

# Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy

In the previous article, we discussed the global and local frameworks for addressing climate change. This week we will discuss Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) - one of the biggest steps taken in Guyana to address climate change and promote national development.

Developed countries have historically pursued a development pathway that involved energy-intensive industrialisation with heavy reliance on fossil fuels, and conversion of forests and other ecosystems to make way for agriculture, industry and human settlements. These activities injected high levels of greenhouse gases (GHGs) into the atmosphere and contributed greatly to climate change.

Within recent years, many countries around the world have begun to recognise the important role of low carbon development as a means by which they can reduce dependence on fossil fuels and manage forests and other ecosystems sustainably, while still pursuing economic growth and development.

Guyana is one such country and has placed great emphasis on balancing economic development and environmental protection. Guyana is highly endowed with vast forests resources which cover approximately 85% of the country or approximately 18 million hectares. The country has maintained a low deforestation rate over the years attributed to the sustainable nature of forestry operations.

By opting to maintain its low rates of deforestation, Guyana has provided a great service to the world by helping to reduce the high levels of carbon-dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emitted into the atmosphere - thereby reducing the threat of climate change. Tropical deforestation contributes to approximately 17% of global GHG emissions and addressing this issue has now become one of the global priorities to combat climate change.



The Government of Guyana has been exploring avenues by which it can maintain its forests to help in the global fight against climate change while at the same time receive financial resources for doing so. A study was subsequently conducted that estimated the Economic Value to the Nation (EVN) of Guyana's forests, to be approximately US\$580 million per annum. This value is based on optimising the use of the forests for logging, mining and other extractive activities. Based on the findings and national and international developments, Guyana proposed to pursue a new development pathway which balances economic development and sustainability and in the process transition towards a low carbon economy. This vision was outlined in its Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) launched in 2009.

The LCDS is a national strategy which provides the over-arching framework for achieving Guyana's long-term developmental goals, using nationally appropriate green growth strategies to achieve this transition. It was developed through a national consultation exercise during which vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples, forest users and dependent communities, women and youth were engaged in the development of the strategy. A Multi-Stakeholder Steering Committee (MSSC) was established to oversee and guide the implementation of the LCDS.

The Strategy was revised in May 2010 after comments and feedback from extensive outreach sessions with a wide cross-section of stakeholder groups and communities were incorporated in the document. A further update to the LCDS was done in March, 2013.

### **The LCDS has three main components**

#### **Investment in Low Carbon Economic Infrastructure**



This includes: the development of hydropower systems to reduce reliance on petroleum based fuels; the upgrading of sea defences to protect against current and future impacts of sea level rise; improved roads and drainage and irrigation to unused, non-forested lands; and improved hi-tech telecommunications facilities to facilitate the development of low carbon businesses such as call centres.

#### **Investment and Employment in Low Carbon Economic Sectors**



This will target investment in commercial production of fruits and vegetables, particularly in areas such as the intermediate savannahs, aquaculture and the export of fresh and frozen seafood; sustainable forestry utilising the high internationally accepted standards of sustainable yield harvesting; and wood processing to produce high value products.

#### **Investment in Communities and Human Capital**



This will ensure that indigenous and other hinterland communities, as well as other citizens including the urban poor, will have expanded access to improved social services such as health, education/vocational training, low carbon electricity, clean water, and employment that does not threaten the sustainability of the forest resources.

One of the key ways by which Guyana has been supporting the implementation of the LCDS is through its partnerships with other countries. Funds earned from climate services that the forests provide to the world are invested to create a low deforestation, low carbon, climate resilient economy.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2009 Guyana and Norway signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), in which Norway committed to providing Guyana up to US\$250M by 2015 for avoided deforestation. Under the MOU, contributions from Norway are channeled towards supporting priority projects identified in the LCDS. To date, Guyana has earned three payments from Norway totalling US\$115M. This agreement is the first international commitment of financial support to the LCDS.

Guyana has made significant progress to date in the implementation of the LCDS. In 2009, eight priority projects were identified in the LCDS to serve as pilot projects and once implemented; the model and lessons learnt will be amplified to other areas within that specific sector. Implementation of these projects commenced along with a number of new projects as identified in the LCDS Update.

Guyana's LCDS can be seen as an innovative approach to combating climate change while simultaneously promoting economic growth and development. It is a workable model that could be adopted by many developing countries as they phase into a low carbon path of development.

Next week we will continue to discuss the LCDS and the major projects that are being implemented.

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