

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

National Report:

Trinidad and Tobago

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The Commonwealth Foundation would like to thank the Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development, Network of Non-Governmental Organisations of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women, CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation and all organisations that participated in the research and national consultation.

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

National Report: **Trinidad and Tobago**

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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UN Millennium Campaign

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

This summary presents perspectives from civil society in Trinidad and Tobago 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, Trinidadian and Tobagan civil society organisations (CSOs) made a number of recommendations to accelerate progress on the MDGs and improve future development frameworks.

An initial research report was prepared in the first half of 2012 by the Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development (CNIRD), based on an analysis of published data and focus group discussions with secondary and tertiary students, young people, women's community groups, church groups and academia. This formed the basis of a civil society consultation convened by the Network of Non-Governmental Organisations of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation in December 2012 to verify and expand upon the research findings, and to make further recommendations.

Civil society review of the MDGs in Trinidad and Tobago

CSOs consider that the strongest achievement has been on Goal 2, while there has also been progress on Goals 3 and 4, and to a lesser extent on Goals 5 and 6. Goals 1, 7 and 8 are assessed as unlikely to be achieved by 2015. While Trinidad and Tobago's gas and oil production has to some extent cushioned the country from the worst effects of the global financial crisis, CSOs believe that persistent poverty and hunger remain: despite the country's high income status, more than one-fifth of people live below the poverty line, and CSOs further question the appropriateness of current measures of poverty.

CSOs report that in general they have not placed much new programmatic focus on the MDGs. They tend to address MDG areas only where they overlap with existing work themes. They are more likely to refer to national development frameworks, which only intersect with the MDGs to some extent. However, CSOs feel that the attention international donors give to the MDGs has offered new opportunities to connect with international conversations, develop legitimacy and access international funding.

A common civil society critique of the MDGs is that they were imposed in a top-down manner, and it is suggested that this partly explains the lack of response and lack of synergy between civil society and the government, with the government seen as the main actor for addressing the MDGs. This suggests a challenge in understanding the potential role of civil society in MDG processes. Given this, CSOs report that there is no systematic co-operation, although there has been some collaboration on specific areas, such as sexual health and community poverty projects.

CSOs acknowledge that they should more consciously define their role in the MDGs, and to articulate that role to government in actively seeking increased participation. At the same time, CSOs acknowledge a need to build up collaborations within civil society and to develop their own sources of data to aid analysis.

CSOs critiqued the MDGs as having been insufficiently adapted to the national context. Areas such as education (where issues should include quality and access for people with disabilities), gender (where women's access to education is strong but empowerment in workplaces and the home is an issue) and health (where non-communicable diseases present a major health problem) were identified as among those that would benefit from more locally specific goals. Other emerging issues identified as needing attention in future goals include: addressing the impacts of climate change, mainstreaming lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights within a human rights framework, and addressing emerging male marginalisation in spheres such as education.

CSOs also suggest that there is a need to focus on employment and livelihood issues, and to undertake wide-ranging work to redefine poverty and combat exclusion. Here CSOs believe that it is time to initiate a national discussion on well-being that goes beyond economic dimensions. CSOs also feel that national development plans need to be consistent over more than one political administration to achieve impact, instead of changing with each change of administration, as has happened recently.

CSOs suggest that there is a need to explore the benefit of collaboration across the Caribbean. Shared challenges across the region include increasing debt and decreasing development assistance. Stronger Caribbean networking offers one way to build up resistance to shocks and address the vulnerabilities of small island developing states (SIDS), but the value of regional networking for civil society and governments has still not adequately been explored.

Recommendations

Recommendations from CSOs to improve the participation of civil society include:

- Intergovernmental organisations with programmes in Trinidad and Tobago should do more to promote the role of civil society and build in space for civil society in activities they support, to demonstrate the value of civil society inclusion.
- Any new development framework should set indicators for civil society and government co-operation.
- New legislation may be needed to help systematise and expand co-operation.

Key recommendations from CSOs for future development frameworks include:

- There should be greater localisation of goals, enabled through participatory processes. Localised goals should then be promoted through culturally relevant and locally appropriate awareness raising.
- The development of new goals should be underpinned by a wide-ranging national discussion on redefining well-being, reducing inequality and improving the inclusion of marginalised groups.
- To improve monitoring, there should be civil society shadow reporting on development goals at UN meetings and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). As part of this, civil society would need to develop its own sources of data to aid independent assessment.

