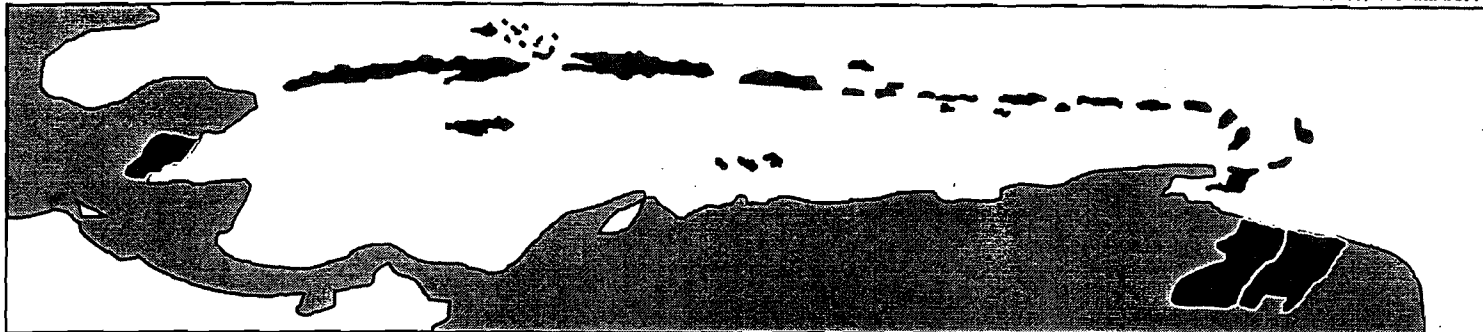


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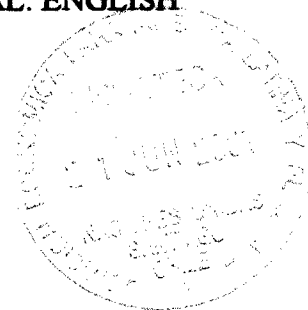


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**Expert Group Meeting on  
Social Development Programmes and  
Policies in the Caribbean  
Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago  
23-24 October 2000**

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**REPORT OF  
THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON  
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES  
IN THE CARIBBEAN**





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## **REPORT OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES IN THE CARIBBEAN**

The Expert Group Meeting on Social Development Programmes and Policies in the Caribbean was convened by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (ECLAC/CDCC) from 23-24 October 2000 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

### **Welcome and opening**

Mr. Donatus St. Aimee, Officer-in-Charge of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, welcomed participants to the meeting on behalf of the Director, Dr. Len Ishmael, who was unavoidably absent. He explained that the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean considered matters related to the welfare and well-being of the peoples of the region a prime topic for the development of its work programme and essential to the fulfilment of its mandate under the United Nations Charter.

Mr. St. Aimee identified the following questions as some of the issues to be considered by the meeting: (a) the success of various programmes in targeting the poor and needy and in reducing poverty; (b) how realistic were the programmes in terms of their goals and objectives; and (c) to what extent were the principles of policy science applied to the development of the poverty reduction programmes.

He invited participants to contribute their views and knowledge of social programmes and projects to highlight enabling factors for success in improving people's livelihoods and to identify the obstacles to achieving this objective and wished participants success in their deliberations.

### **Social development policies, programmes and projects: The need for reflection**

Ms. Sonia Cuales, Social Affairs Officer, ECLAC/CDCC secretariat presented the topic, "**Social Development Policies, Programmes and Projects: The Need for Reflection**". In her presentation Ms. Cuales explained that since the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995, many programmes were put in place to address the problem of poverty in the Caribbean. Assessments of these programmes at the subregional, regional and international levels have, however, not shown impressive results.

She identified a number of obstacles to the effective implementation of poverty programmes, not least among them being access to resources. National reports from the subregion have highlighted several obstacles, including (a) insufficient technical and technological capabilities and (b) some countries' vulnerability to natural disasters. Ms. Cuales spoke of several other constraints to the achievement of sustainable livelihoods in the subregion,

and noted the inadequate methods of evaluation to assess the implementation and impact of poverty eradication programmes.

She expressed the wish for the meeting to deliberate on the reasons why poverty programmes and other social development projects did not seem to be achieving much success in terms of improvement of people's livelihoods and to focus on strategies for greater success in the implementation of the programmes. This included attention to research and to methods of evaluation that could properly assess implementation and the impact of such programmes.

### **Presentations – Critical issues**

#### **The macroeconomic context**

Dr. Ralph Henry, Executive Chairman, KAIRI Consultants Ltd., congratulated the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat for convening the meeting and noted the importance of such forums for the review of work that was being done in the subregion. He also noted the concern that poverty programmes did not seem to be achieving much success, but cautioned that five years might be too early to predict the success or failure of these programmes.

Dr. Henry said that in order to be competitive, governments must focus their attention on the development of human resources since people were the main resources of the subregion. He pointed to the fact that even as concerned as governments must be with the collection of revenue and the growth of the economy in order to provide for needs of the population, they could not afford to put social development issues on the backburner.

He identified education and health as two of the important factors in the development of human resources and reasoned that people had to be conditioned, through education, to absorb knowledge which could be used for development. Education, he said, must therefore be made available to the existing workforce in a process of life-long learning. Dr. Henry also explained that from the point of view of intergenerational poverty, if children were not taken care of now, this would have implications for future generations.

Dr. Henry spoke of the importance of data in coming to an understanding of the situation of poverty. He urged participants to make use of the available data to gain a general understanding of conditions as they existed in countries of the subregion, in the short term, while attempting to gain more specific data via research in the long term. Infant mortality was, in this regard, a useful indicator of the extent of poverty in a country.

#### **Moving from rhetoric to practice**

Ms. Denise Noel De Bique, Caribbean Regional Adviser, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), spoke of moving from rhetoric to practice in implementing development programmes in the subregion. In her presentation, she explained that in the Caribbean, there was a large measure of acceptance of democratic principles at the constitutional level as well as in the implementation of programmes to facilitate equity and social development.

She pointed, however, to a number of issues that need to be considered in the implementation of social programmes. These included:

- (a) The use of concepts, bearing in mind the various meanings and assumptions that often underlie these concepts.
- (b) Recognition of the various actors and structures set up to attain the objectives of the programmes.
- (c) Examination of the programme design. The objectives must be clear and achievable and the programmes must be relevant.
- (d) Management of finances – in spite of the objectives of the funders, finances should be managed to the best advantage of the beneficiaries.
- (e) The need to honestly identify the risks associated with the implementation of a project without giving in to the fear of losing donor funding.
- (f) The ability to clearly identify the location of outcome results.

