

ECLAC/CDCC Expert Group Meeting on
Integrated Planning in the Caribbean:
A Perspective from the Social Sector
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**REPORT OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON
INTEGRATED PLANNING IN THE CARIBBEAN: A PERSPECTIVE
FROM THE SOCIAL SECTOR**

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REPORT OF THE AD-HOC EXPERT MEETING ON INTEGRATED PLANNING IN THE CARIBBEAN: A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE SOCIAL SECTOR

Introduction

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean and secretariat to the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC), in collaboration with, the Ministry of Human Development, Local Government and Labour and the Ministry of Economic Development, Tourism and Culture of the Government of Belize convened a one-day meeting on “Integrated Planning in the Caribbean: A Perspective from the Social Sector”. The objectives of the meeting were:

- (a) To provide a forum for experts engaged in integrated planning to share their experiences of planning with a social sector focus;
- (b) To identify best practices and challenges; and
- (c) To strengthen confidence in efforts at long-term social planning for human development and poverty eradication in the Caribbean.

Attending the meeting were senior technocrats of the Government of Belize, a representative of the Cabinet Office of the Government of Jamaica, the Ministry of Planning and Development, Government of Trinidad and Tobago, the Ministry of Social Development, Government of St. Kitts and Nevis and representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department for International Development (DfID). The list of participants is attached to this report as Annex 1.

Agenda item 1: Opening

The meeting was brought to order by the representative of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat who thanked participants for taking time away from their end-of-year activities to attend the meeting. She took the opportunity to thank the Government of Belize and the UNDP for their support in making the meeting possible.

The ECLAC/CDCC representative reminded participants that one of the most significant outcomes of the world conferences which occurred in the final decade of the twentieth century was the acknowledgement by the global community that in order to achieve sustainable human development, it was necessary to address the social and economic dimensions of development with equal vigour.

She took the opportunity to speak to the work of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat over the last five years in strengthening capacities in social statistical analysis and evidence-based social policy formulation in supporting governments to achieve their goals as stated in those conferences. In referring to governments' commitment to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) she asked that, for this particular Expert Group Meeting, participants take note of the long-term nature of the MDG targets and their measurable indicators.

The ECLAC/CDCC representative, in reminding participants of the purpose of the meeting, noted that increasingly there was agreement that integrated planning take into consideration the economic and social dimensions of development. It was holistic, in that, it addressed not one problem alone, but sought to capture the multidimensional nature of development, with time bound targets that were measurable and had been derived through participatory processes. This approach to planning, she suggested, had proved to have the most efficient, attainable and effective outcomes.

Mr. Roy Cayetano, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Human Development, Local Government and Labour of Belize welcomed participants. He spoke of the many changes which the Ministry had undergone, including its most recent change after the elections of March 2003, and the impact of these changes and the challenges which they presented to processes of long-term social planning such as the National Human Development Agenda (NHDA). He reminded the meeting that the process was one which his Ministry, along with the Ministry of Economic Development, had spearheaded. He expressed his enthusiasm at the opportunity for exchange of information which this forum provided and indicated that he looked forward to the outcomes of the day's deliberations.

The representative of UNDP, in welcoming participants to the meeting, expressed his hopes that the meeting would be frank and open so that best practices could be shared and all could learn from the difficulties encountered.

Agenda item 2 and 3:
Adoption of agenda and organization of work

The meeting adopted the agenda as presented and agreed to the organization of the day's work.

The agenda of the meeting was discussed and adopted as follows:

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda

3. Organization of work
4. Presentations on experiences in integrated and participatory planning: A social perspective
 - (a) Belize
 - (b) Jamaica
 - (c) St. Kitts and Nevis
 - (d) Trinidad and Tobago
5. Recommendations of the expert group
6. Other business

Agenda item 4:
Presentations on experiences in integrated and participatory planning:
A social perspective

Agenda item four was addressed in the format of two panels. Ms. Adele Catzim, consultant to the NHDA project, and currently Coordinator for the National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents' Project of Belize, and Ms. Anne Marie Bonner, Principal Director, Policy Analysis and Review Unit, Cabinet Office, Government of Jamaica, spoke on the first panel.

