



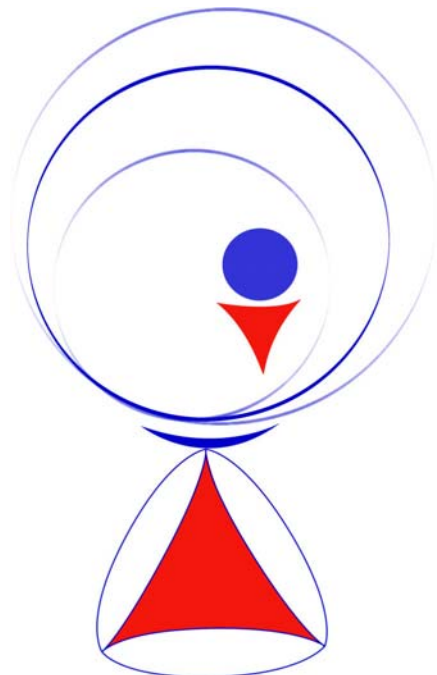
ADDRESS

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE HAZEL MANNING
MINISTER OF EDUCATION

NATIONAL SCHOOLS DIETARY SERVICES LIMITED

LAUNCH OF LOGO

**CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
MACOYA, TRINCITY
October 26 2007**



Today marks a historic day for the relationship between the Ministry of Education and the National Schools Dietary Services Limited as it is the day on which this relationship will be formalized by the execution of a contract.

Cabinet in 2002 approved the establishment of the NSDSL, a limited liability company to replace the Board of Management of the School Nutrition Programme. This Company was subsequently incorporated under the Companies Act 1995 and while the transition in terms of the governance of the School Nutrition Programme was taking place, the provision of meals to the Nation's children continued uninterrupted.

The Ministry of Education has retained the services of the NSDSL from the date of its incorporation as a limited liability company to continue its Programme of supplying meals to students. This service is provided in accordance with the accepted Caribbean's Recommended Daily Allowance and in keeping with students' religious beliefs and other requirements.

The NSDSL is in receipt of public monies to provide their services and the Ministry of Education in complying with the guidelines for Public Procurement. The key tenets of these guidelines are accountability, transparency and value for money, and with these in mind, negotiations with the Company were initiated to develop a contract to govern our relationship.

Again, I must highlight that today is significant as it represents the culmination of extensive negotiations between the Parties as to their respective roles, responsibilities and obligations. Today, the Ministry of Education and the NSDSL will execute the aforementioned contract and we will continue to hold hands in furtherance of a common goal, that being, the provision of nutritious meals to the children of our Nation.

Today is also a significant day in the life of the NSDSL as the Company is unveiling its logo – this is historic because in just three years **the NSDSL is ready to 'brand' itself** not only as a provider of nutritional meals but a leader in the field of school nutrition at home and in the region.

Branding and the development of a company's logo is one of the most important steps that an organisation can take to create a recognisable identity in today's competitive world.

This has been a wonderful moment enhanced by the visual images you have presented and the sounds of the national youth orchestra. NSDSL deserves not only our congratulations but also our hearty applause!!!

The NSDSL was established by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in 2004. By 2006, the company took its first tentative steps to becoming an autonomous body driving programmes and projects that give life to its mission.

The logo that NSDSL unveils today embodies the company's mission to provide services and information that promote healthy choices and lifestyles.

Embedded in the logo design is the concept of nutrition and the effect that it has within the school, the community and beyond.

Embedded in the logo design is a message for the country and the region that school nutrition rests on research, food science and technology.

Embedded in the logo design is the hope that this logo will come to symbolise healthy eating habits and healthy lifestyle food choices for children, their parents and the Nation.

Therefore what we are witnessing today is the imaging of a Company whose motto and driving force is to improve the **quality of life for all** through sound nutrition.

A healthy population is critical if the Government is to maximise its vision for development. The Ministry of Education has been given the mandate under Vision 2020 to create citizens capable of driving and sustaining national development.

Therefore our concerns must extend beyond academic preparation and successes, to all facets of child development including the physical, mental emotional and nutritional. We recognise that today's children will be the young adults of 2020 and beyond. And so today's children have to be encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and healthy eating habits.

Having heard the vision, the passion and the commitment expressed by CEO Herrera about the work of NSDSL we are confident that this company understands the complexity of school nutrition and the technology and research that links good nutrition to the child's ability to learn.

The nutrition-learning link impacts on the child in areas such as:-

(1) Short-term cognition where the attention span is affected negatively

- (2) Brain development, which suffers if children are undernourished
- (3) Behaviour in school often degenerates when nutritional levels are low while on the other hand
- (4) School attendance improves when children are assured meals.

In the final analysis, improvement in all these areas of child development ultimately translates into better grades and performance in achievement tests. It is also well known that when children are not well nourished both learning and behaviour are compromised. Yet many parents in today's fast-paced world are unable to satisfy that basic need of all children for sound nutrition. Busy parents often fall victims to the pressure of advertisements that bombard the child at every turn.

The advertising industry thrives on the 'nag-factor' in parent – child relationships and the child's natural love of play, so that children are enticed by playgrounds created in restaurants serving energy-dense rather than nutrition-dense meals.

If we are to achieve *Excellence in Education that begins with well nourished children* we must be mindful of the pressures of the wider food environment and the many challenges presented by the global advertising that targets children.

Market researchers estimate that children aged 4-12 influence parent-purchasing of over \$565 billion dollars worldwide annually. This is arena in which the NSDSL brand must compete.

Therefore the Ministry of Education remains dedicated to supporting the contribution of NSDSL as we work towards our goal of quality education for all. For in addition to our responsibility under Vision 2020, the Ministry of Education is also committed to the *Dakar Framework for Action (2000-2015)*

The Dakar Framework for Action is a global initiative, which promotes a holistic developmental approach to the Education For All [EFA] goals.

