

AUGUST 2018

SUMMARY REPORT

EMPOWERMENT & OWNERSHIP - THE WAY FORWARD FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT RENEWAL IN GUYANA



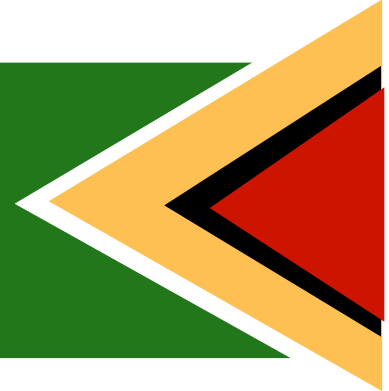
AN OVERVIEW OF THE ANALYSIS
OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN
GUYANA CONDUCTED AT THE
NCLDO

Arthur Chung Conference Centre

July 26th, 2018



TABLE OF CONTENTS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	I
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Conference Delegates	2
1.3 Conference Objectives and Methodology	3
1.4 Scope of Work Done at the Conference and of this Report	4
2.0 Importance of the NCLDO	5
2.1 Local Governance in 2018.....	5
2.2 How We Got Here	6
2.3 Where We're Headed: The New Local Governance Paradigm	9
3.0 Situational Analysis	11
3.1 Actors and Stakeholders in Local Governance Reform	11
3.2 Areas of Focus for Strengthening Local Governance in Guyana	12
3.3 Identifying Existing Good Practices.....	15
3.4 The Implications for Leadership of Local Democratic Organs	16
4.0 The Way Forward	19

4.1 Reflections on the Conference	19
4.2 The Local Government Development Agenda 2019 – 2025.....	21
4.2.1 Capacity Building.....	21
4.2.2 Institutional Strengthening.....	22
4.2.3 Infrastructural Development	23
4.2.4 Public Awareness	23
 5.0 Beyond the NCLDO	 25

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Evolution of Local Government in Guyana.....	28
Appendix 2: Key Changes to Local Government Legislation	31
Appendix 3: Excerpts from President Granger	36
Appendix 4: The Father of Local Government in British Guiana– James McFarlane Corry	38

List of Figures

Figure 1: Local Governance Actors and Stakeholders	11
Figure 2: Issues to be Addressed to Strengthen Local Governance	14
Figure 3: Leadership Guidelines.....	17

List of Tables

Table 1: Summary Analysis of LDO Participation in the NCLDO	2
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List of Acronyms

LDO	Local democratic organs
LGC	Local Government Commission
MoC	Ministry of Communities
MOTP	Ministry of the Presidency
MTCs	Municipal Town Councils
NCLDO	National Conference of Local Democratic Organs
NDCs	Neighbourhood democratic councils
NRDCC	National Regional Development Consultative Committee
PAMD	Plan of Action for Municipal Development
PARD	Plan of Action for Regional Development
RDCs	Regional democratic councils

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Background and Introduction

The National Conference of Local Democratic Organs (NCLDO) was held on July 26th, 2018 at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre under the strategic programme to empower and equip LDOs for improved service delivery to residents of their communities, towns and regions. It was convened to gather information on the current practice of local governance in Guyana and identify development priorities for inclusion in the 2019 budget. Organised by the Ministry of Communities and the Ministry of the Presidency, the conference was the launching pad for a participatory process of conducting situational analyses of the local governance sector and identifying solutions to the challenges faced within and across LDOs. The NCLDO was thus an important step in the ongoing process to deepen democracy within Guyana and initiated the succession planning efforts of the outgoing councils.

Two hundred and thirteen (213) chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of RDCs and NDCs, mayors and deputy-mayors of MTCs, and the administrative head and a minority and/or constituency councillor of each of the eighty-one (81) LDOs participated in the NCLDO. This report will summarise the work undertaken by these delegates and make recommendations on the way forward for the local government reform process. It is complemented by an annexed transcript of the NCLDO proceedings.

B. Key Conclusions of the Conference

The delegates worked in plenary and small-group sessions to conduct a rapid appraisal analysis of local governance in Guyana. In doing so, they conducted a stakeholder analysis, identified challenges to the efficient management of LDOs, and articulated draft leadership guidelines for LDOs. Key conclusions of this process follow:

- △ The stakeholder map produced underscored how much local government affects and is affected by the entire society, and reinforced why consultation, coordination and collaboration must underpin the work of all LDOs. Enhancing LDO capacity for stakeholder management is essential for improved LDO leadership.
- △ The primary issues hindering transformative LDO leadership and effective LDO management revolve around human capacity constraints and weak institutional postures. Addressing these issues is a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for local government development and must be the central focus of the local government agenda for the medium-term.
- △ Leadership is the key to unleashing the transformative power of local government. Keeping community, municipal and regional development as their focus, LDO leaders must practice and promote the tenets of good governance, namely participation, representativeness and consensus orientation; transparency and accountability; equity; efficiency and effectiveness; rule of law; and responsiveness.
- △ There is significant misunderstanding of the local government system and the roles and responsibilities within LDOs and across the different tiers of government, particularly at the NDC level. This retards the work within LDOs and, coupled with years of deterioration of local governance system, has also resulted in civic disengagement.
- △ The work to empower and equip LDOs for improved service delivery must start with the building of leadership and management capacity within communities and professionalising the local government system to be able to attract and retain premier talent.
- △ LDOs want autonomy in the administration but not financing of the local government system. This is unsustainable and untenable and must be resolved for the deepening of

local governance. In the medium-term, the work of MPAC/Axiologic to modernise the property valuation system will provide a path towards financial independence for LDOs, but in the short-term, technical and financial support from central government is unavoidable.

- △ Political maturity is essential for effective LDO management. This requires changes in approaches and discourse at both the local and national levels, particularly since LDO representatives take their cues for the engagement of members of opposing and independent parties from their national counterparts.

C. Recommendations on the Way Forward

Advancing the local government reform process will require:

- △ A seven (7) year local government development agenda fashioned around (1) capacity building to ensure that local authorities have the range and depth of skills required for effective management of their communities; (2) institutional strengthening to provide the policies, processes, structures, equipment, tools, resources and information systems LDOs need to meet their mandate; (3) infrastructural development to respond to the immediate development needs of communities; and (4) public awareness to build understanding of and engagement in the local governance process.
- △ Regional consultations that flesh-out the high-level picture fashioned at the NCLDO and are complemented by detailed institutional reviews, performance appraisals, and job analyses in every RDC, MTC and, at minimum, a representative sample of NDCs.
- △ Increasing current levels of financial and technical support to LDOs to allow for enhanced service delivery in the short term and provide a transition period for LDOs to develop the capacity to lead and finance the development of their communities.

- △ Leading by example by the Ministry of Communities and central government to provide LDOs with a model of cooperation and collaboration for the greater good of Guyana and Guyanese.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

On July 26th, 2018, the National Conference of Local Democratic Organs (NCLDO) was held at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre. The conference was convened by the Ministry of Communities and the Ministry of the Presidency under the strategic programme to empower and equip local democratic organs (LDOs) for improved service delivery to communities, towns and regions, and had three main goals:

- △ To learn from local democratic organs the challenges faced in delivering services to their communities;
- △ To open dialogue among central, regional and local levels of administration; and,
- △ To determine local democratic organs' development priorities for consideration in the development of the 2019 budget.

The work towards the realisation of these goals was intended to help central government better understand the realities of the current council of LDOs. This was necessary to allow for improved planning towards and coordinated implementation of the desired new paradigm of enhanced local governance, as well as for succession planning within the local government system.

1.1 Background

The National Conference of Local Democratic Organs (NCLDO) was born from a meeting on March 16th, 2018 between His Excellency President David Granger and chairpersons and overseers of neighbourhood democratic councils (NDCs) in the East Berbice/Corentyne Region. That meeting was convened to initiate discussions on the challenges being encountered by the NDCs in the provision of services to their communities. Upon its conclusion, President Granger made a commitment to return to the region to have a more in-depth discussion about the challenges and opportunities for improved management of the region's communities. However, recognising that

many LDOs faced the same challenges as the NDCs in the East Berbice—Corentyne, President Granger elevated that ‘discussion’ to a national level, and it became the NCLDO.

