitat.

The symposium was chaired by Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, Minister of Local Government, Community Development and Sport (MLGCDS) of Jamaica, with Mayor Robert Montague (Jamaica) as co-chair and the Hon. Alfred Grey (Bahamas), the Hon. Matthew Walter (Dominica), Mayor David Fonseca (Belize) and Mayor Murchison Brown (Trinidad and Tobago) as vice-chairs.

Carl Wright (CLGF), Jos Johnston (Commonwealth Secretariat) and Loraine Robinson (MLGCDS) acted as symposium secretaries.

Introduction

The Commonwealth's concern with local democracy derives from its commitment to a set of fundamental values which are enshrined in the Harare Commonwealth Declaration of 1991. At the core of these are adherence to democratic principles and people-centred development which respect the rights of the individual without reference to race, creed or gender. Local government is essential to transforming these principles into practice. It brings the democratic process closer to the people it serves and allows

access and involvement to the widest possible cross-section of citizens. An inextricable link exists between democracy and good governance.

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting held in Abuja, December 2003, Heads of Government re-affirmed the value they attach to elected local government as an important foundation for democracy. They endorsed the giving of constitutional and legal recognition to this sphere of local government. They also welcomed the co-operation between the Commonwealth Secretariat and CLGF in the promotion of best democratic practice. The Symposium was organised in fulfilment of this mandate and in furtherance of this co-operation.

The Symposium addressed local democracy and good governance in the Caribbean in four key areas:

- ◆ *Local Democracy and Good Governance in the Caribbean: An Agenda for Regional Co-operation*
- ◆ *Promoting Local Democracy and Good Governance*
- ◆ *Ensuring Effective Decentralisation*
- ◆ *Local Government – Effective Service Delivery for All*
- ◆ *Regional Caribbean Perspective*

A number of conclusions and recommendations emerged in each area.

A. PROMOTING LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Effective local democracy manifests itself in a number of ways including:

- ◆ *Elections conducted in an atmosphere devoid of intimidation and under a system that is transparent and also commands respect and legitimacy*
- ◆ *Inclusive local decision-making*
- ◆ *Appropriate devolved powers*
- ◆ *Clarity of roles and functions of the different spheres of government, preferably through constitutional or other legal recognition*
- ◆ *Finance commensurate with its functions*
- ◆ *Efficient and effective delivery of services*

- ◆ *Local government having an organised voice that is recognised as autonomous and legitimate*

Within this, the following consensus was reached:

1. Inclusion in the political decision making process

A number of sections of society are excluded to varying degrees from the political decision-making process. These include:

- ◆ *Women*
- ◆ *Youth*
- ◆ *People with disabilities*
- ◆ *The economically impoverished*

Recommendation: Inclusion in the political decision making process should be addressed in a number of ways; these could include:

- ◆ *Citizen participation on local decisions targeted at the disadvantaged groups*
- ◆ *The introduction of legislation providing for quotas for one-third women's representatives on council*
- ◆ *The statutory duty to consult being placed on local government*
- ◆ *The establishment of local youth parliaments*

2. Addressing political polarisation in local councils

Excessively politically polarised positions in local councils can have an obstructive effect on achieving municipal goals, undermine the integrity of decisions taken, the esteem in which the council is held by the citizenry and ultimately the legitimacy of local government itself.

Recommendations: political polarisation may be avoided by:

- ◆ *Development and adoption of a strategic plan, using a participatory/consultative approach, which is widely and publicly disseminated (through different media) for implementation by the local government.*
- ◆ *Adoption of participatory budgeting to inform the council of the evolving priorities of the community.*

3. Voter turnout

Low voter turnout adversely affects many local elections in the Caribbean and threatens the legitimacy of local government through the democratic deficit it creates. This appears to arise from a number of issues including misunderstanding of the role of local government and a crisis of confidence in it. Voting is not only a right, it is a duty and responsibility.