Ms. Noel De Bique also pointed to the need to understand the developmental and operational concerns of the donor community, the actions that were needed at the institutional level, and the challenges and benefits to be gained from partnering with non-governmental and other organizations in achieving the goals of social equity and development.

In pointing to the good practices that were necessary to support the implementation of social programmes, she made the following recommendations:

- (a) Demonstrate how attention to equity is good for programmes and projects;
- (b) Be open to feedback;
- (c) Introduce some amount of flexibility in the project design;
- (d) Develop a roster of experts in the region;
- (e) Take care in the selection of partners and in nurturing relationships with them.

### **Plenary discussion**

Participants raised the issue of the availability of data, and specifically the use of infant mortality data, as a means of monitoring poverty. It was felt that this indicator represented too much of a final outcome of poverty and that other indicators, such as illness or malnutrition data, might better serve the purpose and allow for intervention before it was too late.

Although it was agreed that the time in which poverty programmes were being implemented might not allow for a verdict of success or failure, participants raised issues that pointed to the need to ensure that current practices would allow for proper evaluation and good outcomes at a later date. In this regard, it was noted that in some countries country assessments of poverty did not always have the benefit of the input of civil society.

The meeting also discussed the need for country poverty assessments on an annual basis, pointing to the costliness of this exercise. Some participants suggested that it might be better, in the case of Jamaica for example, to conduct these surveys every three years. Others felt that an annual survey captured trends and sudden changes that necessarily occurred in small open economies, and was therefore important. The suggestion was also made that questions to elicit more social information could be added to the census.

The reaction of the poor was also raised during the discussion. In this context, it was stated that people were over-researched and had become skeptical of the usefulness of surveys that were being conducted in seemingly endless succession in their communities. It was noted that usually people who were the subjects of research in surveys were not asked for their opinion. A salient point was also the recognition of the fact that there was generally also insufficient concrete action arising out of research that was conducted, even though it was recognized that census questionnaires were already lengthy.

The question of participation and inclusion of the stakeholders by the researchers was an item of discussion. The meeting was informed that in this regard, the role of the researcher could become one of "manager of the process", rather than "sole expert" and that the outcome of the research was often much more meaningful due to the input of the stakeholders. It was noted however, that the challenge to the researcher entered in the form of conducting effective participatory research against the background of contractual pressures from the executing agency. It was suggested, therefore, that commitment to a participatory approach might be considered for inclusion in relevant Terms of Reference.

## **Presentations – Critical issues**

### **Factors in design and implementation**

Dr. Dennis Brown, Lecturer, Dept. of Behavioural Sciences, University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine, presented on factors associated with the design and implementation of poverty eradication programmes that could affect their outcomes. Dr. Brown described these as:

**The source or genesis of the programmes:** Since the poverty eradication programmes in the region have been, for the most part, foreign driven, this has implications for sustainability and ownership as well as definition of objectives and procedures of the programme.

**The administrative infrastructure within which the programmes operate [this includes attitudes of administrators towards poverty and the changes necessary to**



**eradicate poverty]:** For the administrative structure to successfully tackle poverty eradication, it has to have a fair measure of flexibility and must be staffed by professionals with an acute awareness of what poverty eradication was all about and the importance of what they did in making this happen. Dr. Brown explained that the Caribbean civil service was characterized by rigid and hierarchical structures that negatively affected the performance of poverty eradication programmes, even when inserted as special units within these structures. He also suggested that the other feature of the administrative framework that hindered the effective implementation of poverty eradication programmes had to do with the attitude of many of the persons associated with the implementation of these programmes towards the poor.

**The evaluation and research dimensions of these programmes:** In addition to finding out what the dimensions of poverty were in a society and measuring the impact of poverty eradication programmes, there was also a need for research. Dr. Brown described this as assigning to a specially created unit within government or academia, the task of drawing on the data provided by the Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS) and examining in-depth issues raised or suggested by the continuous data. The ultimate objective of this exercise would be the creation of theory from which policy could be informed. It is important though, he cautioned, to recognize that evaluation and research were two different exercises and that one should not try to do two in one.

**Community involvement in both the design and implementation stages of the exercise:** This, it was explained, was important from the standpoint of (a) the empowerment of these communities given the dependency and authoritarianism that characterized Caribbean history; and (b) the sustainability of the programme.

### Plenary discussion

The meeting was asked to consider the need for a different administrative structure to conduct surveys, one that required disaggregation at the community level. In this regard, it was suggested that regional units, coordinated by one central unit would be better able to target communities and utilize resources optimally.

The point was also made that governments tended to misinterpret suggestions for greater participation of communities and that there was need for processes that produced a demonstration effect.

The issue of changing values and their impact on poverty was also discussed at the meeting. It was noted that policy planners tended to speak of the poor in terms that suggested that they somehow had values that kept them in poverty. It was pointed out that this would obscure the values of the larger superstructure that really helped to keep people in poverty. The meeting agreed that there was a distinction to be made between "making a value judgement about people's attitudes and behaviour" and "understanding people's attitudes and behaviour".

## **Presentations – Critical issues**

### **The Jamaica experience**

In his presentation, Mr. Jaslin Salmon, National Coordinator - Poverty Eradication, Jamaica, agreed with Dr. Ralph Henry, that it might be erroneous to suggest that the poverty eradication programmes were not successful in achieving their objectives. He said that poverty eradication must be looked at as a long-term proposition, citing the case of Jamaica, which showed a decline of 27.6 per cent in poverty between 1991 and 1999. He suggested that a scientific approach to poverty meant that it was not necessary to focus on change in any one year, unless it was so unusual as to demand attention. In this regard, Mr. Salmon reiterated that instead of the annual Survey of Living Conditions that was currently being conducted in Jamaica, there ought to be less frequent surveys.

Mr. Salmon also highlighted some of the problems associated with the implementation of programmes designed to reduce poverty in Jamaica as follows:

(a) **Crisis in the financial sector:** Government has had to spend billions of dollars to rescue the financial sector in Jamaica.

(b) **Debt service problems:** Jamaica is now borrowing money to service the budget and 62 per cent of the budget goes towards debt servicing.

(c) **The need for changes in the relationship between donor/lender agencies and the countries that they are supposed to be assisting:** Although well intentioned, these agencies often unknowingly supported organizational agendas and ignored the priorities of the poor. These organizations also came with a "one-size-fits-all" package and proceeded to convince countries that their needs were in line with this approach. Countries too, in order to obtain the assistance of the international organizations, spent a lot of time trying to find out the priorities of these international organizations and the kinds of programmes they were likely to support, and then tailor their proposals to fit these priorities. As a result many programmes died when donor/lender support ended. The dilemma for these international organizations, according to Mr. Salmon, was that although they might realize that the recipient country was being manipulative, they had to be careful not to violate established protocol. In that regard, he suggested the need for these agencies to insist on transparency in all its dimensions, achieved through the establishment of clear standards and proper monitoring.