1.2 Conference Delegates

Delegates were drawn from Guyana’s sixty-two (62) NDCs, nine (9) municipal town councils (MTCs) and ten (10) regional democratic councils (RDCs). Four (4) delegates were invited from each of the eighty-one (81) LDOs—the chairperson and vice-chairperson of each RDC and NDC and mayor and deputy-mayor of each MTC; the regional executive officer, town clerk and overseer as the administrative head of the RDC, MTC, and NDC respectively; and a minority and/or constituency councillor from each LDO.

In the end, approximately three hundred (300) persons participated in the NCLDO. This included two hundred and thirteen (213) invited delegates; Speaker of the National Assembly, Dr. Barton Scotland; the Ministers of State, Legal Affairs, Natural Resources, Business, Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs, and the Ministers within the Ministries of Finance and Health; representatives of the National Regional Development Consultative Committee (NRDCC) and the Local Government Commission (LGC); regional and community development officers; technical staff of the Ministry of Communities; and other interested stakeholders (including the media).

All eighty-one (81) LDOs were represented at the NCLDO. A summary analysis of delegate participation in the conference is presented as Table 1 below.

LDOS	ATTENDED	EXPECTED	% ATTENDANCE
RDCs	36	40	90%
MTCs	28	36	77.77%
NDCs	149	248	60.08%
TOTAL	213	324	65.74%

TABLE 1: SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF LDO PARTICIPATION IN THE NCLDO

1.3 Conference Objectives and Methodology

Held under the theme “Catalysing Local Government Leadership for Community and National Development”, the objectives of the NCLDO were to:

- △ learn about the experiences and practice of local governance from the third (3rd) councils of LDOs elected in 2016;
- △ provide a forum for LDOs to begin to articulate guidelines for unleashing the transformative power of leadership in local governance; and,
- △ identify priority projects for the 2019 budgetary programme.

The NCLDO was thus the first step towards the achievement of the three goals set out by the Ministries of Communities and the Presidency, and in determining the critical areas of focus for advancing the local government reform agenda. A strategy of inclusion, engagement and empowerment was adopted, and the information required was gathered through two (2) main avenues: a plenary and three working-group sessions.

In the plenary, delegates were asked to share the challenges they faced and opportunities they saw for enhancing the administration of their communities, as well as their community’s development priorities. To maximise the limited time available, one of the four LDO representatives was invited to speak on behalf of the LDO; delegates were encouraged to complete the brief questionnaire included in their delegate packages; and NDCs were invited to lead the discussion off, with the missing details to be filled in by municipal and RDC representatives. This session saw contributions from twenty-nine representatives, a full transcript of which is included as Section 2 – Interactive Session in the annex.

The working-group sessions allowed for a more in-depth analysis of local governance in Guyana. Delegates were split into three groups: the first comprising of chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of RDCs and NDCs and mayors and deputy-mayors of MTCs; the second of LDO administrators (regional executive officers, town clerks and overseers); and the last of constituency and

proportional representation councillors and minority representatives of MTCs and NDCs. Delegates of each of these groups identified local governance actors and stakeholders; the main issues to be addressed to transform local government administration; and best practices and lessons learned in their management of their communities. On this foundation, each group then considered what leadership of their respective council should look like. The essence of these discussions is provided as Sections 3, 4 and 5 of the annexed transcript.

1.4 Scope of Work Done at the Conference and of this Report

The NCLDO provided a high-level snapshot of the experiences of the third (3rd) councils of LDOs (excluding RDCs). It was the first of a series of consultations to be held in each region to expand and deepen the understanding and analysis of issues being faced by LDOs and identify targeted solutions to those issues and experiences.

Delegates were engaged and made considerable progress in conducting a situational analysis of local governance in Guyana today. In one day, a stakeholder map was produced, key areas of focus for local government transformation were identified, and actions to scale-up and deepen democratic governance were recommended. Delegates also begun the work of articulating leadership guidelines to support the work of this and future councils.

This report will summarise the discussions among key local government stakeholders, position the conference within the larger local government development agenda, and offer suggestions on the way forward for local government transformation. It includes an annexed meeting transcript that details the day's proceedings, as well as contextual information provided to all delegates by the Ministry of Communities as appendices one through four.

2.0 IMPORTANCE OF THE NCLDO



2.1 Local Governance in 2018

2018 marks the fourth year of a policy of positioning local government as a key agent of community and regional development and, as such, as a partner of national development. Beginning in 2015 with the passage of the Local Government (Amendment) Act, Cap 28:02 and the establishment of new towns at Bartica, Lethem and Mabaruma, LDOs have been empowered and continuously encouraged to lead and manage their communities, towns and regions in the best interest of the resident they serve. This was amplified in 2016 with the holding of local government elections and the election of the third (3rd) councils of local administrators in Guyana's history.

The decentralisation agenda continued in 2017 with the establishment of the Local Government Commission (LGC). The Commission assumed responsibility for all staffing-related matters of LDOs, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of LDO performance, investigation of matters under its purview, review of existing and proposed legislation and policies, resolution of disputes within and among LDOs, and for making recommendations for the improved functioning of LDOs. The National Regional Development Consultative Committee (NRDCC) and the Regional Development Consultative Committee in each region were also established in 2017 to promote regional development through improved communication and collaboration among community, regional and national stakeholders.

In addition, the MoC has increasingly provided technical support to LDOs. This includes the development and dissemination of the Handbook for Councillors of Municipalities and Neighbourhood Democratic Councils and support for the completion of a pilot Plan of Action for Regional Development (PARD) for Upper Demerara/Berbice and of the Plan of Action for

Municipal Development (PAMD) for Corriverton, Georgetown, Linden, New Amsterdam and Rose Hall. Efforts to draft a PARD for Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo are underway and PAMDs for Bartica, Lethem, Mabaruma and Mahdia are expected to be completed by the end of 2018.

These efforts have been complemented by the hosting of several engagements to encourage the sharing of information and experiences across LDOs, including a roundtable on developing PARDs based on the experience of Upper Demerara/Berbice, action roundtables on financial management for MTCs and RDCs, and workshops on procurement for NDCs and community councils. The MoC is also providing MTCs with training on the legal framework for local governance and has decentralised management of the Community Enhancement Initiative to MTCs and NDCs and oversight to the RDCs.

Local government elections, essential for the democratic renewal of NDCs and MTCs, are scheduled for November 12th, 2018, as is constitutionally mandated. These will see the election of the fourth (4th) councils of municipal and neighbourhood democratic organs.

2.2 How We Got Here

Under Dutch rule, Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice existed as three (3) colonies that were managed by a governor, who was advised by a council of plantation owners. They became counties and were unified in 1831 under British rule. A century later, in 1931, Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice were further sub-divided into nine (9) districts. Each district was administered by a District Commissioner, who coordinated the activities of central government agencies in the district and provided advice to villages as needed.

At the village level, leaders aspired to coordinated, collaborative and cooperative management and development of their villages. James McFarlane Corry, Chairman of the Den Amstel village from 1895 to 1922, rose to prominence during this period and embodied the tenets of transformative leadership needed to transition from the plantocracy that previously existed to

the desired democratic system. He led in the inauguration of the Village Chairmen's Conference, organised to improve village life and strengthen local democracy, and served as its first chairman from 1904 until his death in 1924.

At the municipal level, Guyana's first two towns were Georgetown, which was founded in 1781, and New Amsterdam, which was founded in 1791. Linden, Corriverton and Rose Hall were established in 1970, and Guyana's first post-independence local government elections held in that year with the participation of 58 local authorities. The local authorities were governed by the Local Government Act, Cap 28:02 which was enacted in 1945 and the Municipal and District Councils Act, Cap 28:01 which came into being in 1970.

This led to the division of Guyana into six (6) administrative regions and the establishment of the Regional Minister System in 1973. This was followed by the enactment of the Regional Development Authorities Act, Cap 28:08 in 1977 and, in 1978, the National Assembly mandated the development of a new constitution for Guyana. The resultant Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, the first crafted by and for Guyanese, was enacted in February 1980.

Later that year, then Minister of Economic Development and Co-operatives, Desmond Hoyte, laid the *State Paper on the Re-organisation of the Local Government System in Guyana* in the National Assembly. This state paper paved the way for the passage and enactment of the Local Democratic Organs Act in October 1980, which established RDCs and set out the duties of LDOs. The Local Democratic Organs (Regional Democratic Councils) Order reorganised Guyana into ten (10) administrative regions and established ten (10) regional democratic councils in 1980 via Order No. 69 of 1980.