1. Introduction

This report presents perspectives from civil society in Trinidad and Tobago 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. An initial research report was prepared in the first half of 2012 by the Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development, based on an analysis of published data and focus group discussions with secondary and tertiary students, young people, women's community groups, church groups and academia. This formed the basis of a civil society consultation convened by the Network of Non-Governmental Organisations of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation in December 2012 to verify and expand upon the research findings, and to make further recommendations.

Trinidad and Tobago's gas and oil production has to some extent cushioned the country from the worst effects of the global financial crisis. The World Bank classifies Trinidad and Tobago as a high-income country¹ and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assesses it as having high human development,² suggesting there should be a strong platform for making progress on development goals.

Trinidad and Tobago's government has stated its commitment to achieving the MDGs and to putting in place a multi-stakeholder partnering process.³ As a sign of commitment, the Ministry of People and Social Development (MPSD) was created by the administration elected in 2010 to tackle Goal 1 on poverty and hunger. It acknowledges that people must be at the centre of development if programmes and projects are to yield tangible outcomes.⁴ It also places special emphasis on programmes that assist the vulnerable and marginalised,⁵ implicitly recognising that such groups have been under-served in the MDG process to date. There may be new opportunities in this political acknowledgement for civil society to seize.

2. Civil society perspectives on progress towards the MDGs

The present status of attainment of the MDGs shows a mixed picture, and there are diverse views among the CSOs consulted about progress. Table 1 attempts to consolidate across this diversity of views.

1 World Bank country classifications, accessed February 2013, <http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications/country-and-lending-groups>

2 UNDP 2011 Human Development Index, http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2011_EN_Table1.pdf

3 See *Innovation for Lasting Prosperity, Medium-Term Policy Framework 2011–2014*, Ministry of Planning and the Economy, October 2011, http://www.planning.gov.tt/sites/default/files/content/mediacentre/documents/Innovation_for_Lasting_Prosperty_web.pdf

4 For example, Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister stated: '16.7 per cent of our people still live below the poverty line; 11.7 per cent are considered the working poor and 9 per cent are deemed vulnerable. It is with these groups in mind that we have established a new Ministry, the Ministry of the People, [that] is unique in our political history and whose aim is to bring the government closer to the people in a delivery centred manner that deepens the partnership between the government and the people.' Speech given by The Honourable Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the High-Level Plenary Meeting of the Sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, United Nations Headquarters, New York, 21 September 2010

5 The Ministry's website states: 'Particular emphasis is placed on developing and executing programmes and services that protect and assist vulnerable and marginalised groups in society such as women, children, persons with disabilities, the elderly, the poor/indigent, the socially displaced, ex-prisoners, deportees and persons living with HIV/AIDS.' Accessed February 2013, <http://www2.mpsd.gov.tt/content/about-ministry>

