1.1 System of Government:
The parish councils/KSAC comprise a council of democratically elected politicians headed by a Mayor and an administration headed by a civil servant, whose title is Secretary to the Council. The Mayors are not elected popularly by the electorate, but rather by their peers within the Council and acts as chairman to the Council. In general councilors contest elections on party tickets and not in their own rights as individuals. Secretaries are appointed by a Municipal Services Commission, which is a statutory body designed to insulate the appointment of parish council staff from political interference, manipulation and pressure.

Since local governments are not entrenched in the constitution, they operate under the *ultra vires* principle, meaning that they can operate only within the powers assigned to them under national legislation.

The Council’s business is conducted through a committee system, of which there are six permanent standing committees, plus additional committees that may be formed at the Council’s discretion. The Council itself, which is also called a committee of the whole in some jurisdiction, is required to meet monthly to discuss parish business, make decisions and pass the necessary regulations and byelaws to enforce its decisions. There are thirteen local authorities operating in the fourteen contiguous parishes, which range in sizes from Hanover, with 66,000 residents to the Kingston and St. Andrew Metropolitan Area with a population of 697,000.

1.2 Local Authorities:
Of the thirteen local authorities, twelve are councils operating at the level of the parishes, while the other, which is known as the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation (KSAC) is a result of the merger of the councils for the parishes of Kingston and St. Andrew. The functions and responsibilities of these local authorities are governed by the Parish Council and KSAC Acts and subsequent amendments to said acts.

The system of government in Jamaica is based on a two-tiered layer of central and local government, with a highly centralized public sector\(^1\). At the national level the ministries and autonomous para-statals such as statutory bodies, which are currently being organized as executive agencies, have been vested with the jurisdiction over the various sectors and sub-sectors. While the constitution only recognizes a national government structure, there is also a Parish Administrative System of local government at the sub-national level.

The local government system has its early origins in the colonial period and was organized along geographic units called parishes, in order to facilitate coverage for church administration, communication and poor relief and was called the Vestry System.\(^2\)

Up until the mid 1980s, parish councils/ KSAC enjoyed extensive responsibility for a wide range of local services and infrastructure, including public health; sanitation/solid waste disposal; development control including physical planning, approval of building and subdivision plans; parochial roads; drains and gullies; traffic management and parking; minor water supplies; fire protection; regulating public markets and abattoirs; regulating trade and retail establishment such as hotels, bars, restaurant, food stores, barbers and hairdressers; public amenities such as parks, cemeteries and other

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open spaces; social welfare which included poor relief and management of infirmaries.\(^1\)

**1.3 Financing the Local Authorities**

During the 1960s and to the mid 1970s parish councils/KSAC enjoyed a high degree of autonomy and were responsible for the delivery of a wide range of local services. The councils were able to set local rates for local services and consequently were able to obtain up to 75% of their revenues from local rates. Their revenues were complemented with direct transfers from central government, targeting specific services or area of work. During the period all councils generated budget surpluses from their operations.

The latter half of the 1970s saw the government increasing the use of the parish councils/KSAC for channeling national programmes of the central government. Programmes were not decentralized and placed under the jurisdiction of the councils, but were centrally managed and directed by central government itself, thus negating the autonomy of the councils as a layer of government, with clear jurisdictional responsibility for governing at the local level.

Significant transfer from central government to the councils led to the emergence of a process, which resulted in the substitution of direct transfers from central government as the main revenue source for the parish councils/KSAC. The result of the expansion of this type of financing was the emergence of the dependency of the central government for transfers, thus replacing the reliance on local rates as the primary source of earning revenue for finance parish council/KSAC operations.

The new government of the 1980s continued the process of eroding the revenue base of the councils by continuing to finance parish council/KSAC operations through central government transfer. Consequently, by 1985 the parish councils/KSAC were totally dependent on transfers from central government for revenue, which was reducing annually, while the mechanisms and capacities to maintain collection of local rates simply dissipated.

**1.4 Centralization of Services**

In 1985 the then government of the day, faced with the economic decline of the early 1980s, removed the core functions and responsibilities and the supporting revenue from the Parish Councils/KSAC. The economic restructuring took the form of a massive re-centralization of powers, services and responsibilities away from local to central government.

