

A civil society review of progress  
towards the Millennium Development  
Goals in Commonwealth countries

National Report:

# Jamaica

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## A civil society review of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in Commonwealth countries

# National Report: Jamaica

This project aims to encourage and articulate civil society analysis of: progress towards the MDGs; the usefulness of the MDG framework for civil society; the contribution of civil society to the attainment of the MDGs; issues for a post-2015 agenda to consider.

This report documents the outputs of a two-stage process: desk research to review UN, government, civil society and other multilateral reports on national progress towards achieving the MDGs; and a national consultation workshop with civil society, which tested the findings of the desk research and enabled a deeper discussion on MDG progress, utility and post-2015 agenda setting.

This project was undertaken as part of a programme with the UN Millennium Campaign (UNMC), which supported country-level research by civil society organisations in 20 countries.

The Commonwealth Foundation led this process for the following 14 countries: Cameroon, Ghana, Grenada, Jamaica, Malawi, New Zealand, Pakistan, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda and Zambia. The UNMC led in the following six countries: India, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Philippines and The Gambia.

## Commonwealth Foundation

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The Commonwealth Foundation is a development organisation with an international remit and reach, uniquely situated at the interface between government and civil society. We develop the capacity of civil society to act together and learn from each other to engage with the institutions that shape people's lives. We strive for more effective, responsive and accountable governance with civil society participation, which contributes to improved development outcomes.

## UN Millennium Campaign

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The UN Millennium Campaign was established by the UN Secretary General in 2002. The Campaign supports citizens' efforts to hold their governments to account for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Development Goals were adopted by 189 world leaders from rich and poor countries, as part of the Millennium Declaration which was signed in 2000. These leaders agreed to achieve the Goals by 2015. Our premise is simple: we are the first generation that can end poverty and we refuse to miss this opportunity.

# Executive Summary

## Project rationale and process

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This summary presents perspectives from civil society in Jamaica on progress made and challenges experienced in relation to the national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the extent to which MDG processes have provided opportunities to enhance participatory governance and civil society relations with government. Based on their reflections, Jamaican CSOs have made a number of recommendations to accelerate progress on the MDGs and improve future development frameworks.

In the first half of 2012, the Women's Resource and Outreach Centre undertook key informant interviews, a focus group discussion and an online survey, as well as background research and participation in assessments of key MDG targets by state agencies. This was followed by a national consultation held in December 2012 by the Association of Development Agencies and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation to verify and enhance findings and make additional recommendations.

## Civil society review of the MDGs in Jamaica

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CSOs assess Goals 2 and 3 as achieved, although on Goal 3 they feel that more still needs to be done beyond MDG targets to enhance women's empowerment. They assess Goals 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 as off target, although they acknowledge some achievements on each.

CSOs and government agree that progress on the MDGs has been derailed by the economic downturn, which means resources now go into servicing debt that could go towards meeting the MDGs. CSOs believe the downturn has underlined some structural economic problems in Jamaica, and fear that a return to borrowing from the International Monetary Fund will bring increased austerity through conditions imposed. Economic contraction has seen poverty and unemployment increase, meaning that progress has been reversed since 2009, when the government reported the Goal 1 target as met; this shows how fragile progress on poverty can be.

CSOs feel that while in theory the MDGs should provide a platform for shared understanding and collaboration between government, civil society and the private sector, in practice they have not been fully involved in planning and policy development, due to the larger challenge of government and CSOs operating mostly in separate spheres. CSOs believe a climate of constant monitoring and evaluation is needed to drive implementation of the MDGs, but they do not report playing a role here.

CSOs report positive recent signs that the government is recognising the need to involve them and is showing greater willingness to engage in a structured manner, but a framework is yet to be formalised. Power imbalances remain in relationships, and CSOs are often restricted to observer status in official processes. New coalition structures formed by civil society, including the Jamaica Civil Society Coalition and the 51% Coalition on women's representation, demonstrate fresh civil society willingness to work together for greater consultation.

A further challenge is that the MDGs are reported to be largely unknown among many communities, including some CSOs. Some CSOs' work relates to, but does not refer to, the MDGs, so that their contributions are not always well-captured or understood. Much more reference is made to Jamaica's national development frameworks, particularly the long-term development plan, Vision 2030. There is also felt to be insufficient information dissemination about the MDGs, while CSOs assert that a weakness of the MDGs as a whole is in the disconnect between targets and financing mechanisms.

Those CSOs that make reference to the MDGs report doing so mostly to help access funds or to link to international spheres. To some extent this has driven an increase in results-based monitoring in CSOs that receive funding. However it has also sparked debate about the accountability of CSOs that are seen to rely on international donor funds. Resourcing is an enduring constraint for CSOs, a challenge exacerbated by the economic downturn and a shift in the provision of most official development assistance (ODA) to direct budget support, which largely excludes civil society.

A further reason advanced for limited CSO engagement with the MDGs is the view that the MDGs do not correspond well with Jamaican reality or take into account its cultural nuances and norms, and the effects of its geographic location and status as a small island developing state. CSOs identify key nationally-specific current issues which the MDGs do not properly cover as including crime and corruption, ballooning debt, continuing gender inequality despite high achievement by girls and women in education, the affects of emigration, rural poverty related to land ownership inequalities and the growth of non-communicable diseases. Other key development issues assessed as unaddressed by the current framework include early childhood education, the status of people with disabilities, and sexual and reproductive rights. The MDGs also cannot take into account the ways in which crime cuts across development initiatives. Further, lack of attention to inequality and the absence of a human rights vocabulary make the MDG framework problematic for many in civil society. A related critique is that the MDGs can encourage an isolated and technocratic approach to challenges such as diseases and child mortality, when in fact these have complex, multiple economic and socio-cultural influencing factors.