Table 1: Civil society assessment of progress towards the MDGs⁶

	Goals, targets and indicators⁷	Civil society assessment of progress	Government assessment of progress	Civil society perspectives on challenges
<p>6 The Socio-Economic Policy Planning Unit, housed within the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, had not finalised the <i>MDG Progress Report</i> at the time of going to press. All government assessments included in this paper are therefore drawn from the 2011 draft summary table provided by the ministry</p>	<p>Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger:</p> <p>1a. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1.25 a day</p> <p>1b. Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people</p> <p>1c. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger</p>	<p>Unlikely to be achieved</p>	<p>On track and target is likely to be met by 2015</p>	<p>Poverty and hunger remain continuing concerns in Trinidad and Tobago, despite its high-income status. Over 20 per cent of people are assessed as living below the poverty line,⁸ and 11 per cent of the population are reported to be undernourished.⁹</p> <p>CSOs consulted questioned the appropriateness of the current level of the poverty line and measures of poverty.</p>
<p>7 Unless otherwise stated, the target date for the achievement of all goals is 2015</p>	<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>	<p>Views range from achieved to mostly achieved, but with reservations</p>	<p>Achieved and target has been met</p>	<p>Significant progress has been made, and access to education is assessed as good across different economic classes. By 2005, 99.2 per cent of children who started primary school were staying on to completion,¹⁰ while there is now 100 per cent literacy for women and men between 15 and 24 years old.¹¹ However, concerns were raised in this review about the quality of education, education access for students with disabilities and the extent of functional literacy.¹²</p> <p>This was seen as a goal that would benefit from localised and appropriate targets being set.</p>
<p>8 According to the Household Budgetary Survey, 21.8 per cent of the population live below the poverty line (Central Statistical Office, 2011)</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>	<p>Some progress has been made</p>	<p>On track, and goal is most likely to be achieved</p>	<p>72 per cent of people currently in tertiary education are women.¹³ There has also been an increase in the number of women parliamentarians.¹⁴ Yet this has not translated fully into the employment sphere, where women only hold 40 per cent of jobs in the non-agricultural employment sector.¹⁵</p> <p>CSOs consulted questioned how relevant the targets under this goal are to the needs of women in Trinidad and Tobago, and also the needs of men, given their educational underperformance. It appears that women outperform men at all levels of the school system; in particular rural and inner city schools male students have the lowest level of performance.¹⁶ This suggests that other arenas need to be targeted for women's empowerment, and targets set for improving access to education for boys and men.</p>
<p>9 'Food Security – A vehicle to eliminate hunger in Guyana and the Caribbean', PowerPoint presentation by L Ramsammy</p>	<p>10 'Creating a World Fit for Children', Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2007</p>			
<p>11 UNICEF country data, 2012, available at http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/trinidad_tobago_statistics.html</p>	<p>12 Defined by UNESCO in the following terms: 'A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development', <i>Education for All Global Monitoring Report</i>, UNESCO, 2006, http://www.unesco.org/education/GMR2006/full/chapt6_eng.pdf</p>			
<p>13 Data from The Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women, 2012</p>	<p>14 The proportion of women members of the House of Representatives rose from 19.4 per cent after the 2002 general election to 28.6 per cent in the 2010 election. Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union Women in National Parliaments database, 2012, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm</p>			
<p>15 Institute for Gender and Development Studies, 2012.</p>	<p>16 Gender issues in education and intervention strategies to increase participation of boys, June George, Ministry of Education, 15 June 2009</p>			

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Goals, targets and indicators	Civil society assessment of progress	Government assessment of progress	Civil society perspectives on challenges
<p>Goal 4. Reduce child mortality:</p> <p>4a. Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate</p>	Some progress	On track and mostly likely to achieve goal	<p>Child mortality has improved significantly, with the under fives mortality rate (the probability of dying between birth and five years of age per 1,000 live births) falling from 37 in 1990 to 27 in 2012, and the infant mortality rate (probability of dying between birth and one year of age per 1,000 live births) decreasing from 32 in 1990 to 24 in 2010.¹⁷ However, this still compares unfavourably to most Caribbean countries, with only Guyana and Haiti having higher rates.</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>	Progress, but questions raised	Progress is on track, and goal is most likely to be met	<p>Almost all births in Trinidad and Tobago are delivered by skilled personnel.¹⁸ Antenatal and reproductive health services are widely available, with the exception of abortions, which remain illegal in most cases.¹⁹</p> <p>Maternal health is, however, threatened by the loss of health practitioners overseas. The scale of this challenge can be seen in the fact that in 2012 the government recruited 70 health care professionals from Cuba, in addition to the 135 foreign health professionals already operating in the health service as at December 2011, to fill gaps left by migrating health workers.²⁰</p>
<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>	Progress, but questions raised	Progress is lagging, and it is unlikely the goal will be met	<p>CSOs assess Trinidad and Tobago's HIV/AIDS response as adequate; however, non-communicable diseases are a significant problem, made worse by increased access to fast food. This offers an example of how the MDGs could be better indigenised to focus more strongly on a health issue of rising national importance.</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>	Unlikely to be achieved	On track, and goal is most likely to be achieved	<p>Creating a 'green economy' is stated as a key national priority.²¹ However progress is limited. CSOs acknowledge that many policies have been put in place, but implementation has been slow, while the legal and regulatory framework on environmental issues remains out-dated.</p>

¹⁷ The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UN Population Division and United Nations Statistics Division, 'At a glance: Trinidad and Tobago', http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/trinidad_tobago_statistics.html, Other calculation methods for mortality rates vary

¹⁸ 'Creating a World Fit for Children', Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2007

¹⁹ 'Abortion is currently only permitted to save the life of the pregnant woman, and to preserve both mental and physical health, and is illegal for any other circumstance. These restrictive laws often force women to seek illegal solutions.' Source: Trinidad and Tobago Country Program, Planned Parenthood, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/international-program/trinidad-tobago-country-program-19031.htm>

²⁰ 'Social Sector Investment Programme: Stimulating Growth, Generating Prosperity', Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, <http://www.finance.gov.tt/content/Social-Sector-Investment-Programme-2013.pdf>. See also 'Health Systems Profile: Trinidad and Tobago Monitoring and Analysing Health Systems Change/Reforms', third edition, Pan American Health Organisation/World Health Organisation, October 2008, which states: 'Trinidad and Tobago faces a shortage of qualified health care professionals ... Local professionals have mainly migrated to the US, the UK and other Caribbean islands ...'

