



# *National Homecoming Framework for Action 2009*



**"As one people in many lands,  
we shape our nation with many hands"**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

St. Vincent and the Grenadines, like all other developing countries, have experienced over the years a voluntary migration of talented Vincentians. Most are located in developed countries such as the United States, The United Kingdom and Canada. Others reside around the Caribbean. Vincentians living in another country serve as a potential link between both countries, which can eventually become a valuable resource for SVG.

For a minority, St. Vincent and the Grenadines is just a place they or their parents were born. They have no emotional ties and St. Vincent and the Grenadines has become a place where some distant relatives live. For many more, St. Vincent and the Grenadines will always be home. They have contributed in numerous ways, whether directly to family and friends through remittances or organizations mainly through health and education.

Vincentians abroad have long awaited an avenue to make recommendations and suggestions that will help to guide the process of development of their country. They therefore should be invited to take a fresh look at ways in which knowledge, skills, financial resources, entrepreneurial ability and connections can be mobilized to feed into development programmes of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This would assist in creating new opportunities for employment, income generation and economic security for those in the Diaspora, while at the same time giving impetus for sustainability in the development initiatives for the state and closer relations.

This document seeks to accommodate such and let Vincentians in the Diaspora know they are being listened to. This will serve as an avenue to communicate ideas which can enhance the dialogue and encourage the sharing of time, talents and resources.

## CONTEXT

To commemorate and celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence, efforts have been made to enhance relationships between the Vincentian Diaspora and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG), through Vincy Homecoming 2009. In this context, Vincentians at home and abroad have met October 21-23, 2009, at the National Library Complex, Kingstown, SVG, to chart the course for increasing levels of cooperation and collaboration between Vincentians in the Diaspora and SVG.

This St. Vincent and the Grenadines Diaspora Framework for Action is necessitated by decades of experiences of Vincentians migrating to various parts of the world including Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia and the rest of the Caribbean. During this time, Vincentians in the Diaspora have significantly contributed to St. Vincent and the Grenadines by providing economic, financial, and positive social remittances. Also, existing in the Vincentian Diaspora Communities are major resource structures which include community organisations, government offices, businesses, skilled human resources, and special events. In this context of decades of development, the Vincentian Diaspora is on the verge of lifting itself to a higher level of commitment to nation building. Urgently needed is a framework for a plan of action that will seek to build on achievements and correct past failures and inaction.

Furthermore, Vincentians at home and abroad have been making great strides for many decades, and they have embarked on many initiatives during the Homecoming process. They have also formulated recommendations to facilitate the progress of SVG.

The St. Vincent and the Grenadines Diaspora Framework for Action provides recommendations for action on behalf of Vincentians living in the Diaspora and those in SVG. It contains proposals that will give concrete meaning to the Vincy Homecoming 2009 theme: “As one people in many lands we shape our nation with many hands.”

The **St. Vincent and the Grenadines Diaspora Framework for Action** focuses on three (3) main areas: Social Development, Economic and Business Development, and Governance and Political Development. It also contains the means and ways to implement and follow-up recommendations found therein. It is an integrated program most Vincentians could rally around. It is an expression of the knowledge and wisdom gained from many decades of development throughout the Vincentian Diaspora and in SVG.

## **Mission Statement**

Vincy Homecoming is a collaborative effort endeavoring to unite, engage and enrich Vincentians at home and abroad, and to encourage contributions to the economic and business, social, and political and governance development of SVG.

## **Goal**

To provide a Framework that would galvanize the efforts of the Vincentian Diaspora and SVG in order to address issues and initiatives pertinent to the development of SVG.

## **Objectives**

1. To identify special projects that will lend themselves to input from Vincentians at home and in the Diaspora.
2. To provide a mechanism to facilitate the free flow of information and resources among Vincentians at home and abroad.

## **I. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **A. Human Resources:**

- The Government and the Diaspora should identify and build a database of existing organisations, projects and skilled professionals in the Vincentian Diaspora and SVG;
- The Government of SVG in collaboration with community organisations in SVG should prepare a data-base on the developmental needs and projects in order to begin a dialogue on how the Diaspora could effectively meet these needs;
- The government of SVG and the Diaspora should provide information and counseling for Vincentians migrating to the Diaspora on how best to become integrated into their respective host countries. There is a need to teach those who migrate “the ropes”- what legal rights they have;
- Organize contingents of Vincentian professionals to visit St. Vincent and the Grenadines to conduct activities of a developmental nature;
- Honor Vincentians in the Diaspora who have been involved in promoting the interests and heritage of SVG and contributing significantly to their adopted countries;
- Coordinate efforts to convene a summit to address: (i) Education (ii) Health and (iii) Civic and Economic strengthening, or coordinate three (3) separate summits addressing each topic;
- The St. Vincent Diaspora in all locations is in a position to share ideas with the government of SVG with regards to technical expertise in various sectors such as health care and education;

- All efforts must be made to reduced brain drain from SVG and turn it into brain gain.

