



The local government system in

St Vincent & the Grenadines



Key facts

POPULATION (Census 2001): 109,022
AREA: 389 sq km
CAPITAL: Kingstown
LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION TO GDP: 0.6%
CURRENCY: East Caribbean dollar (XCD)
HEAD OF STATE: HM Queen Elizabeth II
GOVERNOR-GENERAL: Sir Frederick Ballantyne
HEAD OF GOVERNMENT: Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves
FORM OF GOVERNMENT: constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy
PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM: unicameral
STATE STRUCTURE: unitary
LANGUAGES: English (official) Bhojpuri, Vincentian Patois, Portuguese (recognised)
NATIONAL ELECTIONS: last: 2010; **turnout:** 62.3%; **next:** 2015
LOCAL ELECTIONS: There is no elected local government in St Vincent & the Grenadines.

SUMMARY

St Vincent and the Grenadines is a democratic constitutional monarchy with no local government. There is no constitutional provision for local government and local administration is governed by the Local Government Act 1981.

1. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

St Vincent and the Grenadines is a democratic constitutional monarchy with a unicameral parliament. The head of state is HM Queen Elizabeth II, represented by a governor-general. A referendum in 2009 proposing to replace the monarch with a non-executive president was defeated. The parliament, called the House of Assembly, comprises 21 representatives 15 of which are elected from single-member constituencies and six are appointed senators. The senators are appointed by the governor-general; four on the advice of the prime minister and two on the advice of the leader of the opposition. The term of office for all members is up to five years. The cabinet is appointed by the governor-general on the advice of the prime minister from the members of the House of Assembly, with no more than two being drawn from the appointed senators.

2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2.1 Constitutional provisions:

A proposal to include local government in the constitution failed when the draft constitution did not receive the support of the people in a referendum held in 2009.

2.2 Main legislative texts:

The Local Government Act 1981 provides for either wholly elected or partly elected and partly nominated local authorities. The authorities continue however, to be administered by clerks appointed by central government.

3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

3.1 Local government within the state:

There is no elected local government in St Vincent and the Grenadines. In 1973 elected local government was dissolved and currently the six parishes are administrative units of central government and are responsible for only a limited number of services.

3.2 Ministerial oversight:

Local government administration is managed by a department within the Ministry of Housing, Informal Human Settlements, Lands and Surveys,

Physical Planning and Local Government (MHILP&LG). A local government officer is appointed as the head of this department and is responsible for the supervision of 14 local government entities including town boards and village councils. The local government officer reports to the permanent secretary of the MHILP&LG.

3.2.1 District authorities: St Vincent and the Grenadines is divided into districts, and each district is served by a local authority. Each local authority is administered by a clerk who reports to the local government officer. Both officers work in close collaboration with the local MP and hold consultations with local citizens.

3.2.2 The Kingstown Board, which serves the capital, has a unique administrative arrangement. It is headed by a warden who reports directly to the permanent secretary of MHILP&LG.

4. ELECTIONS

There is no elected local government in St Vincent and the Grenadines.



5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The local government department holds regular community consultations through town hall meetings.

6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

There are no organisations of local government authorities.

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The mechanisms for intergovernmental interaction are informal but exist at all levels. Village and town clerks work in close collaboration with the local representatives of the National Emergency Management Organisation, Ministry of Transport and Works, Ministry of Health and other agencies which are responsible for disaster mitigation, infrastructural development, sanitation and other related services.

At the management level, the local government officer works in close collaboration with the senior technical staff of these ministries, as well as local MPs and government ministers. S/he also represents the MHILP&LG on inter-ministerial committees with respect to rural development interventions. Where necessary, the permanent secretary schedules special meetings of senior staff across the public service to address issues of conflict or collaboration.

8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

The director of audit and the public accounts committee of Parliament, which is headed by the leader of the opposition, have oversight of public services, including local government. The Ministry of Finance and the Office of the Accountant General also have administrative responsibility for budgetary approvals, monitoring revenue collection and expenditure and ensuring that government resources are efficiently used in accordance with legal requirements. The Ministry also provides an internal audit function for local government authorities.

9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

The budget-setting process is as follows: following an annual budget call by the Ministry of Finance, an advance proposal on behalf of local government is submitted by the MHILP&LG. This proposal is determined after consultation with clerks, area representatives and residents of the community and is submitted to the permanent secretary by the local government officer, revised in senior management discussion and then submitted to the Ministry of Finance for consideration. Tax levies and rates are determined by central government and local authorities collect taxes on its behalf. All taxes are paid into the consolidated fund, except property taxes collected by the Kingstown Board, which is entitled to retain these for the

Table 1. Distribution of councils and population

Parish	Town/village	Population (Census 2001)
St Patrick	2	12,242
	Barrouallie	5,463
	Bridgetown	6,779
St George	3	49,590
	Calliaqua	22,706
	Kingstown	13,857
	Kingstown suburbs	13,027
	Chateaubelair	6,081
St David	Layou	6,338
Charlotte	4	25,535
	Georgetown	6,985
	Marriaqua	8,254
	Sandy Bay	2,805
	Colonarie	7,491
North Grenadines	-	5,647
South Grenadines	-	3,589
TOTAL	6	11
		109,022

Source: Statistical Unit, Gov. of St. Vincent and the Grenadines¹

financing of its operations. All local authority staff are part of the central civil service.

10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

The services provided by local authorities include the construction and maintenance of minor/village roads, footpaths, drains, walls and other infrastructure; sanitation services including the cleaning of public places and disposal of garbage in the district (with the exception of Kingstown); management of public cemeteries, community/rural markets and other facilities; and collection of property taxes on behalf of central government. The services provided are determined primarily by law, policy and resource availability. Local authorities charge low rates for using community markets and a small fee for the use of cemeteries. Service fees can be waived for the indigent on application to the social welfare division of the Ministry of National Mobilisation.

References and useful websites

1. Statistical Unit, Ministry of Finance and Planning, www.finance.gov.vc/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10&Itemid=2
2. UN statistics <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2008/Table03.pdf>
3. IMF statistics www.imf.org/external/data.htm
4. Department of Local Government, www.transport.gov.vc/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=103&Itemid=30
5. Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines www.gov.vc
6. UNDP Human Development Report 2010 www.hdr.undp.org
7. UN (2004) St Vincent and the Grenadines: Public Administration Country Profile <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan023203.pdf>