

# THE BROAD POLICY FRAMEWORK OF OUR INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

This integrated development strategy was derived from the various position papers and policy documents including the National Integrated Development Strategy (NIDS) during the early stages of its development. Presented here is what is determined to be the core of the development strategy of the Government of the British Virgin Islands. This policy framework contains the basic principles, goals and policies and highlights two overriding goals of greater participation of the people and sustainable development. The objectives, policies and programmes mostly originate from the background/sector studies, issues and strategies workshops of the National Integrated Development Strategy and the current short to medium terms planning documents such as the National Budgets, the Speeches from the Throne and selected sector plans. The policies here are general and their specific may be found in other detailed documents

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## CONTENTS

### Introduction

### Benefits

### Mandates

### Principles

### Objectives

### Policies/programmes

1. Economy
2. Environment
3. Infrastructure
4. Government
5. Human Resources Development
6. Spatial Development
7. Law and Order
8. Social Welfare and Social Welfare

### Application

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## INTRODUCTION

The principles, goals and policy objectives contained in this policy document are consistent with those of the National Integrated Development Strategy (NIDS). Among other overarching objectives, the contents of these policy statements seek to promote greater public participation and lead to the implementation of effective measures to achieve better standards of living and to improve the quality of life. By deepening and widening public participation in decisions and policies development in respect of the

management of our country, the people can meaningfully contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Introduction of meaningful consultative and participative processes in formulation of policies and decision-making are at the centre of our overall strategy of people centered development. An overall development strategy centred around the participation of people is one which in our context ignites the further institutionalisation of democracy. The term “civil society” includes all actors that are not governmental, including the for-profit private sector and individuals. The term “public participation” is used in its traditional sense and includes all interaction between government and civil society to solve shared problems. It also includes the process by which government and civil society hold dialogue, establish partnerships, share information, and otherwise interact to design, implement, and evaluate development policies, projects, and programmes. The process requires the involvement and commitment of all interested parties, including the poor and traditionally marginalized groups, immigrants and disadvantaged groups.

This document is intended to encourage the responsible participation of civil society, the strengthening of the capacity of government institutions at all levels to solicit, receive, and integrate public input, and the expansion of opportunities for government and civil society to interact as the main operation strategy in the development of National Integrated Development Strategy. It identifies common principles, presents a set of objectives, and identifies programmes for achieving public participation and our national development main goal of improving the quality of life.

The British Virgin Islands population with its international character and deep passion for the preservation of environment and desire to “be different” is able to contribute meaningfully to the decision making process. The policy objectives contained in this policy statement cover the economy, the infrastructure, the environment, human resources development, government, law and order, social security and social welfare and spatial development.

## **BENEFITS**

It is increasingly recognized that any development effort requires the active involvement of an informed civil society to be truly sustainable. Involvement through public participation in the decision-making process introduces a broader range of ideas, experience, and expertise and encourages the development of alternative solutions. It enhances the knowledge of traditional decision-makers by opening development issues to the scrutiny of non-traditional partners.

Integrated development is expected to result in better balanced development and in so doing generate economic opportunity for all groups and regions of the country. This introduction better of equity in the economic opportunity minimizes the disparities in the distribution of benefits and contributes to the stability of society.

Additionally, reaching consensus at various stages of the decision-making process reduces the potential for serious conflict and increases the likelihood of improved and lasting solutions. Finally, integrated development with public participation provides lasting opportunities for cooperation and coordination between government and civil society, building trust between the participants and leading to the creation of long-term collaborative relationships. All this is particularly true in dealing with issues related to the integrated development, since it includes people from all segments of society and can bring them together to work toward common goals.