²¹ See, for example, 'Working for Sustainable Development in Trinidad and Tobago', Ministry of Planning and the Economy, June 2012, <http://www.planning.gov.tt/sites/default/files/content/mediacentre/documents/Working%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20in%20Trinidad%20and%20Tobago.pdf>

Goals, targets and indicators	Civil society assessment of progress	Government assessment of progress	Civil society perspectives on challenges
Goal 8. Develop a global partnership for development 8a. Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system 8b. Address the special needs of least developed countries 8c. Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing states 8d. Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries 8e. In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries 8f. In cooperation with the private sector, make available benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications	Unlikely to be achieved	Achieved, as target has already been met	As a small island developing state, trade is essential to Trinidad and Tobago's development. The stalled Doha trade round and terms of trade that disadvantage small economies offer a long-term challenge.

It can be seen from the above that there is significant disagreement between civil society and the government on progress towards the MDGs. The areas of closest agreement are that Goals 2 and 5 are on track and Goal 6 is off track.

While accepting that there has been progress on Goals 3 and 4, civil society is more critical than the government about aspects of these goals. The largest areas of disagreement are on Goals 1, 7 and 8, which civil society assesses as off track.

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

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

While the government recognises the importance of the MDGs, it has also seen the need to create a domestic framework to foster the infrastructural and institutional changes it considers necessary for development.

The government, following its election in 2010, instituted a new framework for sustainable development which replaced the previous administration's 2020 Strategic Vision Plan.²² The framework outlines the importance of different actors working together, and underlines the role that civil society and other actors play in development: 'At the heart of the thinking behind our policy framework is that we must work together to create a mutually respectful place for discussion, dialogue and meaningful action by designing forums for government, business, labour and civil society to sit together and talk things through... The objective is to enhance synergies that provide social support, employment opportunities and facilitate community development.'²³

Within this framework, the government articulated seven interconnected pillars for sustainable development, which aim to strengthen the framework for the attainment of the MDGs and support an economic diversification strategy based on technological advance. Notably, pillar six addresses good governance and recognises that institutions should be responsive to the needs of citizens, and that there should be greater civic engagement.²⁴

A new government initiative in 2012, that may open up fresh space for civil society to engage more closely with development goals is the creation of a Civil Society Board (CSB). This represents an attempt to put in place an acceptable and workable framework through which CSOs can participate in development processes in ways that help to build legitimacy, access to funding and sustainable networks, and increases their role and visibility in governance. At the time of writing the board is still being set up, and registered CSOs will elect its representatives.²⁵

In this policy, areas of emphasis are: agriculture, business, construction, culture and heritage, education, environment, faith-based organisations, health, justice and security, labour, social development and poverty alleviation, sport, Tobago affairs²⁶ and young people. It has been noted that gender does not feature in this list, sparking civil society calls for its inclusion.

CSOs report that they have to some extent made use of Trinidad and Tobago's domestic development frameworks to help shape their strategic objectives, depending on their areas of expertise. By comparison, CSOs have critiqued the MDGs for having been developed through a top-down approach. CSOs reflected that the MDGs have not been sufficiently indigenised for Trinidad and Tobago, which limits their relevance. Since they have not always been well adapted to the national context, frameworks such as those outlined above are sometimes preferred.

²² 'Manifesto 2010, Prosperity for All: Manifesto of the People's Partnership', Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2010; and 'Innovation for Lasting Prosperity', op. cit

²³ Ibid

²⁴ A fuller description of the seven pillars is available on Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development website, accessed February 2013, <http://www.planning.gov.tt>

²⁵ The terms of reference for the board, published in November 2012, are available at <http://www.planning.gov.tt/sites/default/files/content/mediacentre/documents/Draft%20TOR%20CSB%20-%202012.pdf>

²⁶ Tobago is the smaller island in the two island state

CSOs also underlined that internationally the MDGs are just one part of the global governance architecture and discourse, which includes other forums such as the Rio+20 process on sustainable development and the resulting discussion of potential sustainable development goals, as well as the emerging post-2015 agenda.