## Recommendations

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Recommendations from CSOs to accelerate progress on the MDGs include:

- Emphasis on the creation of jobs and equitable growth, and the promotion of decent work and labour standards.
- A renewal plan for every rural and urban community that includes basic goals such as addressing chronic poverty and securing water and sanitation, along with greater promotion of rural and urban development, including addressing land ownership inequalities.
- More focus on issues such as:
  - Non-communicable diseases, particularly obesity, diabetes and hypertension
  - The status of people with disabilities
  - The impacts of migration, including promoting the contribution of diaspora remittances to development

Recommendations from CSOs for new development frameworks include:

- Participatory governance should be promoted as a right, and political reform implemented at all levels to realise this, with a guarantee of CSOs' independent presence in social partnerships.
- Civil society should be strengthened, to encourage strong, effective partnerships, coalitions and cohesive voices.

## 1. Introduction

This report presents perspectives from civil society in Jamaica on progress made and challenges experienced with the MDGs, and the extent to which MDG processes have provided opportunities to enhance participatory governance and civil society relations with government. In the first half of 2012, the Women's Resource and Outreach Centre undertook key informant interviews, a focus group discussion and an online survey, as well as background research and participation in assessments of key MDG targets by state agencies. This was followed by a national consultation held in December 2012 by the Association of Development Agencies and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation to verify and enhance findings and make additional recommendations. This consultative research process enabled Jamaican CSOs to identify emerging issues of social concern, and to reflect on the nature of their partnership with the state and the urgent need for new strategies and thinking.

This report comes in a context of difficult current economic conditions in Jamaica occasioned by a global economic downturn, which has underlined some structural economic problems in the country, particularly regarding the national debt. In the Government of Jamaica's budget for the 2012/2013 financial year, 54 per cent of budgeted expenditure was allocated to servicing Jamaica's JA\$1.7 trillion debt,<sup>1</sup> the equivalent of JA\$600,000 for every Jamaican citizen.<sup>2</sup> Jamaica's debt to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio stood at 128 per cent in March 2012,<sup>3</sup> while debt servicing and public sector wages consume 80 per cent of the government's budgeted expenses.<sup>4</sup> Civil society fears that a return to borrowing relations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will bring conditionalities that increase the level of austerity for the most vulnerable communities.

Between 2008 and 2010, the global recession resulted in a contraction of the Jamaican economy by 5.1 per cent, with declines in tourism and in European markets for Jamaican exports such as alumina. This contraction saw a doubling of the poverty rate from 9.9 per cent in 2007 to between 18.5 per cent and 20.3 per cent in 2011, and a rise in unemployment to 12.8 per cent in 2011.<sup>5</sup> Crime and violence are widely acknowledged to contribute to low productivity and investments, and increased health, social service and security costs, estimated to amount to between 5 per cent and 7 per cent of gross output<sup>6</sup>

Despite economic decline, mounting social disaffection, rising rates of poverty, growing urbanisation<sup>7</sup> and high levels of crime and violence, Jamaica continues to enjoy a vibrant democracy with considerable civic energy and active participation by CSOs, both in advocacy and in the provision of services to the most vulnerable. This comes against a backdrop where far less than half the population express trust in national government, the Prime Minister and parliament, while trust in political parties is lower still.<sup>8</sup>

1 As of February 2013, this equated to approx. US\$17.8 billion

2 Over US\$6,300 per person at current rates

3 A New and Binding Covenant for Stability, Equitable Growth and Prosperity: Budget Debate 2012/2013 presentation by Dr The Hon. Peter D Phillips MP, 24 May 2012, [http://www.jamaicatax.gov.jm/budget\\_presentation/opening\\_budget\\_presentation\\_2012.pdf](http://www.jamaicatax.gov.jm/budget_presentation/opening_budget_presentation_2012.pdf)

4 'Jamaica chooses austerity to pave way for bond and IMF deal', K Collister, *Jamaica Observer*, 13 May 2012 [http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/business/Jamaica-chooses-austerity-to-pave-way-for-bond-and-IMF-deal\\_11071665](http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/business/Jamaica-chooses-austerity-to-pave-way-for-bond-and-IMF-deal_11071665)

5 'Update on the Jamaican Economy', Centre for Economic and Policy Research, May 2012, <http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/jamaica-2012-05.pdf>

6 *Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions Report*, Planning Institute of Jamaica and Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2009; *A Growth Inducement Strategy for Jamaica in the Short and Medium Term*, Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2011

7 The urban population grew by 35 per cent in 1991 to 52 per cent in 2009. The high proportion of the urban population living in unacceptable living conditions or slums is described as 'increasingly problematic'. 'National Report of Jamaica on Millennium Development Goals' for the United Nations Economic and Social Council Annual Ministerial Review, Geneva, July 2009, Planning Institute of Jamaica in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade

8 *The Americas Barometer* in 2010 estimated that 41.9 per cent of Jamaica's population trusted national government, 40.2 per cent trusted Parliament, 38.8 per cent trusted the Prime Minister and 33.5 per cent trusted political parties. See *The Political Culture of Democracy in Jamaica, 2010: Democratic Consolidation in the Americas in Hard Times*, University of the West Indies, Vanderbilt University and USAID, January 2011, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/jamaica/2010-culturapolitica-corrected.pdf>



There have also been some positive social changes since the MDGs were initiated in 2000, and since the last such civil society review took place in 2005, which should be taken into account in the formulation of any future development frameworks. In the opinion of civil society involved in this review, changes include a decline in dependence on political machinery and patronage, some shift in gender norms and the explosion of new technology, although this latter development has also contributed to the growth of new forms of crime. A significant landmark that needs to be taken into account is the initiation in 2010 of a new long-term national development plan, Vision 2030, while recent times have also seen the launch of new civil society coalitions, as outlined further below.