Ms. Catzim's presentation was based on a paper which she had prepared and submitted to the Government of Belize. A copy of the presentation appears as Annex 2. She detailed the processes that had been undertaken in Belize in seeking to elaborate a 20-year plan for human development for the country. In addressing the difficulties and the successes, she focused on the lessons learnt. Key among them were: the need for leadership which appreciated institutional memory, understood the process and supported its vision; the need for the use of existing plans thus demonstrating the value of the work of the technocrats; earmarking and making available adequate financial resources from the outset; and the use of a simple administrative structure to manage the process. She further went on to report that she had used the basic processes inherent in the NHDA approach for the production of the plan of action for children and adolescents. She highlighted two major differences in the two processes. Firstly, whereas in the NHDA process, funds were not available, in the case of the plan of action for children and adolescents, funds were available from the onset. Secondly, the plan for children did not seek community consultations but reviewed existing plans and reports to provide an appreciation of the needs of communities. She suggested that there was room for broader stakeholder consultation.

In making her presentation, Ms Bonner sought to provide an overview of the Government of Jamaica's approach to developing a 15-year development plan. A copy of the presentation appears in Annex 2. She endorsed the notion of an integrated and participatory approach to the planning process and highlighted a number of issues involved in achieving an integrated approach. Key among them was the need for an outcome-focused approach; an alignment between priorities and resources; full participation by key stakeholders; cross-sectoral planning; linking social and economic concerns; and comparative benchmarking of performance. In examining what had been working, Ms. Bonner highlighted a number of areas. One area was an awareness and willingness of communities to participate in the planning process. This was demonstrated by the fact that a large number of communities expressed an interest in the process, however, not all communities which desired to be included in the process, could be accommodated. Another area involved the extent of agreement between the political and administrative levels of government regarding the planning process. The process allowed both technocrats and political actors 'to be speaking from the same page' about the goals and targets for national development. The challenges which she identified included the need for more to be done in changing cultural practices, such as that of the culture of policy formulation; the need for more dialogue between politicians and bureaucrats; more ownership by the government for reform processes; the need for infusion of a new cadre of officers in the public service; and the development of greater capacity of the citizenry to engage in participatory processes.

The floor was opened for discussion on both presentations. The presenters were commended for their insightful presentations. Participants commented on the absence of a culture of planning in the Caribbean and described the approach to addressing social problems as a sort of ad hoc 'fire fighting' approach. The meeting agreed with the need for an infusion of a new cadre of public service officers but was pessimistic about the ability of governments in the subregion to attract and keep them. The meeting arrived at a consensus that two key questions needed to be addressed to advance the notion of integrated long-term planning from a social perspective. One question dealt with the notion of political will, which was agreed by all as essential for such a process to be successful. The specific question became, how should such political will be demonstrated? The second question was raised regarding the need for strengthening the capacity of the citizenry in the participatory process. Which should come first, the increased capacity of communities in how to set targets, monitor and implement programmes or the planning process itself?

After much discussion the meeting agreed that it was necessary for 'political will' to be made obvious beyond lip service. It was suggested that such 'will' could be demonstrated: through commitment of resources, both human and financial; ownership and direction of the process by the highest

levels of government, i.e. Prime Minister and/or Minister of Economic Development (or Planning) and Minister of Social or Human development; and by the degree of involvement of other Cabinet ministers in order to ensure a holistic approach to the process. In regard to the question of a full participatory process by communities, it was suggested that communities need to be enabled or empowered to engage in the shaping of social policy. When there was engagement of communities in this process, the task of producing social relevant policy and achieving human development would be made easier.

The panel was resumed with two new panellists, Ms. Jovil Martin, Social Planner, Ministry of Social Development, Community and Gender Affairs, Government of St. Kitts and Nevis and Ms. Victoria Mendez-Charles, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Planning and Development, Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Ms. Martin provided background information on St. Kitts and Nevis and social planning which she concluded was more crises-driven and top-down than proactive and holistic. She also suggested that it was somewhat segmented and based in three ministries: Health, Education and Social Development, Community and Gender Affairs, without a social policy framework within which all ministries could work. An overview of the social safety net programmes and other related activities which were being undertaken to address poverty and human development in St. Kitts and Nevis was provided. This was done in the context of information on the poverty status of the population and some of its causes which was based on the poverty assessment conducted in the country in 2001.