### **Local Response on Human Resources:**

- There needs to be a holistic approach to community development, human capacity building and attaining the right attitudes;
- There is a general lack of communication between communities. There needs to be a change in mind-set, a change in social prejudice and we need to put forward a positive image of our beloved country.

### **B. Cultural Arts:**

- Create businesses and organisations in the Diaspora to promote local Vincy music and other cultural arts productions;
- The Government should become more involved in aggressively marketing Vincy Mas in the Diaspora;
- The Government should promote, in the Diaspora, the cultural works of Vincentians; and
- Encourage more cultural exchanges between schools in SVG and the Diaspora.

### **Local Response on Cultural Arts:**

- A more inclusive cultural participation needs to be encouraged, and all efforts must be made to develop a transferable cultural product;
- There needs to be exchanges in every facet of Vincentian life between the Diaspora and locals and the sharing of best practices;
- The Homecoming programme should be held bi-annually after 2009 with emphasis on a particular season each year (Carnival – Christmas- whaling- sports-easterval-) this will give the youth a chance to have something to look forward to; and
- There needs to be more understanding and appreciation of our cultural heritage to enable us to build national pride.

### **Local Recommendations on Education:**

- There is need for education development from as early as pre-school and this includes both formal and informal broad based training which can assist in the process of unifying/enlightening and for the comprehensive development of the nation;
- Formal and informal training should be broad based in all areas of endeavor;

- Twining schools in the Diaspora and SVG; and
- Establishment of scholarship programmes in conjunction with the Diaspora aimed at assisting worthy locals.

### **C. Sports:**

- Create and encourage dialogue between the relevant sporting authorities, Vincentian sports enthusiasts in the United States of America, and SVG with the aim to develop productive sports activities which will be beneficial to Vincentians at home and abroad;
- Develop a sports exchange program for Vincentians at home and abroad; and
- Diaspora should explore the creation of a fund to build, repair and sustain playgrounds in SVG.

### **Local Response on Sports:**

- To stimulate and facilitate the development of sports generally throughout SVG including the development, maintenance and management of sport facilities not only for the excellent participation of our nations' youth but also for the recreation of all Vincentians and visitors alike; and
- Development of sporting facilities and athletic skills and performances would be enhanced through collaborative effort with the Diaspora and the Vincentian culture;

### **D. Health:**

- Develop a network amongst Vincentian organisations in the Diaspora to help promote activities towards a healthy lifestyle, and provide more contributions to the health sector in SVG; and
- The Diaspora and the Government of health institutions in SVG should engage in dialogue with a view to developing the service capacity of the health sector in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

### **E. Organisational Development:**

- Vincentians in the Diaspora should be encouraged to create new organisations and/or volunteer for enrollment in established Vincentian organisations in the Diaspora; and
- Organisations in the Diaspora should adopt villages, organisations, projects, programmes or policies in SVG.

### **F. Immigration:**

- Establish a forum in the Diaspora to address issues relating to immigration matters.

The Consulates should take responsibility in developing programmes to obtain information and inform Vincentians in the Diaspora on immigration, other social issues, and relevant trends and policies of their host countries;

- Programmes for returning Vincentian nationals (resettlement) should be strengthened; and
- Form alliances with other Caribbean groups to address immigration issues.

#### **G. Youth:**

- A youth exchange programme between SVG and its Diaspora should be established; and
- Establish an initiative that would help young people to avoid a life of crime.

#### **H. Aging:**

- Diaspora should provide technical expertise to stakeholders in SVG to increase awareness on aging issues by reviewing and analyzing policies and coordinating activities in SVG; and
- Diaspora should identify and work in partnership with community-based organisations that serve SVG seniors toward improving their quality of life by providing resources that promote wellness and healthy aging. Especially needed are more senior citizens centers and wheel chair accessible buses.

#### **Local Response to Aging:**

- Greater efforts should be made to include the elderly in public policy decision making, particularly as it relates to returnees who have vast knowledge and experience and are often willing to give freely if asked.

#### **Media:**

- Regular on air or television programs, geared towards discussing relations between SVG and the Diaspora should be initiated.