## 2. Civil society perspectives on progress towards the MDGs

Civil society involved in this review recognised that there has been some progress towards achieving each of the goals; however, more work needs to be done to fully achieve each goal. Civil society personnel also agree that many of the goals in the Jamaican context have been derailed by the economic downturn and therefore need to be reassessed. There is also a need for greater customisation to take into account the Jamaican context. An example of this is Goal 3 on promoting gender equality – in Jamaica, there is little or no disparity in the school system up to the tertiary level, but gender inequality persists, implying a need to focus on arenas other than the classroom to improve the empowerment of women.

**Table 1: Civil society assessment of progress towards the MDGs**

Goals, targets and indicators <sup>9</sup>	Civil society assessment of progress	Government assessment of progress	Civil society perspectives on challenges
Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger: 1a. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1.25 a day 1b. Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people 1c. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger	Off target	Achieved	CSOs recognise that special emphasis has been placed on reducing extreme poverty and hunger, but there appears to be no more than 55 to 60 per cent attainment of this goal, <sup>10</sup> and CSOs see progress undone by worsened economic conditions. The position has declined since 2009, when the government officially reported that the target had been met, showing the vulnerability of people to falling back into poverty.

<sup>9</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the government assessments, targets, indicators and quantitative data in Table 1 are drawn from the *National Report of Jamaica on MDGs, 2009*, op. cit. Unless otherwise stated, the deadline for the achievement of targets is 2015

<sup>10</sup> *Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions Report*, op. cit

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Goals, targets and indicators <sup>9</sup>	Civil society assessment of progress	Government assessment of progress	Civil society perspectives on challenges
<p>Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education:</p> <p>2a. Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling</p>	Achieved	Achieved	<p>On paper the education goal has been achieved, and the government has put in place free education up to secondary level. However, there are many questions from civil society about the quality of education, and its accessibility to all. Concerns are expressed about the quality of teachers, access to transportation in rural areas, high absenteeism, poor sanitation facilities and boys' underachievement in education. This last issue connects with the problem of crime.</p>
<p>Goal 3. Promote gender equality and empower women:</p> <p>3a. Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015</p>	Target achieved but more needs to be done	Lagging	<p>There is no disparity for women and girls in education, but other measures are needed to promote the empowerment of women in a Jamaican context. Positive moves include the passage of legislation and the adoption in 2011 of the National Policy on Gender Equality. Jamaica is ranked 10th in the world on UNESCO's Gender Parity Index for women in tertiary education.<sup>11</sup></p> <p>Although Jamaica has a female Prime Minister, women's representation in the House of Representatives stood at only 12.7 per cent following the December 2011 election,<sup>12</sup> a fall from 13.3 per cent in the 2007 election. Recent research by the Women's Resource and Outreach Centre suggests there is no change in the proportion of women serving on boards.</p>
<p>Goal 4. Reduce child mortality:</p> <p>4a. Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate</p>	Off target	Far behind	<p>Civil society acknowledges a marked improvement in child mortality rates and immunisation levels, but still assesses that the target will not be achieved by 2015, due in part to reduced financing in the public health system. Notwithstanding this, a good platform has been established from which a post- 2015 agenda can be developed.</p>
<p>Goal 5. Improve maternal health:</p> <p>5a. Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio</p> <p>5b. Achieve universal access to reproductive health</p>	Off target	Far behind	<p>Maternal health is off target despite this being an area where there has been strong CSO/government collaboration. The impact of poverty on diet, the rise of non-communicable diseases and the migration of skilled health workers are assessed as factors here. The removal of user fees for public hospitals in 2010 has improved access to health care.</p>

<sup>11</sup> See UNESCO Institute for Statistics website <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/gender-education.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union, Women in National Parliaments database, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

Goals, targets and indicators	Civil society assessment of progress	Government assessment of progress	Civil society perspectives on challenges
<p>Goal 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases:</p> <p>6a. Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS</p> <p>6b. Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it</p> <p>6c. Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases</p>	Off target	On track	<p>Gains have been made on HIV/AIDS, but CSOs believe that these are threatened by a decline in investment in treatment measures and the scarcity of some medications. A longer-term challenge is the heavy stigma placed on people who have HIV/AIDS. Any attempt to address HIV/AIDS cannot be made in isolation, but needs to address the development of tolerance and shifting of cultural norms.</p> <p>In addition, among young women aged 10–19 years old, there has been an increase in HIV infection rates. The civil society organisations consulted believe this to be connected to a rising wave of violence against women and girls. Cases of domestic violence in Jamaica have risen, with childhood and intimate partner violence having gone up 28 per cent between 2010 and 2012. Intervention strategies are poor and victims often fail to report offenders or violence for fear of being seen as informers, or being against the community.<sup>13</sup></p>
<p>Goal 7. Ensure environmental sustainability:</p> <p>7a. Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources</p> <p>7b. Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss</p> <p>7c. Halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation</p> <p>7d. Achieve, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers</p>	Off target	Lagging	<p>The National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA), while valued, is assessed as often being unable to implement the relevant legislation and does not have legal enforcement powers. Jamaica is signatory to some 37 environment-related international and regional agreements, but CSOs report that these are not being enforced and that the regulatory framework is weak.</p>

