

National Development Strategy – “Eradicating Poverty and Unifying Guyana”

At the last sitting of Parliament, Government put forward as an amendment, a call for the PNC Reform to support the implementation of the National Development Strategy (NDS) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Both documents were compiled locally, with information gathered through a consultative process with the Guyanese public.

To many, there is not a clear understanding of what these documents are and why in the context of Guyana’s development, they are important.

The overall objectives of the National Development Strategy - Civil Society Document are:

- To attain the highest rates of economic growth that are possible;
- To eliminate poverty in Guyana;
- To achieve geographical unity;
- To attain an equitable geographical distribution of economic activity;
- To diversify the economy;

Who came up with these objectives? The people of Guyana i.e. civil society defined as “individuals and groups, organised or unorganised, who interact in the social, political and economic spheres of a country.”

Two basic considerations form the strategy. One, that the scourge of racism is removed and that an inclusive system of governance be developed and practiced so that all would feel that they have a stakeholding interest. Two, that a considerable degree of harmony would prevail the country if social and economic growth policies were formulated and implemented to benefit the population.

The strategy outlines a multi-pronged approach by which these objectives can be achieved. Firstly, the strategy is to ensure that the practices followed by all central, regional and local governments (both present and past) are as “inclusionary, accountable and transparent as possible.”

The second prong of the strategy is linked to the macro-economic policy and economic management and includes:

1. Reforming the tax system, eliminating and reducing some taxes, introducing a more effective and equitable tax and simplifying taxation procedures to induce increased investment and incentives for investors to engage in new ventures in economically depressed areas.
2. Formulating an investment strategy and code to encourage investors to invest in the country and to spell out the terms and conditions under which they would be required to operate.
3. Establishing a one-stop investment agency to expedite and facilitate the actual investment process in Guyana through GO-INVEST.
4. Enhancing the efficiency both of the country’s revenue collection agencies and of those institutions that are charged with procurement, and with other forms of expenditure, and with their monitoring.
5. Designing systems that would focus on trade promotion and mobilising our economy to generate increased export.

The third prong of the strategy is the establishment of a road network throughout the length and breadth of Guyana over the next ten years and includes the rehabilitation and modernisation of the coastal roads, the placement of bridges across Supenaam linking the Essequibo Coast, the Demerara and the Berbice rivers, the construction of an up-to-date north south road from Georgetown to the Takutu. Also included is the construction of two deep-water harbours in the Berbice and Demerara rivers and the improvement of the Cheddi Jagan International Airport Timehri and the Ogle Airport.

The fourth prong approach is the role and the importance of Information Technology in the modernisation of Guyana. This includes the reform of the Public Utilities Commission, the full computerisation of the Public Service including Ministries, departments and institutions that are responsible for finance, education and health, the utilisation of IT in the process of education and the provision of health services at all levels and the establishment of Internet linkages between the University of Guyana and institutions of learning in other parts of the world. Other aspects to the use of Information Technology are forging linkages with expatriate Guyanese in order to utilise them as part of the Guyanese work force, establishing deadlines for the full computerisation of various sectors of the economy and setting up public centers to provide access for all to computers and the internet.

The fifth prong approach is the enhancement of social services, through which poverty can be eradicated and productivity improved. The Strategy foresees the expenditure of significant proportions of financial resources to provide universal access to educational and health facilities at all levels and in all places. Emphasis is also placed on increasing the number of physical structures through which these services will be offered, the availability of necessary equipment, trained teachers and qualified health personnel.

Other approaches forming the focus of the National Development Strategy are:

Reform of the Public Service; the role of the family and the importance of gender considerations in the process of social and economic development; the conservation of the environment; Amerindian development and implementation of the NDS. It was recognised that apart from government, multilateral and bilateral sources of financing, successful implementation also depends on the private sector. Thus, the suggestion was advanced that agreements be entered into with the private sector to “build,

operate and transfer ownership (BOT) and build, operate and own (BOO) arrangements. Therefore, in return for their services, finances and investment, persons either will be allowed to charge tolls or be recompensed for their expenditure through utilising Guyana’s natural resources or by being paid cash over a specific period. Alternatively, a combination of all these methods could be considered.