The loss of both its direct revenue base and its main service responsibilities have significantly diminished the leadership role of the parish councils/KSAC as service providers, regulators and enforcers of laws under its jurisdiction. The Councils/KSAC, which were already totally dependent on central government for financing, were effectively reduced to mere conduits for funding requests, transfers and few welfare functions.

Also resulting from this massive centralization of local services, have been the high dependency upon political affiliations to secure resources for most activities; a weakening of the Council’s/KSAC’s managerial, administrative and technical capabilities; the decaying of infrastructure assets and public facilities; none provision of basic local services; greater institutional fragmentation of responsibilities for land development; uncoordinated planning; increase in poverty and deterioration of both the physical and social environment.

The main sector institutions which were given an expanded role as a result of the 1985 actions were the Ministry of Construction (MOC) which was put in charge of entire road network, and the newly created National Water Commission (NWC) under the Ministry of Public Utilities and Transport which catered for the water needs of the country.

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The World Bank Staff Appraisal Report (1997) noted that while the arguments presented in favor of the centralization process included improved efficiency, rational planning, development of scale economies, and improved potential to recruit qualified staff, the results were different. The roads and water sections where the benefits of centralization were expected to be most visible deteriorated in both the physical facilities and the quality of services provided.

With low and sporadic subventions, no additional financial resources and lack of manpower, none of the agencies made responsible for these sectors, has succeeded in maintaining, let alone expanding these systems. Mired with these responsibilities without adequate resources, the administrative and technical capacities of these institutions have deteriorated over time.

2.0 Local Government Reform:
In response to growing public dissatisfaction over the poor performance of the central government agencies charged with delivering local services, and the inability of local government authorities to service their constituents, the new government, through a Cabinet decision, detailed in Ministry Paper 8/1993, introduced the Local Government Reform Program as a major policy initiative.

2.1 Objectives:
The policy paper set forth seven objectives for the programme which were to:

- Restore the functions and responsibilities which were removed from local government and rehabilitate the Councils;
- Establish new arrangements for the financing of local government which would give the Councils adequate and independent sources of revenue and effective control over these revenues;
- Upgrade the institutional capacities of Local Authorities to ensure that they are able to perform their functions in an effective and cost efficient manner, and are enabled to take on the new challenge of providing leadership and coordination in the process of community development and empowerment;
- Effect a comprehensive revision of all outdated legislation which presently constitute a major constraint to the effective performance of the Councils;
- Upgrade the quality and cost efficiency of all local government services and regulatory functions;
- Shift the focus of local authorities to one of providing leadership and a coordinating framework to the collective efforts of the people of their respective parishes towards involvement in local development;
- Examine the distribution of service functions between central and local governments as well as community organizations, NGOs and the private sector, and to identify better or more cost effective arrangements for the delivery of these services.

2.2 Components of the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP):
The Reform was designed to be accomplished through the realization of six components, which are as follows:

2.2.1 Legal Reforms:
This component seeks to overhaul the entire legislative framework which now governs the operations of the Local Authorities, most of which are outdated or no longer appropriate to the realities of modern Jamaica. In the first instances, laws slated for priority treatment are those relating to:

- Reform of the political and organizational structure;
- Reform of local government financing;
- Public Health Act and regulations;
- The Poor Relief Services Act;
- Vending and Litter Act;
- Building, Planning and Community Development Acts;

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2.2.2 Financial Reform:
The main objective of financial reforms under the LGRP is to ensure that Local Authorities have the means to generate adequate levels of revenue suitable for financing its various services and operations and to respond to the needs of the citizens of the parish it serves without ignoring the objectives of prudent financial management, cost efficiency, accountability and transparency.

2.2.3 Institutional Reform (which also includes human resource development and computerization):
The objective of this component is to upgrade the structural capacity of the Local Authorities to enable them to perform their new roles and responsibilities. This meant that modernization of the Councils, human resources development, as well as strategic planning would become key elements of the reforms in this area.

2.2.4 Service & Infrastructure Upgrading:
Upgrading the quality of service and the regulatory functions falling under local government is another key element of the LGRP. Services upgrading envisages a qualitative change in the mode, method and efficiency of service delivery by the Councils, to their clientele, as a result of their improved and strengthened institutional capacities. The major objective is to plan and implement necessary improvement measures for all services provided by Local Government Authorities.