<sup>13</sup> *Camariah's Way*, film on domestic violence in Jamaica, MNI: A Global Caribbean Connection, 20 October 2012, <http://www.mnialive.com/empowerment/3117-camariah-s-way-a-film-on-domestic-violence-in-jamaica.html>

Goals, targets and indicators	Civil society assessment of progress	Government assessment of progress	Civil society perspectives on challenges
<p>Goal 8. Develop a global partnership for development</p> <p>8a. Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system</p> <p>8b. Address the special needs of least developed countries</p> <p>8c. Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing states</p> <p>8d. Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries</p> <p>8e. In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries</p> <p>8f. In cooperation with the private sector, make available benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications</p>	Off target	Lagging	The prevailing view among Jamaican civil society is that Goal 8 is flawed. There has been a growth in unilateralism and unequal trade agreements. Goal 8 has failed to drive the development of a progressive, transformative agenda in the global governance arena. A further concern is the reclassification of Jamaica as a middle-income country, which has the potential to affect Jamaica's ability to access resources. <sup>14</sup> Jamaica has seen significant volatility in official development assistance, <sup>15</sup> and as most ODA now comes in the form of direct budget support (according to government sources), civil society is largely excluded. Civil society recognises that it needs to take more ownership of the development of partnerships.

While in theory the MDGs should provide a platform for common understanding and collaboration among government, the private sector and civil society, in practice, as Table 1 demonstrates, there is considerable divergence in views between government and civil society about progress on the MDGs.

One area of shared agreement between CSOs and the government is that the economic crisis of 2009 caused a major setback in attempts to achieve the MDGs. The government's report states: *'The immediate external challenge preventing Jamaica from making greater headway in the MDGs is its heavy debt burden. When the country spends so much on debt repayment, it is virtually impossible to make significant headway in tackling problems.'*<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, an overall weakness of the MDGs has been in the linkage between the goals and financing; the economic crisis further negatively impacted on financing for development as a whole.

For a full list of the MDGs, along with the targets and indicators, see: <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/host.aspx?Content=indicators/officialist.htm>

### 3. Usefulness and challenges of the MDG framework to civil society

This analysis should be understood in reference to the context within which CSOs are operating in Jamaica: many see themselves as working in an environment of increased economic and social pressures, but with critical capacity issues and a corresponding low level of operations. While civil society has seen some recent growth in new partnerships, largely between different

<sup>14</sup> *The National Report of Jamaica on MDGs, 2009*, op. cit. states: 'The criterion of middle income status does not seem to take into account Jamaica's reality: the level of violence, its fragile status as a SID [small island developing state], and its economic vulnerability.'

<sup>15</sup> For example, the *Economic and Social Survey 2011* produced by the Planning Institute of Jamaica states that, 'ODA levels ... were adversely affected, due to the challenges encountered with the implementation of the Stand-by Arrangement (SBA) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) among other factors. Newly approved projects and programmes by Multilateral Financial Institutions (MFIs), Multilateral Technical Co-operation agencies and bilateral sources decreased by 46.3 per cent, 65.8 per cent and 74.6 per cent, respectively.'

<sup>16</sup> *National Report of Jamaica on MDGs*, op. cit.

parts of civil society, which offer possibilities of pooling resources and for consensus-building activities, issues of CSO sustainability remain paramount. CSOs consulted felt that the MDG process had not particularly opened up new spaces for increased collaboration on and implementation of development activities, although groups working on HIV/AIDS were seen to be having more successes, mainly because of the formation of a regional network and linkages with other actors, such as academia.

One significant challenge is that the MDGs have remained largely unknown to many communities and even some CSOs. Some CSOs have mandates and work programmes that are not framed with explicit reference to the MDGs, although they relate to them, as they seek to advance human development in different ways. This means that the contribution of the MDGs may not always be well captured or understood. Much more reference is made to Jamaica's national development frameworks, particularly since the initiation of Vision 2030.

Those CSOs that do make reference to the MDGs report doing so mostly as a mechanism to access funds, or to link to international spheres. To some extent this has driven an increase in results-based monitoring within those CSOs that receive funding.

A common civil society critique linked to limited engagement is that the global targets of the MDGs do not correspond to the reality of Jamaica. For example, the poverty line standard applied for the MDG of people living on less than US\$1.25 a day is assessed as inadequate in the Jamaican context, if a poverty line is defined by a person's ability to purchase an essential basket of goods and services,<sup>17</sup> which is also vulnerable to food price inflation.

More broadly, criticisms are made of the MDGs on the grounds that they do not adequately address the specific issues Jamaica faces, or take into account its cultural nuances and norms, its demographics, such as the social role various ethnic and religious identities play, and the effects of its geographic location and status as a small island developing state. Further, a lack of attention to indicators relating to inequality, and the absence of a vocabulary related to human rights, make the framework problematic for many in civil society.

CSOs put forward the above as major reasons why they have engaged with the MDGs selectively.

Concerns are also expressed within civil society about the legitimacy of some CSOs who are actively involved in MDG agendas, as the MDGs are most often leveraged as a tool to access international donor funds, calling into question the domestic accountability and independence of those CSOs.

CSOs do not feel that they are fully involved in planning and policy development related to the MDGs. This is because of a larger challenge of government and the fact that CSOs operate mostly in separate spheres according to their own interests and conditions. More positively, a strong sense among the CSO personnel consulted that government, civil society and perhaps the private sector would in theory agree on the MDGs suggests a basis to explore enhanced collaboration.