(d) **The need for structural change:** Structural changes in society were necessary so that the poor could have greater access to resources to help them rise above poverty.

(e) **The need for changes in the political structure:** Citing the problem as being located primarily with the middle-income countries, Mr. Salmon explained that in many cases political leaders were stuck in traditional structures and were therefore unwilling or unable to make the necessary and desired changes for the transformation of the status quo.

(f) **The need for greater collaboration between policy makers and technocrats/experts:** In Jamaica, this was not done often enough. In the same vein, there was also some amount of distrust between the government and the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that should be examined.

(g) **Fragmentation of programmes and projects:** In the case of Jamaica, programmes and projects aimed at eradicating poverty extended across 11 ministries and several other agencies. This meant that a lot of time was spent protecting turf rather than finding solutions to problems. The problem was currently being examined with a view to making the necessary institutional changes.

In spite of these problems, Mr. Salmon reported that some amount of progress had been made to improve the implementation of social programmes. Ministries had been persuaded of the need to develop indicators to monitor the implementation of programmes. This has been done in many areas.

#### **Women's projects in communities**

In her presentation, Ms. Staphorst, President of the National Women's Movement in Suriname, noted that poverty eradication programmes often lacked sustainability and the potential to be replicated. They were often neither socially nor individually profitable because people's participation in decision-making was not usually a part of the process of implementation.

Ms. Staphorst explained that non-governmental organizations were important actors in the development of the process of participatory development and had in fact embarked on important initiatives for effective participation of communities in Suriname. However, Ms. Staphorst identified some of the constraints to this process, which she felt would erode many of the benefits before they were able to make an impact at the macro level. These obstacles included factors that were both internal to the organizations and movements that have embarked on the process of facilitating and developing participatory approaches to social development and factors that were external to these organizations, but which impacted on their ability to operate.

Among the internal factors were:

- (a) Organizational fragmentation;
- (b) Vulnerability to manipulative politics;
- (c) Lack of financial independence.

Among the external factors were:

- (a) Lack of consensus on the need for participatory development;
- (b) Difficulty in measuring the effects of participatory development;

(c) **The question of time as it related to political expedience.** In this regard, Ms. Staphorst pointed out that sustainable development was a slow, painstaking process, which might not always accord with the need of politicians and aided administrators to display dramatic and quick results.

Ms. Staphorst also pointed to issues related to the implementation of projects in rural areas and in very traditional communities. The issue of gender needed to be sensitively managed in these communities, since poor management might hinder the implementation of development programmes.

Ms. Staphorst spoke of the need to create structures of participatory development which would best allow the process to grow. This required two kinds of actions:

1. **Improve government mechanisms for delivering inputs to the poor:** In this regard she explained that participation of the communities will progress, only when governments improved their mechanisms for the delivery of inputs to the poor by decentralizing relative management and thus facilitating local decision-making and local accountability.
2. **Support organizations of the poor:** This involved building support and sustenance for the grass-roots phenomenon by using the basic forms of locally initiated organizations as building blocks for people's participation.

Ms. Staphorst concluded by emphasizing the need to create a unified national approach to participatory development as one of the means of overcoming the obstacles to participatory development.

#### **Group discussion – Critical issues**

Group discussions concentrated on issues identified as facilitating factors, or concerns and obstacles to the successful implementation of social programmes and projects, which were meant to improve the welfare and well-being of the peoples of the region. These were referred to in relation to questions of research, targeting, monitoring capacity, infrastructure, organization and administration, human resource capacity and management, among others.

In the discussions on the need to advance on the commitment to reduce poverty in the region it was considered necessary and important to do the following:

1. Collect both quantitative and qualitative data in research projects as both were important.
2. Encourage the use of data among policy makers for the development of policy.
3. Sensitize policy makers to research methodology; assist and train them in the use of social data for policy and programme formulation. Reference was made to the

**Jamaican model in which capacity-building in social analysis entailed the creation of the necessary critical mass in a country.**

- 4. Increase and improve the coordination of donors in a manner that would facilitate the implementation of programmes and projects in the best interest of the beneficiaries.**
- 5. Utilize, to a greater degree, participatory methods in the design and implementation of programmes and projects.**
- 6. Educate stakeholders about the different types of legislation that existed and affected them.**
- 7. Consider national development plans in the development and implementation of other programmes.**
- 8. Mix survey and research to strengthen knowledge base regarding poverty and its reduction or alleviation.**
- 9. Share work in the region. For example, one person might be working on a methodology to measure poverty while at the same time someone else could undertake work to measure deprivation in significant areas to develop multiple poverty lines.**
- 10. Challenge the existing attitude to research and information in the social sector in order to see improvement in the impact of poverty reduction programmes.**
- 11. Undertake more research on the identification and use of proxy variables as indicators of poverty.**
- 12. Build capacity in participation, social mobilization and communication skills for persons responsible for poverty reduction programmes for the involvement of people in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes to be successful.**

On the other hand, with regard to donors, the meeting also observed that donor-driven programmes were not considered to be sustainable and in fact might even reduce national capacity.

### **Towards an action agenda**

This session began by painting a picture of the current policy process situation that impacted on poverty programmes and projects. This was done in order to identify any existent gaps and in doing so, to inform discussions for future actions to improve the process. Discussions were assisted by the presentation of a model of the Ideal Policy Process which was offered for critique (see chart I) from which a second and alternative model was derived. (See chart II).