2.2.5 Building New Interactive Relations:
The reform of relationships between Local Authorities and other agencies on which the performance of local government depends is an essential component of the LGRP. This will be built around reviewing the existing relationships based on the emergence of new roles and functions of these agencies and the councils. It may also mean developing new relationship with agencies where none existed with Councils prior to the Reforms.

2.2.6 Public Education and Community Participation:
The public education component seeks to facilitate the transfer of information about the Reforms to the public, the councils, specific sectoral interest groups who must interact with the Local Authorities and act as a conduit for the passage of information from people of the parishes back into the programme. Community participation envisages the participation of the local population in local public affairs, in defining local problems, determining the solutions to those problems and taking ownership of the process of applying those solutions to the overall benefit and development of the respective parish. Some Parish Councils have also adopted the practice of presenting proposals for their annual budgets to the public in their Parishes, and provide opportunities for citizens to critique it and make suggestions of their own.

3.0 Major Accomplishments:
Some accomplishments of the Local Government Reform Programme over the years are described below:

3.1 Legal Reform:
Amendments of selected statutes and regulations to establish the legal framework for a Reformed Local Government, so as to secure the future development of an effective parish council system, with efficient administration, professional service delivery capability and improved revenue generation capacity. The most significant of these statutes are the Parochial Revenue Fund Act, amendments to both the Property Tax and the Road Traffic Act, re-establishing the legal framework for access to direct revenue sources for Parish Councils; comprehensive review and redrafting of the Town and Country Planning Act to provide a framework for enhancing the role of Parish Councils as Local Planning Authorities and an interim proposal for inclusion of local government in the revised constitution of Jamaica. Overall the review and redrafting of some 100 laws, which affect the operation of the councils and are critical for creating the necessary legal framework for reform of the local government system have been slow in showing result. See Editorial: The Gleaner, Kgn. Jamaica, October 2002
3.2 Financial Reform:
Establishment of the Parochial Fund consisting of revenues from property taxes and motor vehicles license fees, which has become the major revenue source for Parish Councils. A significant increase to most licenses and user fee charges, with Parish Councils being granted autonomy to set fees in the future. Development of new budget format for parish councils. Proposals for the establishment of computerized accounting and financial management systems, as well as strengthening internal audit functions, within councils. Both councilors and staff received general training in financial management and budgeting. Despite the establishment of the Parochial Fund the councils/ KSAC are still inadequately financed. The Gleaner\textsuperscript{8} observed that “The absence of a secure financial base for the operation of the KSAC and the parish councils is one of the major reform issues that must be resolved with some urgency”.

3.3 Institutional Strengthening:
The institutional strengthening has not kept pace with the other component of the Local Government Reform programme. Consequently the MLGCD through the IDB funded Parish Infrastructure Development Programme (PIDP) has developed an action plan for strengthening the organizational capacities\textsuperscript{9}. Some achievements under this component noted as follows: Increase in salaries and benefits of parish councilors and staff, as part of a long-term strategy to establish compensation parity with central government employees and to attract persons with levels of skills and qualifications. Implementation of a process of recruitment and placement of qualified personnel within priority management posts in the councils, Preparation of corporate plans by all parish councils. The CIDA funded Supporting Local Government Reform Project (SLGRP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have provided technical expertise and other resources for undertaking organizational and business process of all parish councils/ KSAC.

The SLGRP has focused specifically on the parish councils of St. James and Manchester, for which organizational development strategies were recommended, drafts of a generic set of council procedural by laws and an operational procedures manual were prepared for further work by the Local Government Ministry. Computers and training in the computer skills were provided for both councilors and stall. The MLGCD developed IT strategies, which were aimed at the establishment of electronic databases within the councils, computerizing the accounting systems and the creation of operational and functional services delivery-tracking systems.

3.4 Civil Works:
Under the IDB-funded Parish Infrastructure Development Fund (PIDP) the provision of selected civil works, particularly road rehabilitation have moved ahead rapidly, to the extent that the PIDP came to be described as a civil works programme rather than a capacity building programme. Since September 1999 some 70 Km of roads out of a projected 195 Km have been rehabilitated island wide; 285 minor water supply systems have been slated for work; 19 markets are to be refurbished and work is scheduled to be done on the administrative offices of all 13 parish councils/ KSAC.\textsuperscript{10} The rapid pace at which civil works were undertaken far outpaced the institutional and capacity building components of the PIDP. The management of these civil works was being done by the MLGCD itself and consequently, despite the volume of money spent, the PIDP had very little impact on the operations of the parish councils/ KSAC and how they went about doing their work.