<sup>17</sup> Economists in Jamaica suggest a much higher amount, closer to US\$5 a day, would be appropriate

There is a strong view among the CSOs consulted that a climate of constant monitoring and evaluation is needed to drive implementation of the MDGs and whatever goals follow them. This is one of the main objectives of the Jamaica Civil Society Coalition, discussed below. Yet CSOs do not report that they play a major role here, suggesting a key accountability deficit. It is noteworthy that none of the institutions which exert oversight in Jamaica, whether they be national institutions such as the Statistical Institute of Jamaica, the Planning Institute of Jamaica and various universities and research institutions, or international institutions with which Jamaica's government engages, including the IMF, World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Development Bank, Organisation of American States and Commonwealth Foundation and Commonwealth Secretariat, are CSOs. CSOs attest that their limited capacities prevent them from playing as active a role as they would like in the monitoring of the MDGs. CSOs also believe that there is a lack of adequate information on the MDGs. These factors inhibit the engagement of all spheres of society in discussion of the MDGs and action on their implementation, which is a necessary part of their full achievement.

An enduring constraint that prevents Jamaican civil society doing more is the difficult resourcing situation for CSOs. Jamaican CSOs involved in this review report that the long-term challenge of adequate resourcing has been exacerbated by the global economic downturn, with core support in particular hard to find.<sup>18</sup>

A recent trend in response has seen a few CSOs attempt to address such sustainability issues by moving into entrepreneurial ventures, such as the sale of goods or services, including intellectual capital. Intellectual capital resources include research, education and cultural strategies, training methodologies and community-enhanced knowledge capacities. These can improve the resources of CSOs and thereby contribute to their effectiveness and independence. Some CSOs have created partnerships with international organisations and some with local businesses, while some undertake contracted service delivery for government entities. A few have set up foundations as a way of encouraging longer-term sustainability. Provided such approaches are grounded in core civil society principles, they merit documentation of good practice and replication where appropriate.

There is widespread agreement on the value of having a comprehensive development framework, and Jamaican society, including CSOs, was involved in a participatory process to develop Vision 2030, Jamaica's long-term national development roadmap. CSOs consulted as part of this review consider that Vision 2030 Jamaica takes the MDGs into account and articulates strategies for their achievement. They also believe it provides a framework, in the form of the Medium Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework, to address new goals that may come out of the post-2015 MDG process. This suggests again that there is fresh potential for engagement and collaboration. The emergence of new civil society coalitions, as discussed below, can be seen as important new expressions of a commitment to more intense social engagement, in the spirit of Vision 2030.

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<sup>18</sup> See also Michael Witter, *Civil Society Participation in Governance in Jamaica and Belize*, 2004, which states: "This decade has also been challenging for civil society organisations because of the declining access to all forms of resources – volunteered time and funding from the state, international agencies and local private sector institutions."

## 4. Contribution of CSOs to the MDGs and their delivery

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CSOs believe their main contribution to the MDGs is in the form of service provision. They report participating in implementation areas where they have extensive knowledge and track records in service delivery, particularly on education, environmental issues, gender equality, health and HIV/AIDS. For instance, CSOs are adding depth and quality to education provision by running initiatives such as homework centres and special remedial programmes.

Examples of CSO projects that were developed and implemented with a focus on realising Goal 3 include the SISTREN Theatre Collective, which offers an ongoing project, 'Pan di Corner', to promote a gender perspective in work that aims to reduce community-based violence in inner city neighbourhoods, and the programmes conducted by the CSO umbrella body, Association of Development Agencies (ADA), to strengthen the capacity of women traders. On Goal 7, CSOs are working with communities and academics to understand the impact of climate change on rural livelihoods with a view to influencing the government agenda; on Goal 6, they have launched the 'Zero Campaign' to address stigma and discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS.

A number of CSOs report recent collaborations with other actors to address issues related to the MDGs. These include collaboration with the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica on environmental and child survival programmes; a partnership between the Dispute Resolution Foundation and the Bureau of Women's Affairs on women's economic empowerment projects; and the work of the Shaggy Foundation to raise funds to support the Bustamante Children's Hospital's reform and development programme. Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs also collaborate with hospitals in various activities to reduce infant mortality rates.

State agencies where there have been partnerships with CSOs on Goal 7 include the National Environment and Planning Agency, which has collaborated with CSOs and academia on environment and climate change and gender initiatives. The Ministry of Water, Land, Environment and Climate Change has run initiatives with CSOs, academia and public, private and international agencies to conduct environmental and climate change assessments to determine vulnerability to, and the impact of, climate change.

In a recent multi-stakeholder collaboration between environmental CSOs and national and international actors, also framed with reference to Goal 7, the Jamaica Conservation Development Trust has worked with the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica, the National Environment and Planning Agency, the Forestry Department, USAID and the UNDP on the management of a national park and the inclusion of park border communities.

Civil society has also participated extensively in the development of a national action plan to address the widespread problem of gender-based violence, but this is yet to be implemented.

Recent years have seen the emergence of two new civil society coalitions that offer fresh opportunities to foster closer civil society involvement in aspects of the MDGs. The Jamaica Civil Society Coalition (JCSC), founded in 2010, brings together CSOs that focus on participatory governance, transparency and accountability, and is discussed further below. The 51% Coalition, established in 2011, is an alliance of women's organisations and other CSOs that aims to establish representation quotas for women as a temporary special measure to secure their equal participation in power and decision-making, and therefore addresses Goal 3. There also seems to be some rise in regional networking. For example, the HIV/AIDS CSO, the Jamaica Network of Sero-Positive Women, is now connecting with the Pan-Caribbean HIV/AIDS partnership. Other examples include the Caribbean CSW 57 Network, a partnership of women's CSOs working on the elimination of violence against women and girls, and the Global Water Partnership – Caribbean (GWP-C), a CSO coalition working on water, sanitation and hygiene issues.