Recommendation: Civic education through a multi-media approach is required to enhance the general understanding of the role local government plays in the smooth functioning of our communities. Local government must strive to achieve levels of transparency and accountability that will overcome the crisis of confidence that it sometimes appears to face. A recommended mechanism is the promotion of open council meetings actively encouraging citizen participation.

4. Accountability

Accountability mechanisms require further development to satisfy the demands of the citizenry. These include appropriate downward as well as the more common upward accountability.

Recommendation: Local government should develop means to implement meaningful downward accountability to complement the existing upward accountability. Such accountability should give special regard to the effectiveness of services delivered and councillors reporting back to their electorates on a regular basis.

5. The importance of local government associations

The fragmented voice of local government in many countries in the region weakens its capacity for advocacy and representation with regards to other sectors.

Recommendation: National local government associations should be established in all countries in the region by local government and these should be formally recognised by the national governments and have a clearly defined role in inter-governmental relations.

B. ENSURING EFFECTIVE DECENTRALISATION

The Symposium agreed on the following conclusions and recommendations.

Conclusions:

- ◆ *Decentralisation focuses on empowering people and creating efficient and effective governance at the local level.*
- ◆ *For decentralisation to be effective there must be some degree of financial autonomy, however local government capacity must be present to ensure proper management of such fiscal autonomy.*
- ◆ *The roles and responsibilities of local government must be clearly defined. There must be a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities between central and local government and amongst practitioners operating at all levels.*
- ◆ *Local government staff must be responsible to their local authorities and not to central government, and local authorities should move towards taking full responsibility for their conditions of service.*
- ◆ *Regular communication between mayors, councillors and staff is essential for effective partnership working.*
- ◆ *Resource limitations mean that partnership working is an essential component of implementing decentralisation. Local government must work in partnership with central government and other stakeholders to achieve its core goal of development. This can be achieved through the implementation of a strategic plan, which should recognise each stakeholder's resources and expectations and agree on common objectives.*
- ◆ *Partnerships must lead to benefits for all partners. In a true partnership everybody wins. Some examples include:*
 - *Central Government is helped by different ministries not duplicating their respective services in each district, and can avoid the problems associated with trying to deliver services locally. This can increase the efficiency of handling issues and contribute to the capacity building of others.*
 - *Local Government can obtain additional resources, build its own capacity and achieve coherence of delivery and social cohesion. It can benefit from the community taking more responsibility, its independence is endorsed, and provision of a good service will increase satisfaction, and also the chance of re-election.*
 - *For civil society co-ordination may ease the pressure of fund raising*

and enhance the status of the CSO, giving ownership and a sense of belonging.

- *Corporate citizens benefit from better relationships with their communities, goodwill, economic benefit, more customers, and an improved environment.*

- ◆ *Local councils should exercise a community leadership role.*

Recommendations:

- ◆ *Institute fiscal autonomy for local government, allocating specific sources of revenue, and introducing financial management controls.*
- ◆ *Introduce legislation to guide fiscal decentralisation and identify revenue raising mechanisms for local authorities.*
- ◆ *Use central government resource allocations to local government to equalise and support disadvantaged communities.*
- ◆ *Local councils should think broadly about possible new sources of funding, rather than constantly reviewing old ones. Key options with potential might include: selling local government services, e.g. architects, housing and financial services, investment in infrastructure e.g. through bonds, providing entrepreneurial opportunities for locals, preparing project proposals for external sponsorship, private sector joint ventures, retain local fees rather than passing them on to central government and contracting local organisations to maintain the facilities they use.*
- ◆ *Define the shared and separate roles and responsibilities of local government staff and councillors including a manual of procedures and code of conduct*
- ◆ *Regular communication between citizens, mayors, councillors, staff and other stakeholders is essential for effective partnership working.*
- ◆ *Produce an overall long-term vision and a strategic plan for working within a multi-stakeholder environment.*
- ◆ *Recognise the rights and functions of non-state actors within the multi-stakeholder environment.*

C. DELIVERING QUALITY SERVICES TO ALL

In considering what local government provides, the Symposium examined:

- ◆ *Planning processes*
- ◆ *Benefits of direct delivery or alternative methods*
- ◆ *Building partnerships*
- ◆ *Roles of local government beyond 'just service delivery'*

Arriving at the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. Planning

Planning requires co-ordination between:

- ◆ *local, regional and national policies,*
- ◆ *different local government areas affected by projects which cross boundaries,*
- ◆ *the roles of different players.*

Planning requires genuine participation by citizens.