Ten years later, Anna Regina was established as a town and the Local Democratic Organs (Area) Order No. 47/1990 identified three hundred and thirty-three (333) neighbourhoods (including indigenous villages). Of these three hundred and thirty-three (333) neighbourhoods, one

hundred and twenty-nine (129) were established by Order No. 51/1990, sixty-five (65) of which were activated as NDCs. Local government elections for the second (2nd) councils of LDOs (except RDCs) followed in 1994.

In 1998, the Herdmanston Accord was signed, which led to new constitutional provisions in 2001, namely:

*75. Parliament shall provide that local democratic organs shall be **autonomous** and take decisions which are binding upon their agencies and institutions, and upon the communities and citizens of their areas.*

77A. Parliament shall by law provide for the formulation and implementation of objective criteria for the purpose of the allocation of resources to, and the garnering of resources by local democratic organs.

78A. Parliament shall establish a Local Government Commission, the composition and rules of which empower the commission to deal with as it deems fit, all matters related to the regulation and staffing of local government organs with dispute resolution within and between local government organs.

78B. The electoral system in respect of local democratic organs below the regional democratic councils shall provide for the involvement and representation of individuals and voluntary groups in addition to political parties and accountability to the electors.¹

Thereafter, constituencies were created with the passage of the Local Authorities Elections (Amendment) Bill in 2009 and, following the recommendations of a 2003 Joint Task Force to revise Cap 28:01 and 28:02, the Municipal and District Councils (Amendment) Act was enacted in 2013 and the Local Government (Amendment) Act in 2015.

Throughout the changes in the local government architecture and the introduction of provisions to expand and deepen the local government system, one thing remained largely the same: local

¹ Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, pages 52 – 54.

authorities played an administrative, and not a development, role in their authority areas. This resulted in the absence of systems and policies for effective local management and leadership of communities; a breakdown in civic consciousness and demand for effective local leadership and administration; and the erosion of the aptitude and competencies for local governance within communities.

2.3 Where We're Headed: The New Local Governance Paradigm

The new paradigm for local governance was expounded by His Excellency, President David Granger in his address to the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and Industry on March 24th, 2016. Titled *Capital Towns and Economic Development*, his address laid out the plan for moving from what he described as a local government culture of “dictation, domination and dependency” to one of decentralisation, consultation, collaboration and development. The goal is for that new culture to lead to the realisation of the local government system espoused in the Constitution, which will be marked by improved service delivery, economic development, and prudent leadership of Guyana’s communities and regions by regional and local authorities.

This new vision for local governance is to be underpinned by the development of capital towns. Capital towns are expected to be the economic hub and focal point for the delivery of public services in every region of Guyana. This will ensure that residents in each region can enjoy access to effective and efficient public services in the region they reside. These public services are expected to cover:

- △ **Social services** which includes education; health; housing; water; security; and the registration of births, marriages and deaths;
- △ **Economic services** which includes commerce; shipping; telecommunications; tourism; and manufacturing services;
- △ **Environmental services** which includes the promotion of green development; provision of green and renewable energy; recycling and other waste management; reduction of pollution; and other environment-related services; and,

- △ **Financial services** which includes micro-enterprise financing; banking; insurance; and business development services.

Furthermore, it is expected that capital towns will address the four critical factors for local and regional development: infrastructure, investment, innovation, and information and communication technologies. These factors are vital for increasing productivity and competitiveness, attracting financial investment, achieving economies of scale, supporting job creation, and levelling the playing field between rural communities and towns.

To be able to deliver these services effectively, MTCs specifically, and LDOs more generally, will have to operate differently than they have traditionally. This will require substantive enhancement of the ability of MTCs to mobilise financial and human capital, the defining and implementation of urban development codes, and the diversification of economic activities. It will also require better coordination and greater collaboration between and among the different tiers of government for prudent planning and effective implementation of development initiatives, particularly those related to regulation of land tenure, taxation, public investment, social development, and construction of integrated infrastructure.

The most important factor for achieving this new paradigm, however, is arguably transformational leadership. This is why the NCLDO was an important step in the local government reform process.

3.0 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

3.1 Actors and Stakeholders in Local Governance Reform

The analysis of local governance in Guyana undertaken by NCLDO delegates began with the identification of the actors and stakeholders of the local government system. The actors and stakeholders identified in the three working groups—leadership of constituencies, leadership of administrations, and leadership of councils—have been amalgamated into the stakeholder map depicted as Figure 1 below.

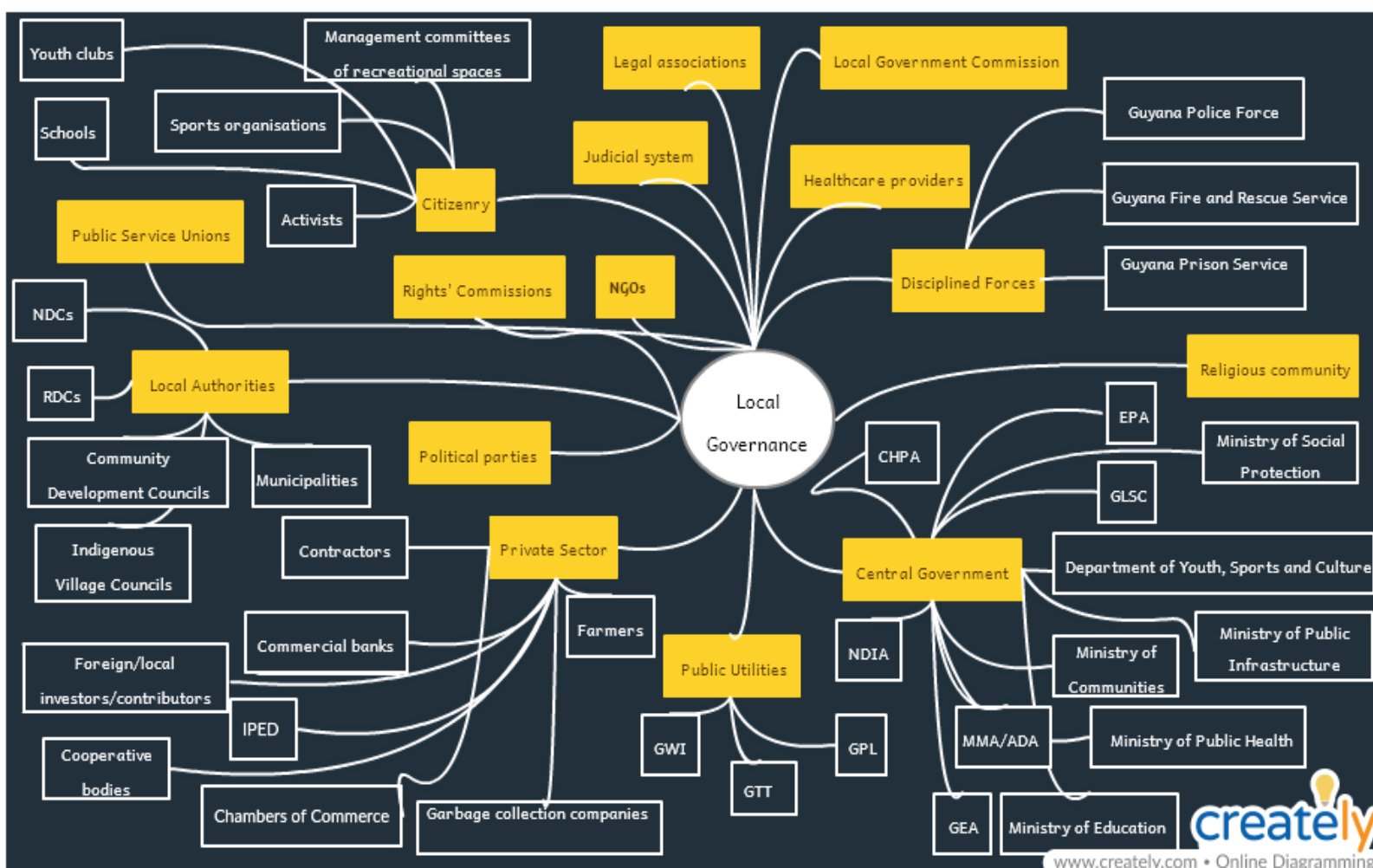


FIGURE 1: LOCAL GOVERNANCE ACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Figure 1 depicts the notion “local governance is everyone’s business”—all of society is impacted by or impacts the work of local democratic organs, and everyone has a role to play in the management and development of our communities. The complex web of relationships generated by conference delegates underscores the need for communication, collaboration and coordination, as well as the challenges of maintaining boundaries in the execution of each party’s responsibilities.