## 5. In focus: formation of the Jamaica Civil Society Coalition

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*'In May 2010, the Government refused to sign the US extradition order for drug dealer Christopher "Dudus" Coke,<sup>19</sup> and thereby place the matter before the Jamaican Court to determine the merits of the request. In the midst of the national crisis precipitated by the government's decision, press releases circulated thick and fast from a wide cross section of organisations. These included a range of NGOs and CBOs, private sector and church umbrella organisations. From my vantage point of being on a news and current affairs radio programme at the time, I could keep track of the various statements in the media, and see the emerging commonalities and differences in the positions being taken. I came to the conclusion that a strategically important next step was to bring together the various groups, in order to make a deeper impact on governance in that moment of national crisis and take forward a transformational agenda.'*

Carol Narcisse, Chairperson, Jamaica Civil Society Coalition<sup>20</sup>

On 2 June 2010 the leadership of several CSOs came together to conduct a dialogue, identify points of agreement and consider creating an alliance to advocate for good governance. This led to the formation of the JCSC, a grouping of civil society bodies and individuals focused on civil society participation and engagement in shaping national policy, and on positively influencing the rule of law and governance in Jamaica. The group was anchored in principles of democracy, transparency, respect for diversity, and protection of the natural environment and gender equality. Among its 21 members are CSOs active in human rights, election oversight, peace and justice, violence reduction, environment and sustainable development, and women's rights and economic development, along with private sector, community and church umbrella organisations; there are also eight active individual members.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Christopher Coke is the leader of a drug gang who was extradited to the USA in 2010 and was alleged to be close to figures in the then ruling party. In the violent clashes during the operation to capture him between the security forces and the community in the Tivoli Gardens neighbourhood where Coke was the 'Don' (unofficial community leader), over 70 people were killed.

<sup>20</sup> Carol Narcisse, personal communication, May 2012, cited in a forthcoming paper by Rawwida Baksh and Linnette Vassell on gender and citizenship

<sup>21</sup> Chairperson's Report, Jamaica Civil Society Coalition June 2010–June 2012, JCSC Annual General Meeting, 22 June 2012. Revised as at 26 June 2012. See also the list of members at <http://jamaicacsc.com/index.php/who-we-are/members-organizations-individuals>



The JCSC has brought public attention to bear on a host of issues ranging from the strengthening of anti-corruption mechanisms, political party registration, financial disclosure, electoral finance reform and deliberations on the proposed growth strategy which is being pursued in the context of Jamaica's interactions with the IMF. Members believe the JCSC has helped to establish a sense of community within civil society, particularly in national budget processes. Through this coalition and the partnerships that have been established, they pushed for the formation of Social Partnership of Transformation meetings with the Prime Minister, a positive and progressive step for civil society. The JCSC has encouraged people's participation in key national debates on issues such as the IMF, national debt and the budget. It is currently lobbying for a single anti-corruption commission. It has secured CSO representatives in tripartite structures that would normally be limited to participants from government, trade unions and the private sector. It has also made submissions to the Planning Institute of Jamaica, a key body for MDG oversight, and successfully advocated for the development of a new solid waste management plan.

The JCSC is also part of an ongoing collaboration that has been taking place among community-based organisations (CBOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), government departments and agencies, and the private sector on the design and implementation of the Community Renewal Programme (CRP). The CRP provides a framework for violence reduction and community development projects. It promotes capacity building for agencies and self-empowerment at individual and community levels and takes a 'harmonised, holistic approach, drawing together the several programmes which are being implemented by multiple agencies across government and civil society. Critical to its success will be a governance framework which is inclusive, fostering community ownership of all aspects and phases of the process and involving state and non state actors in the Programme's implementation and oversight.'<sup>22</sup>

The first phase of the CRP, which is currently being piloted, targets 100 communities through a wide range of socio-economic and governance interventions. Its guiding principles are:

- Community empowerment and participation at all stages and levels of the programme
- Strong leadership at the political and institutional levels to guide co-ordination and collaboration
- The fostering of partnerships in planning and implementation between state and non-state actors
- Enforcement of law and order, taking into account 'sociological concerns' as a means of creating an environment conducive for development
- A gendered approach, recognising sensitivities, nuances and attitudes<sup>23</sup>

The JCSC participates at national advisory level in the direction of the CRP. What is still needed however is for the communities on the ground where the CRP is being implemented to themselves be part of the official partnership structure. The JCSC intends to develop workable strategies to make such linkages, and

<sup>22</sup> See Community Renewal Programme brochure, <http://www.dogoodjamaica.org/app/webroot/uploads/CRP%20Launch%20Brochure%202B%20pub%20-%20New%20Updates%20-%20Oct%202011.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Community Renewal Programme. Towards Building a Secure, Cohesive, Just and Empowered Jamaica, Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2012

in doing so to better inform actions that respond to economic shocks facing communities, in the wider development framework of Vision 2030.

The Partnership for Transformation (PFT), instigated by the previous administration, brought representatives of government, the opposition, the private sector, trade unions and civil society together to consult on national development issues, strategies and actions. The JCSC successfully lobbied for independent places for specific interest groups – on the environment, human rights and youth, as well as for women’s groups and faith-based groups. The PFT has now been restarted, with a focus on the national economy and development.

The establishment of the JCSC can be seen as part of a rise in civil society assertiveness on issues of corruption and governance.<sup>24</sup> New formations such as the JCSC offer fresh platforms to help Jamaicans raise their voices on emerging issues, such as participation and transparency in investment and contracting arrangements with international entities. This opens the way for dialogue and closer civil society involvement around ODA issues that are fundamental to the achievement of the MDGs and future goals.