Baseline surveys are needed, but are often expensive, and it may be possible to use statistics or local profiles prepared for other purposes, possibly by the national statistical office. This may require specific changes to the mandate of the government statistical service.

Recommendations:

- ◆ *Identifying local priorities should be the outcome of a participatory consultative process with local citizens.*
- ◆ *Local government planning should be integrated for the whole community and informed by profiles of the community to be served.*
- ◆ *Decentralisation of services needs to be backed up by decentralisation of planning.*

2. Direct or alternative delivery of services

There are many variables in different local situations, and it is not possible to be prescriptive about how far services should be managed in-house, contracted out or undertaken in partnership with other agencies or organisations.

Possible alternative ways of delivering services include:

- ◆ *contracting out,*
- ◆ *work for debt write-off,*
- ◆ *partnership with the private sector,*
- ◆ *corporate sponsorship of facilities,*
- ◆ *self-help activities,*
- ◆ *partnership with civil society organisations.*

Some of the factors which need to be taken into account are:

- ◆ *cost effectiveness,*
- ◆ *human resource capacity,*
- ◆ *conditions set by those providing funds,*
- ◆ *industrial relations environment,*
- ◆ *social impact,*
- ◆ *affordability to the public,*
- ◆ *the need for optimum mobilisation of resources.*

Potential problems could include:

- ◆ *corruption*
- ◆ *difficulty in monitoring*
- ◆ *possibility of political interference.*

Recommendations:

- ◆ *Municipal objectives should be paramount in addressing methods of service delivery.*
- ◆ *Equitable delivery of services to all citizens should be ensured.*
- ◆ *Local authorities must retain ownership of infrastructure.*

3. Effective partnerships

For partnerships to be effective there needs to be:

- ◆ *open dialogue,*

- ◆ *mutual respect and trust,*
- ◆ *self-analysis and self-reflection,*
- ◆ *a regulatory framework with clearly defined roles and responsibilities,*
- ◆ *effective sanctions to enforce laws and regulations.*

Key stakeholders should be brought into a reporting forum to share critical information.

A national day of community service can be a focus for partnership.

An essential component of partnerships is the capacity to identify and capture adequate resources.

Recommendations:

- ◆ *Deciding between the competing priorities at the local level should be the responsibility of the local authority.*
- ◆ *Various models for community consultation should be explored, for example Parish Development Committees – a mechanism for involving citizens in the planning process in Jamaica.*

4. Beyond service delivery

Beyond simple service delivery there are six key areas in which local government can operate:

- ◆ **Planning to meet community needs**
Local government planning should be integrated for the whole community and lead to sustainable development. It should be backed up by vision (long-term), a corporate plan and appropriate research and data collection.
- ◆ **Development and human services**
Development is a primary role of local government and should include capacity building among citizens and other stakeholders. All development should include a 'social' plan and be equitable. Local government should take a co-ordinating role or facilitate different services from others.
- ◆ **Advocacy**
Local government should provide leadership for the community – all the more important where resources are limited. It should ensure that

locally-based institutions, such as universities, serve the local community, and should represent local interests in national planning.

◆ **Innovative management**

Innovatory management is needed to meet community needs, and it may be appropriate to bring in manager leaders from different backgrounds. Local officials should move from a 'civil service' to an entrepreneurial style, possibly with a marketing manager.