## **MANDATES**

Additionally, in recent years, the governments of the British Virgin Islands have advanced these commitments by developing and implementing national mechanisms to strengthen democratic institutions and achieve sustainable development through increased public participation. The commitments upon which these advances are based are the following:

- On September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1998 the Governments of the United Kingdom and the British Virgin Islands signed a Memorandum of Co-operation and Partnership under which the latter undertook “to mobilize and deliver resources to ensure the health, prosperity, productivity, cohesiveness and resilience of the people of the British Virgin in a responsible and integrated manner.” This document sets out the principal aims and objectives of policy over the next three years (1999-2001) in key areas together with appropriate targets and performance measurement criteria.
- In July 1998 the Government of the British Virgin Islands prepared a Medium Term Economic Strategy, (MTES) 1999-2001 to provide an overview of its economic strategy. The Medium Term Economic Strategy, (MTES) made it possible to integrate the strategic objectives and aims into the National Integrated Development Strategy (NIDS) with operational planning and budgeting. Among other objectives, the Medium Term Economic Strategy, (MTES) concentrates on activities to sustain economic growth, promoting and supporting private sector development, improving the performance of the public sector, environmental sustainability and maintaining social welfare.
- The Ruling Party (Virgin Islands Party) Manifesto 1999 focuses on continued building of confidence and stability around tourism and financial services. The mandates given in this document includes the enhancement of social services, law and order and a better balance in development especially with our sister islands. Environmental management, land development management and the affairs of marginalized groups are featured in the manifesto.

- In the 1994 National Report on Population and Development the Government of the BVI committed to the explicit inclusion population policies and strategies into national development policies. The Government committed to integrate population concerns into strategies, policies and programmes of sustainable development with particular attention to the needs of the poor and vulnerable groups.
- Government policy concerning environmental management was comprehensively formalized in the National Report for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development UNCED. The policy elaborated that “the overall goal is to use, manage, conserve and enhance the natural resources of the British Virgin Islands within the limited of their carrying capacity.” This policy established development activities within the framework of a sound conservation policy.
- At the 1997 First Caribbean Ministerial Meeting on the Implementation of the Small Island Development States (SIDS) Plan of Action, ministers, including from the British Virgin Islands, re-affirmed the principles and commitments to sustainable development embodied in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21, the Barbados Declaration and the Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the Bolivia Summit.
- In 1996 the BVI Government committed to the concept of focusing national development policies on the core issues of the World Social Summit (WSS) in an integrated manner. The endorsement committed Government to the development of policies to enhance social integration, the reduction of poverty and the expansion of productive employment in a simultaneous manner.
- During the period 1995-1999 National Budgets and Speeches from the Throne enunciated policies and strategies of the Government of the British Virgin Islands focusing on building the economy, improving environmental management, expanding social services, enhancing the delivery of government services and improving the communities of the country all in an effort to improve the standards and conditions of living for the people of the British Virgin Islands.
- The 1996 the Government commitment to a process of public participation and consultation for the formulation of a National Integrated Development Strategy (NIDS) to guide the long term visioning process and development integrated strategies aim at ensuring Sustainable Development.

The commitments above-stated charts the progress toward the development of a broad policy framework for the British Virgin Islands placing the processes of community consultation and widespread participation of the people in development decision-making as the fundamental components in our drive to Sustainable Development.

## **PRINCIPLES**

From these overarching commitments and our practicing of Good Government the below listed principles can be identified throughout.

1. *Inclusiveness* Full participation by all those affected by development issues is essential to achieve development solutions that are equitable, lasting, and therefore sustainable. Special efforts must be made to include women, indigenous people, youth, and other traditionally marginalized groups, including disadvantaged persons, as well as to fully engage the non-profit sector.
2. *Comprehensiveness*: Inclusive and continuous participation throughout the process of design, implementation, and evaluation of projects, policies, or programs inspires new ideas and expertise, legitimises decisions, and enriches outcomes. A decision-making process that is sufficiently flexible to include inputs at all phases can benefit from adjustments wherever they are needed to respond to new information or circumstances.
3. *Accountability*: High trust and confidence are placed in politicians and public officials of the British Virgin Islands government in the course of their stewardship of the resources of the people. To confirm and reaffirm that trust and confidence from time-to-time the people expect to receive audited reports of the performance of the public management functions and given sufficient opportunity to review report and question the wisdom of those decisions.
4. *Proactivity*: In our democracy people expect the Government to manage their rights, privileges and opportunities in such a way which permits them to reach their full potential and be a unmistakeable part of the decision making process. A proactive Government guarantees those rights, obligates itself to ensuring the availability of those privileges and commits to the provision of those opportunities for improving the standards and conditions of living.