3.5 Human Resource Development:
The employment of suitable qualified staff to fill key priority posts, in the parish councils/ KSAC has been a key objective of the Institutional Strengthening Component of the Local Government Reform Programme. Such positions included Directors of Finance, Planning, Administration; Commercial services Manager; Community Relations Officer and Internal Auditors. Training needs assessment for both parish councilors and staffs were undertaken. Courses were design and

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{9} See MLGCD. Oct. 2002 GOJ/IDB, PIDP. "Action Plan for Organizational Strengthening Task Force"

delivered, based on the training needs identified by personnel from the MLGCD or in cooperation with training institutions in both public and private sectors.

A major issue that has emerged in the filling of these priority posts, is that the role of the Parish Council and Municipal Services should be re-examined with a view to giving the councils greater input in the selection and appointment of the Secretary Manager and other key posts. This view has been put forward by the CIDA-sponsored Supporting Local Reform Project and supported by a number of councilors in the Manchester and St. James.

3.6 Public Participation and Outreach:
The MLGCD was obliged to create new mechanisms for promoting civil society involvement in local public affairs and in the reform of the local government system, having phased out the parish advisory councils (PACs) and the national advisory council (NAC). Parish Development Committees (PDCs) were established in all parishes as that new institutional arrangement that would allow for civil society to be involved in public affairs at the level of the parishes. Major players in the private sector were selected to lead these newly created PDCs, which have managed to survive as local partnerships of community based organizations, NGOs, public and private sectors.

Without a legal framework nor public charter, PDCs have had to face an uphill task of neutralizing and overcoming the openly suspicious and disapproving attitudes of councilors, who saw these nascent PDCs as threatening their power base. To gain legitimacy PDCs have had to carve out a niche, which is focused on the promotion of Local Sustainable Development Planning (LSDP). If nurtured and build, the partnerships forged by the PDCs can prove to be very effective vehicles through, the local citizenry can be networked and mobilized to promote local sustainable development planning and facilitate public expression and oversight at the level of the parish.

4.0 Challenges to the Reform of local Government
Thus far the initiatives implemented under the Local Government Reform Programme, the have tended to focus firstly, on improving the performance of the parish councils, as they are presently constituted and operating and secondly, on cultivating a new image of the parish councils/ KSAC. Initiatives aimed at decentralization and disentanglement of powers and responsibilities between central and local government have been held in abeyance. It should also be note that to date, many of the accomplishments of the MLGYCD in the reform of the local government system, while contributing to the creation of an enabling environment for building and strengthening the capacity of parish councils, are in themselves, only the first steps in what must be a long term and sustained process froth with challenges.

Some major challenges that have emerged and have to be resolved if the reform of the local government system is to achieve its expected results and to be meaningful are identified as follows:

4.1 Effects of the Party System
The political system in Jamaica has come to be dominated by two major political parties, whose interest at times is allowed to take precedence over the national interest. This has its genesis in the earliest emergence of the parish councils as an institutional mechanism for local governance. While the colonial government ruled at the level of central government, at the local there emerged two streams of local management.

On the one hand there was the Vestry System representing the church and the Plantocracy, while on the other hand there was the newly emerging cooperative movement representing cooperative societies, friendly societies and community based organizations. The Vestry System formed the basis of the parish council system as we know it, although candidates were chosen from among the ranks of the leaders of the cooperative movement. Hence the first local government elections were contested by independent candidates.

With the formation of the multiparty system, local government elections ceased to be dominated by independent candidates and came under the aegis of the political parties. The dominance of the political parties has severely limited the ability of independent candidates to successfully contest local elections.
Over time the extent of the domination of the political parties over the Jamaican society has been widely acknowledged and characterized by the various sections of the society, including the political parties themselves, as one that is tribally divisive and adversarial and by its very nature perpetuates a hostile competition for the scarce benefits and spoils emanating from government operations. The local government system is not immune to this tribalism and in fact mirrors the partisan and sectarian interests of the parties in the delivery of services and in making fundamental decisions.