There are signs that the government recognises the need to involve CSOs and is showing greater willingness to engage with civil society in a structured manner, but a framework has yet to be formalised. A power imbalance remains in relationships between civil society and the government, and CSOs are often restricted to the status of observers. These new coalition structures demonstrate fresh civil society willingness to work with more coherence, an essential part of any framework for greater consultation.

## 6. Lessons learned and recommendations

Examples cited by CSOs in this review of the gap between the global targets of the MDGs and the development needs of Jamaica include the following:

- Goal 1 does not address hunger and poverty sufficiently. The goal should also contain an indicator for housing availability.
- Goal 2 does not address all the possible inequalities in the education system. The indicators should address social exclusion, and exclusion by placement on how students fare in the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT). It should also focus on the quality of education, which is affected by class size and teacher-student ratios, and on secondary and tertiary education.
- Goal 3 is the only area in which gender is mentioned, whereas gender should be a central element of all the goals, particularly given that 45.5 per cent of Jamaican households are headed by women<sup>25</sup> and the women’s unemployment rate of 16.85 per cent far exceeds the male rate of 9.5 per cent.<sup>26</sup> Gender disparities impact on other goals, such as health goals, and on experience of climate change and natural disasters.

CSOs identify current key national issues which the MDGs do not properly cover as including crime and corruption, economic development, increasing imbalance of payments, ballooning national debt, gender inequality, migration,

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<sup>24</sup> T Munroe, 'Controlling Corruption, Transforming Governance – Where Are We? Where From Here?', National Integrity Action Limited / Ministry of Justice, First Annual Prosecutors Anti-Corruption Training Seminar, 10 February 2012

<sup>25</sup> Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions report, Planning Institute of Jamaica and Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2009

<sup>26</sup> Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2011 data

rural poverty related to land ownership inequalities, the growth of non-communicable diseases, and the explosion of technology. Key aspects of development that are missing include early childhood education, response to disability issues, and sexual and reproductive rights. The MDG framework also cannot address the ways in which crime manifests itself and cuts across development initiatives.

A further criticism that emerged is that the MDGs can encourage an isolated and technocratic approach to problems such as child mortality and disease, but there is a need for a more holistic response that takes into account economic and socio-cultural factors. For example, the causes of poverty and inequality are complex, including underemployment as well as unemployment, social exclusion in the education system, educational standards and training, social status, housing, access to health, attitudes such as racism and sexism, poor governance and political affiliation divides.

Compared to the MDGs, there seemed to be higher buy-in and support for Jamaica's Vision 2030 plan, particularly as it addresses the MDGs as well as other national priority areas not covered by the MDGs. In doing so, it complements and can help to make the MDGs more relevant to Jamaica. CSOs point out, however, that Vision 2030 needs to be publicised and promoted in schools and through community outreach. Vision 2030 also needs to be underpinned by the opening up of more participatory spaces.

This review suggests that in any development processes, civil society, including CSOs, individual activists and other civil society actors, must be fully accepted as active, credible and integral key informants in the development of programmes and their implementation. Civil society brings a wealth of experience and knowledge about communities, issues and solutions. It is this knowledge, wisdom and experience that can ensure that development is effective, inclusive and participatory; this is why civil society must be given space in the development sphere. The contribution of civil society to development needs to be measured, acknowledged and promoted, both within Jamaica and internationally, as a key requirement for moving development forward. There should be deliberate efforts to enable civil society participation in the development of new targets and indicators that have local relevance and connect with CSO mandates and interests.

Participatory governance demands that CSOs and the communities they work with are given an equal, independent and respected seat at the table. This must be underpinned by sound mechanisms for collaboration and cohesiveness within civil society, which is a key aspect of enhancing civil society participation in MDG delivery. By working coherently and in collaboration (which should not be mistaken for homogeneity), civil society can address some of the concerns government may have about giving it more opportunities to express its voice. It is also essential that civil society work remains values based, and promotes human rights and social justice, including on questions of gender, race, ethnicity, class, disability and sexual orientation.

The development of more partnership platforms, which can provide assistance such as peer support and technical assistance, also holds the possibility of helping civil society develop a more self-sustaining base. At the same time, the allegations of fraud and corruption that have attached themselves to some CSOs that receive MDG-related funds suggest there is a need for more internal accountability mechanisms for civil society, such as a civil society charter and registry.

In order to improve progress on the MDGs, CSOs are calling for increased ODA, and for more debt swaps, such as those that created the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica and the Forestry Conservation Fund.<sup>27</sup> They argue that debt swaps will benefit the government, and the country as a whole, by reducing debt payments and keeping within Jamaica resources that would otherwise go to service debt. Funds realised through this approach could be effectively applied to community and organisational capacity development, and enable more effective multi-stakeholder partnerships.

## 7. Post-2015 development framework

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This review suggests that to be successful any post-2015 development framework must take into account the emerging issues of countries experiencing their own levels of development, as well as factors such as different agricultural needs and cultural norms, and the peculiarities of their geographic location and the make-up of their populations.

The process of developing new goals should explore and embrace a host of deeply entrenched developmental issues which are faced by Jamaica, the rest of the Caribbean and the world, some of which transcend borders, including climate change, gender justice, income equality, financial regulation, debt, migration and, important in the Caribbean context, the special needs of small island developing states. The work should be anchored in an understanding and application of universal human rights principles, which also need to be applied to the governing of relations within the international community.

In an ideal scenario, development goals, being locally relevant and inclusively arrived at, would then be reflected in all relevant policies across a broad spectrum.