CSOs did, however, report that new opportunities to participate in projects related to the MDGs have been created as a result of international organisations giving attention to the MDGs and framing development initiatives in the light of them. When they have participated in these, CSOs feel they have gained legitimacy from MDG processes and the focus these bring to the issues that many CSOs work on. They have found the framework useful for connection to international conversations, while donors' global focus on the MDGs has also helped make available funding for CSO participation in MDG processes.

In addition, the discussion of poverty in Trinidad and Tobago is complicated by the fact that there is no agreed poverty line. In this regard, the MDGs are acknowledged to have at least provided a defined framework that can help inform discussions on poverty, even though the MDG framework's definition of poverty may be inadequate.

It is important to note that civil society does not make systematic efforts to collect its own statistics and data on the MDGs, and relies on government statistics and data provided by international organisations. This limits civil society's ability to mount independent critiques of official statements of progress.

4. Contribution of CSOs to the MDGs and their delivery

There was general consensus among those consulted that civil society has not played a major role in progress towards MDG targets. However, CSOs tend to address development goals on an individual case by case basis, in accordance with their particular missions, rather than in a systematic way. For example, several CSOs are involved in distributing food to the poor, without explicitly referencing Goal 1. The principal reason put forward for this is a lack of synergy between civil society and government. The government is seen as the main actor in addressing the attainment of MDGs and the related targets, and there seems to be no clear understanding among either government or civil society of the role of civil society in this process.

CSOs report having been involved in some aspects of policy development which relate to goals such as 1, 5 and 7, eg. with the Environment Act, Anti-Pollution Act, national cultural policy, national land use policy, national IT policy, national youth policy, national gender policy, Children's Authority and the development of local content codes for cultural goods. The policies are all in different stages of development. For example, the Anti-Pollution Act, in spite of a great deal of civil society participation, is still not a workable piece of legislation. CSOs have also

reported that there has been no real consultation with civil society on issues of land use, and no input into the Land Use Act.²⁷ Civil society considers that it has had a limited role in planning and policy development related to the MDGs, and believes that it should play a much larger role in future.

CSOs believe they perform an important role in filling current governance gaps. They perceive that governments and international organisations are often bogged down by bureaucratic structures and political goals, and so cannot adequately understand the development needs of communities. CSOs have the capacity to adapt, fill holes and partner at different levels of governance. Many have expertise and specialist knowledge, for example on successful strategies for addressing poverty at local level, curbing domestic violence and advancing gender equality, and although many are limited in their human resource capacities, their closeness to communities means they are able to benefit people who cannot otherwise be reached. The Family Planning Association was suggested in the review as one example of this – with its expert knowledge of its subject matter and history of working with people on the ground, it was well placed to lead the achievement of improving access to reproductive health services and promoting contraceptive use.

Goal 6 provided an example of new partnership building to address the MDGs. With funding support from UNAIDS, a National Coalition on Women, Girls and HIV/AIDS was formed in 2010, hosted by the Family Planning Association. A technical advisory board consisting of CSO representatives and specialists was created to provide input and guidance to the operations of the national coalition, and a work plan has been created which will further develop stakeholder collaboration and facilitate funding support.

There are also examples of government support for and engagement with civil society to advance development agendas. One of the government's programmes to address poverty, the Regional Micro Project Fund, makes funding available to CSOs that work on poverty reduction projects geared towards vulnerable people, such as older people, women and young people. There has also been specific government support for CSOs working on gender issues, while on HIV/AIDS there is a history of partnerships between the relevant ministries and HIV/AIDS CSOs.

In addition, in response to the decent work agenda, which connects to Goal 1, the Ministry of the People and Social Development has provided funding to a number of CSOs for activities that facilitate and encourage access to decent work. Seventy-five CSOs received this support in 2011, most of which worked in the essential service areas of providing children's homes, services for people with disabilities, and homes and activities for older people.²⁸ The decent work agenda has also prompted regional networking, with the National Union of Domestic Employees joining with its Caribbean counterpart to try to win increased buy-in for decent work policies.