◆ **Public protection/ security**

Local government should be pro-active in promoting quality of life – developing community structures/organisations for 'security', and working with the police to deter, rather than punish anti-social behaviour. Local police should be employed and municipal courts could try municipal issues, with the revenue going to the authority. Community policing may be appropriate.

◆ **Investment**

Large projects, including public/private partnerships, can be revenue earning. Local authorities should appoint an investment officer/director answerable to the mayor, and may develop business improvement districts.

5. Other issues

◆ *'Everyone wants to go to heaven, but no one wants to die', illustrates the challenge of getting stakeholders to realise the cost of service delivery.*

◆ *Public/private partnerships must have defined limits. New Zealand has learned from experience that local authorities must retain ownership of infrastructure.*

◆ *Service delivery is cheaper and quicker locally.*

◆ *Central governments benefit from decentralisation because it avoids duplication and frees up central government to concentrate on national priorities.*

◆ *In Uganda non-performing councillors can be recalled by the electorate. In order to be equitable, this system requires local authorities to have responsibility and funding for local services and for the 'recall' process to be rigorous.*

D. REGIONAL CARIBBEAN PERSPECTIVE

The following recommendations and commitments emerged from the Symposium's deliberations on regional issues and mechanisms.

1. *Commitment for national governments to work to implement the 2003 CHOGM Mandate in respect of:*
 - ◆ *Recognition of the fundamental importance of local democracy*
 - ◆ *Establishing constitutional and legal recognition for local government*
 - ◆ *Ensuring respect for the principles of the Commonwealth Harare Declaration at local level*
 - ◆ *Implementing an expanded CLGF programme on local democracy and good governance*
 - ◆ *Commitment to work towards the Commonwealth agreed target of 30 per cent women's representation at all levels of government by 2015.*
2. *Endorsement of the Commonwealth Secretariat proposal to encourage links between the Caribbean and Pacific with a view to developing principles of good practices for small states.*
3. *Agreement to establish the necessary structures to facilitate regular networking among local government, central government, civil society and corporate citizens within the region.*
4. *Agreement to create a Caribbean Forum of Ministers responsible for decentralisation, local government, community development and citizens' participation in order to forge regional positions and interact with local government and civil society in the region, building on, and co-ordinated with the existing RIAD/OAS and CLGF/Commonwealth structures.*
5. *Recommendation that national governments should support local authority members and officers in their efforts to strengthen and, where necessary, establish national associations of local government and national associations of local government officers, giving formal recognition to such associations.*
6. *Support for the revitalisation and reconstruction of the Caribbean*

Association of Local Government Authorities, CALGA, and the effective functioning of its governing structures and secretariat. Strengthening CALGA will require sustainable efforts.

- ◆ *CALGA should meet regularly and establish working committees, putting together a work plan with specific objectives.*
- ◆ *There is a need for improved relations between CALGA and national bodies.*
- ◆ *CALGA should meet early with the Ministers Forum to work out relationships.*
- ◆ *CALGA needs to clarify its role vis-à-vis the other regional organisations.*
- ◆ *The critical path will be for the new Executive to:*
 - *meet,*
 - *agree objectives, produce a work plan and strategy,*
 - *clarify inter-relationships with regional organisations,*
 - *establish a secretariat (voluntary in the first instance),*
 - *plan long-term and develop strategy.*

7. *Strong endorsement of the vital need for capacity building in local government in the Caribbean. Specifically, the following should be done rapidly:*

- ◆ *Greater use should be made of the Certificate course on local government run by the University of the West Indies (UWI), St Augustine, which is currently little patronised outside of Trinidad.*
- ◆ *Educators from all levels working with ministries/local government/CALGA should conduct needs assessments nationally and regionally.*
- ◆ *Identify and develop appropriate and innovative methodologies to overcome restrictions of the ‘classroom environment’, acknowledging varying levels of skills/knowledge.*
- ◆ *UWI/CALGA/CFM should develop a uniform regional accreditation system and, with local government ministers, standardisation of skills requirements across central and local government.*

