



Case study: localising the SDGs - Jamaica (2016–2018)

INTRODUCTION

Vision 2030 Jamaica, the National Development Plan published in 2009, provided a strategic road map to prepare the country for achieving developed status by 2030. Building on the bipartisan support of the Vision 2030 commitment for the SDGs transcends political parties and electoral cycles. The Government of Jamaica recognises local government as an important actor in achieving the SDGs. The Local Sustainable Development Plan (LSDP) allows municipalities to lay out their local development priorities in alignment with Vision 2030 and the SDGs. While not all local governments in Jamaica currently have an LSDP, work to build on existing successful implementation is ongoing and the LSDP is recognised in the 2019 Voluntary National Review as a key mechanism for achieving the SDGs.

Through an on-going partnership with the European Union to promote and strengthen local government as a key actor in development, CLGF was able to pilot the project *Strengthening local government's role as a partner in development* in Jamaica (among other countries), and support was focused on strengthening the existing institutional and organisational linkages between local, national and international development goals, as well as working with a set of pilot councils to implement elements of their LSDPs and demonstrate the development impact at the local level.

In Jamaica, the law governing municipal corporations mandates the preparation, adoption and implementation of LSDPs. Planning of the LSDPs requires an integrated view of development, in which connections between social, economic and environmental systems are taken into account. Social and economic development must work in harmony with environmental systems, within which they may exist, and, upon which they depend.¹ This approach to development planning presents an opportunity to address almost all of the UN SDGs. In the councils partnered with CLGF through its EU funded project, local planning demonstrated initiatives towards attaining:

- Local Economic Development (LED) strategies to generate incomes of the poor: SDG #1; and promoting economic growth through productive employment: SDG #8.
- Applying information technology to support municipal development and planning: SDG #11
- Sanitation, and municipal waste management and composting: SDGs #6 and #11

¹ A Framework for Local Sustainable Development in Jamaica (2000: 4-5)

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Country/regional context Jamaica is a constitutional monarchy with two spheres of government, national and local. The country has had a national LGA since 1920 - the Association of Local Government Authorities of Jamaica (ALGAJ) - which is recognised within the country's legislative framework to represent the interests and welfare of local government. Jamaica is reforming its Local Government system through new laws passed in 2016. Among countries in the anglophone Caribbean, Jamaica is often consulted (through ALGAJ) when seeking territorial experience and best practices for local government arrangements. Both ALGAJ and the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development (MLGCD) are member of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF).

Challenges that induced the host government / EU to engage in a more strategic way with LRG The country has been experiencing economic hardships over a prolonged period and is dominated by IMF policy strictures imposed on its central government. Having a national LGA to leverage support for local level interventions ameliorates the situation for local authorities and the people they serve. Notably, the 2013 EU communiqué on empowering local authorities recognised that public and private actors have their role to play, especially at local level, in addressing the complexities of sustainable development and fighting poverty.

Main actors involved at the initial stage. Strategies for localising the SDGs in Jamaica were spearheaded by the executive of the ALGAJ in collaboration with the planning officers of the three participating councils. Project management was provided by ALGAJ in partnership with CLGF's Regional Office.

Core information over the programme (objectives pursued, engagement approaches used, core activities, budgets involved) The SDG pilots in Jamaica were implemented in three councils and projects included:

1. Trelawny Municipality: small scale agriculture and local tourism

The *Wirefence Agricultural Economic Project (WAEP)* sought to increase employment and earning power within the community (SDG #8). This project provided start-up capital to farmers who did not have the means to gain access to livestock, feed and seed, as well as practical training. The support programme was set up as a revolving fund where participants reimbursed the project after the crops were reaped and the livestock sold (to twenty percent (20%) of the gross sale of products). Seven livestock and two cash crops (sweet peppers and carrots) were included for the first phase of the project and the municipality is looking to scale up the number of participants in a further phase of WAEP.

The *Albert Town Yammania Tour* project aims to promote a community tourism experience for visitors to Albert Town and celebrate its agricultural heritage, history and culture. The tour includes visits to the points of interest, including yam farms and the culinary and cultural experiences of food tasting, drumming and music. The partnership element of the community-based project managed to secure temporary office space for the tour company and support its business registration. The project has brought new livelihoods to what was primarily an agricultural community, promoting both inclusive sustainable economic growth (SDG #8) and sustainable consumption and production (SDG #12)

2. St Thomas Municipality: local economic development and land-use planning

In St Thomas, a focus on spatial planning involved the collection of land-use data to advance development of the municipality's Local Sustainability Development Plan (LSDP). External support and the planning department work to analyse primary and secondary data to plan for renewing, regenerating and sustaining municipal development. Key elements included mapping and projections to guide land use and development within the Municipality (SDG #11).

