

**Assessment of Development Results
Evaluation of UNDP Contribution
Guyana**

Executive Summary

Introduction

Located on the north eastern coast of South America with a landmass of 214,969 square kilometers, Guyana is the only English-speaking country on the continent and had an estimated population of 736,000 persons in 2008. The population is concentrated in a narrow coastal belt bordering the Atlantic Ocean, an area that occupies only 10 percent of Guyana's land mass. Approximately 76.7 percent of Guyana's land surface is covered by dense forest, where scattered communities of the native Amerindian population live. Guyana's small population is composed of six different ethnic groups, the largest of which are those of East Indian descent, who are about 43.4 percent of the population, and Afro-Guyanese with about 30.2 percent. The other main groups are mixed race (16.7 percent), native Amerindians (9.2 percent) and the Chinese, Europeans and others totaling 0.3 percent. The country's economy is traditionally based on three main export commodities: sugar, rice and minerals such as gold and bauxite. The agricultural sector, which is mainly sugar and rice production, is the major contributor to the Guyana economy with about 30 percent of GDP in 2007, followed by industry (mainly mining and manufacturing) with 23 percent, and services (including the public sector) comprising about 47 percent. Environmental issues are of particular importance in Guyana due to its key role in global forestry conservation as evidenced by recent launch of the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS).

The Assessment of Development Results (ADR), which was an evaluation of UNDP contribution to Guyana, was conducted between May and July 2009 by an independent evaluation team composed of three external consultants and a task manager from the UNDP Evaluation Office, and supported by the work of a research assistant. The ADR covered the time period from 2001 to 2008. UNDP launched its second Country Cooperation Framework (CCF) for Guyana in 2001, which was extended to 2005. From 2006 to the present, the programme has operated under the Country Programme Document (CPD) and Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP), which was co-designed with and approved by the government of Guyana in line with the country's main development priorities as found in the 2001-2006 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

The broad objectives of the ADR were to assess overall UNDP performance and contribution to the development of Guyana during the past two programming cycles (2001-2005 and 2006-2010), and to extract recommendations to be applied in the design of future country strategies, particularly for the next programming cycle starting in 2012¹

The ADR focused on several key criteria and topics that are standard across all ADRs conducted by the UNDP Evaluation Office. UNDP performance in contributing to development results in Guyana (as embodied in the CCF and CPD/CPAP) was assessed. The strategic positioning of UNDP was also assessed, that is, how UNDP situated itself within the development and policy space of the country and what strategies it took in assisting the development efforts led by the government and people of Guyana. The specific criteria applied were: effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, strategic relevance, strategic partnerships, responsiveness, and contribution to UN values and coordination. Under each criterion, specific subcriteria were used based on an evaluation framework approved by the Evaluation Office with extensive input from the main stakeholders in Guyana.

The ADR process unfolded in several stages. Following a scoping mission in June 2009, planning was conducted and a main mission took place in July 2009. After the data collection phase, the team analyzed the qualitative information collected from more than 200 participants (including main partners and beneficiaries) and then an inception report was drafted to outline the evaluation design. This report was carefully reviewed and revised several times through a multi-stage quality assurance process, including the Evaluation Office, expert external reviewers, UNDP senior management, the country office and

¹ The Guyana programme in UNDP has been extended to 2011.

government of Guyana. The final report was presented for discussion with country office colleagues and national partners during the stakeholder workshop. The final evaluation report is the result of extensive input and dialogue with a wide range of key partners in the UNDP Guyana programme.

UNDP in Guyana

The UNDP Guyana country programme is managed from the country office in Georgetown, Guyana, which is currently staffed with approximately 30 people. From 2004 to 2008, the average annual expenditure for the programme was \$3.55 million. From 2001 to 2008, the country programme supported 34 development initiatives totaling approximately \$24 million, which included both core and non-core resources.

Since 2001 the UNDP Guyana programme has focused its efforts within four main thematic areas—poverty reduction, democratic governance, environment and energy, and disaster recovery and risk reduction—as well as gender equality as a cross-cutting theme, which are all consistent with the first and second multi-year funding frameworks and the current corporate strategic plan (2008-2011). The largest number of projects and expenditures were in environment and energy, followed by democratic governance, poverty reduction and disaster recovery and risk reduction. Presented below are key findings in each of these thematic areas:

Poverty reduction: The ADR found that work on poverty and livelihoods contributed to planned country results as well as provided some immediate benefits for vulnerable communities and beneficiary groups, especially in remote and rural communities. Poverty and livelihoods work under the CCF cycle from 2001 to 2005 built on what had been done in the late 1990s, with a continued emphasis on community-based poverty reduction work with Amerindian peoples, women, youth and the rural poor (in line with the PRSP-I key objectives and aims as well as UNDP corporate strategy and values). During the CPD-CPAP period the programme continued to evolve; results for poverty reduction were differently defined and there appeared to be attempts to create a better balance between upstream, policy-related work and downstream community initiatives. There was on-going support for building Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and PRSP monitoring capacities in the country (at both the national and regional levels), several ‘pilot’ initiatives to support small-scale economic development for isolated communities, and capacity building for small-scale entrepreneurs via the EMPRETEC project. However, several smaller-scale, downstream initiatives in community-based poverty reduction faced challenges in capturing the lessons of pilot initiatives as well as linking their effects to broader policy reform aims.

