

STRATEGIES FOR POVERTY REDUCTION IN THE CARIBBEAN: HOW TO BE EFFECTIVE

Neville C. Duncan

I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The main factor setting the foundation for successful poverty reduction is Prime-Ministerial/Presidential leadership and active coordination of a holistic program. This is the ideal situation of course. As will be briefly shown in this presentation, there are very successful examples of programs which, in their expansion on a nation-wide scale and rooted in community core organizations, can replicate such successes for the state as a whole. If that were to be so, it should be recognized that this could not be possible unless macroeconomic changes of significant proportions were induced from such a commitment. Indeed, what would, of necessity, emerge are entirely new ways of doing business economically, politically, socially and culturally. These are precisely the reasons why poverty reduction strategies require the full attention of the effective Head of Government attempting them.

The transformation of successful pilot projects and success stories in poverty reduction from the level at which they achieve success to wider levels of inclusiveness is, predictably, problematic but not impossible. Indeed the problems should in no wise be minimized. There are several levels of preparation in order to successfully achieve these goals.

At one level of preparation, what is needed is an entirely new and dynamic articulation among three key groupings of actors in ways not previously seriously envisaged – (1) a reforming and decentralized Central Government; (2) a refashioned and revitalized Local Government system (legally and or constitutionally guaranteed); and (3) an enabled Non-State Sector (broadly conceived, though internal distinctiveness would be respected). This adds up simply and powerfully to a new system of governance.

At another level of preparation, the Budgetary, a significant reallocation of proportions of national budgets away from cities and towns to rural villages and townships is required. This has, significantly and successfully, so far, been accomplished in a few Latin American countries,

notably Bolivia, whose model of decentralization and democratization is fast attracting inter-state agreements for horizontal cooperation in support of the reform process in other Latin American states. It is a shift not primarily in locating decentralized departments and units from central government but more so in engendering a great deal of relative autonomy assigned to local government authority and community-based civil society actors. This is a big and very important step, and is simply not possible without leadership at the highest level. Yet, it seems very evident that our leaders do genuinely want to eradicate poverty and are seeking a vision broad enough to provide extensive coverage and which is in keeping with capabilities and cultural predilections of their peoples.

A crucial level of preparation is the receptivity and capability of those whom are the targets of anti-poverty interventions. It is an excessively idealized notion to assume that the "powerless" can easily be empowered and by means such as training (intensive or extensive), "legalizing" their seizure of "captured" land, making "micro-entrepreneurs" of them, providing them with all the services (clean piped water, proper sanitation and solid and liquid waste disposal, access roads, secure shelter, and so on). There is no doubt that much of this needs to be done anyway but must not be confused with the task of eradicating poverty. First of all, the deliverability and sustainability of the initial intervention has to be questionable, as well as expectations of decisive beneficial outcomes. Secondly, standardized re-education and training programs hardly meet the necessary requirement of transmitting educational and technical progress to persons, especially the most disadvantaged, at a level and a pace which they can absorb and over a sufficient period of time to ensure continuity of learnt new capabilities.

There is also a third perspective on this worth mentioning here. Structural factors may have led to individual and community poverty as well as sheer bad fortune, but several of the poor are poor because they are less-motivated, more socially maladjusted, slower learners than others also afflicted by poverty. It should not be expected that such persons could, "over night" become entrepreneurs, own account workers, and responsible waged workers. It is more the case that considerable effort should be directed more at strengthening what others are successful at doing, that is legal, in poor and disadvantaged communities, in the expectation that these activities can generate sufficient sustainable opportunities, than in stimulating micro enterprises among the poorest of the poor themselves. Indeed, they might not want such responsibility in their lives just as how most university graduates from business schools prefer to find jobs than create them.

A fourth level of preparation is the issue of identifying the level and extent of poverty as well as the actual identity of those experiencing poverty, concerning which most countries have developed some capability to do so to

the satisfaction of a number of international aid and donor agencies (or, rather, these agencies have satisfied themselves that their measures and estimations of poverty are not far off the mark). However, these surveys and reports have not specifically identified the poor or the poorest of the poor by person or name, although their characteristics have been identified, as well as their consumption patterns and their generalized spatial location.

In a culture of political patronage and clientelism, more discriminating mechanisms and methodologies have to be agreed to actually identify targeted populations most in need of interventionary support and action. Much of this information can, relatively easily, be gathered by introducing a more effective management information system which utilizes the knowledge of the scores of public officials who come into daily to weekly contact with the poor and with poverty in general. The initial outlay in the required training and electronic communications equipment would be easily recovered from the beneficial effects of better targeting, speedier intervention and multiple input assistance.

A fifth level of preparation is the institutional framework, in its compositional aspects, through which interventionary activities are identified, examined and supported through resource provisioning, monitored and evaluated, and reconsidered. Again, credibility and impartiality would be encouraged through broad-based membership, appointed or elected by the originating sender stake-holder. Ideally, such a representative would be contributing not in his or her own right as an expert but as representing the views, arrived at through discussion with the sending organization. This casting of the bread of patronage on the waters of opportunity is oftentimes anathema in the political system and is really not feasible without prime-ministerial/presidential leadership.