CHART I

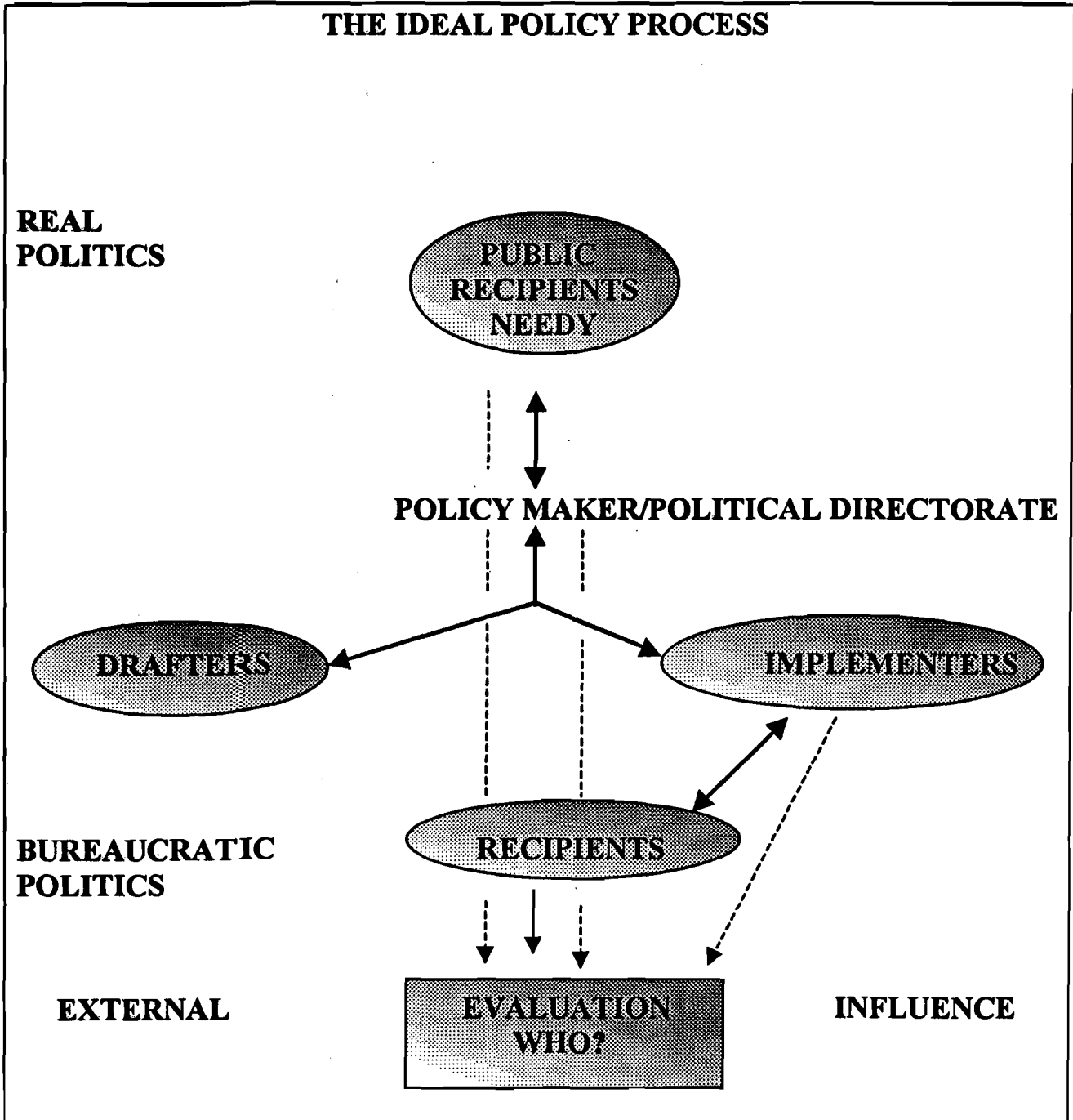
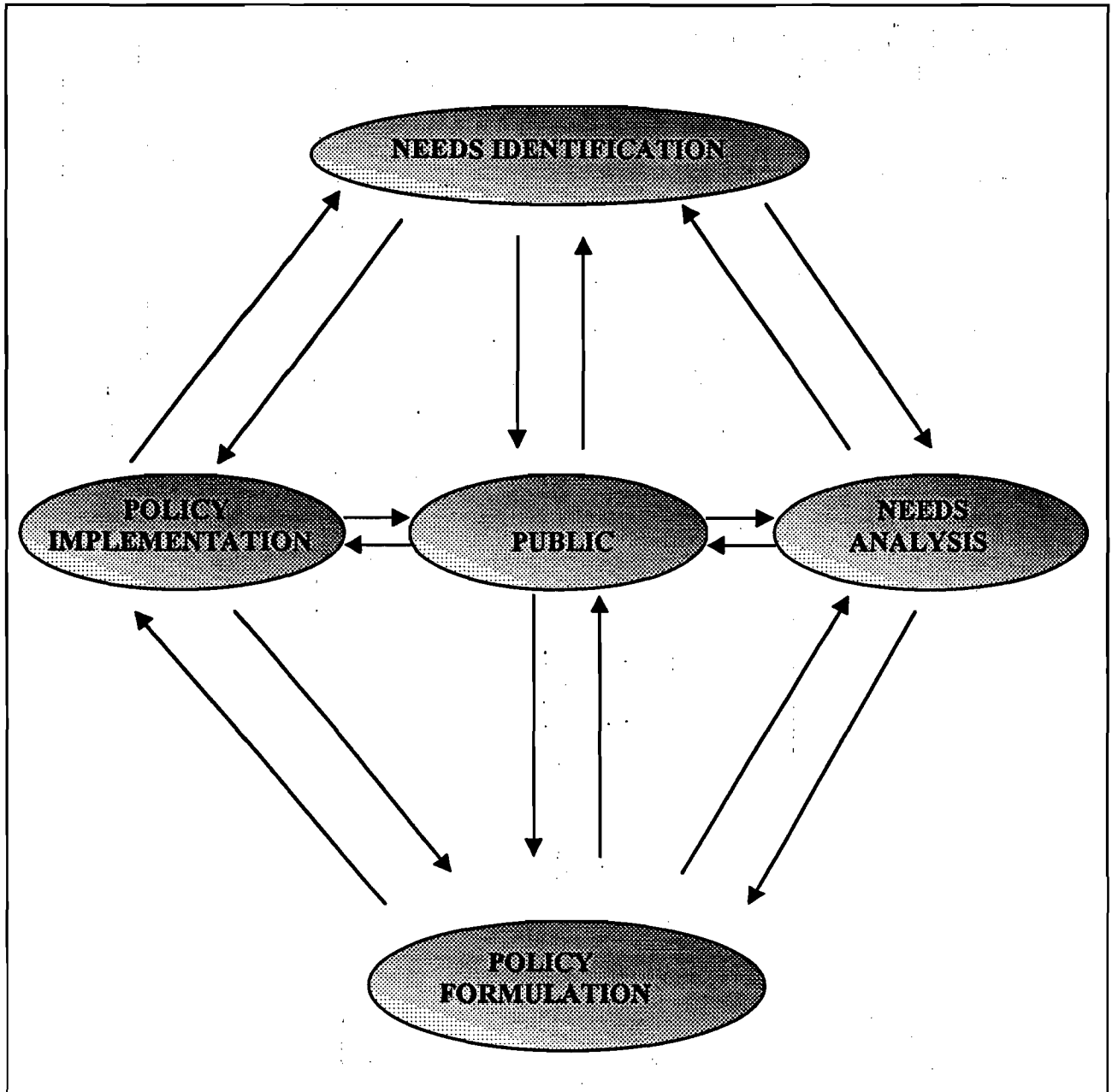


CHART II



In critiquing both models, participants noted that evaluation was an important part of the policy process and should be ongoing throughout. The Caribbean reality was the converse, however, where the existing hierarchical structure proved to be problematic to the process. Besides, both models needed to show that there were external pressures and international influences on the process. Participants engaged in a vigorous debate and intimated that there was a need to locate the various actors within the process and their roles in evaluation to effect proper solutions toward success. Evaluation was noted to take place at different levels by the different players (by implementers, policy makers, donors, etc.) and that these had various purposes and modes. One such mode was the Survey of Living Conditions (SLC) and thus it was suggested that a model for evaluation could be built into the SLC and could perhaps be undertaken every two years.