An underlying need identified by participants in this review is to develop new approaches to partnership within the global South through regional links, for example in the Jamaican context, with Caribbean regional civil society bodies such as the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC) and the emerging Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership (CIWiL). Closer regional connections are necessary if civil society is to impact on regional intergovernmental structures, in this case the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and also globally on intergovernmental structures, such as the United Nations system and the Commonwealth.

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<sup>27</sup> Following extensive advocacy and lobbying by civil society, the governments of Jamaica and the USA agreed to write off Jamaica's debt to the USA. As a result, the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica was formed to accommodate matching funds from both governments to support environmental and sustainable development programmes implemented by CSOs. While debt swaps in Jamaica are seen as largely successful, identified areas of weakness in this case include the lack of space to bring in additional funds and other resources

While bearing this in mind, development priorities in contemporary Jamaica that could be addressed as part of post-2015 goals include:

- Creation of jobs and equitable growth, and the promotion of decent work and labour standards
- The need for a community renewal plan for every rural and urban community that includes basic goals such as addressing chronic poverty and securing water and sanitation for all
- Promoting rural development, including infrastructural development, and the management of urbanisation, including better regulation of the management of commercial and residential areas and more effective use of public and private spaces
- Tackling rural poverty and land ownership inequalities. Issues here include gender inequalities in land ownership, squatting, and ownership through inheritance without legal title, which means land cannot be used as collateral for loans for entrepreneurial activities
- Addressing non-communicable diseases, such as obesity, diabetes and hypertension
- Improving the lives of people with disabilities by making progress on issues such as accessibility, infrastructure, public awareness and education, stigma and discrimination, and opportunities for self-empowerment
- A focus on adult education, which can contribute to achieving progress on a range of other issues such as violence against women, HIV/AIDS and environmental sustainability
- Outreach to faith-based communities around the critical role they can play in addressing key development issues such as HIV/AIDS, gender discrimination and gender-based violence (given the tremendous influence of religious leaders over their members and the majority role women play in religious congregations)
- There is also a need to take a comprehensive approach to the impacts of migration from Jamaica, components of which could include training of workers for overseas employment when opportunities are not available at home, promoting diaspora remittances, addressing the phenomenon of returning Jamaicans who have been deported from other countries,<sup>28</sup> and consideration of rural to urban migration

Any goals should be underpinned by:

- The promotion of participatory governance as a right and the implementation of political reform to realise this at all levels, including the guarantee of CSOs' independent presence in social partnerships
- The strengthening of civil society, supporting the forging of strong, effective partnerships and coalitions and the development of cohesive voices

While goals that focus on these areas and enable participatory approaches are likely to secure broad support, the challenge will be implementation. This is not

<sup>28</sup> A survey conducted by the Ministry of National Security and the Planning Institute of Jamaica indicated that 53 per cent of deportees returned to Jamaica reported that they had been involved in criminal activities since their arrival. There is public concern about the reintegration of these Jamaicans and their susceptibility to becoming involved in gang and criminal activity

only the result of economic constraints, but also of the trust deficit in political institutions that inhibits concerted action in Jamaica. The hope must be that a sense of renewal and momentum can be generated from the celebration in 2012 of Jamaica's 50 years of independence to foster fresh commitment to inclusive and bold national development processes.

## 8. Conclusion

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The process of this review has afforded Jamaican CSOs an opportunity to examine the environment for, and impact of, their work, as well as their important role in bringing issues to national prominence and holding the government to account. This has underlined the need for critical reflection on the state of affairs within civil society itself and served as a reminder of how important a robust civil society is for governance and the pursuit of broader governance agendas.

This means that the sustainability of CSOs is a matter beyond the concern of civil society itself, and must be the concern of all development actors, so that CSOs can fully play their role in debate, problem solving and accountability, as well as service delivery. It also means that CSOs must continue to put their houses in order and hold themselves to the same standards of accountability that they demand of other social actors.

This research has been conducted in the context of the formidable challenges faced by Jamaica, which has now been independent for 50 years. However, the country has tremendous assets and opportunities, one of which is its civil society. In this new phase of the journey, the momentum that has begun to be generated among CSOs through this process of reflection, analysis and consensus building should be sustained and built upon.

## Participating organisations

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### Original research process:

- Women's Resource and Outreach Centre

### Focus group participants:

- Community Based Rehabilitation Services of Jamaica
- Council of Voluntary Social Services
- Eve for Life
- Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
- Hannah Town Community Development Committee
- Jamaica Civil Society Coalition
- Jamaican Network of Seropositive Women
- Parenting for Change
- Rockfort Community
- Rose Town Benevolent Society
- Trench Town Community Development Committee
- Women's Media Watch
- Women's Resource and Outreach Centre
- Youth Opportunity Unlimited
- 3Ds Project
- 51% Coalition

### Interviewees:

- Bureau of Women's/Gender Affairs
- Jamaican Network of Seropositives (JN+)
- Ministry of Health
- Planning Institute
- United Nations Development Programme Jamaica

### **Consultation organising partners:**

- Association of Development Agencies
- CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

### **Consultation participants:**

- Association of Development Agencies
- Bureau of Women's Affairs
- Charles Town Maroons Council
- CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
- Combined Disability Association
- Commonwealth Foundation
- Jamaica Agricultural Society
- Jamaica Association on Intellectual Disabilities
- Jamaica Vendors, Higglers and Markets Association
- Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce
- Ministry of Science, Technology, Energy and Mining
- National Consumer League
- Planning Institute of Jamaica
- Rastafarian Indigenous Village
- St Thomas Environmental Protection Agency
- Trinityville Area Development Committee





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