Having discovered who really are the poor, especially the poorest of the poor, understanding as concretely as possible what causes their poverty and, more importantly, what those who accept that they are poor both want and need for their well-being, these become the *sine qua non* for successful intervention. This point can hardly be overstressed in the rush by our governments to deliver what seems to be easy and straightforward to deliver such as school meals, drugs for the elderly, food stamps, poor relief cheques, etc. Poverty eradication is an act of social development and not an act of social welfare. Obviously, direct relief to the desperate should not be withheld but must be quickly transformed into a program of social development. True and successful poverty eradication is not something you do directly with and for the poorest but for the society as a whole in achieving a people-centered development. In privileging the poorest attention is drawn to the basis for all macro-level developmental action and the real measure of success, namely the sustainable removal of significant

numbers of persons from that register. No other measure is nearly as important.

II. THE MEANING OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE ROLE OF THE STATE

Alexander Pope (1997) reminded us that; "for forms of government let fools contest, whatever is best administered is best". While not accepting this statement fully, there is much that is true in it. In its downplaying of the significant role to be played by political will in any successful process of governance, it emphasizes the necessity to achieve administrative efficiency and effectiveness. It, instead, elevates administrative will. It emphasizes that size and form of the administrative structure should follow function and purpose and should relate to what is privileged in terms of goals and objectives. It points, therefore, to the need for streamlining and integrating of administrative machinery within the framework of a reformed system of governance. To be sure, there is a significant role to be played by political will and broad-based consensus on primary objectives among stakeholders, without which the best designed administrative arrangements will come to nought and be sabotaged in practice.

The role of the state is strongly influenced by the model of development chosen. Traditionally, and contemporaneously, that model is a *growth* model. It is a model which emphasizes economic growth rather than social development. It focuses on growth in domestic product in order to increase *per capita* income. It is an approach which seeks to maintain favorable investment climate to stimulate enterprise growth. Such large-scale enterprises providing employment through increased production will gradually benefit the poor. Market mechanisms become the primary allocator of benefits. So, performance is measured by profits, foreign exchange earnings, production quantity and value. This paradigm also allows for social welfare activities, by way of a marriage, such as public investment in health, education and infrastructure, but they are not equal partners; they are not privileged. The aim is to add improved physical well-being to the growth model. They are accretions to the primary objective of growth with welfare being an important though secondary and consequential element in the process.

In terms of the administrative machinery, there are established ministries, departments, units, statutory boards and social commissions. These tend, in their specialisms and specificities, to fragment the effort for an integrated approach towards the poor, and especially towards children and their parents and guardians. Not being privileged by being first order concerns of the state, the activities become segmented and rely upon some magic of osmosis to achieve dynamic and catalyzing outcomes. In spite of

this, in the past, the results were not bad although far from optimum. So the situation remained tolerated and accepted as the best that could be done under the circumstances. New ways of achieving greater efficiency and effectiveness were hardly explored, and the best ideas would in any case require a paradigm shift in the dominant development model – which was easier said than done.

The exigencies of today in the form of declining government revenues in real terms, the debt overhang which deny resources to the social sectors, the claims to revenue resources of the threatened collapse in the financial sector (insurance and banking), sluggish and insecure economic productive base (bananas, sugar, bauxite/alumina, oil, manufacturing industries), the sacrifice of state revenues in terms of concessions and in building infrastructure to stimulate foreign investment and export-led growth, all conspire, wittingly and unwittingly to deny co-equal status or pre-eminence to social development in macro-models of development. Since our governments have been and are genuinely sincere in wanting to provide for their populations but are hamstrung (both by the choice of development model as well as the insufficiency of resources to deliver services with the existing bureaucratic mechanisms), the search is on for alternative governance approaches. Such approaches would achieve maximum effectiveness within an alternative development paradigm rather than be grafted upon existing structures but realistic assessment suggests that, for the time being, the best value has to be sought within existing bureaucratic settings, suitably modified.

Governments of the Anglophone Caribbean have been seriously revenue deficient in terms of the manifold calls upon their financial resources. Aggregate public spending has contracted over the past two decades. The speed at which these contractions came made it difficult, if not impossible, for the government to sustain national priorities across functions and programs, in a manner which kept an efficient balance between labor, capital and other inputs. (World Bank, 1996a:20).

The World Bank report cited identified three kinds of action to be undertaken to redress the situation:

1. use national priorities to pick which functions should be strengthened;
2. reduce spending elsewhere; and
3. make spending more efficient in all areas where the government remains active.

The prior activity is to earn more revenues through successful development strategies but until that occurs these are the stark choices. The

question then is: what is to become first level concerns of government, what second and what third levels concerns?

The initial issue is a paradox. There has to be a search for a securer economic base but it appears that in order to do this the state has to make a considerable effort to increase domestic savings and install a low tariff regime in order to reduce the cost of operating economies quickly becoming tourism and services oriented ones. At the same time, there has to be the immense effort to achieve satisfactory revenues in a situation where taxation levels in most Anglophone Caribbean states are already high. These are, in turn, needed to support two types of activities which have come into bitter competition with each other: (1) the provision of impeccable infrastructural features (pure water, modern sewerage systems, domestic and international transportation systems, and first-quality telecommunications); and (2) the maintenance and then improvement of health, education and other social sector policies, while providing an adequate safety-net. Under prevailing development models, these two streams of state activities are in fierce competition and pose the sternest test for good governance capabilities of policy-makers and state administrations.