### **Presentation - Critical issues**

#### **Factors determining success or failure**

The meeting moved into addressing critical issues which affected the successful implementation and/or outcome of projects designed to improve people's quality of life.

The representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), added reality to the discussion by sharing his experiences on factors that determined success or failure of projects in the region. At the regional level, projects were predisposed to unique problems, much of which stemmed from the insular thinking of countries as was true of a regionally conceived project that was earmarked to be piloted in suitably viable countries. However, when a decision was to be taken at the regional level on the pilot countries, Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member countries insisted that implementation of the project should be regional even in countries where it was not viable to do so. This resulted in resources being spread thin and the project being watered down, eventually losing its viability. The feeling was that it would have succeeded had the plan been implemented in the few countries as originally designed.

A second example was that of a project that suffered because of historical ties associated with former colonies. This project, which sought to fight a tick infestation, encountered a problem in negotiating the modality for execution of the programme. The funding country did not want to fund a project that would not be executed in its territories. While the controversy continued, four years elapsed and the infestation had spread to other countries, thus necessitating a much larger and costlier project.

He alluded to the case of two other problems which national programmes and projects faced. The first was the absence of capacity or of will to sustain the programme and the second presented political vulnerability that affected decision-making and the sustainability of programmes.

With respect to the latter, it was shown how political vulnerability affected a project to revive the coconut industry in the region through the preservation of the shelf life of coconut



water. Thus, with coconut water evidenced to be an iso-tonic drink alike Gatorade, the project was conceived amidst a decline in regional coconut industries and it, therefore, displayed enormous potential benefits for the Caribbean. The process to preserve coconut water, through a filtration process was devised by FAO's scientists and plans were made to market the product regionally using joint Caribbean efforts. This project was executed in a Caribbean country and managed on behalf of the government. However, when the reigns of power changed the project was shelved and no further interest had since been expressed. The meeting was told that four years had since passed and FAO had recently started to release the technology which saw countries in Asia and Europe seizing the opportunity to utilize the technology to produce coconut water and probably at a lower cost.

How the absence of capacity affected projects was clearly identified in the next example of two seed projects, conceived in the 1980s, which would have assisted in the grading and cleaning of seeds, especially rice. Among other things, the first project included training and the provision of mechanical equipment. The second project was equipped with state of the art equipment, but the training staff left for greener pastures. It was revealed that both laboratories were currently lying idle due to the lack of will at the highest level. Blame was also squarely placed at the doorstep of the funding agencies as well for not recognizing the level of political will that was needed to secure success of the projects. In that light, it was felt that preconditions ought to be set before projects were approved. It was noted that unfortunately no penalties currently existed for non-compliance and, therefore, countries were not reprimanded.

He noted that the Caribbean was not a homogeneous group and, therefore, not all solutions mapped out for countries branded as developed would necessarily work. Projects thus needed to be customised to suit the implementation country.

He forwarded a suggestion to deal with the political challenges, which he conceived to be rooted in the adherence to the political party system. He suggested that if individuals were elected rather than parties, then politicians would be able to vote according to conscience in the interest of the country rather than to party allegiance. Therefore, in a scenario such as this the sustenance of projects and programmes would not be affected by the outcome of elections. He intimated that he had no answer for the problems that arose from insularity.

### **Projects for the youth**

The representative of Trinidad and Tobago shared his experiences in the execution of youth projects. He noted that the youth were not a homogeneous group and that because of the wide age band, 15-24, which constituted youth, the needs of this group varied and did so from country to country. Youth was also seen as an at-risk group because of political, cultural and socio-economic factors and that the challenges facing Caribbean youth reflected the social problems of the wider society inclusive of crime and violence, teenage pregnancy, unemployment and increasingly high dropout rates. They were also being marginalized, poorly trained and estranged and were soon to be saddled with the country's future. In light of the glorification of the youth as the future, he noted that the West-Indian Commission's admonition in 1992 of the need to move beyond such platitudinous statements to deal with issues affecting them was quite appropriate.

Statistics revealed that in Trinidad and Tobago, 46 per cent of the population was under the age of 25; 23 per cent fell within the 20-24 age bracket and there was a dropout rate of 18.5 per cent. Within this scenario, the process towards youth projects, although experiencing complications, had started and in 1998 a youth informed policy was developed which resulted in 130 young people being trained to go into communities to organize youth related projects. This resulted in 77 consultations throughout Trinidad with 5000 young people being surveyed. A report of the findings was presented to Parliament on the needs of this group, but the document was withdrawn and the process temporarily halted until elections were held. At this juncture he said that with the current trend in governance, the need for stakeholders' input was important and noted as an example the impact of the minimum wage bill on youth.

He informed of a project that focused on marginalized youth, which arose out of the recognition of the deteriorating condition of youth in certain communities which led to the educated ones in the community moving out leaving the community more impoverished human resource wise. Forty-five such communities were identified into which trained youth carried out investigations. The programme was temporarily stalled because of internal and external circumstances, some of which related to the fall out of structural adjustment policies that impacted on the availability of project funds which, although approved by government, had not yet been released.

Another project, designed for the Laventille community in Trinidad and Tobago, proved to be a challenge with respect to the identification of the community's needs for incorporation into the project. He explained that Laventille was a culturally dominated community and, therefore, the arising project necessitated linkages with the top performers in Trinidad and Tobago and the introduction of computer literacy. The numerous people leaving school without skills for social living and the fact that parents themselves did not have these skills spoke of the need for training of both groups along this line. The approach was, therefore, developmental and people-centred. He also noted that most groups that intervened in youth issues and projects were adult-led and that not many were youth-led. A case was made, therefore, that the youth knew what they needed and should be allowed to express their needs.