The Civil Society Document of the National Development Strategy projects that if the programmes of the NDS are fully implemented, the average annual growth of Guyana’s Gross Domestic Product between 2001-2010 could be 9%

The following section is extracted from the NDS Document

SECTORS	OBJECTIVES - Where Guyana should be in 2010
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that governance is participatory and inclusionary. • That the rule of law prevails throughout the land. • Governance is transparent • Government officers and politicians are accountable to Guyanese citizens.
Macro-economic Strategies and the Management of the Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote high growth rates of output and employment. • To ensure that inflation remains at relatively low levels. • To ensure that the population’s basic needs are met and that the growth process contributes to a reduction of poverty. • To ensure that the growth path is sustainable in fiscal, environmental and institutional terms.

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Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enhance the quality of life of the country's inhabitants by utilising its natural resources while neither degrading nor contaminating them. • To ensure that the natural resource base for economic growth continues to be available in the future. • To intensify and widen the dimensions of our living standards through the conservation of unique habitats, natural treasures, biodiversity and our cultural heritage.
Information Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assist in the modernisation of Guyana through the application of information technology to all aspects of the country's development, including the macro-economic and public sector management, the production and export of agricultural and industrial goods and the provision of the basic social services of education and health. • To rationalise the telecommunications sector by clearly defining the role of competition in its operations, and by establishing a legal and operational framework for its regulation. • To provide universal access by the Guyanese population and its private and public sector institutions to the Internet at affordable rates, through the encouragement of the development of systems that allow for the widest dissemination.
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To secure an adequate and

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	<p>dependable supply of electricity in order to ensure the country's future economic development. This includes improving the quantity, quality and reliability of the electricity supply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reducing our dependency on imported petroleum products.• Increasing the utilisation of new and renewable domestic energy resources.• Ensuring that energy is used in an environmentally sound and sustainable way and encouraging energy conservation practices.

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Transport	<p>ROAD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To construct a national road transport network which would provide the basis for the economic development of the entire country. • To establish road linkages with Brazil and Venezuela and through these countries with the rest of South, Central and North America in order to facilitate trade. <p>AIR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the standard of living and the quality of life of Guyanese by providing air access to different parts of the world and to different areas in Guyana. • To enhance penetration into the country's interior to assist the tourism industry. • To provide facilities to enable easy ingress to and egress from the interior in times of emergency. <p>MARINE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote efficient and reliable maritime transport in the coastal and riverain areas of the country, particularly as it relates to the major sector of the country. • To ensure that the facilities and services that are available at the ports and harbours of the country optimise the export and import of all types of commodities from and into Guyana.
Sugar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the competitiveness of the

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	industry so that it may increase its contribution to the development of Guyana.
Rice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that the industry becomes internationally competitive so as to ensure sustainability in the face of reduced preferential access and falling export prices. • To increase padi yields per acre and milling yields. • To reduce transportation costs by developing export facilities such as bulk loading facilities.
Agricultural Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop institutions which would facilitate the improvement of the operations of the agricultural sector, by enhancing their efficiency in providing public services in the production and marketing of agricultural produce. • To improve institutional support for the development of the diversified small farm sector. • To improve coordination between national and local institutions so that local communities can access information and resources from other levels of government. • Increase long-run viability of institutions for agricultural finance.
Non-Traditional Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the rate of growth within the sector and its output so that a most significant number of job opportunities would be created.
Fisheries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the production of shellfish

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	and fin-fish in an environmentally sound manner in order to increase the economic benefits to Guyana.
Forestry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the economic benefits which Guyana derives from its forests and associated resources and to distribute equitably the benefits of forest-based developments to Guyana's rural and interior areas. • To promote sustainable and efficient forest activities, which utilise a broad range of forest resources and contribute to national development. • To achieve improved sustainable forest resource yields while ensuring the conservation of ecosystems, biodiversity and the environment. • Ensure watershed protection and rehabilitation.
Water	<p>SEA DEFENCES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that the assets, productivity and livelihood of those Guyanese who inhabit the coastal belt are protected from the ravages of the Atlantic Ocean. <p>DRAIN AND IRRIGATION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To contribute to the national goal of equitable and rapid economic growth by facilitating increased agricultural production and other economic activity on the coastland.
Mining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish the foundations for the continuing growth of the sector so that it may contribute to the economic growth of the country, the equitable