4.12 Selection of Councilors
In the Jamaican local government system, the general practice for persons interested in contesting the local elections for the positions of councilors is to do so, on a party ticket, rather than doing so in their own right as individual citizens, despite the fact that a few “independent” people have been known to contest those elections. As a result of this system, the selection of candidates for local elections becomes a major activity for the Member of Parliament or constituency chairman. In fact the candidate and later councilor, at best, can be described as a creature of the MP/constituency chairman, because it is the MP who determines whether or not such person becomes a candidate11 and later on how effective that person can be as a councilor in his or her division. If a MP feels that his/ her power and control over his/ her constituents is not safe and can possibly be threatened by a prospective candidate, that person would not stand a chance of contesting local elections on the party ticket, for the constituency of that MP. In other words the Member of Parliament can make or break a councilor. In North America and other jurisdictions national partisan interest is not allowed to dominate local government elections and the norm is for persons to contest local elections on their own right as individuals, rather than on the national party ticket.

4.13 Election of Mayor
As a consequence of this party dominated system, the mayor who is not popularly elected by the electorate, but rather is officially selected by his/ her peers in council, is in fact selected by the party with the majority in the council. Specifically, the party’s regional / parish or constituency machinery makes a determination as to who should be the mayor. Councilors of the majority party would then meet in caucus to determine how to effect the party’s decision, and would later put the selection to full council in chamber, where it is rubberstamped. The net effect of this practice is that democracy suffers, as councilors of the minority party have no say in who becomes the mayor. While the practice may be seen as being practical for the political parties, for the country its consequences are negative. It is bad for governance, as it merely perpetuates the tribal political practices right down to the local level and in effect set the stage for a partisan, tribal and adversarial term of administration by the council. It conditions and orients the councilors to give the party’s interest precedence over whatever future decisions they will have to make.

4.2 Discretionary Funds and the Role of MPs
Funding the parish councils/ KSAC has been a major component of the as stated in Ministry Paper 8/93 and which is reinforced in Policy Paper 17/03. While significant progress has been made by the MLGC to increase the revenue flows of the parish councils/ KSAC by the establishment of the Parochial Revenue Fund and the deployment Commercial Services Managers with specific assignments to maximize revenues from user fees and charges, other significant sources of funding for local services are discretionary funds such as the Social and Economic Support Programme (SESP) and Local Development Programme (LDP). These discretionary funds are assigned to the Members of Parliament, that is, it is the MP who determines why, where, when and how these monies are spent. In point of fact the parish councils/ KSAC merely continue to act as conduits for channeling these funds, as the MP can move the funds from the councils/ KSAC to other central government agency if he or she chooses.

Consequently the MP wields enormous power over the councilors, who are obliged to seek favors from the MP and to always be on good terms with him/ her in order to access those funds for work in their divisions. This system of accessing funds is contrary to the very spirit and essence of good governance and contradicts the policy of

11 See The Daily Observer; p5, December 12, 2002: Article by C. Edwards “councilors being forced out”
devolving power and autonomy to the parish councils/ KSAC as local authorities. It allows the MP to appropriate to him or herself, the delivery of certain local services and thus confuses the role of the MP. Rather than being legislators and national policy makers, representing and protecting the interest of their constituents at the national levels, MPs find it more convenient and expedient to limit themselves to local services delivery at the expense of the parish councils/ KSAC.

On the one hand, MPs of the ruling party tend to shy away from questioning the position of the government on matters that may be of national significance, but may have negative consequences for their constituents. This inaction on the part of the ruling MPs is simply a move to close ranks and protect the party’s interest.

On the other hand, the MPs from the opposition party will question governments position on a particular matter, but not necessary from the point of view of the effects on their constituents. In many cases, the challenge to the government is a party challenge and is aimed at exposing party failure and scoring political points.

Therefore, the onus is on the parish councils/ KSAC as local authorities to challenge this method of allocating and using public funds by central government. The credibility and image of the councils have suffered badly, as a result of their inability to provide adequate funds for the delivery of certain basic services, while Members of Parliament are able to provide such services by virtue of having those discretionary funds at their disposal.