### **The poverty concept and the reality of poverty**

Ms Pat Ellis, Managing Director, Pat Ellis Associates, Inc., spoke on the concept of poverty and the reality of poverty and stated that poverty had many dimensions inclusive of personal poverty, where one lived in less than acceptable conditions. Community poverty, another dimension, was where whole communities lived in poverty and in the case of some families, for generations, as was captured in the comment "since time begin and now we poor". Different types of poverty were highlighted, for example, intellectual poverty, which underscored the lack of skills and spiritual poverty, often lamented by the poor themselves. Thus, it was emphasized that economic poverty was not the only important aspect of poverty of a human being or communities as a whole. The different levels of poverty were also highlighted, such as the destitute, the new poor and the working poor, who while working, still could not meet their needs. Therefore, policies and programmes designed to deal with poverty must take these issues into account.

Ms Ellis shared some expressions from poor women with children, single women in female headed households (FHH), men and younger people and reiterated the theme that schooling did not prepare them for life's challenges. Older people expressed the view that while there were services and financial assistance available for the elderly, such as pension and health care, the cost remained high for the beneficiaries. Among vulnerable groups, the older persons were concerned about the intolerance of the general population towards them. She called attention to the fact that different groups experienced poverty differently and that global programmes that did not pay attention to the reality of these groups had failed. Communities admitted that sometimes the phenomenon of drugs, although known as "unlawful and bad", had made it possible for some families to feed their children.

In her work Ms Ellis had found that the poor were weary of being researched and of the quantum of meetings held in their communities, which led to little or no action to alleviate their situation. She also referred to political affiliations in communities of the poor, which often determined who got jobs on county projects or not and concluded by stating that in general people were "fed up" of promises.

In addressing the question of why programmes for the poor were not benefiting the poor, the following reasons were posited:

(a) Little sensitivity and a serious lack of understanding of the complexity of the situation of the poor by politicians, planners and policy makers and an unwillingness to accept the reality of their situation.

(b) Many programmes developed for the poor focused on building and infrastructural development.

(c) The methodologies employed in projects for the poor were not participatory and did not involve the beneficiaries in the development, design, planning, and evaluation of projects.

(d) Implementing agencies often did not have the resources or capacities but more importantly, the know-how to implement programmes. This, despite successful examples of projects and programmes such as the Rose Hall Project in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and SERVOL in Trinidad and Tobago. These have empowered people to change their living conditions and to challenge bureaucracies to give them the necessary resources to do so.

She suggested that these experiences should be drawn upon when embarking upon projects especially to gain an insight into their execution and elements of sustainability. She also mentioned the need to look at the short-term benefits and long-term transformation of projects. In this regard she noted the lack of collaboration and coordination among agencies and within agencies in addressing projects for the poor. The meeting was reminded that poverty eradication and social development were issues of national concern and not only of micro-communities and that the lessons from the micro must inform the action at the macro levels. Policy makers, therefore, needed to understand the social construct and inequalities of communities, which perpetuated poverty among women, men, youth, and the elderly. Ms Ellis promoted, therefore, in

light of her experience in this field that a holistic and integrated poverty programme that factored in spiritual poverty as distinct from religion in the analysis was needed and desired by the poor themselves.

### **Open discussion - Plenary**

This session heard from Dr. Jeff Dellimore, Deputy Director, Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), on the Bank's poverty oriented programmes and activities. He noted that the Bank had made poverty reduction its primary objective and outlined the following initiatives as evidence of its efforts:

(a) A major initiative will be taken to develop a more evidence-based response to poverty by strengthening capacity for social analysis, social policy formulation and social planning in the CDB in order to increase benefits to poor and vulnerable people from the Bank's intervention. This will be undertaken with the financial assistance of the Department for International Development (DFID), and includes training, continued development of guidelines for social analysis, commissioned research, and promotion of information sharing among the Bank's Member Countries (BMCs) on best practices.

(b) Working papers will be presented by year-end for discussion with the Special Development Fund V (SDF V) contributors on the Bank's framework for poverty reduction and on strengthening governance and institutional development. This will be shared with all stakeholders.

(c) A Poverty Reduction Policy and Action Plan will subsequently be produced for Board approval during 2001, to guide the development of operational strategies in various sectors and programme areas so that there is much sharper focus on opportunities for systematic reduction in all CDB-financed operations.

(d) Assistance to the BMCs to undertake country poverty assessments will continue, in collaboration with donors active in the region. Priority will be given to completing poverty assessments for all remaining BMCs during the first year of the SDF V replenishment cycle, and to updating earlier assessments on a three to five-year cycle.

(e) The Bank will be proactive in assisting BMCs to develop and adopt national poverty reduction strategies/action plans. Together with CDB's corporate poverty reduction policy, these will provide a detailed framework for targeting CDB's interventions and leveraging additional domestic as well as international resources for poverty reduction. The target will be to have such national poverty reduction strategies in place for all active SDF borrowers by the end of 2002.

(f) In addition to direct poverty reduction programmes, targeted support will be provided to the process of economic transition through pro-poor private sector development, selected measures of human resource development, regional action in areas such as trade negotiations and development of appropriate social safety nets.

(g) CDB's sector policies, strategies and guidelines will be reviewed and adjusted, where necessary, to facilitate better understanding by staff and borrowers of the Bank's role and policies for promoting poverty reduction and to harmonise its interventions in various sectors within its corporate mission.

(h) Increased attention will be focused on project implementation and project quality and on the outcome and impact of the Bank's intervention, which will be supported by the introduction of a new project performance evaluation system, effective 2001.

With respect to FAO's presentation on the commercialization of technology one participant noted that the Caribbean Industrial Research Institute (CARIRI) in Trinidad had done so with the input of the private sector to bottle and sell sorrel as a soft drink.

Ms Ellis' presentation on the Saint Lucia project drew the comment that one could not intervene in all communities at the same level of intensity and, therefore, there was a need to know the key levers that effected change in one community which could then be used for replication in other projects. In response, one participant indicated that levers were identified, e.g. readiness of the community for projects as ascertained by certain factors that alluded to readiness. The meeting recognized that while the project had been the most studied and replicated, there were other actors involved in the process. The comment was made that in addition to this, there were also different factors at play in each case. Some attributed the success of the Saint Lucia experience to special circumstances at that particular community that were external to the project.

Some reaction to the CDB's initiatives expressed the view that there were other agencies already doing similar studies and work that CDB had outlined. It was then explained that the CDB would continue along its present path as most of the studies undertaken earlier by that organization and others were now outdated.

The question was asked as to the possibility of addressing poverty in those new studies as it related to the Beijing Platform for Action and the World Summit for Social Development Programme of Action (WSSD/POA), and to merge both recommendations when looking at the way forward so as not to reinvent the wheel. Inclusion could also be made of the Lima Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Braaga Declaration on youth.

