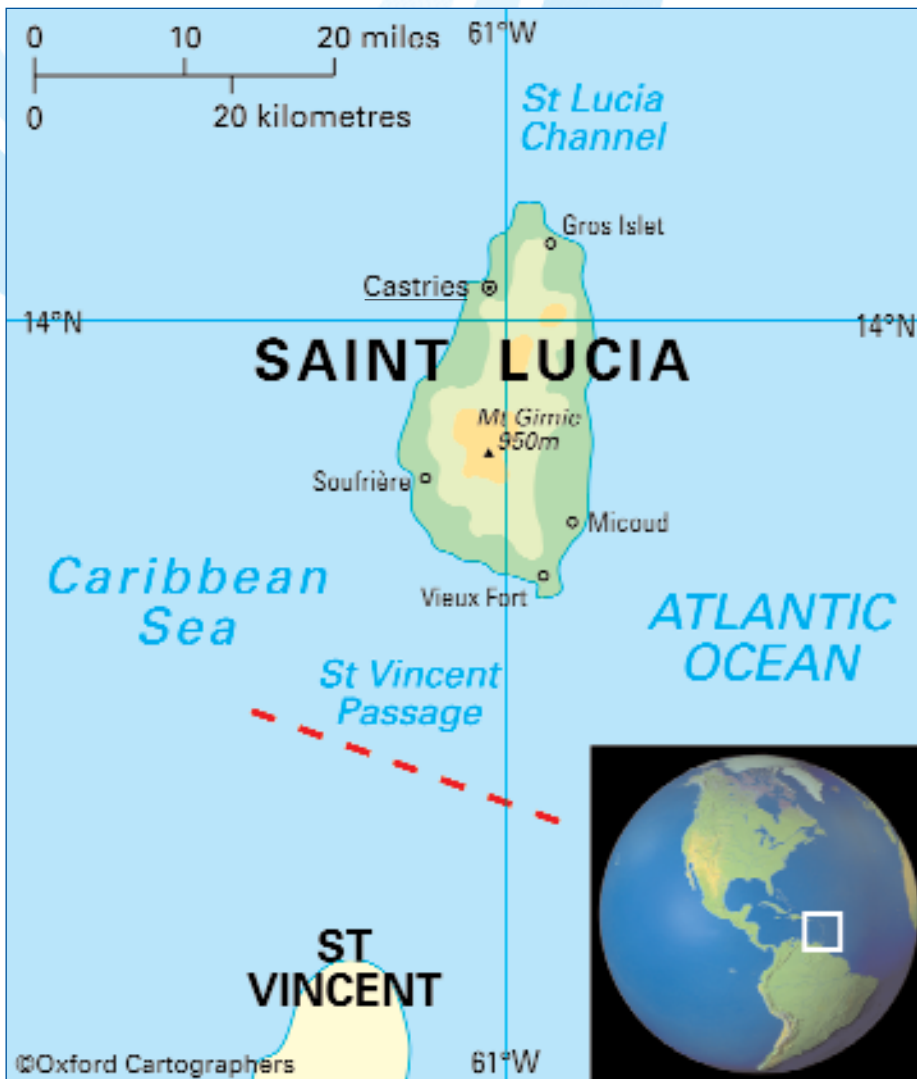


THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM IN

ST LUCIA



1 INTRODUCTION

St Lucia is a single-island state. It is a constitutional monarchy situated in the Windward Islands in the eastern Caribbean. Its land area is 616 sq km with a population of 170,649.¹

The head of state is HM Queen Elizabeth II represented by a governor-general. The head of government is the prime minister who appoints a cabinet from parliament. Parliament comprises the House of Assembly, with 17 members elected on the first-past-the-post system for a term of up to five years, and the Senate, with 11 appointed members – six on the advice of the prime minister, three on the advice of the leader of the opposition and two by the governor-general. The capital is Castries.

There are nine administrative divisions, namely Anse-la-Raye, Castries, Choiseul, Dennery, Gros-Islet, Laborie, Micoud, Soufriere and Vieux-Fort.

Local government comprises Castries City Council, three town councils and six village councils.

2 POLITICAL AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF ST LUCIA

Local government elections were suspended in 1979 and subsequently a number of pieces of legislation were passed that centralised the delivery of a number of services such as solid waste disposal.

There have been moves by the ministry responsible for local government to introduce democratically elected councils across the

island for several years. In 1999, a Local Government Reform Task Force was introduced. So far, the Green Paper on Local Government Reform has been in circulation, with recommendations as to the implementation of local government in St Lucia.

The last general election was held in 2006. The St Lucia United Workers Party won 11 seats and the St Lucia Labour Party won six. The next is constitutionally due in 2011.

The Minister of Physical Development, Housing, Urban Renewal and Local Government is responsible for overseeing policy formulation pertaining to local government. The minister, Hon. Richard Frederick, operates within the framework of the Local Government Ordinance 1947.

3 LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

3.1 Constitutional provisions

The constitution makes reference to local government but has not implemented the establishment of local government.

3.2 Main legislative texts

The main legislative texts governing local government are:

- Local Government Ordinance 1947
- Castries Corporation Act 1967.

4 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

4.1 Main divisions

The main division in local government is between the City of Castries and the rest of the councils. Where local councils operate, they are single-tier. There is one city, three town councils and six village councils.

4.2 Distribution of local governments and population

The City of Castries has a population of about 67,340. The population of the other towns and villages averages about 9,745. Some 50% of the population lives in urban areas.

5 DEMOCRATIC AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local elections have been suspended since

1979. Currently the Minister of Physical Development, Housing, Urban Renewal and Local Government is responsible for the nomination of all councils. Officers of the Ministry of Social Transformation are active in consulting civil society organisations. From this process recommendations are made to the minister and appointments are approved by cabinet.

In Castries City Council the decision-making process is through committees; however in the smaller councils all issues are dealt with in full council. These councils each have nine members.

5.1 Local government staffing

Staff are recruited both centrally (higher grades) and locally. The powers to discipline remain with the body responsible for recruitment. There is no deployment of central government staff to the local councils. The town clerk, or clerk of council, is an established post within the Government Service. The clerk has an assistant clerk. In Castries City Council there is a wider complement of staff.

6 DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY COMPETENCE

In the absence of effective law, the functions are those delegated by the minister or those the existing interim councils prioritise. The consequence of this is that the services delivered by local councils are far from uniform across the sector.

The local councils all undertake maintenance and repairs to roads, pavements, footpaths and streets within major communities; cleaning and de-silting of drains, streets and pavements; maintenance of squares, parks and open spaces; provision and maintenance of daycare services; landscaping and beautification programmes; maintenance of public buildings; grantings of permits and licences; environmental monitoring, development control etc; operation of libraries; and de-silting of rivers.

7 FINANCE

7.1 Revenue

The total aggregate revenue for local government in 2004/2005 was EC\$136,597, or US\$50,277, and in 2005/06 EC\$119,390 or US\$43,943. The main sources of revenue are:

- Trade licences
- Hawkers'/vendors' licences
- Rental of property
- Fish fines
- Market dues
- Cemetery dues
- Sundry dues
- Sundry receipts.

The Ministry of Physical Development, Housing, Urban Renewal is responsible for varying and collecting the local taxes. The local council is responsible for collecting user fees.

7.2 Revenue-sharing

There is no set policy for transfer payments made from central government to the local councils. These payments comprise nearly all the revenue received by local government.

7.3 Expenditure

The total aggregate expenditure for local government in 2004/2005 was EC\$3,144,002, or US\$1,342,000, and for 2005/2006 it was EC\$7,591,156 or US\$2,794,050. No breakdown of expenditure is available.

Local government is not permitted to set deficit budgets.

8 ORGANISATIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

There is no local government association in St Lucia.

9 INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Relations between the local government sector and central government are largely determined by dialogue between councils and central ministry officials.

10 E-GOVERNMENT

An e-government strategy is currently in place at the national level.

In 2005 there were an estimated 55,000² internet users which represents 32% of the population of St Lucia.

11 ENVISAGED REFORMS

There are ongoing discussions on reinstating local democracy and establishing local government. The timescale for this remains unclear.

12 SUMMARY

Local government has been conducted over the past 28 years in St Lucia by interim councils appointed from time to time by the minister with responsibility for local government. The functions and responsibilities of local government have been gradually but consistently transferred to centralised authorities since 1980.

References

- 1 CIA World Factbook 2007
- 2 Ibid.