Local democratic organs must thus actively and purposefully manage stakeholder relationships, engaging stakeholders and actors based on the stakeholder’s interest and influence. This is a necessary condition for the success of LDO initiatives and the building of social capital within communities. This necessarily means that LDOs must be trained in stakeholder analysis and management and equipped with the necessary tools and systems to be able to practice meaningful and appropriate stakeholder engagement.

3.2 Areas of Focus for Strengthening Local Governance in Guyana

The duties of LDOs are enshrined in Guyana’s Constitution in Article 74 (1 through 3) and read thus:

74. (1) It shall be the primary duty of local democratic organs to ensure in accordance with law the efficient management and development of their areas and to provide leadership by example.

(2) Local democratic organs shall organise popular co-operation in respect of the political, economic, cultural and social life of their areas and shall co-operate with the social organisations of the working people.

(3) It shall be the duty of local democratic organs to maintain and protect public property, improve working and living conditions, promote the social and cultural life of the people, raise the level of civic consciousness, preserve law and order, consolidate the rule of law and safeguard the rights of citizens.²

² Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, page 52.

Despite this constitutional mandate, the history of local governance in Guyana has resulted in a significant dearth of capacity within LDOs to effectively lead and manage communities and formulate locally-led solutions to the unique challenges they face. This shared experience of being unprepared and ill-equipped for local leadership and administration was highlighted in both the plenary and working group discussions at the NCLDO.

Figure 2 that follows is a graphic depiction of the other leadership issues and challenges identified by LDO representatives as the most critical barriers to local governance reform, as well as development challenges faced by their communities. The leadership issues and challenges highlighted can be separated into two main categories: human capacity constraints and weak institutional capacity.

- △ Human capacity constraints include inadequate staff, staff without the required technical skills and competencies for the proper functioning of the LDO, and poor soft skills (including leadership, communication, conflict resolution, stress management, and time management) within councils.
- △ Weak institution capacity includes weak internal processes and systems, where they exist; misunderstanding of the roles and responsibilities within LDOs and across the different tiers of governance; the absence of financial and procurement policies and regulations; inadequate 'checks and balances' within LDOs; weak communication within and across LDOs; inadequate finances and equipment; and weak planning, budgeting, and performance cultures and abilities.

Together, these two categories of challenges retard LDOs' ability to effectively and efficiently respond to the development challenges in their communities. They also hinder collaboration to maximise the limited resources available and undermine the sustainability of the initiatives that are implemented. The discussion among delegates at the NCLDO reinforced the fact that efforts to strengthen local governance that do not address these issues will ultimately fail, even if they address the development issues faced by communities. **Human capacity development and institutional strengthening must thus underpin the local government reform agenda.**

ATTITUDES

Dishonesty/Lack of integrity
Insubordination
Dependency syndrome
Lack of timely communication/Poor communication
Lack of staff and councillor commitment/motivation due to remuneration
Lack of confidentiality of staff matters and statutory meetings
Culture of low community participation in events and at meetings

INFRASTRUCTURE/RESOURCES

Staff shortages
Inadequate office space/Poor LDO facilities
Lack of financial resources (poor rate collection and inadequate subvention)
Inadequate IT and communication infrastructure
Inadequate equipment and machinery to construct and maintain community infrastructure

CAPACITY

Lack of capacity to enforce laws
Lack of understanding of development needs of the community and of the policies to be implemented
Absence of problem-solving skills to address community issues (even when the issues are understood)
Low technical capacity of council staff and councillors
Poor implementation performance
Lack of information to aid councillors in the execution of their duties
Lack of knowledge of the law by councillors
Misunderstanding of roles and responsibilities of councillors and administrators

SYSTEMS

Outdated policies and procedures, and lack of job aides
Lack of established mechanisms for communication among LDOs and with central government
Large numbers of unregulated areas and no system to correct this
Slow judicial system -> lengthy process for taking legal action against defaulters
Absence of systems to ensure separation of duties within and among LDOs

POLICY/POLITICAL

Political influence
Prioritisation of party politics and not community needs
Lack of political will for real management of communities by local leaders
Poor stipend and salary for staff and councillors
Lack of substantial fines to deter errant residents
Lack of cooperation between stakeholders particularly between the RDC, NDC and municipality
Conflicts of interest in the award of contracts, hiring of staff, management of committees, etc
Unclear and constantly changing financial regulations
Inadequate documentation of policies and procedures

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

Poor drainage
Deplorable roads
Inadequate street lights
Absence of landfills/incinerators for effective waste management
Inadequate social safety nets
High unemployment and underemployment
Inadequate housing

FIGURE 2: ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED TO STRENGTHEN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

3.3 Identifying Existing Good Practices

Having identified the issues to be addressed to strengthen local governance in Guyana, the LDO representatives then shifted gears, thinking not only of the issues and challenges faced in the management of the LDOs but also the lessons that were learned and the best practices that were emerging in their work. Those best practices and lessons learned are summarised below.

Best practices

- △ Be sincere and just in the management and administration of the LDO.
- △ Interact with the residents often, and in the form and through the means that they prefer.
- △ Design and plan interventions to benefit as many community members as possible.
- △ Engage residents in the designing, planning and implementation of development work and collaborate with stakeholders. This increases the effectiveness and sustainability of initiatives.
- △ Resist political interference in the work of the council. While political parties are represented on the council, those parties should not be allowed to direct the work of the council. The parties' policies and ideologies can inform the representatives' contributions to the council but must not supersede residents' input and community needs.
- △ Lead by example. This means opening the LDO office on time, treating residents with respect and compassion, being transparent, being responsive to issues, delivering quality services to the community, and putting the community first.
- △ Motivate residents to pay rates in a timely manner.
- △ Conduct regular team building activities within the LDO to foster positive interpersonal relationships.
- △ Be proactive and actively monitor development works and LDO performance.
- △ Consider the needs of women, the elderly, youth and other vulnerable and underserved populations in the design of community development initiatives and actively strive to involve these target groups in the management of the community.
- △ Plan social and cultural activities to foster engagement and the building of social capital within communities.

- △ Seek out innovative ways of expanding the LDO's revenue base.

Lessons learned:

- △ Respect the opinions and experiences of others.
- △ If you do not find joy in leading, you should not be involved in local government management and administration.
- △ Do not make promises that you cannot keep—a key element of local leadership is managing expectations based on priorities, the level of need in the community, and available resources.
- △ Welcome opposing views as they help to strengthen initiatives. Amplifying political and personal differences retards the work of the LDO and stymies community development.

This process of identifying existing practices that could be built on, as well as those that must be eliminated for true local government reform, proved essential to the discussion of the practice of local government currently and what the standard of leadership should be. It was important that LDO representatives examine their current leadership practices and, on their own steam, recognise that the practice of local governance currently is not all bad. The best practices and lesson identified, and the process of identifying them, provided the foundation for the consideration and elaboration of leadership guidelines for leaders of LDOs.

3.4 The Implications for Leadership of Local democratic organs

The NCLDO was held under the theme “Catalysing Local Government Leadership for Community and National Development” in recognition of the importance of leadership to the effective management of LDOs and development of Guyana's communities, towns and regions. With the stakeholder analysis, issue identification, and discussion of best practices and lessons learned in local governance as the foundation, conference delegates began work on formulating guidelines for leadership of LDOs, a summary of which is presented in Figure 3 below.

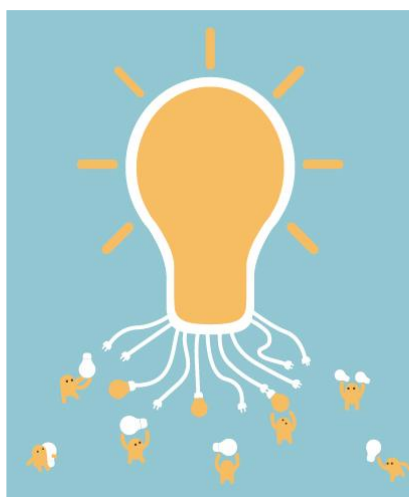


IDEALISED INFLUENCE

- Accept and learn from challenges and mistakes.
- Lead to produce results (the physical, social and economic development of the communities).
- Lead by example.
- Monitor performance, evaluate policies and programmes, and regularly report on the financial and operational performance of the LDO.
- Develop plans for the socioeconomic, infrastructural, cultural and economic development of the community, town and region.
- Operate within the confines of the law always.
- Maintain good and complete records of the LDO's assets and finances.