With respect to the policy process as charted at the commencement of the session, it was queried whether the filters used to examine political, institutional and managerial issues, could also be used in the examination of case studies as well. The merit of experience and the need to look at lessons learnt from case studies to assist in the process was advised. In that regard, the following four areas were singled out to be addressed:

1. Evidence-based experience, where it is drawn from case studies of projects that were successful or failed;

2. Comparisons should not engage in broad sweep analysis but identify the key levers of change. In the reform process, therefore, there is need to bear in mind the points of intervention that worked or failed;
3. Learn from lessons of experience; and
4. Identify how managers and policy makers in the process can build consensus to avoid duplication of efforts.

One participant expressed the view that changes in government should be used as an opportunity to train politicians, given the five-year planning horizon, and to strategize around projects to ensure implementation so that they were not shelved. Planners could, therefore, utilize the 1.3.1 planning horizon where in the first year the design of training programmes and cognisance of the political culture with a view to managing political succession would take place. In such a plan the next three years would see institutions being put in place to manage programmes for the poor and then finally implementation of the programmes in the final year.

At this juncture Ms Ellis reiterated some of her earlier points and further noted that:

- (a) There were too many poverty assessments;
- (b) United Nations agencies should provide resources to communities to assist them to identify needs;
- (c) Planning ministries were not in touch with communities and therefore did not have the capacity to flesh out the issues for them;
- (d) There was a need to identify suitable implementers and thus to develop capacity and skills to implement programmes and projects; and
- (e) Poverty reduction took time and, therefore, account must be taken of the variations of the evaluation cycle, project funding cycle, planning cycles, and political cycle as these impacted on efforts in this area.

The CDB representative noted that to avoid duplication, its poverty assessments involved every organization and hence were financed by a cross-section of agencies. These assessments were very costly and the results were utilized by all agencies involved. With respect to the 1.3.1 planning horizon, it was felt that once the process was robust the cycle could be broken as was evident in the case of Suriname. The new Washington Consensus regarding poverty eradication was seen as a threat to poverty efforts in the region as it necessitated quick results. With this in mind, soft targets, which still did not address the very poor, were chosen to meet the desired results.

The representative of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) saw that there was a need to consider the demand side of labour as currently the youth were being trained for non-existent jobs and, therefore, the result was mismatch in the demand and supply of labour. The

need to train for jobs in demand and to, therefore, look at the macroeconomic level in terms of what jobs were being created was clear.

She noted, though, that the question of jobs in the construction industry tended to present a problem. When training for these jobs, such as for plumbers and masons, was offered by National Training Programmes and the training was advertised, the response remained poor. It was felt, therefore, that the construction industry needed to address this situation to attract potential employees.

During further debate, a concerned participant made the following observations:

(a) In the region, poverty had become a commodity, used by some and exploited by others for profit.

(b) Communities were over-researched and continued to remain poor.

(c) Cooperation was needed in the area of implementation of projects for the poor.

(d) Housing for poor people was often beyond their income range.

(e) There was a need to understand the requirements to lift communities from poverty, as they were not the same as 20 years ago and that the investment factor should take this into account.

(f) There was need to consider the time it took to mobilize a community and to allocate programmes.

(g) Collaboration between agencies was necessary to be able to fund projects that addressed issues as they emerged from the communities.

In response to comments about the United Nations and the impact of its programmes on communities, it was explained that because of the way in which donors funded projects, and the fact that there were many conditionalities, it remained difficult to resolve many issues.

Some participants insisted that new actors should find out about other actors who were in the community before and find out what they had been engaged in there. This would guide the collaborative process and the designation of a key or lead agency to operate within the community.

Some participants considered politicians to be obstacles to the participatory process and, therefore, the need was identified to look for innovative ways to influence them. Two possibilities to effect this were advanced. The first was to conduct an inquiry as to whether political parties would be interested in training young parliamentarians on social development, population and development and poverty and secondly, the establishment of a women's parliamentary forum which would seek the training of women across political parties.

In this regard it was noted that poverty eradication was a macro level issue that should be owned by the State and that it demanded from the State a certain level of commitment and resources. If the State was brought on board in the right way it could make a difference. The Non-Independent Caribbean Countries (NICCs) and the Asian economies were offered as testimonies. Some felt, therefore, that the involvement of the State needed to be considered against the wider global situation. In the final analysis, since the State itself had left space for civil society, community based organizations (CBOs) and NGOs to operate, the State had to respond to civil society.

The representative from the Ministry of Social Development, Trinidad and Tobago, informed the meeting that there were proposals to restructure the social services delivery system and that the last phase of the planning horizon would see a regionalized structure that would link communities with the overall developmental plan for the country. This would take the form of a regional social service agency comprising all key stakeholders in the country to work with a team of personnel from various government and community agencies. A bottom-up approach would be adopted in communities to identify issues and needs. A pathological approach seemed to exist in social development which resulted in processes being dealt with after problems had arisen. The restructuring of the social service delivery system, therefore, was important to the curbing of this approach and represented a way to deal with issues in a more proactive and positive approach rather than reactionary, as was the practice currently.

### **Closing**

In closing, Ms. Cuales highlighted four major points for placement on the Action Agenda of the various agencies, organizations and individual actors and specialists at the meeting, as follows:

1. Programmes and projects should be evidence-based
2. Model building needed to move forward
3. It was important to concentrate on short-term goals and remedies in order to achieve long-term transformation
4. It was important to invest in human resources and to include participation of the target population at all stages of project preparation and implementation.

Mr. St. Aimee, on behalf of the Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, and himself, thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting and stated that he had enjoyed the healthy discussions that emanated. He promised to forward the report of a recently held expert meeting on agriculture, which dealt with similar issues. He said that the willingness to address the political framework was worthy but should be propelled by universities, using the political sciences to address how to influence the directorate, by gaining an understanding of political structures to influence it to impact on the nature of social programmes.



He intimated that information technology now allowed for more interactions and information sharing other than that culled from meetings and hoped that the gathering would use this outlet. He also expressed the wish that the next meeting of experts on social development and poverty would look at other social factors such as, for example, the integration of all agencies in a holistic approach toward social development.