²⁷ Land issues in Trinidad and Tobago include squatting containment, regularisation and relocation, upgrading of squatter settlements, the availability of land for the landless and the provision of starter homes. There are spontaneous civil society squatter groups which interface with the land settlement agency to facilitate the regularisation of titles or relocation of squatters

²⁸ 'From Steady Foundation to Economic Transformation: Social Sector Investment Programme', Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012

5. Lessons learned and recommendations

CSOs consulted were realistic about the inability of civil society to advance ambitious development agendas on its own, and the corresponding need for multi-stakeholder approaches. These need to be supportive and inclusive, and to drive critical thinking.

Civil society acknowledges that it needs to more consciously seek to define its role in the attainment of the MDGs, and to articulate that role to the government. By doing so it can seek increased participation so that it can play its proper role of holding government accountable for the implementation and delivery of services, and lobbying government for improved implementation.

To make this possible, it may be necessary to introduce new legislation to help expand and systematise co-operation. A further recommendation to foster enhanced relations is to designate specific spaces for CSO representatives in the country's appointed Senate.

At the same time, civil society needs to build up its own internal collaborations. CSOs acknowledge that they need to show that they are improving their legitimacy, accountability and responsibility. There also needs to be longer-term and more structured collaboration between civil society and the private sector.

Intergovernmental organisations involved in development in Trinidad and Tobago have a role to play in helping to open the door for civil society. They could be encouraged to do more to promote civil society's role, and build in space in activities they support that enables civil society participation. In doing so they would help to demonstrate to government the value of civil society inclusion.

There could be civil society shadow reporting on development goals at UN meetings and CHOGM, to ensure that civil society views are included as part of reporting. There could also be parallel reporting processes by government and civil society reports on key development challenges. For this, civil society would need to develop its own sources of data to aid independent assessment.

CSOs suggest that national development plans need to be consistent over more than one political administration to have impact. Recent changes have suggested there may be a habit of initiating new development plans by new governments. The question that arises is how multi-party consensus can be fostered over fundamental long-term development objectives in a polarised political environment.

CSOs consulted believe there is scope for initiating a national discussion on well-being, which goes beyond economic dimensions. There is an emerging view that the definition of poverty needs to be expanded to go beyond measures of income and social security, for example, to address aspects such as physical and mental health, and access to social assets. There is a need to focus on reducing inequality and improving the inclusion of marginalised groups, such as homeless people, people who have been deported as illegal immigrants from other countries, people living with HIV/AIDS, unemployed people and LGBT people.

The test for social programmes should be whether they are fully reaching these groups, and whether they are helping to challenge barriers of stereotyping and discrimination. This also serves as a reminder to CSOs that they should promote a human rights-based perspective in their engagement with development goals.

There has been no real organised youth voice on the MDGs, and no government outreach on the MDGs to young people. Education should be used to foster active citizenship among the young, and new engagement opportunities for young people should be built as part of future development goals.

This review considers that localisation is a key need for the MDGs and for future goals. In the short term, this should encompass culturally relevant and locally appropriate awareness raising. In the longer term, localisation can only be achieved through the kind of participatory processes outlined above.

From this consultation process, the following emerged as thematic areas that could be addressed by future, localised development goals:

- Redefining poverty and combating exclusion
- Developing functional literacy
- Promoting local community economic development
- Mainstreaming LGBT rights as part of a human rights framework
- Addressing male marginalisation in some spheres (for example, in education)

Any new development framework should also set specific indicators on civil society and government involvement.

CSOs in Trinidad and Tobago felt that it was important as part of this review process not to consider Trinidad and Tobago in isolation, but also to explore the Caribbean dimension. Shared challenges across the region include those of increasing debt and decreasing development assistance. Stronger Caribbean networking offers one way to build up resistance to shocks and address the vulnerabilities inherent in small island developing states, but the value of regional networking for civil society and governments has still not been adequately explored.