In this context, historic gains in overall health coverage and other social indicators are being lost due to the growing inadequacy of public revenues and the inability of private initiative to offer affordable services. Additionally, new problems are manifesting themselves as stabilizing and adjustment policies take their toll – sharp increase in criminal activities (including the illegal drug transshipment trade, money laundering and domestic use and abuse), inadequate waste management, and destructive land use policies and marine environment management. These now compete for shrinking resources once allocated to other social sectors. Without determined and sacrificial effort to protect historic gains, find new resources and strengthen alliances with civil society, it is hard to imagine progress, even in the medium term.

When needed resources are this tight, and legitimate contestations for prioritization are so bitter, a political decision is needed. Depending on where you stand and through which window you look at the Anglophone Caribbean reality, the view of what must be prioritized becomes different. The alternative to the growth-led development model is a vision which is people-centred and sustainable politically, economically, socially, technologically, culturally and spiritually. It is a perspective which argues that in order to achieve social development which caters to a broad range of fundamental human needs, there should be no decrease in allocations to primary health care, reproductive health, education, shelter, water and sanitation, credit, institutional support and work guarantee schemes for people in poverty. The needs of children are paramount because this is the

way to break the transmission of poverty from one generation to the next. Children's needs, in all their various forms, and in relation to their primary care givers, seem a moral and efficacious basis for prioritization.

The Anglophone Caribbean countries have achieved wonderful success in the education and health sectors, because they were prioritized. Nearly universal literacy, life expectancy at or above 70 years, stable or declining crude death rate per 1,000 persons, all attest to a measure of success. Nevertheless, for all these countries, there are serious deficits in quality and efficiency in both the education and health sectors and none more evident than among children.

Inequity begins with limited access to pre-school education and continues through the system because of wide variations in the quality of primary schools, the selection process and allocations arising out of Common Entrance Examinations, tracking at the secondary school level, streaming in schools, and the CXC examinations. Household inability to pay the supportive costs of ensuring good education and inadequate home environment put poor pupils at a further disadvantage (World Bank, 1995b). From the foregoing, and this is a finding in all countries, it is evident that there is a positive correlation between educational level, productivity and earnings. These disadvantages translate in reinforcing the cycle of poverty. Pupils are also short-changed by outdated teaching methods and materials, often done without any sensitivity to the socio-cultural environment of pupils, and inadequate school curricula. It is virtually unquestioned that good education and health systems are needed to achieve growth and reduce poverty.

There is the need to go behind the general statistical data to identify the actual inequities and ensure that resource flows are not reduced, but rather increased, to the most vulnerable populations and that services are delivered with optimum efficiency. The emphasis must now be to focus on the quality and level of service, because these are the locations where the main inequities reside.

The non-poor, in our system of budgeting and policy implementation, receives the bulk of available public resources. This is simply gross allocative inefficiency. It is not good practice to continue to try and stretch contracting resources to meet the provisioning of all or many of the traditional state services. None really succeeds in the way intended and strategic successes are exactly what is needed in this conjuncture.

III. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE: STREAMLINING AND INTEGRATING

In the latest phase of the Administrative Reform Programme in Jamaica there is an effort to thoroughly reform a few agencies, particularly those concerned with the collection of revenue, and pilot ministries. This occurs simultaneously with an effort to develop further government-wide financial and personnel management and information systems. In 1995, Jamaica reorganized and restructured the Social Development Commission (SDC) to serve as an implementation agency for a new initiative by the Government to eradicate poverty through the Integrated Community Development Programme (ICDP) and the Special Training and Empowerment Programme (STEP). A National Social Development Council of the Bahamas, with broad-based membership was established in 1995. Trinidad and Tobago has been putting its recently approved National Social Development Committee on a more operational footing. Several other anglophone Caribbean countries have been thinking on and intending to act along similar lines and to set up some form of executive agencies dealing with social development and poverty eradication.

Not many Governments have sought to establish a formal bureaucratic framework led by a Ministry to undertake and coordinate the task of social development and bring under one planning and budgetary mechanism all program and projects relating to community empowerment and poverty eradication.

What is true in this general sense is also true of the specific sense in which programs directed at, for example, children and their families are not planned in advance of budgetary allocations as an integrated approach. The catalyzing effect of doing so is lost both before the budgetary estimates and after at the implementing stages. There are Ministries of Social Development in Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Bahamas in which the social services are located. Several others have located them in a division or department linked with related portfolios such as labor or sports or women development or community development or local government or housing or youth affairs or culture or human resources. So there have been real attempts at coordination and integration to a variable degree in each state.

As Leo Pujadas (ECLAC/CDCC, 1996:22) noted; "there is no genuine mechanism in place for the coordination of social development at the national level in any country. In its place, under various guises are Standing Committees of Ministers and senior Public Servants pressed in the service of Poverty Eradication". In addition, he reminds us that social development is much more than a messianic zeal directed at poverty eradication and it is

much more than the overweening emphasis of social services provisioning on social assistance rather than on development and rehabilitation of their clients.

