

CHAPTER 1

ORIGINS AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 In most countries, development plans and strategies are prepared by national governments. Although in some cases certain sections of the population are consulted during various stages of the preparation of such documents, in very few instances, if any, are representatives of civil society actually involved in the identification of the objectives of national development, in the formulation of policies and strategies to attain the identified goals and, perhaps most important, in the management of the entire process.

1.2 By civil society is meant individuals and groups, organised or unorganised, who interact in the social, political and economic spheres of a country. Neither governments nor political parties are included in this definition of civil society although many of the members of civil society almost inevitably belong to or support either the government or the political opposition.

1.3 In 1993, Dr Cheddi Jagan, the then President of Guyana, approached the Carter Center seeking help in the formulation of a National Development Strategy (NDS). The Carter Center agreed to provide both financial and technical assistance in the preparation of a first draft, which was published in 1996.

1.4 Although many Guyanese experts contributed to the preparation of the series of documents which comprised the Strategy, the management of that project was not placed in the hands of Guyana's civil society. Moreover, a number of well-qualified persons did not have the opportunity to participate. In addition, the major opposition party objected to it being put forward as a national strategy mainly on the ground that it would be used by the People's Progressive Party, the political party in Government, as its manifesto for the elections which were due in the following year.

1.5 The first draft was therefore never brought to Parliament. It soon became apparent, however, that a policy framework document, such as the NDS, would provide a useful guide for the future development of Guyana. It was also evident that the 1996 Strategy contained so much useful information and so many useful analyses that it would be a pity to discard it in its entirety. However, it was rapidly becoming out-of-date because the dynamics of the economy since its formulation had altered somewhat. Furthermore, it seemed more than likely that a mere revision would be met by the same objections that were made to the methods of preparing, and to the perceived political objective of, the original document.

1.6 Accordingly, the Carter Center, after consulting the then Minister of Finance, Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, approached a number of members of Guyanese civil society and discussed with them their possible participation in the formulation of a second and final draft of the National Development Strategy. It was pointed out to these citizens of Guyana that they would be in full control of the process, and that their proposed strategy, once formulated, would not be censored in any way. A very high proportion of those who were contacted agreed to serve and, in September 1998, a broadly representative national civil committee, now known as the National Development Strategy Committee (NDSC), was assembled.

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1.7 The arrangement between the Minister and the NDSC is that the report, once completed, will be submitted to him. It will then be discussed in Cabinet and laid, unaltered, in the National Assembly. There, the Government, as well as opposition parties, would be free to express their views on the Strategy.

1.8 At its first two meetings, which were the only ones attended by the Minister of Finance, the NDSC elected five co-chairpersons whose task it was to co-ordinate and manage the process. Before formally taking up their positions the co-chairpersons, either together or in groups, met the leaders of all the parliamentary political parties and apprised them of the intention to re-write the NDS, the broad composition of the NDSC, and the procedures which would be followed in formulating the Strategy. The co-chairpersons, in addition to chairing all meetings of the NDSC, where draft chapters were considered in detail, met among themselves each week. They also kept the Minister of Finance informed of the progress that was being made in the Strategy's preparation.

1.9 Immediately after the convening of the NDSC, sectoral committees were selected to undertake the work of developing revised drafts of all the existing chapters, and of preparing new drafts for chapters on Governance and the Guyanese Family, which were not included in the original NDS. Every race, every religion, every political party, every economic sector, and every ideological persuasion was represented on the NDSC, and/or the sectoral committees. It must again be stressed that these sectoral committees were not merely engaged in updating the document published in 1996. Their rewriting of the chapters entailed, in many cases, changes in philosophy, substance and thrust. Put in another way, the entire strategy has often been changed and entirely new sectoral versions have been put forward in some instances. Change was not made for change's sake, however. Indeed, wherever it was realised that the early drafts still met the requirements of Guyana's future development, they were substantially retained.

1.10 This National Development Strategy is essentially an exercise in summary plagiarism. In addition to drawing upon the expertise of members of its sectoral and central committees, it relies very heavily on the reports of visiting consultants, studies undertaken by the Government itself, assessments of the economy by the Bretton Woods institutions and other members of the United Nations system, reports of donor countries and non-governmental organisations, and the manifestoes of the major political parties. Most important, were the inputs of ordinary Guyanese citizens throughout the length and breadth of the country. Their views were solicited through questionnaires, and through consultations, particularly in regard to the preparation of the first draft of the National Development Strategy.

1.11 Each new sectoral draft, on its completion, was discussed at joint meetings of the National Development Strategy Committee and the relevant sectoral committee. A final version which took into account the decisions made at the joint meetings was then prepared. These sectoral chapters are published in their entirety as separate documents, as separate appendages to this report. However, the individual sectoral strategies were distilled into the succinct coherent national development framework which is presented here.

1.12 The new chapters on Governance, the Guyanese Family and Information Technology are perhaps illustrative of the all-embracing approach which the NDSC has taken with regard to Guyana's socio-economic development. The Committee is convinced that there can be little or no economic progress in Guyana if there is not good governance. Accordingly, it has made prescriptions in respect of, *inter alia*, civil rights, the rule of law, the independence

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of the judiciary, public administration (including the Public Service, and systems to ensure accountability and transparency), and the delegation of authority from the Centre to the regions and villages. The chapter on the Guyanese Family emphasises the crucial importance that is attached by the Committee to the enhancement of human values in our society, and to the vital role which should be played by the family in this area. Particular attention is paid in this new chapter to the plights that are currently being experienced by our young and elderly persons, and strategies are put forward towards the alleviation of the problems which they face. The other new chapter emphasises the necessity of utilising the recent advances in Information Technology in modernising Guyana. It stresses the need for their application to all aspects of the country's development in order to enhance its knowledge base and to improve its efficiency.

1.13 The importance of gender and environmental issues pervades the document.

1.14 It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the NDS is not an economic development plan in the conventional sense of the term. For example, it does not attempt to assess the total amount of capital that would be required to finance the country's development during the first decade of the twenty-first century, and although it provides forecasts on the rates of economic growth that would occur if all or some of the strategies that are put forward in the documents are implemented, these must be considered as being merely indicative. It is hoped that the strategy, if accepted, would be converted into programmes and projects, which would then be costed, some for financing by the public sector and others by private enterprise. The costed public sector projects would then provide the basis for annual budgetary requirements and allocations.

1.15 This National Development Strategy is put forward by Guyanese civil society both as a compass and as a framework for realising our potential and for releasing our society and economy from the shackles which now so decisively restrain us. It seeks to define our most urgent priorities and, in every area, clearly lays down concrete policy reforms and actions. It is the product of many of us: Guyanese of all races and of diverse professions. To implement it and to realise the dream it embodies would require the collaboration of the entire nation.

1.16 What has happened in Guyana, in regard to the formulation of the National Development Strategy, has been a rare, if not unique, occurrence. Indeed, it is perhaps the first truly inclusive and participatory development exercise ever to be undertaken in our country. It is the hope of all the members of both the National Development Strategy Committee and the Sectoral Committees that this Policy Framework Document, once debated, and hopefully approved in Parliament, with whatever changes that body may wish to make, would provide the basis for the future development of our country in the years to come.