4.3 Role of Councilors
Political parties in Jamaica do not as a rule apply the same level of rigor and screening in the selection of candidates for local government elections, as they would normally do for the central government elections, the Members of Parliament are allowed to make the determinations. Consequently, the candidates are usually persons from the lower tiers of the party who could not necessarily satisfy the party’s criteria for candidacy as Member of Parliament and who are usually loyal to the member of parliament.

The effects of this system on the political management of the parish councils / KSAC have been devastating. With very few exceptions the councils, which were elected to govern, lack strong perceptive political leadership that is willing and able to identify and treat with issues affecting the development of the parish and the living conditions of their citizens.

Ironically the position of a councilor is now a paid job without any checks and balances with respect to conduct of councilors, their performance and quality of representation. The monitoring of the conduct and performance of councilors is left to the mayors. The effectiveness of the control exercise by individual mayors is dependent on the personality, the nature of the relationship cultivated with councilors and the parish council administration. In many instances the conduct and performance of councilors are left to their own consciences, as the institutional mechanism for ensuring professional integrity is evidently inadequate, to the extent that some councilors operate as contractors to their own council and see nothing wrong with it.

The unwillingness and or inability of councilors to move outside the box of the party’s interest and demonstrate a conceptual grasp and understanding of national and local development issues and to treat with those issues within the context of the development of the parish, have rendered the councils ineffective as a layer of the democratic system of government, that is structured to respond to local concerns and demands and to bring the ordinary citizens into the process of governance.

Councilors have refrained from eliciting the views of their constituents and from taking positions on matters of decentralization and the effective financing of the parish councils/KSAC, because in general, they do not see themselves as beholden to their constituents, but rather to the party. Central government has re-embarked on a path of once again of removing key local services from the parish councils/KSAC and placing them under the charge of specialized national agencies, much to the indifference of the councilors.
Councilors have failed to demonstrate a capacity to grasp and grapple with local development issues, save and except for the regular road repairs and cleaning of drains and gullies, which are publicly visible and can redound to some measure of political mileage for them. Management of their local jurisdiction, in particular the towns and cities has totally eluded most councils. They have misguidedy focused on misplaced priorities that are perceived to be in the party’s interest, while the usefulness of the parish councils/ KSAC continue to wane in the public’s perception, to the extent that the councils have come to be considered a burden on the public purse and their relevance being seriously questioned. The lesson from North America and other jurisdictions where strong and effective local governments operate, is that government at the local level can be most successful, if and only if, it is devoid of national partisan political interest and is free to base its operations and decisions on the demands, well-being and aspirations of the local citizenry it serves.

4.4 Decentralization as a Policy Imperative
Actions undertaken by the government over the past five years have given rise to questions about government’s commitment to decentralization as a major policy plank of the Local Government Reform Programme. In effect central government has embarked on a path, which mounts to a reversal of any attempt at the devolution of power and autonomy to parish councils/ KSAC.

More local services were centralized under newly created national agencies, such Fire, Solid Waste Management and Disposal, Poor Relief and other welfare services and urban roads were removed and placed under the National Works Agency. Local enforcement and municipal policing are being looked at as additional duties for the Island Special Constabulary Force, which is a centrally command national institution. The failure to consider the creation of municipal police under the jurisdiction of the parish councils/ KSAC as local authorities is in itself an indicator of the how far government is prepared to go in decentralizing power and autonomy to local authorities.

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INTRODUCTION
As the twenty-first century opens, Jamaica finds itself at a crossroads. The institutional framework of society, a relic of colonial days, is strained to the limit as it tries to cope with a rapidly changing world. New approaches are essential if Jamaica is to address the major challenges that now face society, such as globalization, crime, inequality, corruption and economic stagnation.

One major innovation is the move towards greater involvement of civil society in governance. The primary mechanism that has been developed to do this is the Parish Development Committee (PDC). The concept and ideas behind the PDC as a critical and innovative measure to bring about a new era and dispensation in governance in Jamaica has gained wide acceptance and support among stakeholders in the Parishes. Many individuals, businesses and agencies have welcomed the principle. They see that the PDC movement has immense potential to help the government to remedy many of the weaknesses and deficiencies in current approaches to governance and management of local affairs.

Regionalisation is another major proposed innovation. If accepted in its present form (proposed by central government), regionalisation would lead to an amalgamation of local government institutions. The main objective is to increase the efficiency of service delivery to the people.