- ◆ *Civil society with local government agencies should build a culture of participation, including training in participatory methodologies such as for decision making, engagement of partners, and the concept and process of civic governance.*
 - ◆ *National Local Government Service Commissions with training components should recognise that management practices and information technology skills are critical to transforming local governance.*
 - ◆ *Provision of training for both councillors and officials.*
8. *Agreement to establish a focal point for the Caribbean Forum of Ministers which would co-operate closely with CALGA so as to enhance close partnership between the two spheres of government within the region and facilitate co-ordination of support being provided by international/bilateral organisations, agencies and institutions, to the processes of decentralisation, strengthening local government and citizens/community participation within the region.*
9. *In the context of partnership with civil society, endorsement of the following recommendation made by the Civil Society caucus to facilitate the establishment of a mechanism for the sharing of information and collaborative action among CSOs throughout the Caribbean as soon as possible in support of:*
- ◆ *people-centred development,*
 - ◆ *a non-partisan and participatory approach to local governance,*
 - ◆ *formal interaction among civil society, the Caribbean Forum of Ministers, and CALGA,*
 - ◆ *stimulating participation in the local democratic process by youth, indigenous peoples and people with disabilities,*
 - ◆ *promoting public awareness programmes on local governance, while taking into account the various initiatives already being undertaken by CSOs towards these goals.*
10. *The intention to seek official recognition by OECS/CARICOM of the Caribbean Forum of Ministers and CALGA, in the short term under its Council on Human and Social Development and, in the long term through the establishment of appropriate new institutional structures so as to ensure that local government issues are properly reflected in the work of OECS/CARICOM.*

11. *Hon. Portia Simpson Miller (Jamaica), elected as Chairperson of the Caribbean Forum of Ministers, was asked to take forward the initiatives agreed upon.*
12. *Confirmation of the role and responsibilities of the Caribbean Forum of Ministers and CALGA in bringing together their central and local government members in the region in support of local democracy and good governance, accessing and administering Commonwealth and international development agency resources to this end and representing the interests of its Caribbean and other Small State members in international fora with the support of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF), Commonwealth Secretariat and other institutions where appropriate.*
13. *CLGF to take initiative to secure funds/resources and channel these to support projects by local authorities in the region in support of the UN Millennium Goals, including poverty reduction and collaboration with UN-Habitat in respect of its campaigns on urban governance and secure tenure.*

Annex B

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Annex C

Notes on the Organisers

The Commonwealth Secretariat

A voluntary association of sovereign states spread over every continent and ocean, the Commonwealth's 1.7 billion people make up 30 per cent of the world's population. Emphasising equality, trust and understanding, the Commonwealth facilitates the advancement of democracy, human rights and sustainable economic and social development within its member countries and beyond. The Commonwealth is committed to a set of fundamental values spelt out in the Harare Commonwealth Declaration of 1991, at the core of which is belief in and adherence to democratic principles.

The Commonwealth Secretariat, established by Heads of Government in 1965, is the principal organisation of the Commonwealth implementing the decisions taken by the 53 member governments. The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation is the means by which the Commonwealth promotes economic and social development and the alleviation of poverty in member countries. It operates on the principle of mutual assistance, with member governments contributing finance on a voluntary basis and obtaining technical assistance as needed.

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Commonwealth Local Government Forum

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum is a membership organisation bringing together associations of local government, individual councils and ministries of local government from across the Commonwealth. It also welcomes associate members from academic, research and professional organisations with an interest in local government.

The CLGF works to promote and strengthen democratic local government, and to encourage the exchange of best practice through conferences and events, its Good Practice Scheme, research and information on innovation, and by working with Commonwealth countries to support the development of democratic values and good governance.

As the local government arm of the Commonwealth, the CLGF ensures that local government's voice is heard, and that it gets full recognition within the Commonwealth.

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