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	<p>geographical distribution of economic activity throughout the nation, the diversification of our economy, the penetration of the hinterland and the eradication of poverty particularly in depressed interior areas.</p>
Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To increase its contribution to the economy's overall development through a rapid increase of production and employment in the manufacturing sector. ● To stimulate a judicious degree of diversification. ● To have a wider utilisation of relevant and adaptable modern technology.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To raise the level of literacy and numeracy in the population. ● To improve the population's command of life skills. ● To meet the special education needs of children who are physically or mentally challenged in one way or another. ● To undertake a remedial or recuperative campaign at the level of adult education for all school leavers and other adults who have not attained sufficient levels of literacy. ● To reduce regional inequalities in education. ● To increase the gender sensitivity of the system at all levels with regard to specific issues affecting both males and females. ● Focussing more on scientific and

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	<p>technical education, computer literacy and informatics.</p>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the length of healthy life for all people in Guyana and to reduce health disparities among social groups. • To improve the population's access to health care and the quality of care that is offered while ensuring that the health services are provided cost effectively.
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To focus on an unambiguous strategy of pursuing high quality, up-market eco-tourism in controlled numbers that do not exceed scientifically determined carrying capacities of interior sites.
Urban Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make Georgetown and other cities more habitable places and meeting the citizens' requirements for improved access to basic services and amenities. • To improve, upgrade and sustain urban infrastructure. • To improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of municipal management services. • To zone Georgetown in a way that protects residents from noxious activities and also protects its priceless architectural heritage.
Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the efficiency with which land resources are utilised in production. • To provide increase access to land on

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	<p>the part of landless rural and urban families and farming families with limited acreages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To rationalise the land selection process and committees, in order to ensure that applications are reviewed objectively and acted upon expeditiously. • To clarify national land policy. • To develop new lands that have the potential for sustaining economic activities. • To make more effective use of Guyana's State land resources by putting in place a proper lease management system with better documentation and an effective system for collecting lease rentals.
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To expand the supply of housing more rapidly. • To make housing as affordable as possible. • To provide improved access to housing for poor families.
Amerindians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the socio-economic conditions of the Amerindians of Guyana • To empower Amerindians to formulate and implement policies, plans and strategies for the development of their own communities. • To enable Amerindians to participate in all the mainstream activities of Guyanese society, without adversely affecting the enhancement of their

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	<p>communities and the preservation of their culture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure the rights of Amerindians, particularly those relating to land ownership and land natural resources development are recognised and honoured.
Gender Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To achieve sectoral growth and development based on equity for women. • To bring gender considerations into the mainstream of development policy and promote a pattern of development based on gender sensitive policies that are designed, implemented and monitored with women's full and equal participation. • To improve our understanding and increase our awareness of the situation of women and develop sensitivity towards gender issues not only within government but within society as a whole.
The Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enable Guyanese to create lives that are at least sufficient and liberating in economic, social, cultural and spiritual terms.
Labour and Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce unemployment and underemployment, and ultimately poverty, by providing greater avenues for employment, greater labour flexibility and mobility and by enhancing the productivity of both labour and capital. • To encourage the development of

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	<p>labour-intensive industries and modes of production in the short-term and to increase productivity in the medium to long term.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the skills, education and productivity of the labour force through improved technical and vocational education and an ongoing, structured and relevant on the job training programme. • To define clearly the role, rights and responsibilities of trade unions, employers and Government and to legitimise the rights of collective bargaining.
The Private Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have the private sector become the engine of growth of the economy by increasing and diversifying production, by increasing competitiveness, by concentrating on the export sector thereby reducing the incidences of poverty and unemployment and raising the standard of living of the citizens of Guyana.
Poverty Eradication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that every individual or family in Guyana is able to afford or provide themselves with the basic necessities of life. • Provide effective relief from the immediate deprivation suffered by the poor in respect of basic necessities such as nutrition, health care, schooling, housing and potable water so that they may be freed from intensive concern in these areas be

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	able to devote their energies more fully to activities that improve their lives economically, socially, politically and culturally.

Source: NDS

These projected achievements are significant for Nation Building.