INSPIRATIONAL MOTIVATION

- Be of good character (honest, respectful, accountable, open-minded and transparent).
- Be humble.
- Practice active listening and communicate clearly.
- Be committed to the management and leadership of community development.
- Serve with distinction.
- Reward good performance by councillors and staff.
- Inspire others to make a difference in their communities, towns and regions.
- Strive for equity and not only equality.



INDIVIDUALISED CONSIDERATION

- Be approachable.
- Use data for informed decision-making and make decisions based on balance, fairness, the severity of the need, cost/benefit trade offs, value for money, resource availability and the feasibility of development initiatives.
- Practice inclusion (within the LDO and with the wider community). This means engaging communities and key stakeholders, providing multiple avenues for data collection and information sharing, and actively working to engage introverts.
- Collaborate, cooperate and coordinate with actors in the three tiers of government: local, regional and national.

INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION

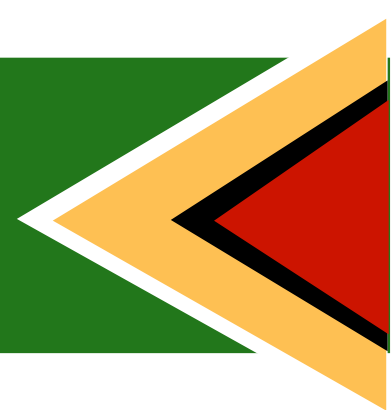
- Be innovative
- Include communities and stakeholders in the identification of development needs and the design, implementation and management of development initiatives.
- Do not micromanage staff and councillors—delegate responsibilities, provide the required support and allow persons to be creative and do their jobs.



FIGURE 3: LEADERSHIP GUIDELINES

The leadership guidelines developed by the three working groups correspond with and have been presented within Bass' (1985) four basic components of transformational leadership: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, individualised consideration, and intellectual stimulation. The mandate LDO representatives set out for leading LDOs is premised on being purpose-driven, inspiring others, being genuinely concerned about the needs and aspirations of their communities, being innovative, and challenging others to be creative. This mandate meets the best practice model of effective leadership and is the type of leadership that is required to transform Guyana—the challenge will be to empower, equip and encourage local government actors to give life to these guidelines.

4.0 THE WAY FORWARD



4.1 Reflections on the Conference

The NCLDO was another step in the local governance renewal process underway in Guyana. It was encouraging—it was well attended, delegates were engaged, and, in only one day, begun the process of reflecting on the current practice of local governance, identifying the development challenges facing their communities, dissecting the leadership challenges and opportunities they face, and articulating standards for how they want their communities managed and led. This bodes well for the success of the local government reform agenda, that is empowering and equipping LDOs for improved service delivery to their communities, towns and regions.

At the same time, the NCLDO shone a spotlight on the work still to be done for local government transformation. While the Ministry of Communities has undertaken several initiatives over the last three years to build awareness and understanding of the purpose and function of LDOs, the discussions at the NCLDO underscored the need for these interventions to be assessed and either expanded and deepened or redesigned and reimplemented. It was clear that the understanding of governance, and particularly of local governance and its importance, is seriously flawed among LDOs. This is especially so at arguably the most critical level of the governance system, that of the NDCs. Initiatives to improve governance and deepen democracy must address this issue, and this is only possible if initiatives are designed and planned to address the root causes of this awareness and knowledge gap. This necessarily means addressing Guyana's history of local governance, not through a political lens or for political mileage but as a root cause of civic disengagement and misunderstanding of Guyana's governance systems.

Moreover, LDO leaders are drawn from the populace and this is where the change must happen if successive councils of LDOs are to be increasingly stronger. This means that the Ministry of

Communities must partner with the Ministries of Education and Social Cohesion to design and implement leadership development programmes for citizens. The Ministry of Communities also must do more to raise public awareness and consciousness of democratic governance, particularly of the role of local government in deepening democracy. Essentially, the work to improve administration of LDOs must start with public awareness and education if the local government system is to attract true leaders and premier talent and avoid a cycle of losing the first half of the council-term to building councillors' knowledge of the purpose and organisation of the local government system. Retaining these leaders will require the acceleration of the work of the LGC to professionalise the local government system.

That aside, it was clear that LDOs have not accepted the ideals of autonomous management of their communities being advanced by central government. In fact, more than 90% of the contributors at the NCLDO asked for central government assistance on things they should be able to handle themselves or for an increase in the subvention to NDCs. Basically, LDOs want greater independence in the decision-making process but do not want to bear the concomitant costs of that increased independence. LDOs must resolve this incongruity and accept that the power to manage and lead their own communities comes with the corresponding responsibility to finance those operations and produce development results.

Going forward, the MoC specifically, and central government generally, will also have to strike the right balance between supporting and challenging LDOs on the journey towards local government transformation. This is particularly true of financially supporting LDOs: do so on any substantial scale and LDOs will never shed the already pervasive dependence on central government; provide no financial support and there will be communities where nothing gets done, and the blame will be cast upon central government. Resetting the balance (between providing financial and technical support to LDOs and promoting the autonomy of LDOs) is essential if the new paradigm of local governance advanced by the government is to be possible.

One step towards resetting that balance is addressing “low hanging fruit”. These include, but are not limited to, formally rolling back policies that were set in the past that are in contravention to the changes in the local governance laws and the spirit of the new local government paradigm; better communicating the recent changes in the local governance laws and the implication of these on the functioning of the LDOs; and conducting intensive training on the separation of duties between the LDO councils and administrations. Most of these issues can be addressed swiftly and with comparatively little financial and labour investments.

4.2 The Local Government Development Agenda 2019 – 2025

Against the backdrop of these reflections and the issues highlighted by conference delegates, it is recommended that the local government development agenda for the next seven (7) years prioritises capacity building, institutional strengthening, infrastructural development, and public awareness. Proposed interventions under each of these four priority areas follows:

4.2.1 Capacity Building

Capacity must be built to ensure that local authorities have the range and depth of skills required for effective management and development of their communities. Work towards this goal should include:

- △ Providing specialised and accredited training for LDO staff based on their roles within the LDO. Training should be in areas such as general management, accounting, public financial management, results-based management, budgeting, reporting, development planning, strategic analysis and planning, facilitation, meeting management, business management, environmental management, human resource management, project management, entrepreneurship, solid waste management, property valuation, and governance;
- △ Providing soft skills development training for all LDO staff in areas such as customer service, communication, leadership, time management, conflict resolution, stress management, and risk management;

- △ Providing tailored and practical training to all LDO staff on the roles and responsibilities of the different tiers of government; and,
- △ Providing LDOs with access to dedicated legal advice (either at the regional or district levels).

4.2.2 Institutional Strengthening

LDOs require policies, processes, structures, equipment, tools, resources and information systems to deliver their mandates and effectively lead the development of their communities.

Building the organisational capacity of LDOs must include:

- △ Conducting team building exercises within, across, and between the different tiers of government;
- △ Rehabilitating LDO buildings to provide the conditions for organisational efficiency and effectiveness;
- △ Formalising and documenting financial, procurement, and performance management policies;
- △ Enhancing the planning and business processes of LDOs, and strengthening internal checks and balances;
- △ Updating communication systems and formalising communication mechanisms among the different tiers of government;
- △ Transitioning Personnel Units into Human Resource Management Departments;
- △ Establishing data management systems and protocols, and providing the requisite training to LDO staff for effectively using these systems;
- △ Updating the institutional structure of LDOs to better align with their mandate, roles and responsibilities;
- △ Increasing the staff complement of LDOs to be commensurate with the role that LDOs are expected to serve;
- △ Expanding the vehicle and equipment complement of the LDO to match the unique needs and circumstances of each LDO;

- △ Enhancing the quality and increasing the scale of technical and policy support provided by the MoC, and strengthening the mechanisms to improve LDO access to that support;
- △ Establishing formal relationships between LDOs and business support and incubation services (particularly, the Small Business Bureau); and,
- △ Articulating plans for the improvement of service delivery by the LDO to communities. These plans should address improving access to education, improving employment, protecting the environment and developing renewable energy in each local authority area, as well as other social, economic, financial, environmental and administrative issues facing the local authority.