Another element of the project supported local economic development (SDG #8), responding to joint municipal-community priorities set out within the LSDP for training community members in the creation of social enterprises. Participants were trained in developing business and marketing plans; provided support in registering a business; and worked to define the economic profile and map the assets of St Thomas.

3. St James Municipality: waste reduction and reuse for Montego Bay

The project supported St James Municipal Corporation to begin the implementation of part of its LSDP, focusing on the implementation of the City of Montego Bay's Environmental Management. Completing a prefeasibility composting study aligned to the City of Montego Bay Action Plan, the work fed into strategies on municipal solid waste reduction/management (SDG #11), and local economic development (SDG #8). This project worked to build partnership between the St James Municipality and government agencies involved in environmental management, waste handling, and agriculture / horticulture.

CONTENT AND LESSONS

Mindful of the economic hardships reflected in the country's economy; situated in under-served communities; and enabled to mobilise local resources: participating councils were motivated to utilise local area knowledge and engage social community institutions in pursuit of these EU-funded projects, ultimately aimed at poverty reduction. In these projects, municipal councils functioned as the crucible for the Community Development Committee and the Social Development Commission to collaborate as institutional partners in meaningful undertakings that had direct impacts on local residents. Apart from identifying the areas of intervention, this collaboration factored into the consensual approach in the design and management of the revolving agricultural loan facility which emerged in the Wirefence project.

LED interventions revealed that it was important to identify training expertise within the locale of the project, so as to reduce costs and build local capacity. 80% of the LED trainees in St Thomas were able to develop business plans and access assistance in applying for small business loans; this resulted in five entrepreneurs each being selected for a \$Jam100,000 grant to implement their plans.

Registering land rights and interests to ensure effective and efficient management of urban land (cadastres, urban property registers) is an important priority to improve local government's administrative ability and underpin sustainable urbanisation. In St Thomas Municipality the application of Information Technology in land-use planning yielded immediate benefits; and the Council was able to map 85% of its roads, improve on its property tax collection, and address environmental health hazards in abandoned lots. The data collected through this EU-funded project will continue to inform the design and implementation of aspects of the LSDP for St Thomas. Similarly, for the St James LSDP, the determination of the most effective solution for developing a composting

facility that will divert organic waste from final disposal sites, will consequently reduce the City of Montego Bay's waste management costs and greenhouse gas emission.

ADDED VALUE

The experiences in Jamaica to advance developmental local government provide an insight into the value of engaging and involving local government in meaningful human development. The Trelawny projects, for example, demonstrated the mobilisation of resources of the church, state agencies and civil society in serving community needs, within the mandate and public accountability framework of local government.

It is worth investing in local area planning as a link-pin with communities in achieving national and international development objectives, and presents a structured approach for local authorities within a decentralised governance system to deliver on their obligations, as evidenced by the land-use planning benefits derived in St Thomas.

Local Economic Development (LED) strategies to generate incomes of the poor and promote economic growth through productive employment built upon the previous CARILED project, which resulted in LED becoming a feature of local government reform/ policy in Caribbean countries. Significantly, all three pilot councils designed projects that incorporated LED, reinforcing the importance of supporting and sustaining successful development initiatives.

The role of the national association - ALGAJ - was critical to the design, management and monitoring of the pilot projects, as well as being the repository for sharing information and best practices in the sector. Therefore, in addition to being a voice for local government, ALGAJ, as a beneficiary of EU support, has had the opportunity to fulfil its coordinating role as a platform for discussion, experience and knowledge-sharing, and is thereby enhancing its capacities, as advocated in the EC statement on empowering local authorities. Moreover, the fact that ALGAJ belongs to a wider umbrella LGA, namely CLGF, means it is strategically positioned as a national LGA to benefit from concerted and targeted regional initiatives in developmental Local government.

For more information please contact:

Sandra Singh, Project Officer, Commonwealth Local Government Forum Caribbean
(sandra.singh@clgf.org.uk)