The questions that currently face PDCs include:
- How to make PDCs financially sustainable
- How to maximize the involvement of civil society at all levels
- How to formalize the PDCs into legal, permanent structures
- How to help local and central government develop a new planning structure that will offer a legal framework for the type of planning that the people want.

The recent move by central government towards regionalisation, adds another level of complexity. The PDC movement is well positioned to help the government explore the benefits and costs of various proposals for regionalisation. Questions that the PDC movement can help to answer include:
- What are the objectives of regionalisation, and will current proposals address them?
- How can civil society be involved in decisions regarding the nature and depth of regionalisation?
- What are the implications of regionalisation for the PDC movement?

GENERAL COMMENTS
The position of PDCs in respect of the Proposals presented in the Green Paper on Regionalization can be best determined by assessing the present situation facing PDCs, and seeking to study the likely impact and consequences of the proposals contained in the Green Paper, both in respect to the PDCs directly, and more generally on the local governance process.

CURRENT STATUS OF PARISH DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES (PDCs)
The PDC movement started in 1999 and has been growing rapidly since, particularly in the parishes of Portland, Manchester and Kingston. It has been very successful in bringing together civil society and government in a new alliance to address the problems facing the country. However, there are many challenges that presently confront PDCs, which if not dealt with satisfactorily could seriously undermine or set back the movement. Among these are:

1. PDCs are presently in a serious financial crisis. Dimensions of the problem are:
   - PDCs have not yet identified long-term, sustainable sources for financing their operational expenses. They presently depend on the goodwill of a few of their members, seriously limiting the scope of their operations.
Although some PDCs have successfully accessed international project funding, there is no provision in the government’s budget for financing the programmes that are critical for successful pursuit of the PDCs’ mission.

Most PDCs and Parish Councils lack the capacity to undertake such programmes (e.g., sufficient skilled facilitators to organized community consultations, public educators, etc.)

If PDCs are confidently to adopt and to fulfill their mandate for fully participatory development planning and facilitation of local socio-economic development, there must be reliable arrangements for financing such development.

For PDCs to perform the roles envisioned for them, their membership must be representative of all the major stakeholders and all geographical areas of their Parishes. While most do have a fairly broad base of membership the challenge of creating a fully representative PDC still remain.

The need to accord PDCs some form or status that will ensure that it is a recognized and legitimate body, and has some permanence is a major concern for most PDCs.

The need for further clarification and clearer definition about the role of PDCs in Parish development and governance, and of the relationship between PDCs and Parish Councils, is a matter that continues to concern most PDCs.

There is still a significant level of cynicism among PDC current and potential members, as to the real intentions of Government towards PDCs, and more generally of real support for the concepts of giving meaningful power for greater local self-management to locals. This makes it imperative not to pursue any course of action that will provide fertile ground for such cynics.

**GREEN PAPER PROPOSALS**

For the purpose of identifying the likely or possible impact on or consequences for PDCs of the proposals contained in the Green Paper, it is best to summarize these into four broad categories:

1. **Proposals relating to Regionalization.** The proposal is for the abolition of the existing 13 Local Government jurisdictions into which the island is divided, and its replacement by 4 Regional Authorities. This will be complemented by the 15 urban centres that will be accorded city status and 34 centres that will be designated as towns. Both Cities and Towns will be provided with some form of municipal management. Some pertinent observations about these proposals are as follows:

   Since these proposals have major implications for civil society, it is surprising that in developing the proposals, the government did not involve the PDCs from the outset, in the development of the concept of regionalisation. This calls into question central government’s commitment to, or understanding of, involvement of civil society in decision-making.

   There is a clear argument for improving the tools of governance at the parish level by:
   - improving the ability of the local authorities to carry out their mandated responsibility through, legislative and financial reform and through institutional strengthening and capacity building
   - building the framework through which citizens can get involved in the decision-making that will affect their daily lives and the development of their communities, through PDCs, Development Areas, Community Development Committees (CDCs), etc.

   It should stand to reason that before trying to restructure the current local authority mechanism that the priority should be on giving the existing local authorities the tools to do the job through this type of strengthening. This should be supported by a strengthened civil society participation. Once this has been achieved, this local team will begin to see the weaknesses on the ground and then and only then should drastic changes in the local authority structure be attempted. Doing so before will lead to a failure of the people to buy into the need for this drastic change and will ultimately end in failure.