With deficits and weaknesses of this magnitude and with the obvious need to create a new normative public sector order to take into account required new governance structures, how much more difficult it will be to streamline and integrate government machinery for improved planning and program to the poor and poorest! The aim should be to achieve social development.

Social development, or social reform, is not to be seen as social welfare. It is a concept based on the understanding that economic reform requires social change and that social change cannot take place without economic transformation. Along with this is the necessity for governments to attend to pressing social demands being made on the state. Specifically in this regard, the aim of social development is to transcend the basic shortcomings of the social policies applied during recent decades. The best way to be able to achieve this is by means of a constructive dialogue among the different segments of civil society. To be sure, while this is happening, exceptional care has to be taken to ensure that in the process of structural adjustment the needs of dependent populations (the elderly and children, physically and mentally challenged persons), the indigent, and the special needs of women and minority ethnic groups are fully met.

This requires efficient government programs, and the creative application of new technologies to achieve sustained economic development. Social development seeks the adoption of policies and instruments designed to incorporate all members of the society in contributing to overall prosperity – creating a win-win, not a winners and losers situation. The coordination of action and decisions in the social and economic fields would occur in relation to:

- a. restructuring of the productive sector investments, with some emphasis on freer enterprise and job creation;
- b. reviewing government priorities and public spending;
- c. improving efficiency and equity in the delivery of funding, transfer operations and social programs and services; and
- d. reforming and strengthening public institutions and organizations of civil society, including the private sector, in order to ensure greater efficiency in the provision of services, among other activities.

Clive Thomas (1995a) had argued that the ability to deliver effective multi-year, centrally-directed and state-led social planning does not exist nor is it necessarily desirable. What he proposed was that social planning be

confined to integrative indicative planning, strategic planning and catalytic interventions, involving all social sectors. Monitoring of ongoing activities, based on accurate mapping of poverty and the need of children and their families is the only secure way of establishing whether progress is being made in identifying problems as they emerge so that speedy corrective action may be taken.

Knowledge of the full spectrum of the tried and tested programmatic efforts for poverty eradication and a sound information base are fundamental requirements for effectiveness and efficiency. In this process, a way has to be found through new co-relations with civil society to access popular creativity and permit people to use their intelligence, skill and labor to find solutions and implement them. However, UNICEF has correctly noted a caution that the basic causes of poverty do not reside within poor communities and, consequently, planning must be both at the community and national levels.

IV. PROPOSALS IN BRIEF ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION

Any effort at streamlining and integrating (which assumes that there are disparate policies and actions to be coordinated) public machinery to deal with the poorest, specifically poverty among children and their families, must deal with the following suggestions:

- (i) The political will of the state must be exercised in favor of an alternative macro-level development model which is people-centered and privileges social development, going significantly beyond social welfare.
- (ii) There should be an administrative will to achieve allocative efficiency in relation to primary beneficiaries and to eliminate the serious deficits in quality and efficiency in the primary social sectors chosen, especially in relation to children and their families among the poor.
- (iii) The political and bureaucratic policy-makers need to undertake a national dialogue among stakeholders to determine priorities and make hard choices with the highest degree of consensus possible. Out of this may naturally emerge a National Social Advisory Association.
- (iv) There should be a coordination mechanism dealing with policies, financing, monitoring and evaluation with status, authority and representativeness which could lead directly to cabinet with responsibility for social development and social policies. Ministerial status may be required.

- (v) The establishment of a Research and Planning Unit with clearly designed responsibilities for periodic program evaluation, planning of coordination and integration of services, and of policy, becomes crucial. It would seek to sharpen social indicators and establish baseline measurements, especially as they relate to vulnerable populations, especially disadvantaged children and their families.
- (vi) The creation of a specific executive agency to coordinate and implement all policies designed with significant impact on children and their families is perhaps the most focused instrument which can achieve allocative efficiency in this regard.
- (vii) Acknowledgment of these requirements include the necessity for an integrated community-based development in order to reorganize the delivery of social services which would lead inexorably to a complete and profound revision of the management system and human resources capabilities needed.

For each Anglophone Caribbean state, starting at how far down this road that country has already traversed, the aim should be to seek to go beyond streamlining and integrating government machinery for improved planning and program delivery. As an ECLAC document (ECLAC/CDCC, 1996) had noted, integration assumes the separateness of domains to be integrated, while [holism] assumes the wholeness of the reality and the imperative of not losing sight of it, not segmenting it, but dealing with all the elements in any particular concrete context. A holism which puts the needs of children first in poverty eradication is almost bound to be morally and practically superior to any other preference.

V. SUMMARY FINDINGS OF SUCCESSFUL NON-STATE AND STATE SECTORS ACTION AND ACTIVITIES IN EMPOWERMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION.

This section draws on concrete work on various types of non-state or sub-state organizations to indicate some of their experiences in people-centered governance. It is a critical analysis which looks at the findings in terms of lessons learned from some indicative experiences outlined. The framework utilized suggests different types of NGOs, and therefore, some special lessons are identified. The effect of this is to convey the complexity and variability of NGOs as well as their potential to contribute to a system of good governance in the anglophone Caribbean. The efforts of local government structures, themselves varied, at community governance and poverty reduction are briefly illustrated. The purpose of these examinations is to begin the process of linking central government, local government and NGOs in a relationship which conduces to good governance.

In order for programs of poverty reduction and community development to achieve optimal results, an understanding of the institutional framework becomes necessary. Data and analysis were presented under five aspects of that framework – (1) quasi international non-governmental organizations (QUINGOs); (2) quasi non-governmental organizations (QUANGOs); (3) NGOs/CBOs; (4) National and regional Networks of NGOs; and (5) Local Government.

QUINGOs were shown to have achieved outstanding success in Caribbean countries in spite of obvious weaknesses, and elements of successful methodologies of poverty intervention strategies were highlighted. With an emphasis upon effective project implementation and the corresponding capacity-building to support this, QUINGOs have, however, merely “internationalized” and not made smaller the role of the state in Caribbean societies. Attention has to be paid to either the re-absorption of these functions by line ministries of government or decentralization and devolution to local government and institutions of civil society, if sustainability is to be achieved when international funding and technical support are no longer available. Too many such “successes” cease with the termination of international funding while the domestic needs continue. The over-articulated administrative structure which International Financial Institutions (IFIs) impose on their sponsored agencies and the disproportionate focus on accountability processes rather than missions betray a deep mistrust of autonomous agencies in the Caribbean. Those efforts which have adopted an explicitly community development approach such as that of the Futures Fund in Guyana have shown how some aspects of this problem can be solved.

The highly acclaimed work of the National Commission on Self Help (NCSH) in Trinidad and Tobago shows the institutional capacity residing in Caribbean countries for successful work in poverty reduction on a broad community-wide and nation-wide basis. It proves that collaborative work with central and local government, community groups, state corporations and the private sector can and do work very well, and autonomously. This is one of the “success” models which should be carefully examined and emulated throughout the Caribbean.

Some examples of other NGOs engaged in poverty relief and development activities, some explicitly economic, and others more social, though no less significant for poverty reduction, were briefly examined. Their successes and problems were revealed. Along with those cases which dealt explicitly with groups in environmental protection, whose work positively impacted upon poverty reduction and community empowerment, lessons about collaborative management and co-production were derived.

Basically, the eco-organizations' examples demonstrated that working with the state is necessary and beneficial. For co-management to be successful, the legal management agency and the co-managing resource users must be equal partners from the start, in determining the management arrangement. National and Regional Networks of NGOs abound and form an impressive institutional framework for interventionary activity at all levels of decision making and action in poverty reduction.

The Caribbean Policy Development Centre's (CPDC) work in regional and international advocacy, and the work of its member organizations sub-regionally and nationally have been recognized by governments and by the CARICOM Secretariat. Yet, work needs to be done in making the regional and national coverage of NGOs/CBOs comprehensive and securing formal recognition from governments as part of the policy process.

The Caribbean local government system is inadequately developed despite the sterling efforts of the Caribbean Association of Local Government Authorities (CALGA) to ensure its spread and its legal and constitutional recognition and relative autonomy from central government. Local government is a critical dimension of a reformed system of governance and hence its development is urgent. Local government is well-situated between central government and NGOs to play a meaningful role in community development and poverty reduction. A CALGA report illustrated some of their community development activities, based on a collaborative management approach, which revealed a willingness and a capacity to be the basis of a country-wide structured response to poverty reduction. It was strongly emphasized that local government should not be bypassed in the rush to generate parallel organizations and popular institutions.

The role of the state in actively promoting collaborative management and co-production activities was stressed. A recommendation was made for the establishment of a Social Investment Fund overseen by a National Commission, with broad-based membership, to encourage national efforts at poverty reduction. Institutional strengthening and capacity building for National and regional NGOs, as well as for Local Government was proposed. Among other recommendations throughout the paper, and at the end, is the notion that a legal and constitutional framework needs to be provided by the state and, through a system of reformed governance, the necessary autonomy be provided for 'multi-partite' arrangements to function with the greatest efficiency and effectiveness.

VI. THE STATE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

Some form of local government exists in most Caribbean countries. The administrative structures in the anglophone Caribbean are derived from the British system. Local government authorities are subordinate partners, within the unitary state systems which characterize the political structures of most of the anglophone Caribbean states, with central government in servicing the needs of the people and in formulating policies associated with these needs, and in their development. For these reasons, they are well-situated to be important agencies for promoting participation of the community in civic affairs and in community development – especially to relieve and reduce poverty and its generational transmission.

Anglophone Caribbean local government authorities vary in many respects – from the most formally established in the constitution to informality representative of pre-local government formations. The diversity, although they are small islands (with the exceptions of Guyana and Belize – South and Central America respectively) is tremendous. For example, the Bahamas has over 700 islands/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 ANGLOPHONE CARIBBEAN

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

Of the constitutional/legal local government systems, the most articulated model is that in Guyana with the local government system having 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 decentralized local government system of Trinidad which has legally conferred statutory status to Municipal Councils and District Councils.

Anglophone Caribbean models of local government should contain the following features:

1. have constitutional or legal status;

2. municipal and District Councils be established as statutory corporations so that local authorities can act fully as development agencies;
3. meet the criterion of full electiveness;
4. have well-defined financial autonomy; and
5. explicitly establish local authorities as community development and empowering agencies as part of their constitutional and legal mandate.

Local government systems, where they exist, are closer to the targeted populations and are in a position to strengthen what people already do to survive economic recession and structural adjustment, and can join with credit unions, trade unions, and NGOs in this common endeavor of empowering people. In this way, they can prove to be effective instruments to work with the poor in communities to reduce poverty.

The efforts of the poor and disadvantaged have often been limited or stifled by the lack of transfer of adequate technological progress to what they do. Local governments, through their connections with central governments, through their ownership and control of vital equipment and facilities, and through their elected representativeness, are well-placed to make themselves relevant in ensuring food security and the creation of economic productive environments.

Local government should not be bypassed in the generation of parallel organizations and popular institutions. They should be facilitated by constitutional, legal and institutional changes which promote decentralization, devolution and democratization of authority and power to be an integral part of the community development process. They are, increasingly, revealing the willingness and capacity to move firmly in this direction as was illustrated in the larger paper.

From a review of collaborative activities between local government and community groups, it became obvious that communities are fully capable of identifying their own needs, planning how to meet them, and implement the agreed plan. In doing so, a variety of resources are mobilized which added tremendous value to the limited financial and material support provided by local and national government, other interest groups and the international community.

If governments are prepared to tap into this dynamism and reservoir of effective governance, then considerable improvements can be made to the lives of people in a wide variety of ways. Although these are the lessons from some of many success stories drawn from the experience of the anglophone Caribbean region, many community efforts at poverty reduction and community development have been fundamentally flawed in terms of a comprehensive governance perspective. A framework on what further interventions and institutional frameworks ought to be undertaken in

inducing preferred social development and community action, needs to be agreed.

VII. INDUCING PREFERRED SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY ACTION

Activities by growing numbers of NGOs and renewed interest in local government were intended to challenge and replace by institutional organization and action the notion that the major developmental planning decisions must be made centrally based upon economic analyses prepared by highly trained technicians, to be implemented by subordinate agencies according to predetermined schedules and procedures. As Korten and Alphonso (1983) have noted, bureaucratic reforms toward more effective social development performance must (i) be guided by a knowledge of the lives of the poor and the dynamics of the social and physical ecologies which sustain their poverty; (ii) local government and community development personnel must facilitate growth in the capacity for choice and action of those they serve; and (iii) break down barriers to collaborative action on complex problems between individual institutions.

Both for central and local government, there needs to be the recognition that structural reform (good governance) must be undertaken as a basic instrument of strategy. This requires viewing both local government authorities and NGOs as strategists and governmental structures as changeable. Although there has been the appearance of numerous NGOs in the anglophone Caribbean, they do not, and must not be allowed to, supersede the role and function of local government, whether in a unitary system or as part of a federal government arrangement. More importantly, the responsibility of the state for social welfare and development must not be allowed to become decomposed. Although the power and authority of the state must, necessarily, be diffused to new centers of action closer to beneficiaries and involve the latter's meaningful participation at all stages, if a new governance structure is to be consolidated.

The reason is as simple as it is often overlooked in exaggerated views about what NGOs and local governments can do. None of these institutions (local government, NGOs) can, at any time, even with the most extensive and intensive capacity-building, be the agency through which, as Cernea (1988) noted, the contradictions of planned change and induced development be primarily or ultimately addressed. It is in their interrelationship and shared, though not necessarily equal, responsibility, within the framework of a new system of governance, that a new synergy will be released which will produce better development and better government.

NGOs and local government should not be seen as competing forces which are better able to put people at the center of development. They must of necessity collaborate. The weaknesses of the one are oftentimes delicately offset by the strengths of the other. NGOs may be seen, as Annis (1987) noted, as small scale, politically independent, low cost, and innovative – as positive attributes. However, these features are unable to treat effectively with pervasive poverty and dispossession. They are unable to offer a sustained and integrated assault, lacking institutional and financial connectedness to central government, and lacking a general base rooted in representative elections. NGOs, however, have a direct legitimate basis, especially the grassroots organizations, through their activities. Their experiences, shared with national and local decision-makers, provide invaluable lessons vital for conceiving development interventions. International donor agencies are rapidly learning this.

Several Caribbean NGOs have taken time out from their activities in production-oriented, production support service and social service projects (Cernea, 1988) to assume a new position as full partners in the development of this region. Their contribution in the area of policy analysis – nationally, through their NGO networks and federations; and regionally, through such organizations as the Caribbean Policy Development Center – is invaluable and achieved because their relative autonomy, as Atherton Martin (1995) has noted, allows them to foster information and institutional linkages which directly challenge the global institutions. Governments (central and local), and the business sectors in the Caribbean feel more constrained. They have presented detailed proposals for alternative people-centered development approaches and have developed or are developing new tools, data bases, and methods of diagnosis and expertise needed for implementing these sustainable development options for the Caribbean. None of this will take such contributions very far unless creative ways for cooperating with the public and private sectors to establish regional and national mechanisms are found (Ibid.).

Central government lends itself to macro studies, NGOs to micro studies (especially of the types adumbrated in this report) and local government lends itself to neither. Yet, the location of local government between community and nation leaves it well-placed to bring civil society and state together in urgently productive relationships. It has to be ensured that well-planned decentralizing, devolving and democratizing exercises are designed with the full participation of these three groups, with labor and business fully involved, and which ensure that there are sufficient resources to enable local government and NGOs/community-based organizations to meet local needs for poverty reduction and social development.

A participatory process is characterized by a proactive stance on the part of those engaged in the process. Their inputs are invited early on, and the tone and substance of the discussions and the report aim to achieve a consensus on programs, policies, and approaches. The government has to be committed to this ethos and be the initiator of the dialogue intended to achieve real results. The ethos embraces all the canons of good governance. Governments, local governments, NGOs, business and trade unions must be clear on the strategy and mission statement which they are trying to achieve and to which they are committed.

VIII. HOLISTIC PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Community development strategies, and the activities and achievements of the groups examined in this paper can be readily placed in four broad strategies: growth, welfare, responsive and holistic (Korten and Alphonso, 1983). They can be distinguished in terms of their dominant goals, primary means, community level tasks, community role, critical assumptions, structure of bureaucracy, coordination, communication flows, locus of initiative and control and primary performance indicators.

Within the growth perspective, for example, the primary performance indicator would be profits, foreign exchange earnings, production quantity and value. For the welfare strategy, the primary indicators would be goods delivered and services rendered. The responsive strategy would focus on the number of beneficiaries and community participation in and control of project activities. The holistic strategy would call for population-based indices of improvements in equity, well-being, and participation in relation to jointly determined goals. On each of the distinctions there are important differences manifested within each strategy.

It is true to say that the instances presented in this document and the hundreds of cases not referred to in the Caribbean specificity, can be seen as reflective of either growth, welfare, or responsive strategies, whether the activities have been initiated and/or undertaken by international donors, the government, local government, business sector, labor unions, credit unions, NGOs and community-based organizations. When constitutional, legislative, institutional, procedural and collective changes are contemplated, it is the holistic strategy that is recommended.

However, if the only practical basis on which all the stakeholders, including (most critically) the targeted populations, can be brought together to achieve poverty reduction and community development is either the growth, welfare, or responsive strategies, these are perfectly valid and important initiatives. Indeed, while improvement plans should be

comprehensive, their implementation, depending on the situation in each country, should be incremental, but purposive.

The holistic strategy (Korten and Alphonso, 1983) has as its dominant goals, growth, equity, well-being and participation which are consonant with IFIs new policy statements, those of NGOs and those of national governments. There is still hesitancy from governments about the primary means being to build community capacities to engage in development partnerships with governments. There is still a great deal of reluctance to forge the necessary linkages with local governments and NGOs.

This reflects itself in an inability, at this stage, to see the community level tasks as complex and varied, so the state still searches for some large directive institution to guide the process. In some activities, as was demonstrated, especially in natural resources management, governments have accepted that the community role should be that of partners in interdependent relationship with government and the stakeholders.

No Caribbean government, as yet, has accepted the critical assumptions of an holistic strategy that it can undertake as policy to restructure societal power relationships and that centralized bureaucracies can learn to share power with community groups. There has been much discussions, and in Trinidad, there has been some legislative action re decentralization, but not much more anywhere.

Similarly, although there is acceptance of the ideology of good governance, there is little action on its practices which would require the perception of bureaucracies in the Caribbean having complex decentralized matrix structures with permanent mechanisms for vertical and lateral integration. This would require a mix of generalist and specialist skills which go far beyond the present in order to achieve community development.

There are emerging a variety of ad hoc coordinating mechanisms but they have not been extensive enough and the need is also for permanent coordinating mechanisms at all levels intended to facilitate joint problem-solving. The communications channels, between central government and local government and community groupings have been dominated by a top-down flow. The requirement is for a continuous formal and informal two-way vertical and horizontal communication through multiple channels. The locus of initiative and control must involve all the stakeholders in various co-arrangements. Similarly, planning and implementation are to be regarded as continuous and interactive.

The requirements for the holistic approach as manifested in changed attitudes of central governments are a long way off from achievement in the Caribbean. However, it is also a development for which Caribbean local government and Caribbean NGOs have been increasing their capacity for

policy interventions at the policy levels, nationally, regionally and internationally. Central governments are, increasingly, under pressure from a changed global political economy and the little revolts of civil society, committing themselves to reformed governance, participation of communities and democratization. Continued pressure from all quarters is expected to produce more positive results in the near future.

For a new system of governance to work, people must be ready for interdependent action. This means they must become proactive in defining what this may mean and how they will participate in it. All the institutions in society must reflect a new governance structure – the public sector, trade unions, businesses, churches, the judicial system, schools, local government, community-based organizations.