#### **Local Recommendations on Community Development:**

- Community empowerment and national development should be based on shared vision, joint trans and inter border operations, and tools for cooperation need to be identified and nurtured;
- Start a network within the communities to foster stronger ties among each other;
- There is a call for the churches to have a strong voice on national issues and aid in bringing about the oneness in the communities;
- It was also recommended that there be more religious activities of a national /interdenominational nature;

- Creativity must be encouraged in highlighting the positives of the communities, motivating persons in the communities, bridging generation gaps, involving businesses in community development and ensuring a wide cross-section of the community is involved in organisations;
- The formation of online communities comprising individuals with a common bond (professional, place of origin, etc.) to facilitate the exchange of ideas aimed at uplifting local communities organisations and institutions;
- Drawing from what the Regional and Integration Diaspora Unit (RIDU) was able to accomplish (i.e. give birth to new, resurrected and strengthened community organisations), it was identified there is a need for an umbrella organisation to assist the community organisations or to strengthen any such existing organisations;
- Local knowledge, network and community identity are important elements for forward continued development in the communities. This can be used to ascertain modalities, and forge new and stronger links with their Diaspora;
- The best village competition should be revived and be called the best kept community for the year; and
- Identification of a local community project should be undertaken jointly by locals and input from members of the Diaspora. Some project ideas are listed below:
  - Assistance in packaging and marketing Black fish in Barrouallie;
  - Building a Sports Complex in Barrouallie to include indoor sports, facilitate cultural programs and teaching cultural programs and hosting the monthly Fish Festival;
  - Fundraising for community projects;
  - Children recreation facilities in East St. George;
  - Capacity building /training; and
  - Additional sporting facilities throughout the country (especially in the Block 2000 area).
- A yearly Forum of community organisations and individuals should be established.

## **II. ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

### **A. Human Resources:**

- Prepare a directory or data-base of Vincentian professionals, businesses and organisations in the Diaspora; and
- There is a fundamental need to review the way business is done with the Diaspora, and use the lessons learned to enhance training of Vincentians for more effective business acumen in international trade.

## **B. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs):**

- Make better use of Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) to enhance business relations between SVG and its Diaspora. ICT must be a central feature in any business development strategy toward the Diaspora.

## **C. Favorable and Conducive Environment:**

- A consultation process must be started between the Diaspora and SVG on how the Diaspora could contribute to business development in SVG;
- Invest SVG, formerly National Investment Promotion Inc. (NIPI), should visit the Diaspora once or twice per year to promote its activities and services;

## **Local Response on Business and Economic Development:**

- Communities can get involve in production of local foods (such as canning fruits) with the Diaspora assisting in marketing;
- There are opportunities to be harnessed in sports tourism through joint co-operation between the Diaspora and local Vincentians;
- Development of more entrepreneurial ventures with the Diaspora in which they can share entrepreneurial experiences and skills;
- There is a need for an organisation/company comprising of professionals who can represent the entrepreneur who does not have resources to seek a loan, prepare business proposal, etc. Financial institutions, in particular the national bank, should look at having a stronger presence in the communities which would help in these ventures;
- Establishing partnership between locals and Diaspora Nationals to facilitate the development of small business enterprises;
- Creating networks to assist local groups in the procurement of resources overseas;
- Financial institutions, in particular the nation's bank, should look at having a stronger presence in the communities;
- The Vincentian in the Diaspora with entrepreneurial skills can bring these skills to SVG and share them with the local entrepreneur;
- Sharing of best practices among local, regional and international businesses; and
- More cooperation among financial institutions in areas where the institutions share the same customer.

### **Marketing Skills/Training in Business:**

- Develop training modules for the service sector;
- Creating entrepreneurship between members of the communities to work together; and
- Creation of sustainable networks in collaboration with the Diaspora and donor agencies.

## **III. GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **A. Policy-making Process in St. Vincent and the Grenadines:**

- Include Vincentians abroad in discussions on all relevant legislations and public policy initiatives, in order to get their views, expertise, advice, and wisdom before laws are adopted;
- A formal structure of engagement with the various Ministries should be created. More information about the future plans of relevant Ministries as well as their current needs is required to facilitate this engagement; and
- Submit this framework to the OECS in the context of sharing of information and for consideration.

### **B. National Diaspora Policy:**

- Call on the Government of SVG to formulate a National Diaspora Policy in partnership with the Diaspora. The timeframe for completing this effort should be within 1 year.

### **C. Political Parties in St. Vincent and the Grenadines:**

- A call for ending political divisiveness and polarisation in SVG; and
- In the quest for national development, all comments and statements that are detrimental to unity and threaten the image of SVG and its development should be condemned.

