

Twelve Steps to Sustainable Development in Caribbean States

By [Eric H. Charles](#), (Tuesday, March 11, 2003)

I've been thinking about key paradigm shifts that may help our country and region to survive - even flourish - in this global economy. I've put together twelve steps for your consideration. Please feel free to elaborate, critique or comment...

1. **Implement a regional system of non-paying or minimally subsidized apprenticeships for pre-adolescents and adolescents...**
 - Provide training in vocational skills (carpentry, masonry, livestock rearing, meat production, commercial agriculture, etc.) through attachment to local companies, or through online learning sponsored by private individuals and companies.
 - Provide training in basic IT skills (use of office productivity tools and office-automation software).
 - Create a "Fast Track" program for secondary school and tertiary level students focused on a specific high-demand career. This program will provide advanced training in software development and data services utilizing cutting edge technologies and tools.
2. **Focus on Caribbean history in primary and secondary schools. Highlight our heritage...**
 - Examine our slavery past, our trivialized contribution to western imperialism as a source of free labor, and our role as impetus for western industrial expansion.
 - Explore our rich heritage, unique culture, sought-after culinary variety, healthy lifestyle and diet, etc.
 - Build national awareness and instill national pride.
3. **Encourage sharing of ideas and the development of team spirit...**
 - Strengthen team spirit through Boy Scouts, 4H Club and other peer-to-peer group settings.
 - Seek to uproot and destroy - each individual personally - the pervasive petty envy and jealousy that so stymie our progress as a people.
 - Each one help one; we are our brother's keeper. By helping each other, we become stronger than the sum of our individual strengths.
4. **Think regional'... Always...**
 - For market opportunities, 'think regional'; market regionally.
 - For sourcing of supplies, 'think regional'; purchase from a regional partner company.
 - When outsourcing services, 'think regional'; outsource to a regional partner company.

5. **EVERY island MUST have at least a jet-capable airport or an international airport...**
 - Such facilities will open doors to international trade. If the benefits aren't immediately apparent, the investment will bear fruit eventually.
6. **Pursue relevant training to position us to tap into the hot global job markets without leaving our shores...**
 - Pursue training of both high school and Sixth Form College (tertiary level) students in marketable job training, such as IT, healthcare provision, geriatrics, etc.
 - Take advantage of the state of the art digital telecommunication networks that already exist in most of the Caribbean to provide remote IT services to international clients.
 - Our proximity - three hours from Florida, USA - to the American market, our native English language, high educational standards and our advanced telecommunication infrastructure make it unfathomable to consider that we've not sufficiently tapped into the growing market for US outsourced software development and data services. Admittedly, we may need to upgrade the skill set and sheer numbers of trained nationals to turn this into a real and viable opportunity. The required training is addressed in Step 1 - Part c.
7. **Pursue relevant infrastructural development to allow us to tap into the hot global job markets...**
 - Invest in retirement communities and retreat centers targeted at the aging North American and European population.
 - Our airport facilities and highly educated and trained workforce afford us an opportunity to provide alternative retirement destinations for elderly North Americans and Europeans in managed and rigorously supervised retirement living communities.
8. **Renew our focus on family...**
 - Develop support networks to better deal with family crises
 - Provide services and re-adjust our thinking to help eliminate or reduce single parenthood - a major source of poverty and deprivation throughout our region. Also, absentee fathers contribute to delinquency, truancy and increased rebelliousness among kids. This is an urgent problem!
 - Strengthen the building block of our society.
9. **Replace personal income tax with a V.A.T rated between 5% and 10%...**
 - This will increase everyone's buying power, thus fueling the private sector and job creation.
 - It will also create the perception of increased wealth, and its associated feelings of success, validation and well-being.
 - Everyone will share equitably in the burden of national development.
10. **Reduce the tax burden on local companies...**
 - Provide tax incentives for employment creation and retention, job training and skill development.

- This is particularly important to strengthen the job creation engine that is small business.
 - Additional tax reduction benefits would be realized through increased participation in the proposed apprenticeship programs and support for community development work.
- 11. Begin to remedy - each man, woman and child individually and as a family unit - the moral decay of our society...**
- Social order is a necessary precursor to socio-economic development
 - Promote self-respect and respect for others in our schools and church communities.
 - Let's build a society founded on mutual respect.
- 12. Equip our business people and political leaders to operate within the global marketplace...**
- Determine the impact of the global markets on our region, its commerce, industry, etc.
 - Educate ourselves: understand the global market indices, financial markets, and their impact on international trade.
 - Trade wisely: For instance, confirm international orders when commodity prices are down. Do the basic 'little things'; the results will be increased profitability and growth.

© Eric H. Charles: Re-publication with author's permission only.

[Back to Economic Development](#)