4.2.3 Infrastructural Development

While work is underway to build individual capacity within and the organisational capacity of LDOs, some attention must simultaneously be placed on the development issues plaguing communities. In the current context, citizen demand of LDOs is generally for improved infrastructure facilities and services. It is thus recommended that the local government development agenda includes:

- △ Rehabilitation of community markets;
- △ Upgrading of community roads (including the provision of street lights and paved walkways for pedestrian traffic);
- △ Establishment/enhancement of landfill sites;
- △ Rehabilitation/construction of incinerators;
- △ Upgrading community centres and other recreational facilities;
- △ Construction/rehabilitation of municipal courts;
- △ Maintenance of green spaces (including play fields and community grounds); and,
- △ Improved maintenance of community drains.

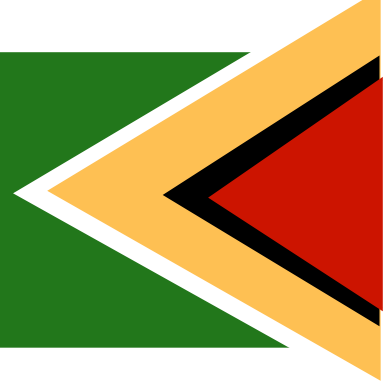
4.2.4 Public Awareness

Building public understanding of and community engagement in local governance must be a vital part of the local government development agenda. This process must include:

- △ Adopting behaviour-change communication techniques to design and produce public education campaigns and materials on local governance;
- △ Conducting public sensitisation campaigns on local governance (including its importance, history and future in Guyana; roles and responsibilities of LDOs; etc);
- △ Collaborating with the Ministry of Education and Department of Youth to develop apprenticeship and internship programmes within LDOs; and,
- △ Hosting essay and other competitions on local governance for children and youth.

Importantly, these are just recommended areas for focus. They cannot be undertaken in silos and will not have the desired impact of advancing the local government reform agenda if they are not undertaken as a part of a larger strategy to modernise local government and develop Guyana. At a local level, this will include regularising housing communities; reclaiming government reserves; increasing access to education and skills training; introducing social safety nets; improving access to justice and quality water; enhancing capacity for farming, agro-processing, and tourism; enhancing environmental management; and helping to create a conducive environment for job creation. At a national level, that socio-economic development agenda will have to include providing incentives for investment in the regions; providing access to cheap and reliable electricity; increasing business development and incubation services; and providing modern, safe, and integrated infrastructure.

5.0 BEYOND THE NCLDO



The inefficiencies and ineffectiveness of managing Guyana from the centre are well known. These inefficiencies and the ineffectiveness stem from a geography that complicates social, economic, and development programming and the inability of centrally-managed programmes to be sufficiently responsive to the unique challenges and opportunities in each region. This, and the need to develop a governance and administration system for Guyana out of Guyanese experiences and ideas, led to the design of the local governance system in the Constitution.

For decades, giving life to those local governance ideals in the Constitution has not been a priority. Guyanese know and have become accustomed to management from the centre, with regional and local authorities serving only to support nationally-led development plans and programmes. In the Guyanese psyche, regional and local authorities are the conduit for the diffusion of national programmes to regions, towns and communities, and are not managers of their communities' affairs or drivers of social and economic development.

As such, despite legislative changes and signals from central government of the desire and political will to give life to the local government constitutional provisions, Guyanese have not generally bought into the idea and accepted what it means for management of our communities and regions: any social and economic improvements that do or do not materialise are because of something the government has done or not done. Even in instances, where it is accepted that the responsibility for an issue rests with the NDC, municipality or RDC, it is not uncommon to hear rhetoric of how central government made the endeavour possible or hindered works due to the lack of financial support.

The result is a complete disconnect between the ideals of local governance in the constitution and the understanding of the governance mechanism by most citizens and many of the LDO leaders themselves. This need for a targeted, concerted and ongoing education campaign on local governance that meets people where they are and communicates with them in a way that is apolitical and with which they can relate cannot be stressed enough.

Second, the NCLDO successfully advanced the conversation on the issues affecting local governance and leadership of LDOs in Guyana today. A high-level snapshot of local government in Guyana was generated and has already helped to inform the planning and designing of initiatives for 2019 and beyond. However, the NCLDO was a start of what needs to be a more comprehensive process. The Ministry of Communities must conduct the promised regional discussions, and while in each region carry out detailed institutional reviews, performance appraisals, and job analyses in every RDC, municipality and, at minimum, a representative sample of NDCs. This is essential to gather the details necessary to turn the high-level snapshot into a detailed picture of the current state of local government, ensure the picture that emerges captures the nuances of each region's experience, gather data for evidenced-based decision-making, and create the conditions for the identification and implementation of solutions that are flexible and designed with and around the unique needs of local authorities.

Third, in the short term, LDOs are simply not equipped, staffed or tooled to effect the change and be drivers of economic and social development as envisioned by the new local government paradigm. At the core, this is responsible for the continued requests for increased financial support, even as there are calls for more autonomy, from LDOs. In the medium-term, the work of MPAC/Axiologic will give LDOs a path to financial independence through the setting of rates and taxes that are grounded in updated and equitable property valuations. In the short-term, central government thus has two options: the first is to continue the status quo, providing a small subvention and sensitising local leaders on the role they are expected to play without the expectation of tangible movement towards the realisation of those ideals; the second is to increase current levels of financial and technical support to LDOs, on a temporary basis, to allow

LDOs to enhance their service delivery in the short term and provide a transition period for LDOs to develop the capacity to lead and finance the development of their communities, towns and regions. The former is more convenient in a time of increasing development priorities and limited fiscal space, but the latter is what is needed to see progress in the local governance renewal process.

Finally, improved leadership and effective management are necessary for the success of the strategic programme to empower and equip LDOs for improved service delivery in their local authority areas. Improved leadership would also bring councils together and reduce much of the dissension that currently exists in many of our LDOs. There is no doubt that the discourse at the national level informs and directs the discourse within and the management of LDOs. Political maturity and leading by example are thus crucial at both the national and local levels. Transforming our communities, towns, and regions has always been about developing Guyana and providing a better life for current and future generations of Guyanese. We must keep that at the centre of this renewal process. At a local level, councillors must manage the dichotomy of representing political parties but working with party supporters and opposers alike for the betterment of their communities; at a national level, that dichotomy must be managed for Guyana's sustainable development and to create a conducive environment for the new paradigm of enhanced local governance central government desires.

APPENDIX 1: THE EVOLUTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN GUYANA

Selected Events

DATE	EVENT
1 March 1837	Establishment of the Georgetown Mayor & Town Council
7 November 1839	Purchase of Pln. Northbrook by newly-freed slaves
2 May 1845	Covenant- proprietors of Victoria Village, providing for “the good regulation and general benefit of the said estate.”
1 September 1891	Establishment of the Municipality of New Amsterdam
August 1904	Inaugural countrywide Village Chairmen’s Conference and election of James Mc Farlane Corry (the Father of local government in British Guiana) as its first Chairman
1932	The introduction a decentralised system of administration via the establishment of District Commissioner System
4 December, 1945	Enactment of Local Government Act, Cap. 28:02,
17 October 1969	Enactment of Municipal and District Councils Act, Cap. 28:01,
June/ December 1970	Local Government Elections (participation of 58 local authorities)
1 August 1970	Establishment of Towns of: Linden (Order No. 29 of 1970) Corriverton (Order No 60 of 1970) Rose Hall (Order No. 61 of 1970)
1973	Establishment of the Regional Minister System that divided Guyana into six administrative regions.
30 June 1977	Enactment of Cap. 28:08, Regional Development Authorities Act
20 February 1980	Enactment of Act 2 of 1980, Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana
	Article 12: “Local Government by freely elected representative of the people is an integral part of the democratic organisation of the state.”
	Chapter VII – Local Government