5. *Transparency:* Harmonious and lasting relationships between the Government and the governed requires accountability as well as transparency. The presence of transparency on the part of both the governed and the government contributes to more meaningful participation in the decision-making process while ensuring that all motivations and objectives are apparent and that vital information to the decision is given and it is reliable.
6. *Access:* The involvement of civil society in development decisions is essential for lasting solutions. In order to participate effectively, citizens must have access to information, access to the political process, and access to the justice system.
7. *Equitable:* One of the major issues which turns out to be an overriding concept of sustainable development is inter-generational equity. Policies and strategies of today must not compromise the ability of the next generation to making a living from the endowment of natural resources we have today.

The above-described principles are at the core of sustained, balanced equitable development of the British Virgin Islands during the next decade.

## **OBJECTIVES**

Through the full and continuous application of these principles, the British Virgin Islands people will have a better chance of realizing the benefits of a sustainable development which assists them in reaching their full potential and improving the conditions of their lives.

- a) Reducing of economic, social, political and physical vulnerability to permit our economy to expand and development given that it is prepared, mitigative measures are in place and it could bounce back in the event of disasters.
- b) Ensuring balanced development on a regional and sectoral basis is to result in a better horizontal and vertical distribution of the benefits of national development.
- c) Improving environment management to ensure sustainability of key economic activities such as tourism and food production leaving our future generation ability to support themselves in tact.
- d) Improving the physical infrastructure is a prerequisite to further expansion of our economy and improved management of our environment.
- e) Enhancing human resources development is imperative for the development of our economy, reduction of imported labour and improving the standards and conditions of life.

- f) Improving social cohesion is essential to promote social capital development, to provide a safe, ordered living environment, to better manage the population and to enhance social integration.
- g) Attaining global competitiveness is a most critical condition for earning a living from international trade in such globally competitive services such as tourism and financial services.
- h) Improving governance requires us to promote and facilitate participation and deliberation in order to deepen democracy as our political system and way of life.
- i) Preserving our cultural heritage promotes the awareness of our culture and identifies us as a Caribbean people giving us the opportunity to enjoy the culture of our immigrants.
- j) Ensuring BVI Islanders a greater stake in the society contributes to meeting their hopes and aspirations while ensuring the continuation of our society and way of life as a unique people.
- k) Promoting global connectiveness to facilitate continuation of our trade in international services and enhancing our communications technology links with the rest of the world are key objectives to building a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

Undertaking efforts to achieve these objectives in the indicated areas of focus should lead to the accrual of benefits identified earlier and will ultimately improve the conditions of and standard of living for all British Virgin Islanders in a sustainable way.

## **POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES**

The following key areas are targeted for developing broad policies and programmes for sustainable development and integrated development planning to fulfil our national goal of improving the conditions and standards of life. The policies described below incorporate our principles and are designed to fulfil the objectives already identified.

### **1. The Economy**

Policy/Programme: *Build a strong and diversified economy capable of meeting the needs and aspirations of the people for the 21<sup>st</sup> century taking into consideration our existing leading sectors and their comparative advantages.*

*In the context of the British Virgin Islands a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy means one that is diversified into sector other than tourism and financial services. Sectors such as food production, professional services, electronic commerce and manufacturing holds some potential in this regard. A 21<sup>st</sup> century economy must be flexible, responsive and adaptive to take advantage of windows of opportunity presented as we insert our country into the global economy.*

## **2. The Environment**

Policy/Programme: *Create an integrated framework of government agencies, private sector organizations, non-governmental organizations and community based groups working under the direction of a suitable legal framework to manage the use of our environment through a network of facilities.*

Managing an environment as delicate and much used as ours requires a full range of scientific, financial, economic, social and political skills on a daily basis. The environment is our future and all of us must play our roles. Government should be the co-ordinator but the private sector and NGO's have a responsibility so the response is to create for which permits the exchange of ideas.