She outlined the action that the Government had agreed to undertake in order to develop a holistic social policy framework for the country, using a NHDA approach. Some of the constraints which she identified to achieving the goal were: weak civil society, a culture of non-participation by the population; inadequate supply of skilled human resources; exogenous shocks such as those caused by hurricanes (which divert expenditure away from social development to infrastructure repair and replacement); and the negative impact of the global economy. Ms. Martin concluded that the new approach to development recognised the need for all economic efforts to be directed not only at economic growth but at raising the standard of living of ordinary people. She suggested that full political commitment was central to achieving the development of a new social policy framework for St. Kitts and Nevis. Ms. Martin's presentation can be found in Annex 2 of this report.

Ms. Mendez-Charles presented the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's initiative to elaborate a development plan to the year 2020 entitled, Vision 2020. Her presentation outlined what Vision 2020 was; the preparatory work of the Ministry of Planning and Development; what the Vision 2020 planning

process entailed; and the scope of the work, including the way forward. The full text of Ms. Mendez-Charles' presentation appears in Annex 2.

She outlined the four planning horizons of Vision 2020 which included the vision and overall objectives for the next 17 years until the year 2020; the specific objectives, strategies and targets for the first six years (2004-6 and 2007-9); the action plans for the first three years (2004-2006); and the budget for the first fiscal year. She noted that the Prime Minister had initiated the plan and there was recognition at the highest level of the value of long-term visioning and strategic planning for Trinidad and Tobago. She spoke of the process of staff mobilisation and the preparation of a situational analysis of Trinidad and Tobago, using the MDGs as a guide and the notion of comparator countries. Ms. Mendez-Charles highlighted what she viewed as a new approach to planning which included long-term developmental perspective, a multisectoral and multidimensional approach. Another aspect of the planning process was the determination to use local expertise in the first instance and have that expertise supplemented by international expertise, where necessary. The process included what was described as a participatory dialogue in which face-to-face community meetings would be held in addition to focused group meetings with special interest groups. Support for this aspect of the process would be provided by UNDP, Trinidad and Tobago.

Ms. Mendez-Charles identified what she saw as the essential factors for success. These included the institutionalisation of the planning machinery; the development of an integrated planning approach; the promotion of broad-based ownership of the plans; public sector reform to ensure effective implementation and reform of attitudes and values within the society.

The floor was opened again for discussion on the last two presentations. Participants commended the presenters for sharing valuable information on processes that would prove to be very useful in their own work. Questions arose regarding the administration of what appeared to be a huge undertaking in Trinidad and Tobago. The meeting addressed the issue of costing of a long-term social planning exercise and how resources should be sourced for support of different aspects of the process. It was felt that the administration of the project should be supported by governments ensuring that they maintained complete control of the process through joint Ministries of Planning (Economic Development) and Social (Human Development). In addition, participants discussed the expected time frame for completion of such a planning exercise. This varied from 11 to 18 months, but the meeting agreed that the circumstances of each country would determine the eventual time frame.

Agenda item 5:
Recommendations

The following recommendations arose from the deliberations:

- (1) The need for increased opportunities for sharing of experiences among social planners and policy analysts;
- (2) Stronger processes in the Caribbean for integrated planning and a more holistic approach to social development;
- (3) The importance for countries to give expression to a framework for social policy to lend coherence to social programmes that addressed protection and development;
- (4) Necessity for the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat to produce a document and make it widely available to colleagues in the Caribbean interested in undertaking long-term social planning and that all efforts should be made to strengthen capacity in social planning within the subregion; and
- (5) The need to increase political will at the highest level in order to facilitate this process.

Agenda item 6:
Other business

The representative of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat thanked the participants once again for their interest and the presenters for their papers. Participants thanked ECLAC/CDCC secretariat for convening the meeting and expressed the opinion that it was most timely and useful. Since there was no other business, the meeting was brought to a close with the usual exchange of courtesies.

Annex 1

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Annex 2

POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS