



bulletin

COMMONWEALTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT FORUM

issue 2/04

■ Promoting democratic local government ■ Sharing good practice

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New vision for local government in the Caribbean

New networks, structures and support for local government in the Caribbean are to be set up and strengthened following a three-day Regional Symposium on Local Democracy and Good Governance in the Caribbean held in Montego Bay in April.

Delegates from ministries of local government, senior local government leaders and representatives of civil society agreed:

- to create a Caribbean Forum of Ministers responsible for decentralisation, local government, community development and citizens' participation
- to support the revitalisation and reconstruction of the Caribbean Association of Local Government Authorities (CALGA)
- to seek official recognition by OECS/CARICOM for these new structures to ensure that local government issues are properly reflected in their work
- a Montego Bay Action Plan to take forward the symposium recommendations.

Jamaica Minister Hon Portia Simpson Miller was elected as Chair of the Caribbean Forum of Ministers to take forward this part of the recommendations, and Mayor David Fonseca of Belize was elected as chair of CALGA.

Delegates also confirmed the key role that the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) has in



CLGF Board members Hon Portia Simpson Miller (left) and Mayor Robert Montague (right) with Dr Raymond Notice, Mayor of St Catherine, at the symposium

representing the interests of local government in the Caribbean and in bringing together central and local government through its members to support local democracy and good governance and help access resources from Commonwealth and international agencies.

The symposium was organised by CLGF in conjunction with the Commonwealth Secretariat and hosted

by the Ministry of Local Government, Community Development and Sports, Jamaica with support from the Commonwealth Foundation. The discussions and outcomes will feed into the 2005 Commonwealth Local Government Conference on Developing Local Democracy in Aberdeen, Scotland, UK on 15-17 March 2005.

further coverage of the conference inside

CLGF Business Plan 2004-05

CLGF Board members agreed the 2004-2005 CLGF Business Plan at their meeting in Kingston, Jamaica on 23 April 2004.

The plan outlines the key aims and activities under each of CLGF's four core objectives: promoting democratic values and good governance; exchanging experience among local government practitioners; strengthening local government capacity; and, maintaining a Commonwealth-wide network of local government.

Copies of the plan will be sent to members with their 2004-05 subscription renewal reminders.

Call for bids for 2007 conference

CLGF will shortly be inviting bids for the 2007 Commonwealth Local Government Conference whose theme is delivering development through local leadership. Invitations and bid criteria will be sent out to all CLGF members during July. Please contact Sue Rhodes or Lorna Nicholas on +44 (0)20 7934 9690 for further information.

Commonwealth Local Government Handbook 2004



The latest edition of the Commonwealth Local Government Handbook was published in April 2004.

See back page for full details.

Commonwealth news in brief

Pakistan suspension lifted

The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG), which met in London on 21-22 May 2004, removed the suspension of Pakistan from the councils of the Commonwealth and took Fiji off its agenda.

The Group welcomed the progress made in Pakistan in restoring democracy and rebuilding democratic institutions. It will keep Pakistan on its agenda to monitor the situation, particularly that the 17th amendment to the Constitution is implemented fully including the separation of the offices of president and Chief of Army staff. The Group asked the Secretary General to look at technical assistance to support strengthening democracy, institution-building and good governance, and to update the Group at its next meeting in New York in September 2004.

Managing the impact of HIV/AIDS in the public sector

An HIV/AIDS Expert Group Meeting held at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London from 30 to 31 March 2004 identified the need to focus on the human resource policy-making agencies to manage the impact of HIV/AIDS in the public sector. Building on good practices around the Commonwealth, the framework developed at the meeting will be sensitive to the diversity of member countries, taking into account the size of countries, prevalence levels, phases of the epidemic, vulnerability and groups at risk.

Community partnerships valuable for environment

Commonwealth Environment Ministers met on 28 March 2004 for the tenth session of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment (CCGE). The meeting was held in Jeju, Republic of Korea on the eve of the United Nations Environment Programme Forum.

Ministers looked at the effectiveness of partnerships in human settlements, water, sanitation and waste management, focusing on three key areas: data collection; water quality and provision; and arrangements for bilateral and multilateral support. They pointed out the valuable role that community/municipality partnerships can play in enabling the poorest communities to collect data about their own settlements and services.

ComHABITAT, of which CLGF is a member, made a submission to the environment ministers meeting.

Local democracy



CLGF Vice Chair Hon Pons'o Sekatle speaking at the symposium

Some 80 delegates attended the CLGF Regional Symposium on Democracy and Good Governance in the Caribbean, including many ministers responsible for local government and community development, leading mayors and other local government leaders, senior ministry officials and other stakeholders from many Caribbean countries and further afield in the Commonwealth. Symposium participants discussed local government reform and decentralisation - roles and responsibilities, partnership working, financial decentralisation, and service delivery.

Nigeria local elections welcomed

CLGF has welcomed the nation-wide local elections held in 34 of the 36 states of Africa's most populous country, Nigeria, on 27 March 2004.

For almost two years councils in Nigeria have had appointed, rather than elected, leaders after the expiry of councillors' term of office in mid 2002. CLGF has been in discussions with the

Federal Government of Nigeria and in December 2003 agreed on the importance of holding local elections early.

The CLGF sees the holding of the elections as a sign that Nigeria is fully committed to the decisions of Commonwealth Heads of Government on the importance of local democracy,

at a time when Nigeria holds the Chair of the organisation.

Mr Kwame Owusu Bonsu, a senior official from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development of Ghana, visited Abuja on behalf of CLGF on 5-7 April to meet key stakeholders and provide CLGF with an assessment of the election process. The CLGF is also discussing with Nigerian members support for the Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON).

Supporting small states

Director's introduction



Like all Commonwealth organisations, the CLGF has a particular concern for its members in small states, including those in the Caribbean. The very first CLGF regional workshop was held in Trinidad in 1994. Since then CLGF has had an active programme involving research, councillor training, provision of technical expertise and regional workshops. It has also sponsored representatives from the region at Commonwealth and other conferences.

It was thus appropriate that Jamaica hosted the first high level CLGF-Commonwealth Secretariat regional symposium following the re-enforced mandate CLGF received at the 2003 CHOGM for its work in support of

democracy and good governance. We were delighted that many mayors, ministers and other senior representatives attended and were honoured to receive a message of support from the Prime Minister of Jamaica, Rt Hon P J Patterson. We plan to convene a similar symposium in the Pacific later this year, a region which like the Caribbean, has many small states.

The regional symposium coincided with the 2004 meeting of the CLGF Board. This allowed valuable interaction between Caribbean local government policy makers and their Commonwealth colleagues, many of whom were visiting the Caribbean for the first time and were keen to develop on-going links.

The Board endorsed a new programme on local democracy and good governance as part of CLGF's 2004-05 Business Plan. This will support programmes to consolidate local democracy, provide technical assistance and undertake local elections monitoring. The programme will target countries undergoing major local government reforms, especially small states which lack institutional capacity.

This new programme demonstrates how CLGF is both supporting small states and responding to the mandate given to it by Heads of Government.

Carl Wright, Director, CLGF

- an essential ingredient

Local democracy is key for effective governance and improving the quality of life of citizens, according to Jamaica Minister of Local Government, Community Development and Sport and CLGF Board member, Hon Portia Simpson Miller.

Speaking at the opening of the Regional Symposium on Democracy and Good Governance in the Caribbean in Jamaica on 19 April, Minister Simpson Miller said:

“For societies of all sizes, local democracy is a vital ingredient of successful efforts to improve the quality and effectiveness of governance.

“Good Governance demands the active and direct participation of citizens and communities in the formulation of policies and making of decisions that will affect them at local level.”

Public sector reform is a high priority in the Caribbean. Many Caribbean countries have local government, but there is a wide variation in structures and powers given to local government. Conference delegates discussed local government reform and decentralisation to develop a network and an action plan for strengthening local government in the region.

Pro-poor strategies

CLGF Vice Chair Hon Ponto'o Susan Sekatle, Minister for Local Government in Lesotho, who also welcomed delegates to the symposium, said:

“If we are to ensure pro-poor development strategies, if we are to meet the millennium development goals, if we are to address the special vulnerability of small states, then we

need development at community level. This is best done by democratically-elected local government, working in partnership with central government and other stakeholders,” she said.

Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General Winston Cox said: “The Harare declaration speaks of democratic principles. Our role is to ensure that those principles are applied, to ensure that democracy in the Commonwealth is healthy, it is robust and locally rooted.

“The key to this is to instil in all citizens a desire to defend all the institutions of democracy. This is why local government is essential”.

At the opening session of the symposium delegates also heard a message from the Prime Minister of Jamaica, Rt Hon P J Patterson.

News in brief

Local government has role in health CLGF tells ministers

In its submission to the Commonwealth Health Ministers' Meeting in Geneva on 16 May 2004, CLGF says that local government, working in partnership with other spheres of government, civil society and the private sector, has an enormous task ahead to develop new strategies and new ways of thinking to meet the challenges of urbanisation. CLGF points to some of the good practice being undertaken by local government in many Commonwealth countries such as awareness raising on HIV/AIDs in Uganda and home-based care in Swaziland.

Local government and Cotonou

A mid-term review of the implementation of the EU Cotonou agreement for African-Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries is now underway. The ACP Local Government Platform (ACPLGP), which CLGF is a leading member, has written to the European Commission to ensure that local government is included in its governance programmes and to clarify the position for local government to participate in ACP-EC cooperation. This follows two high level meetings held in Brussels earlier this year between the Platform and senior EU and ACP officers, including a meeting between the Commission's Director General for Development, Kous Richelle, the ACP Secretary General and CLGF's two vice chairs and Director.

Supporting the MDGs

UN-HABITAT and UNDP are preparing a programme called Urban Millennium Partnership. This programme will support local authorities in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and local governance systems. The Partnership will be launched at the World Urban Forum in Barcelona on 14 September 2004. CLGF has been invited as an associate member of the UMP programme review committee.

UCLG launched

CLGF Board member Father Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, Mayor of Tshwane and President of the South African Local Government Association, was one of three presidents elected at the founding congress for United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) in Paris on 2-5 May 2004. UCLG is the result of the unification of the three international local government bodies - the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and the United Towns Organisation (UTO/FMCU) and Metropolis. CLGF, which was also represented at the launch by Director Carl Wright, will continue to work with UCLG in areas of common interest. A Memorandum of Understanding is being developed with UCLG along the lines of the one previously established with IULA.

Sierra Leone local elections well run

The first democratic local government elections in Sierra Leone for 30 years created 19 new councils that form part of Sierra Leone's new decentralisation strategy. The strategy gives more power to local regions and is part of Sierra Leone's plans to move forward following ten years of war and civil unrest.

Some 1200 candidates contested seats in 394 wards, with just under ten per cent of candidates being women. The two main parties are the All Peoples Congress (APC) and Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP), but five political parties contested seats along with 400 candidates who stood as independents.

The Commonwealth expert team, jointly organised by CLGF and Commonwealth Secretariat, saw the



Rally before the local government elections in Sierra Leone

whole process from the opening of a station, the operation of the voting at 36 polling stations – in both rural and urban areas - to the closing and a count. Polling stations were located in markets, barries (local courts), schools and churches.

Despite election bodies having only four months to organise the elections, the Commonwealth observers noted that

the operation was very well run, and electors were able to freely express their wishes.

Mayor Montague from Jamaica, Cllr Margaret Kotta from Tanzania, Hon Farouk Lawan MP from Nigeria, and Helen Duncan, an elections expert from the UK, made up the team observing the elections which was organised in three groups, one in Freetown, one in Bo in the South and Kenema in East, the third in Makeni in the north.

“The elections were peaceful and well-run. It was good to see people being able to exercise their right to vote for local councillors for the first time in 30 years,” said CLGF Senior Policy Officer Lucy Slack who led the support staff.

Good Practice Scheme goes to Jamaica

Jamaica has been selected as the next country to receive funding of up to J\$20 million (£200,000) for local government projects under the CLGF Good Practice Scheme.

The Jamaica Good Practice Scheme will fund up to five projects for the Jamaica Association of Local Government Authorities and local councils to develop partnership projects with other local government

associations and municipalities in the Commonwealth. The projects will focus on strategic planning, a theme that emerged as a key issue during the recent Regional Symposium on Local Democracy and Good Governance in the Caribbean.