### **D. Political Attitudes:**

- Efforts must be made to create a favorable image and outlook of Vincentians at home with regard to the participation of Vincentians living abroad in the political processes in SVG; and
- Need for dialogue regarding attitudes and perceptions about the involvement in the development of SVG by Vincentians living in the Diaspora;

### **E. Political Participation in Host Countries or Diaspora Locations:**

- The Government of SVG in consultation with the Diaspora must play a more active role in global discussions, and global policy-making processes, in the field of migration;
- Consulates and Missions must be more forthcoming in disseminating information about issues affecting Vincentians in the Diaspora;
- Ambassadors, High Commissioners, and Consuls' General must be more active in helping Vincentians in the Diaspora to prepare for participating in public policy discussions in the host country as they relate to policies affecting Vincentians in the Diaspora and the developmental needs of SVG; and
- Encourage Vincentians in the Diaspora to become politically active in political parties.

### **F. Returnees**

- It is necessary to acknowledge that Returnees played a major part in the Diaspora before returning home to St Vincent and the Grenadines;
- RIDU should create a mechanism to actively address issues unique to Returnees;
- Returnees should be given the opportunity to participate in the social development of the community; and
- Returnees should have a mechanism to engage in the process.

### **Local Response on Governance and Political Development:**

Vincentians are challenged to see their political participation as more than just voting every five years. We are challenged to:

- Go beyond thinking and seeing everything through party politics because objectivity is extremely important in going forward.
- New Laws and Legislations should allow for the input/discussion of all Vincentians at home and abroad;
- Bring newspaper editors together and conduct monthly forums with experts to discuss serious issues; and
- Enhance local capacity through funding from the Diaspora with the necessary mechanisms for accounting and transparency.

## **IV. IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW UP**

### **A. Timeline:**

- Call on the Government of SVG to formulate a National Diaspora Policy in partnership with the Diaspora. The timeframe for completing this effort should be within 1 year;
- Establish an annual Vincentian Diaspora Day on December 18. This could be done simultaneously with the International Migrants Day, which is celebrated annually throughout the world on December 18. Vincy Homecoming should be held every 3 years in the same week of December 18, beginning 2010.
- Quarterly meetings should be organized between RIDU and the Vincy Homecoming Committees in the Diaspora and at home to monitor the implementation of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Diaspora Framework for Action, starting April 2010.

### **B. Resources:**

- For effective implementation of this Framework for Action, all efforts must be made to explore and secure sources of funding for the social, economic, and governance projects found in this Framework, and institute a project development/grants officer whose office will be located in RIDU and in the Foreign offices (Ambassador or Consulate's office) of SVG.

### **C. Organisational /Institutional Arrangement:**

- RIDU, in partnership with Vincentians in the Diaspora, should spearhead the implementation of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Diaspora Framework for Action;
- RIDU or its successor organization, should be incorporated into parliament;
- A Protocol of communication and working with RIDU should be established;
- Develop, popularize or inform the Diaspora community of internship programmes in which Vincentian students studying in countries with Consulates will work on follow-up recommendations in those offices. This will help significantly to ease the added workload of staff in the consulates as a result of the outcomes of the conferences. At the same time, it will help in providing work experiences to Vincentian students;
- All stakeholders are responsible for ensuring the successful implementation of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Diaspora Framework for Action. Therefore, all partners must at all times display the highest sense of commitment, seriousness, will, and diligence for this process to enhance relations between St. Vincent and the Grenadines and its Diaspora; and

- All efforts must be made to achieve cooperation between the Government, organisations, and individuals in SVG and the Diaspora, in order to make better use of opportunities to address common concerns.

**D. Transitional Matters:**

- A coordinating/consultative committee of relevant stakeholders should be established in SVG to guide the Vincy Homecoming process; and
- RIDU in cooperation with the Diaspora should clearly highlight its roles and responsibilities to the Diaspora and Returnees.

**E. Monitoring & Evaluation:**

- Diaspora conference process should be held every 3 years with a final conference in SVG. This process will review the progress made in implementing this *St. Vincent and the Grenadines Diaspora Framework for Action*; and
- Quarterly meetings should be organized between RIDU and the Vincy Homecoming Committees in the Diaspora and at home to monitor the implementation of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Diaspora Framework for Action, starting April 2010.

**NB.** The following suggestions for inclusion in the document came from the cabinet

1. There should be a structure in the National Insurance Services (NIS) to facilitate Diaspora.
2. There should be contact by Diaspora groups/organisations with the relevant government Ministries through RIDU to prioritise needs.

The document should be submitted the OECS secretariat for information sharing and best practice, this is in light of the OECS Economic Union which should be made official on June 18<sup>th</sup> 2010. There are plans afoot for a Caribbean Diaspora Policy. There is also at present, calls for papers on the Role of the Caribbean Diaspora in CARICOM's Diplomatic, Economic and Political Relations <http://www.uwi.edu/documents/pdfs/Guidelines.pdf>