Two of these goals are worthy of mention as they embody key aspects of our work over the last five years and for which good nutrition plays a critical supporting role:-

EFA Goal (1) deals with expanding and improving comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children..... and EFA Goal (6) targets improving every aspect of the quality of

education and ensuring their excellence, so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills....

With respect to Goal 1 we at the Ministry of Education have embraced and adopted the recommendations of the White Paper 1993-2003. As a result, the early childhood sector is part of the formal education system of this country **for the first time in our history.**

We have formulated a wide-ranging and comprehensive national policy for the ECCE sub-sector and we have implemented plans for:

- The construction and outfitting of 600 early childhood centres by 2015 through the newly established Educational Facilities Management Company
- Strengthening the overall management and governance structure for ECCE
- Ensuring highly qualified teachers and administrators who are university trained
- Procuring ECCE centre sites, 300 of which have been identified for construction and the briefs for architects and users have been developed

We are particularly pleased that NSDSL serves over six thousand nutritious lunch meals to 180 ECCE centres and breakfast meals are served to a few ECCE Centres that have made special representation to NSDSL.

Ladies and gentlemen, we believe that our meal intervention is critical at the early childhood level for it is here we have the greatest chance at shaping food tastes and eating habits.

We believe that the early childhood level holds the key to attaining the EFA Goal 6 – improving every aspect of quality in education and ensuring excellence.

Over the last six years the Ministry of Education has worked steadfastly on the implementation of numerous reforms in education at the level of:-

- Management, governance and security
- Curriculum reform and teacher training
- Student performance, accreditation and behaviour modification

All our approaches and interventions have been research driven and student-centred. One area that has had significant impact on school life is the expansion and strengthening of support to students. The Student Support Services Division works through many collaborative programmes with NGO's as well as with various agencies in the private and public sector to shape policies for the improvement of school life, student achievement and student behaviour. Some of these policies include:-

- A Drug Prevention and No Smoking Policy
- An HIV/AIDS Policy and more recently in collaboration with the Ministry of Health we have developed a School Health Policy that promotes wellness in seven areas, one of which I am pleased to say is NUTRITION.

I therefore thank the NSDSL for its contribution to the School Health Policy, which is designed to improve the mental, physical, emotional and nutritional health and wellness of students.

By engaging in activities such as policy formulation, the NSDSL gives validity to the ripple effect of its work embodied in the rings around the representation of the child in its logo. These rings portray the rippling effect of the Company's work on child, school and community.

Another rippling effect of the work of NSDSL is in research. As a young company the NSDSL must be complimented for undertaking research initiatives in addition to all its other commitments with its small staff of 35 persons.

Already the company has engaged in the development of a database of its recipients and a research paper on the *Profile of the Recipients of the School Meal Service in Trinidad*.

The Company also uses an assessment form for students coming into the programme. A recent assessment showed that only 12 out of 182 students had a preference for local food. The rest preferred foreign inspired fast food.

Three major research projects were also completed during the past year:-

- (1) A Baseline Study on the School Nutrition Programme
- (2) The Impact of a Short-term Nutrition Intervention Project and
- (3) The Development of a Financial Model for the Company.

Ladies and gentlemen the research showed that:-

- School attendance has been affected positively by the meal service and
- Teachers reported improved student attention students since the introduction in 2002 of a full scale breakfast programme that has grown over the last five years to over 48,000 meals daily!!!

However, beyond these results, we would be failing our children if we did not recognise other results of these research studies that are wake up calls for parents, teachers, students and the national community:-

- Phase 1 of the baseline study measured 276 students from Diego Martin and Malabar and found that 15% of the students in this pilot study were overweight
- The Short-term Nutrition Intervention Project was conducted with 13 schools in the Sangre Grande district. Lectures were delivered to students for a month. They were then tested some six weeks later. It was found that, the nutrition education lectures had a positive effect as students had begun to make different food choices.

We are painfully aware of the fact that children are manifesting Type 2 diabetes at younger ages and that childhood obesity is on the rise in many countries forcing some countries to consider legislative action.

In addition teenage girls are particularly prone to eating disorders because of a lack of nutritional education and guidance.

We recognise these as constraints and challenges facing NSDSL as it strives to meet its mandate of a nutritious meal service. Nonetheless, NSDSL must be congratulated for creating an army of 76 entrepreneurs who prepare nutritious meals and who are the unsung heroes in the fight to change the future.

The Ministry of Education congratulates NSDSL on its pioneering efforts in Nutrition Education research. We must now find ways to integrate your work more fully with curriculum initiatives in Health and Family Life, Food and Nutrition studies and Agri-Science

We congratulate you on your unwavering commitment to innovative and cost effective menu planning that introduces our children to the foods and flavours of the Caribbean..

I appeal to everyone to join with NSDSL in meeting the challenges to our children's tastes, already so heavily influenced by globalisation.

I ask all our teachers and parents to deepen their understanding of the work of NSDSL and so help to remove the unfair stigmatisation that programme recipients experience.

I take this opportunity to congratulate NSDSL on this bold step of creating a brand.

I look forward to your logo becoming an influential symbol for the adoption of healthy eating and healthy life styles on the educational landscape and the wider environment.

I salute the hardworking individuals who remain committed to providing this meal service and wish great success to the National Schools Dietary Services Limited, and its stakeholders.

In recognition of and in tribute to the achievements of the National Dietary Services Company Limited, the Ministry of Education will sign this afternoon the Memorandum of Understanding between NSDSL and my Ministry, outlining the responsibilities and obligations for both parties under this agreement.

Congratulations and may your brand grow from strength!!!