One bid has already been received from Port Mary who are looking for a partner to develop a strategic plan for sustainable development in the parish

many of whose inhabitants work for the tourism industry.

The CLGF Good Practice Scheme helps local government practitioners from across the Commonwealth to share experiences, good practice and resources by working together on practical projects. This part of the Scheme is funded by the UK government Department for International Development.

Local government is big business

Local government makes up about three per cent of GDP in the countries Commonwealth on average, varying from 0.2% of GDP in Dominica, 0.7% in Jamaica to 7.8% of GDP in Trinidad and Tobago and a massive 11.8% in Canada.

These are some of the statistics that can be found in the Commonwealth Local Government Handbook 2004 which was published on 19 April. The Handbook was launched in Jamaica by Jamaica Minister for Local Government, Community Development and Sports Hon Portia Simpson Miller.

The 2004 Handbook is the third edition, bigger and better than ever. It now contains 26 full country profiles that describe how local government is organised, local government structures, election systems, legislation, service responsibilities, funding, and relationships with central government in

each country. This year the profiles have a new section on electronic government, a field in which many exciting developments are taking place in local councils across the Commonwealth. The profiles are organised in a format that allows easy comparison from country to country.

CLGF Chair Len Duvall OBE, said:

"The country profiles provide key information for policymakers and service deliverers in local government when they are looking for transferable good practice.

"They provide the structures of local government, a snapshot of where it is

today, and indications of how it is moving in each country."

The Handbook also has a section on local government service partnerships, comprising a paper prepared for the second Commonwealth Local Government Conference in Tshwane, South Africa in 2003.

CLGF is grateful to the UK Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for their funding contribution to the research on the profiles and to the University of Birmingham for their research support.

The Commonwealth Local Government Handbook 2004 is published by Commonwealth Business Publications

Ltd for CLGF. All CLGF members will receive at least one copy of the Handbook.

Further copies can be ordered, price £40, from: Rupert Jones-Parry, Publications Section, Commonwealth Secretariat, Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HX, UK; tel: +44 (0)20 7747 6342; fax: +44 (0)20 7839 9081; e-mail: r.jones-parry@commonwealth.int. Pre-payment by sterling cheque, international money order, postal order or bank draft made out to the Commonwealth Secretariat must accompany your order. Post and packaging charges should be added thus: UK Orders: £6 per copy; non-UK orders: £10 per copy. The Handbook can also be bought online at: www.publications.thecommonwealth.org/.

What's on..

July 2004

7-9 **Workshop, Sierra Leone:** CLGF in partnership with the Westminster Foundation

August 2004

2-3 **CLGF Good Practice Scheme Pacific workshop** for Australian and PNG partners, Cairns, Australia

September 2004

13-17 **World Urban Forum**, Barcelona, Spain

28-30 **Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting**, St Kitts & Nevis

October 2004

19-21 **CLGF Symposium on Local Government Service Partnerships**, Malaysia

23-27 **Networked Government**, CAPAM 10th anniversary conference, Singapore

November 2004

22 **CLGF European Members meeting**

23 **CLGF Finance and membership Sub-committee**

December 2004

tbc **CLGF/ Commonwealth Secretariat, Pacific Regional Symposium on Democracy and Good Governance**

March 2005

14 **CLGF Board meeting**, Aberdeen, Scotland, UK

15-17 **Third Commonwealth Local Government Conference**, Aberdeen, Scotland, UK

19 **CLGF General Meeting**, Aberdeen, Scotland, UK

For further information check out the CLGF website at www.clgf.org.uk or contact CLGF on tel: +44 (0) 20 7934 9690, fax: +44 (0) 20 7934 9699; e-mail: info@clgf.org.uk.

CAPAM 2004 biennial conference

Networked Government

23 - 27 October 2004

Singapore

The conference will look at issues such as many agencies, one government, engaging citizens, networking beyond borders

For detailed information on the programme and associated activities please contact:

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Or check out the CAPAM website @ www.capam.comnet.my

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Senator Ian Campbell, Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government, Australia

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