6. Post-2015 development framework

There seems to be common ground for fruitful future discussion between civil society and the government in apparently shared opinions that key issues are missing from the MDGs, such as employment, climate change, some aspects of environmental sustainability, instability in global markets, and equity and inclusion in the development processes. These views were echoed by Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Kamla Persad Bissessar in her address at the United Nations High-Level Thematic Debate on the State of the World Economy.²⁹

Trinidad and Tobago, as an oil and gas producer, is highly dependent on global markets and institutions for its economic growth and development. In the present global order, development and economic growth are inseparable. Academia and the research community in particular put forward the view that unless this situation changes in the near future, it must be assumed that economic growth will have to be sought to form the basis of development in the Caribbean. The fortunes of the country's domestic strategic framework for development are therefore intimately linked with those of the international economic and governance environment. Given this, some of the recommendations for a post-2015 framework, made by CSOs involved in this process, are that global institutions need to be reformed:

- Reform of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and a review of the current trading regime: In its present state the WTO is doing little to protect small states such as Trinidad and Tobago. Special emphasis should be given to changing policies that allow developed countries to defend their agricultural sectors and hamper the agricultural sectors of the developing countries, which helps to perpetuate poverty in those countries.
- Reform of the International Monetary Fund (IMF): Countries should be able to develop their own social and economic plans based on their domestic situations. Such localised monitoring and reporting can alleviate misconceptions of states being unable to manage themselves.
- Reform of the United Nations: For example, the UN Security Council needs to be dismantled in its current form, and a change is especially needed in the role of the permanent members. There needs to be stronger collective decision-making at the higher levels. It was felt by those consulted that permanent membership of the Security Council should be ended, and replaced by membership that can institute a focus on development and security on a global scale.
- Failing reform of the UN's systems, there is a need for a new organisation focusing on balanced, fair development policies, which should be the driving force for change within institutions such as the World Bank. It was felt that development within the present set-up cannot be properly accomplished without a drastic change of culture in the leading governance bodies.

²⁹ Statement by the Prime Minister at the United Nations High-Level Thematic Debate 'The State of the World Economy', 18 May 2012, available at http://www.opm.gov.tt/media_centre.php?mid=14&eid=195

There is also felt to be a need for better regional working. It will be difficult for individual countries, including Trinidad and Tobago, to attain development standards within the MDGs and emerging post-2015 framework unless they work with their neighbours. Given this, common elements of a new development framework for both Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean region could perform the following functions:

- Assist in poverty eradication and elimination
- Promote regional integration and economic co-operation
- Promote gradual integration of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) into the global economy
- Improve the Caribbean's capacity in trade policy and trade-related issues
- Facilitate increased investment in the Caribbean
- Facilitate increased competitiveness
- Work towards production specialisation based on each country's comparative advantage
- Improve agricultural sectors
- Decrease carbon emissions
- Preserve natural resources, not least because Caribbean countries heavily depend on tourist income

7. Conclusion

Civil society has assessed that there is a mixed picture on Trinidad and Tobago's progress on the MDGs, given the country's high-income status. It should not be assumed as part of this exercise that the views of civil society were uniform or that there was consensus on all issues. Civil society is not a monolith, and its diversity in Trinidad and Tobago should be seen as an asset that offers multiple sources of solutions. There does, however, seem to be consensus that the opportunities for engagement between civil society and government, on the MDGs and more broadly, are inadequate, and that there are deficits on both sides of the potential partnership.

Trinidad and Tobago civil society assesses that future goals need to be localised to have greater relevance to the country and the Caribbean region, within which there needs to be greater collaboration. Participatory processes are logically the only way in which localisation of development can be effected. They are also a way of improving engagement between government and civil society and establishing robust monitoring of progress and accountability for future development goals.

Participating organisations

Original research partner:

- Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development

Civil society groups that engaged in focus groups for the original report include:

- National Youth Council of Trinidad and Tobago
- Academia
- Church groups
- Secondary and tertiary students
- Women's community groups

Consultation partners:

- Network of Non-Governmental Organisations of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women
- CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

Consultation participants:

- Artist Coalition
- Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action
- Caribbean Institute of Sustainability
- Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development
- Catholic Commission for Social Justice
- Congress of the People
- Coterie of Social Workers
- Couva Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation
- Fondes Amandes Community Reforestation Project
- Global Harmony Multi-Media Productions
- Hindu Women's Organisation of Trinidad and Tobago
- Men Against Violence
- Millennium Sistahs Trinidad and Tobago
- Mizpeh Halfway House
- National Assembly of the Baha'i
- National Association of Administration Professionals
- National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

- National Muslim Women's Organisation
- People's National Movement
- Rape Crisis Society
- SAVE Foundation
- TDI Associates
- Traditional African Women
- Trinidad and Tobago Transparency Institute
- United Nations Development Programme
- Working Women
- Individuals from or working on issues related to academia, business, culture, education, environment, gender, land settlement in local government, parliament, trade unions, women's human rights and youth



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