DATE	EVENT
5 August 1980	Laying in the National Assembly of State Paper No. 4/ 1980 on the Re-organisation of the Local Government System in Guyana by Cde. H.D Hoyte, Minister of Economic Development and Co-operatives.
18 August 1980	Passage of Bill No. 12 of 1980, Local Democratic Organs Act
29 August 1980	Act No. 12 of 1980, Local Democratic Organs Act
6 October 1980	Enactment of Cap. 28:09, Local Democratic Organs Act, establishing regional democratic councils.
	Sec. 6, Duties of Local Democratic Organs (a) to maintain and protect public property, (b) to protect and improve the physical environment, (c) to improve working and living conditions, (d) to simulate economic activities, and improve production and efficiency, (e) to promote the social and cultural life of the people, (f) to raise the level of social consciousness, (g) to preserve law and order, (h) to consolidate socialist legality, (i) to safeguard the rights of the people; and (j) to give advice, encouragement and support to the people in their daily activities and to give leadership by example.
7 October 1980	Establishment of the ten regional democratic organs via No. 69 of 1980, [Local Democratic Organs (Regional Democratic Councils) Order]
1 August 1990	Establishment of Anna Regina as a Town (Order No 28. of 1990)
2 August 1990	Local Authority Areas identified via No. 47 of 1990 [Local Democratic Organs (Area) Order] – 333 areas (includes Amerindian Villages)
10 August 1990	Establishment of neighbourhood democratic councils (NDCs) [No. 51 of 1990 [Local Democratic Organs (Neighbourhood Democratic Organ) Order]-129 Neighbourhoods
8 August 1994	Local Government Elections- 2nd Councils
17 January 1998	Herdmanston Accord + Menu of Measures, requiring constitutional and local government reform.
14 February 2001	Act 4 of 2001- New constitutional provisions, namely Articles 75, 77A, 78A and 78B (local government)
(May- June) 2001	Establishment of Joint Task Force by President Jagdeo and Leader of the Opposition Mr. Desmond Hoyte (to give effect to new local government constitutional provisions)
December 2003	Report of Joint Task Force and recommendation for 5 pcs legislation: New electoral system/creation of constituencies, Local Government

DATE	EVENT
	Commission, Fiscal Transfers, Revision to Cap. 28:01 and 28:02
30 July 2009	Passage of Local Authorities Elections (Amendment) Bill. (Act No. 26 of 2009) –Constituencies created
28 November 2011	General and Regional Elections and election of Brigadier David A. Granger as Leader of the Opposition in an opposition majority National Assembly.
6 November 2013	Enactment of Municipal & District Councils (Amendment) Act. Cap 28:01 (Act No. 15 of 2013)
11 May 2015	General Election and accession of Brigadier David A. Granger as President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.
5 August 2015	Local Government (Amendment) Act, Cap 28:01 (Act No. 5 of 2015) (a)Sec 54 (2) – Amended- so that the local authority approves its own estimates. Minister is only notified Sec 13 – Deleted – Minister no longer exercise any or all power of a local authority. Sec 14 – Deleted- Minister no longer exercise control over officers and servants of local authority area, nor the power to review the orders/decisions of council.
21 October 2015	Establishment of Towns of: (a)Mabaruma (Order No. 18 of 2015) (b)Bartica (Order No. 19 of 2015) and, (c) Lethem (Order No. 20 of 2015)
March 2016	Local Government Elections- 3rd Councils
23 October 2017	Commencement Order for operationalisation of the Local Government Commission
9 August 2018	Mahdia Township Declaration (Order No. 27 of 2018)

APPENDIX 2: KEY CHANGES TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT



Prior to the enactment of the Municipal and District Councils (Amendment) Act No. 15 of 2013 and the Local Government (Amendment) Act No. 5 of 2015, local democratic organs (LDOs) were required to seek Ministerial approval to conduct a significant amount of their daily affairs. These legislative amendments reduce the Minister's role, allowing for greater management of LDOs by the elected representatives. Some affected are:

Ch: 28:01 The Municipal and District Councils Act

Act No. 15 of 2013, Municipal and District Councils (Amendment) Act 2013

Section 8A The insertion of this section granted the Councils authority to promote the welfare of the municipality, to develop and evaluate policies and programmes, ensure that the municipality is managed in a professional manner by a qualified Town Clerk, amongst other functions without the necessity of Ministerial approval.

Sections 157 & 158 By the deletion of these sections, the Councils are no longer required to submit their annual budget (income and expenditure) for Ministerial approval.

Section 206 (2) LDOs can make and levy a separate rating percentage on the value of a land or building without Ministerial approval.

Ch: 28:02 Local Government Act

Act No. 5 of 2015, Local Government (Amendment) Act 2015

Section 13	Which gave the Minister the power to act as a local authority, whether or not there is a local authority, <u>has been deleted</u> .
Section 14	Which gave the Minister power to exercise general supervision, inspection and control over LDOs and its servants, <u>has been deleted</u> .
Section 42(1)	Which gave the Minister power to approve appointments of fit and proper persons as officers of the Council, <u>has been deleted</u> .
Section 48(3):	The NDC can fix rental rates for persons occupying undivided lands and pastures under its control and management without the necessity of Ministerial approval
Section 50(1):	LDO can set grazing fees for animals on Council or State land without the necessity of Ministerial approval.
Section 54(2):	Councils can alter and amend the annual estimate and rate and agree on same for the ensuing year, and no longer have to seek Ministerial approval. They only need to transmit for notification.
Section 54(6)	Minister can no longer determine or approve how rates are levied.
Section 55	LDO can make contributions, grants or donations, that are no longer subject to Ministerial approval, to voluntary groups, social centres, etc.
Section 66(1)(a)	Estimates and rates do not require to be fixed, prepared or approved by the Minister to be valid. The authority now resides in the Council.

Section 100 LDO can determine the fees to be paid for graves and burial which no longer requires Ministerial approval.

Impact of Local Government Legislative Amendments

The combined effect of the amendments to the local government legislative framework namely Act No. 15 of 2013 Municipal and District Councils (Amendment) Act 2013 and Act No.5 of 2015 Local Government (Amendment) Act is that it operationalizes and give effect to Article 75 of the Constitution which clearly prescribes that:

“...local democratic organs shall be autonomous and take decisions which are binding upon their agencies and institutions, and upon the communities and citizens of their areas”.

The Ministerial authority exercised previously is significantly curtailed thus allowing organs to function autonomously to a greater extent. The Ministerial powers that previously existed were extensive. These changes reduce the chances of interference by the central government in the daily affairs of LDOs and duly empowers the organ.

The impact of those amendments may be summarised under three headings:

- △ Finance (Budgeting)
- △ Administration
- △ Revenue

Municipal and District Councils Act, Chapter 28:01

Finance

Section 157- Submission of Estimates for Approval

Town councils are now empowered to craft, approve and implement their own budget based on the needs of their constituents rather than by the dictate of the Minister. The process is therefore now internally driven. Full control of the budgetary process is

significant since this guides the operations of the organ. Councils are only now required to notify the Minister of its approved budget.

Section 158- Minister's Approval of Estimates as he deems fit

This section liberates the councils from the Minister's subjective exercise of authority over the budgetary process, disempowering the Minister of the power to change any part of their budgets as he deems fit.

Local Government Act, Chapter 28:02

Administration

Section 13- Minister's power to act as a local authority

The deletion of this section is fundamental since it prevents the usurpation of the roles of the LDOs by the Minister whether one exists or not. LDOs' functions cannot be taken away.

Section 14- Superintendent Power of the Minister

The deletion of the supervisory, inspection and control powers of the Minister increases the council's autonomy in the conduct of its own affairs.

Revenue

Sections 48 (3), 50 (1) and 100 removes the need for Ministerial approval for the setting of rates for the following revenue garnering measures:

- △ Fixed rental rates for undivided land and pastures
- △ Grazing fees for animals
- △ Burial and Grave fees

The Minister no longer has the power to determine who keeps money recovered by the Councils. In fact, these revenues remain with the Council.

In addition to the other amendments such as the operationalization of the Local Government Commission established under the Local Government Act 2013, LDOs are liberated from interference and are more empowered to exercise their constitutionally prescribed right of autonomy.

APPENDIX 3: EXCERPTS FROM PRESIDENT GRANGER



Excerpts from remarks by His Excellency Brigadier David Granger, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, to the newly appointed ambassadors on 25th July, 2016

So the political structure is evolving, but we have to break the mould of an over centralized government in Georgetown and over a period of time encourage strong regions which could better administer..., which could raise revenue, which could ensure that their populations and their regional interests are met. So, I would like you to understand that it's not a fad, creating towns. Its business and these towns must develop the capability to raise revenues and to administer their huge regions. When you have a region the size of Costa Rica how can you expect a village to run it, a village named Lethem?

We fought hard for Local Government Elections; not for this party to win or for that party to get so many seats, but to give the people of the regions themselves, the choice, the opportunity to choose the councillors. You cannot sit down in Fort Street, Kingston and decide what suite of furniture somebody must have in Paramakatoi or in Bartica. You have to allow the regions to flourish.