## **3. Infrastructure**

Policy/Programme: *Build a world class infrastructure comprising transport facilities, telecommunications, water, sewerage, electricity and drainage system suitable and to accommodating private initiative.*

Tourism housing and food production places high and extensive demands on infrastructure.

Infrastructure supportive of private development is a prerequisite to the further development of our economy. Our Tourism and transport sectors require substantial improvement to allow them to advance to the next level. Government, by convention and necessity, has accepted the responsibility for investment in infrastructure such as roads, bridges, ports, electricity and water.

## **4. Government**

*Policy/Programme: Build a better government for the people – a government which upholds the principles of good government, increases consultation and participation and uses the resources of the people in the most efficient way to provide for their desires. Reform and develop government services to improve the delivery of the full range of services.*

A 21<sup>st</sup> century government upholds the principles of good governance and democracy in our context while obtaining value for money in the delivery of services. Government must lead in inserting our economy into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and providing opportunities for all BVI Islanders.

## **5. Human Resources Development**

*Policy/Programme: Integrate the network of service providers in health, education and welfare around the concept of human resources development to ensure that the human resources component of development is available. Network human resources services to ensure the full development of people's potential and their contribution to development to resolve related issues.*

The British Virgin Islands have reached a stage of development where human resources have become the key component in transitioning us into the knowledge economy, assisting in the diversification of our economy into other sectors and resolving the chronic labour shortages of both skilled and unskilled workers. Human resources development has other components such as health and welfare services which are just as important to ensuring happiness, health and supportive services in order to be productive.

## **6. Spatial Development**

*Policy/Programme: Create safe, well-laid out and serviced communities built around the needs of people. Our communities must be built with access to the range of amenities, utilities, emergency services, sports, recreation and entertainment services and facilities.*

Spatial development is one of the most critical aspects in development planning as it impacts on the level of community disaster management, emergency services response, beautification and resilience. Physical development in total adds to the desirability, livability and security of communities.

## **7. Law and Order**

*Policy/Programme: Upgrade and expand law and order services to world class level to ensure that the international services we provide meet the expectations and standards. Build up our police and legal services to meet the challenges given by international crime while ensuring the safety and security of our citizens and visitors using the advances in science and technology in the most modern facilities.*

The preservation of law and order is a prime and inescapable responsibility of government in most civil societies. Given that the BVI economy is built on the provision of international services in tourism and finance, the latter being the most regulated in the developed countries, law and order must be a priority to maintain stability and confidence in the products of our destination.

## **8. Social Welfare and Social Security**

*Policy/Programme: Upgrade and improve the social welfare and security systems to guarantee the delivery of services and benefits to the qualified and needy as a cluster of activities supportive of the human resources development initiatives.*

Unfortunately, development never brings everyone along at the same pace and the responsibility and willingness to assist the affected speaks to the goodness of the society. Social welfare is an undeniable function of the State and the commitment in this regard is well established in the British Virgin Islands.

## **APPLICATION**

The implementation of these programmes requires new and comprehensive measures together with cross-agency mechanisms to ensure the total integrated effort. If these policies/programmes are to be successfully implemented, the existing planning and implementation network, the legal and regulatory structures, the private sector, the non-governmental organizations community, the line ministries and the individuals of our communities must all accept the integrated approach at the vertical and horizontal levels.

The political leadership and the Executive Authority must play a prominent role in the co-ordination of this effort. Without the approval and continuous support of the Executive Management and Political Leadership, this policy framework has little chance of implementation. Lastly, the support of the British Virgin Islands communities is absolutely essential to this policy framework.

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