The political party, especially, must reflect, in the way it goes about its business, all the features that it will naturally adopt should it be given the chance to be the government. In these ways, a new synergy will be released which will produce inventiveness, increased productivity, greater happiness of the greatest number, and many new and fully legitimate leaders.

IX. A NEW ECONOMICS

Karl Birkholzer (1996:60-63), in an article entitled "Promoting Community Self-reliance in Europe" recognized a phenomenon of split development with zones of prosperity on the one side and regional crisis on the other. The results of progressive growth are concentrated in certain areas, while, simultaneously, neighboring regions, towns and communities are suffering social and economic decline. The indicators for the emergence of crisis regions are always identical: a growing number of long-term unemployed people; an increasing impoverishment, private as well as public; and the consequent neglect and/or collapse of infrastructure. This is the future of banana growing areas in St. Lucia and Dominica, for example, if privileged access to the UK market is not secured. Our response to finding solutions to poverty which work and are sustainable must recognize this aspect and design appropriate strategies to overcome the problem.

Birkholzer notes that the goal of creating long-term sustainable structures for crisis regions needs to be established. Projects and models need to provide more than emergency aid or 'niche economy' and, instead, develop the kernel of a new economic system for the future. The contours of a new and third sector of the economy may then be developed which distinguishes itself as much as from the traditional market economy as from the state-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, and this must involve the five elements: a new economic dimension, social investment, employment versus unemployment, adjacent markets, and sustainable development.

The task can be described as how a given population can secure the existence of its community in a particular place, in which and from which its members live, with the resources available in that place (the endogenous potential) and on the basis of the following principle: local work for local people using local resources. Sustainable development viewed in this way reveals that it is precisely in crisis regions that plant investment or infrastructural outlays cannot be the motor of economic regeneration (*Ibid.*).

Paradoxically, crisis regions reveal no lack of work, despite the prevalent high unemployment figures. Consequently, the objective of labor market policies must be to finance the necessary work, instead of financing unemployment. Long-term joblessness has been provided for neither in the principle of unemployment insurance, nor in the traditional tools of job creation policies. Long-term unemployment is, on the contrary, an inadequacy of the economic system itself, not of the individual affected.

From an economic standpoint, however, redundancy cannot be acceptable as a concept for revitalizing the economy, because those same people are actually a part of the economy. Crisis regions require a different and autonomous concept of development, one that is orientated towards the internal market, and places the unmet needs of the population of the locality or region in the center stage.

Birkholzer (1996) notes that this will require not only a protective attitude to human and material resources, but also the development of new adapted technologies, whose level of efficiency will no longer be measured by increases in mass production or the reductions in unit costs, but rather, among others, by social and ecological criteria. Nothing less is needed than a root-and-branch transformation of our system of production and work. Placed at the center of local economic and social policies are the goals of creating an independent, community sector within the economy.

The novel and future-orientated aspect of such forms of enterprise is the attempt to overcome the contradiction between economic and social interests by uniting producers and consumers in one enterprise, whereby economic activity is made subordinate to democratic controls and economic models are developed with the aim of realizing social and ecological objectives.

None of this is truly possible without non-state actors working with the state and local government.

X. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The main factor setting the foundation for successful poverty reduction is Prime-Ministerial/Presidential leadership and active coordination of a holistic program. This is the ideal situation of course.

The transformation of successful pilot projects and success stories in poverty reduction from the level at which they achieve success to wider levels of inclusiveness is, predictably, problematic but not impossible.

At one level of preparation, what is needed is an entirely new and dynamic articulation among three key groupings of actors in ways not previously seriously envisaged – (1) a reforming and decentralized Central Government; (2) a refashioned and revitalized Local Government system (legally and or constitutionally guaranteed); and (3) an enabled Non-State Sector (broadly conceived, though internal distinctiveness would be respected). This adds up simply and powerfully to a new system of governance.

At another level of preparation, the Budgetary, a significant reallocation of proportions of national budgets away from cities and towns to rural villages and townships is required.

A crucial level of preparation is the receptivity and capability of those whom are the targets of anti-poverty interventions.

It is more the case that considerable effort should be directed more at strengthening what others are successful at doing, that is legal, in poor and disadvantaged communities, in the expectation that these activities can generate sufficient sustainable opportunities, than in stimulating micro enterprises among the poorest of the poor themselves.

A fourth level of preparation is the issue of identifying the level and extent of poverty as well as the actual identity of those experiencing poverty. In a culture of political patronage and clientelism, more discriminating mechanisms and methodologies have to be agreed to actually identify targeted populations most in need of interventionary support and action.

A fifth level of preparation is the institutional framework, in its compositional aspects, through which interventionary activities are identified, examined and supported through resource provisioning, monitored and evaluated, and reconsidered.

Poverty eradication is an act of social development and not an act of social welfare. True and successful poverty eradication is not something you do directly with and for the poorest but for the society as a whole in achieving a people-centered development.

The points outlined in Section IV identifies specific activities which should be undertaken by the state.

Poverty in all its manifest faces results from a lack of power over resources and an inability of persons suffering from it to act self-responsibly. Providing enabling conditions lead inexorably to a new system of governance and a new economics.

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