Excerpts from remarks by President David Granger at the commissioning of a bus at Mabaruma on 9th September, 2016

Ladies and gentlemen, students, residents of this great region; back in March we embarked on a very important exercise and that is the exercise of empowerment. Many of you never participated, never voted in Local Government Elections before. It is a wonderful experience because you now have been able to choose a town council.

Your government has made Mabaruma into a town and you will be able to ensure that that town council carries out your mandate. If you have problems with light and water and roads, the town council must help you to solve those problems and we are here to help the town council to help you, but you must remain engaged. This is not a job for central government.

You live in the house, you know where it leaks, you wear the shoes, you know where it pinches. You live in the town. It's unfair for somebody in Fort Street, Kingston to try to run Mabaruma and micromanage this township. But you are now empowered and by December 2018, year after next, if they don't perform move them, put in people who will make this town better and bigger. That is what elections are all about and under the David Granger administration we are not going to wait twenty-three years for the next Local Government Elections. There will be Local Government Elections by December, 2018. (Applause.) You have twenty-seven months to perform or perish but let us get Mabaruma going again.

APPENDIX 4: THE FATHER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN BRITISH GUIANA– JAMES MCFARLANE

Address by His Excellency President David Granger on Thursday March 17, 2016 at the commemoration service in honour of James McFarlane Corry

James McFarlane Corry is the acknowledged and celebrated ‘Father of Local Government in British Guiana.’ He is remembered for his sedulous work in Den Amstel and in the villages of Guyana and for his visionary leadership in the establishment of a chain of Cooperative Credit banks.

CORRY, THE MAN

James McFarlane Corry was born in 1850, the son of a Congregational Minister of the Bethesda group of churches in West Demerara. He worshipped in the Congregational Church and a memorial plaque is attached to the Eastern wall of the Smith’s Memorial Church in Georgetown paying tribute to his stewardship. He also attended Bethesda Congregational School and Queen’s College.

Den Amstel and Fellowship was declared to be a ‘Village District’ in 1892. Corry was elected its third Village Chairman in 1895 and served until 1922. He was a village leader, founding the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) branch in Den Amstel in 1888 and remaining President for 27 Years. The Association was credited, at that time, with providing for “...the moral and intellectual improvement of the villagers...” among other things.

He was a professional man, becoming a Magistrate's Clerk in 1881 and being regarded as "...an example of thoroughness in the preparation and presentation of his work." He was appointed as a stipendiary Magistrate in 1911 and also served as a Justice of the Peace in this District (West Demerara).

CORRY AND THE CONTEMPORARY CONDITIONS

The 'Village Movement' started in 1839, the year after Emancipation. The peasant proprietors, in little over a decade, expended over one million dollars to acquire more than 6,000 hectares to establish our first villages. About half of the former enslaved population, about 40,000 persons, moved from the plantations into free villages during that period.

Sugar planters, known collectively in history as the 'Plantocracy', controlled the legislature, known as the 'Court of Policy'. They tried every device, legislative and vindictive, to strangle the development of free villages which rivalled the plantations for labour.

There were, nevertheless, numerous outstanding examples of resilience and independence in agriculture, manufacture and village management. Some villages had begun to establish agricultural societies and to hold 'District Agricultural Shows.' Christian Improvement Associations were formed and a Conference of School Managers and Teachers was inaugurated in 1896. Many villages, however, suffered from repeated flooding, disease and declining production and population.

CORRY, THE CHAIRMAN

Corry, at this time serving as Chairman of Den Amstel, inaugurated the countrywide Village Chairmen's Conference. He was elected its first Chairman in 1904 and served for two decades until his death in 1924. Norman Cameron, in his book 'The Evolution of the Negro,' wrote of Corry's tenure as Chairman of the Conference:

His annual addresses “preserved his views on local government, the serious attitude which he took of the share of government entrusted to the villagers, his passionate appeals to his fellow Chairmen and Councillors for co- operation and to Government for fair-play and a recognition of their services.”

The Village Chairman’s Conference was aimed at improving village life and strengthening local democracy. Cameron wrote that its objective was:

“...that those who were appointed Chairmen should come together, year after year, discuss village affairs, make suggestions among themselves for the improvement of the Villages and, generally, to get such information as would help them in the management of their affairs with intelligence and success;” or, as was later expressed, “to assist one another in the art of managing our own affairs, to discuss the best means of carrying on our work, and to watch legislation as it affects our Villages.”

The Conference’s first agenda was progressive and extensive. Matters to be discussed included the collection of rates; the office of overseer; the custody of village money; the sanitary improvement of villages; the establishment of other local agricultural societies such as the one in Victoria Village; the introduction of village reading rooms and libraries, and Government aid in the form of grants, loans and agricultural instruction.

CORRY AND THE COOPERATIVE CREDIT BANKS

Corry, at this time, ever serious and studious, became aware of the functioning of ‘Raiffeisen’ banks in Austria. These banks were founded by Friederich Wilhelm Raiffeisen and provided small loans, at low rates, for designated purposes, to worthy members of the German agrarian population.

Corry thought it would be good for local small farmers in British Guiana to have access to similar sources of credit. He brought the idea to the notice of the Conference in August 1904, admitting,

at the same time, that he knew nothing of how such banks actually functioned. The Conference decided to obtain help and, as a result, certain representatives of Conference were invited to a meeting of the Royal Agricultural and Commercial Society (RACS) where a paper was presented on the subject.

Certain members of Victoria Village modified the suggested plan to suit their local conditions and, in August 1905, started the first local Co-operative Credit Bank. Others followed, some succeeded and some subsided. The banks at Victoria and Buxton in Demerara and Rose Hall in Berbice, “were reported as doing well under their energetic managers,” by 1912.

The Conference came to the conclusion that the central Government would have to play a part if the best results were to be obtained. It therefore urged the establishment of similar banks but operated by Government. The idea was not adopted at first but, it is recorded:

“... the efforts of the people’s representatives and the spirit of self-help displayed by the farmers were rewarded when in 1914, Government started to operate District Credit Banks. There were three at the end of 1915. In the next year, 15 were added to that number. At the 1917 Conference, it was decided to request the Government to retain the services of the energetic official who had been establishing those banks, solely for work in connection with them. The request was granted.”

The Co-operative Credit Bank did much good work in saving the small farmers from loan sharks and assorted money-lenders. It assisted them to overcome the vagaries and the inevitable difficult periods which afflict peasant farming on the coastland.

Corry was recognised as the individual “who had brought forward the movement.” He, himself, was fully conscious of the importance of having such loan banks in the villages and was satisfied with the fact that the Conference had done something creditable in inaugurating those banks. Corry announced, on the occasion of celebrating the silver jubilee of the Village Ordinance:

“As a permanent memorial of our appreciation and that measure...I invite this Conference to make a practical effort to firmly establish the Co-operative Credit Banks in our Colony, and hand down to posterity as our contribution to the progress of our people, and as a result to the progress of the Colony at large.”

CORRY, THE LEADER

James McFarlane Corry was a leader. He gave the Village Chairmen’s Conference its initial direction and the benefit of leadership. It was similar to the leadership that had appeared in the Agricultural Improvement Societies. The Conference and the Societies worked towards similar objectives – the improvement of the lives of proprietors with house lots and farm lands and the improvement of village conditions in general.

The social significance of independent village institutions can be measured by the statistics concerning the number and size of the villages. Villages numbered 214, of which 96 were in Berbice, 66 in Demerara and 52 in Essequibo by 1902. The village population had nearly doubled from 44,456 to 86,935 persons. The value of village property had increased by half a million dollars and there were 13,969 proprietors owning 31, 255 hectares (77,234 acres) –all in the period 1848-1902.

CORRY’S PLACE IN GUYANESE HISTORY

James McFarlane Corry died at the age of 74 years in 1924. He bequeathed a rich legacy of leadership in rural communities, Christian stewardship, organisational ability, communication skills, visionary planning and public service. Corry was a great guide and a worthy helmsman during a difficult stage in the evolution of rural Guyana. There is no better epitaph to Corry’s life than Cameron’s conclusion that he was “one of the greatest leaders of his people in this Colony (British Guiana), even though his activities were mostly restricted to the Villages.” James McFarlane Corry will always have a place in the history of our country and the memory of people who live in villages such as Den Amstel.



H.E Brigadier David A. Granger, President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, laying floral tribute at the 'Corry Monument', Den Amstel, Essequibo Islands/West Demerara on 2017.03.17