## Annex

## List of Participants

Ms. Cecilia Babb, Deputy Coordinator, Caribbean NGO Policy Development Centre, "Halsworth", Welches Road, St. Michael, Barbados or P.O. Box 284, Bridgetown, Barbados. Tel: (246) 437-6055; fax: (246) 437-3381, e-mail: [cpdc@caribnet.net](mailto:cpdc@caribnet.net)

Ms. Joy C. Brathwaite, Consultant, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 19 Keate Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: (868) 623- 7056 ext. 248; fax: (868) 623-1658; e-mail: [Joy.Brathwaite@undp.org.tt](mailto:Joy.Brathwaite@undp.org.tt)

Dr. Dennis A.V. Brown, Lecturer, Dept. of Behavioural Sciences, University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: (868) 645-3232 ext. 3053; fax: (868) 663-4948; e-mail: [denlyn@trinidd.net](mailto:denlyn@trinidd.net)

Dr. Jeffrey Dellimore, Deputy Director (Social Development), Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) P.O. Box 408, Wildey St. Michael, Barbados. Tel: (246) 431-1721; fax: (246) 426-7269; e-mail: [dellimj@caribank.org](mailto:dellimj@caribank.org)

Mr. Monty Eustace, President, National Development Foundation (NDF), P.O. Box 1455, Mckies Hill, Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Tel: (784) 457-2646; fax: (784) 457-1158

Dr. Pat Ellis, Managing Director, Pat Ellis Associates, Inc., 15 Sanford, St. Philip, Barbados. Tel: (246) 423-8115; fax: (246) 423-0567; e-mail: [patellis@sunbeach.net](mailto:patellis@sunbeach.net)

Ms. Hazel Halley-Burnett, Administrator, Women's Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, 1 Water & Cornhill Streets, Stabroek, Georgetown, Guyana. Tel: 592-2-54362; fax: 592-2-73497

Ms. Gail Henry, Programme Officer, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 19 Keate Street, Port of Spain. Tel: (868) 623-7056; fax: (868) 623-1658; e-mail: [gail.henry@undp.org.tt](mailto:gail.henry@undp.org.tt)

Ms. Gloria Henry, Director, Programme Operations and Training, YTEPP, Level 4, Guardian Building, 22-24 St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: (868) 625-1005; fax: (868) 625-0674; e-mail: [ytepp@tstt.net.tt](mailto:ytepp@tstt.net.tt)

Dr. Ralph Henry, Executive Chairman, KAIRI Consultants Ltd., 14 Cochrane Street, Tunapuna, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: (868) 663-2677; fax: (868) 663-1442; e-mail: [rmhenry@wow.net](mailto:rmhenry@wow.net)

Mr. Wilton John, Director of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, 186 Duke Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: (868) 625-5718; Fax: (868) 624-0011; e-mail: [dya@tstt.net.tt](mailto:dya@tstt.net.tt)

**Ms. Ytha Kempkes, Associate Expert, Labour Market Information and Policies, International Labour Organisation (ILO) Caribbean Office, 11 St. Clair Avenue, P.O. Box 1201, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: (868) 628-1453/4/5/6; fax: (868) 628-2433; e-mail: [kempkes@ilocarib.org.tt](mailto:kempkes@ilocarib.org.tt)**

**Mr. Lennox Marcelle, Legal Counsel, Ministry of Labour & Cooperatives, Legal Unit, Ministry of Labour & Cooperatives, Level 11, Riverside Plaza, Besson Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: (868) 623-4241 ext. 2085/624-8482; fax: 624-4091; e-mail: [molclc@tstt.net.tt](mailto:molclc@tstt.net.tt)**

**Mrs. Denise Noel De Bique, Regional Adviser Caribbean – Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Gender Equity Fund, c/o Canadian High Commission, 3A Sweet Briar Road, St. Clair, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: (868) 622-6232; fax: (868) 628-2581; e-mail: [denise.noel-debique@dfait-maeci.gc.ca](mailto:denise.noel-debique@dfait-maeci.gc.ca)**

**Ms. Antonia Popplewell, Director, Social Planning and Research, Ministry of Social Development, Old Autorama Building, El Socorro, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: (868) 675-6728; fax: (868) 674-4021**

**Mr. Donavan Robinson, Representative, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 134-138 Frederick Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: (868) 623-5175/625-0467; fax: (868) 623-0995; e-mail: [FAO-TT0@field.fao.org](mailto:FAO-TT0@field.fao.org)**

**Mr. Jaslin U. Salmon, National Coordinator Poverty Eradication Programme, Office of the Prime Minister, 1 Devon Road, Kingston 6, Jamaica. Tel: (876) 968-7018; fax: (876) 906-1244; e-mail: [jsalmon@opm.gov.jm](mailto:jsalmon@opm.gov.jm)**

**Ms. Joanna Shaw-Lloyd, Consultant, St. Michael's School for Boys, Diego Martin Main Road, Diego Martin, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: 637-7886**

**Ms. Elizabeth Solomon, National Information Officer, United Nations Information Centre (UNIC), Bretton Hall, 16 Victoria Avenue, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: (868) 623-4813; fax: (868) 623-4332; e-mail: [elizabethsolomon@unicpos.co.tt](mailto:elizabethsolomon@unicpos.co.tt) and [lizjuju@hotmail.com](mailto:lizjuju@hotmail.com)**

**Ms. Siegmien Staphorst, President, National Women's Union, Verl Gemenelandsweg 132B Paramaribo, Suriname. Tel: (1-597) 465626/ 432921/433041; fax: (1-597) 433-167/431296; e-mail: [n.v.b.@sr.net](mailto:n.v.b.@sr.net) or [siegmien@cq-link.sr](mailto:siegmien@cq-link.sr)**

**Ms. Gemma Tang-Nain, Deputy Programme Manager, Caribbean Community Development and Women's Affairs, CARICOM Secretariat, Bank of Guyana Building, Avenue of the Republic, P.O. Box 10827, Georgetown Guyana. Tel: (592-2) 51960; fax: (592-2) 58039; e-mail: [gemmatn@caricom.org](mailto:gemmatn@caricom.org)**

**Ms. Gwendolyn Williams, Management Training/Gender Consultant, 17 Hibiscus Drive, Macoya Gardens, Tunapuna, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: (868) 662-8120; fax: (868) 645-5048; e-mail: [gwenmacoya@hotmail.com](mailto:gwenmacoya@hotmail.com)**

**Ms. Judy Williams, Secretary General, Grenada Community Development Agency (GRENCODA), GRENCODA's Office, Gouyave St. John's, Grenada. Tel: (437) 444-8430/9490; fax: (473) 444-8777; e-mail: [grengo@caribsurf.com](mailto:grengo@caribsurf.com)**

**Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, Third Floor, CHIC Building, 63 Park Street, P.O. Box 1113, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: (868) 623-5595; Fax: (868) 623-8485; e-mail: [registry@eclacpos.org](mailto:registry@eclacpos.org)**

**Mr. Donatus St. Aimee, Officer-in Charge  
Ms. Sonia Cuales, Social Affairs Officer  
Ms. Roberta Clarke, Social Affairs Officer  
Ms. Asha Kambon, Social Affairs Officer**