   Of all the proposals in the Green Paper, the proposals to reorganize the parishes are the most controversial. Discussions with PDC members and others suggest that this idea does not seem to enjoy
strong support among many key stakeholder groups. Given the far-reaching effects of the proposals, broad consensus is essential before any move towards implementation. The proposals are still very general, and will require considerably more study, analysis and discussion before they will be ready for implementation.

To conduct such studies and undertake the “selling” of the proposals to facilitate early implementation would require considerable finance and other resources. At present it appears that the government is poised to draw funds from the PDCs and other programmes to do this. An alternative would be to engage the PDCs in this process, to the mutual benefit of the government, the PDCs and civil society.

2. Proposals for political management of Regions, Cities and Towns. The most notable proposal is for the direct election of Regional Governors and Mayors for Cities.

3. Proposals for the Financing of Local Government. The main proposal here is for the re-introduction of Local Rates.

4. Proposals in respect to the improvement of service delivery.

5. Proposals for legislative changes which are necessary for advancing the other proposals.

IMPLICATIONS OF PROPOSALS FOR PDCs
The major and most direct implications of these proposals from the PDC point of view are firstly in regard to Regionalization, and secondly in respect to financing/service delivery.

IMPLICATIONS ARISING FROM REGIONALIZATION PROPOSALS
Near term implementation of the Regionalization proposals would certainly require PDCs to completely re-organize themselves by dissolving the present Parish based structures and developing regional structures. There are serious risks involved in such a move.

PDCs are just beginning to gain support from the various sectors/groups within their respective parishes, and need to demonstrate tangible achievements to convince these groups that the concept is realistic and workable. Re-organizing to conform to new regional structures would mean going back to square one. Members might not have the patience to start over again, particularly when many issues and doubts about the workability of PDCs and the level of Government’s commitment to/support for these bodies remain unresolved.

A major component of the PDCs appeal to their citizens is based on their loyalty to and identification with Parish, and their willing to work for its upliftment. There is doubt whether they will respond as readily to the concept of a Region, for which they have no emotional affinity or deep-seated sense of pride and common heritage with other parishioners. In addition, the composition of the new regions lumps disparate areas, and could diffuse energy rather than creating synergies. Very careful planning is needed to create new regions that will be meaningful to their citizens as well as practical from an administrative point of view.

Intense pursuit of the regionalization proposals towards early implementation will inevitably divert resources away from PDCs and thus aggravate the current financial crisis facing them, precisely at a time when they would be expected to play a major role in advancing these proposals.

PDCs are not yet strong enough to withstand the heavy impost that would be placed on them by a sudden switch to a regional structure, and would need to be greatly strengthened before they could undertake such a burden.

PREFERRED STRATEGIC COURSE OF ACTION
1. The Proposal in respect to implementation of Regionalization has to be taken in the context of Local Government Reform and therefore should be treated as one of several issues being placed on the table for discussion. It ought not to be confused with the Reform process, which encapsulates a wide range of issues, including regionalization itself. Local Government Reform speaks to the devolution of power, authority and responsibility for delivery of local services, while regionalization merely speaks to one of the possible organizational forms for local government.

2. Any proposals for regionalization or other form of restructuring should be designated as medium to long term, to be approached on a phased basis, with the local stakeholders having optimum
opportunity to adopt a new structure for local governance based on their own experiences, along with appropriate studies and analysis from the centre.

3. PDCs, in association with Parish Councils and the SDC, should be mobilized immediately and provided with the resources they need to play a focal role in leading the dialogue about regionalization and other reform initiatives. These activities would serve to enhance and build the partnership between all the major groups and interests in each Parish, and would take place as part of an overall programme for improving governance and service delivery. PDCs and their major partners should be strengthened for this purpose. This would give the government an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to the participatory democracy through the PDC movement.

4. Immediate emphasis should be placed on building up the PDCs, and the financial foundation for local governance. The financial initiatives would include the proposals for financing Local Government as set out in the Green Paper, as well as identifying resources to meet immediate financial needs of PDCs. The new financing arrangements for Local Government would address the long term financing of the PDCs and programmes for which PDCs will be responsible, as well as for supporting development plans and initiatives which emerge from the work of the PDCs.