Democratic governance: Beginning in the early 2000s, UNDP work on democratic governance was based on continued involvement at the request of government in supporting national elections and on-going dialogue concerning how to strengthen the country’s key public sector and governance institutions. Several specific projects had some success in meeting their planned results over both programme cycles. During the CCF period, UNDP contribution was somewhat limited in scope in comparison to the original plans outlined in the programme document, probably due to changes in the overall context. Consistent technical support was offered to the Guyana Electoral Commission (GECOM) and UNDP Guyana played a noteworthy role in negotiating multi-donor support for peaceful conduct during the 2006 elections. UNDP work in democratic governance did not dramatically expand from the CCF to CPD-CPAP periods, although the Social Cohesion Programme (SCP) did make some acknowledged contributions to national unity-building and constructive dialogue. However, the SCP evaluation noted that there were some weaknesses in the project, including its somewhat fragmented approach and its failure to truly build local organizational capacity or sufficiently engage local government structures, which was corroborated by the ADR team’s own research. In 2007 the so-called Fast Track Initiative spearheaded by UNDP Guyana mobilized a wide range of mainly short-term responses to the Bartica and Lusignan massacres, which appeared to help decrease the potential for wider social and political unrest among affected communities. UNDP Guyana also engaged with both women (especially in the early to mid-2000s) and with youth in its democratic governance programming.

Environment and energy: UNDP Guyana made some useful contributions to national results in the environment and energy area, and there were several examples of moderately effective projects that helped to build both individual and institutional capacities around natural resource and biodiversity management. The scope and variety of programming in the environment thematic area as a proportion of the total country programme increased over time, indicating both its emerging importance in Guyana and the ability of UNDP to respond and adapt accordingly. In response to emerging government interest in renewable energy issues, which surfaced in the early 2000s, UNDP Guyana increased its funding for this area and over the past several years supported an important pilot project in increasing access to renewable energy for hinterland areas. Support for biodiversity and land use management regulations were also expanded in response to emerging needs. The major partners and beneficiaries for UNDP Guyana's work in this area were the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), at a broader institutional level, and various Amerindian communities in the hinterland areas, which involved building capacities for local land use planning and biodiversity management. Projects implemented by the EPA included conducting training workshops for key personnel from the EPA, the Guyana Forestry Commission and other environment-related agencies. The ADR found that institutional capacity building had a positive cumulative effect over several years, but there was a need for continued support to further enhance EPA capacities for regulatory enforcement. Work with Amerindian communities led to increased recognition over time among policy makers of the need to consult with affected communities, as witnessed by the extensive consultations currently taking place around the LCDS. This was also effective in assisting many hinterland communities to become stronger advocates for local environmental management practices. UNDP Guyana helped increase the resources available to Guyana via the Global Environment Facility (GEC), thereby assisting the country to meet global climate change reporting requirements.

Disaster recovery and risk reduction: The ADR found that UNDP made several useful contributions to country objectives and priorities in disaster recovery and management. This included support for both short-term response to emergency situations and longer-term aims to reduce Guyana's vulnerability to climate change and rising sea levels via capacity strengthening with key bodies such as the Civil Defense Commission (CDC) and National Drainage and Irrigation Authority. Two major floods—2005 being the most serious—resulted in 60 percent of Guyana's GDP being lost. UNDP supported the immediate post-flood recovery and reconstruction process in Guyana starting in March 2005, as well as follow-up to provide short-term livelihood inputs to the most-affected rural communities. This further reinforced the need to better prepare for and build long-term capacity to respond to natural disasters and climate change. UNDP had previously assisted the government to prepare a comprehensive disaster management strategy for Guyana. Following the 2005 floods, UNDP was involved in planning for a comprehensive new project to strengthen local and national capacities for disaster response and risk reduction, which was launched in 2008 in close conjunction with other international partners including the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The project will support an update of the 2003 draft comprehensive disaster management strategy funded by UNDP, an update of emergency response and flood response plans, plus extensive capacity development for the CDC.

Main Conclusions

1. In terms of overall development effectiveness, since 2001 UNDP Guyana made some progress towards its planned outcomes in all four thematic areas, which in turn contributed to Guyana's overall development priorities and aims.

The UNDP country programme was characterized by very positive synergies among all the thematic areas, which enhanced effectiveness and was a sensible approach for a country programme of this size. The main challenges in the area of effectiveness consisted of finding the appropriate mix of policy-oriented and community-based interventions, ensuring that useful linkages were forged between the two levels on an on-going basis, and choosing the right combination of short-term initiatives or project investments so that longer-term programme outcomes could be achieved in a clear and demonstrable way.

In poverty reduction, the ADR concluded that UNDP had contributed to national capacity strengthening for poverty eradication in line with main PRSP-I objectives, but these effects were difficult to measure.

Currently one of the main challenges for poverty reduction in Guyana is that UNDP is viewed by most stakeholders as a source of funds for small-scale, community-based work by a range of government, non-state and international partners. Efforts are now being made to shift the focus towards broader, upstream initiatives in line with UNDP corporate priorities. In the future, UNDP Guyana will need to realistically consider what it can contribute at the grassroots level of poverty reduction, in terms of small-scale, one-off economic development initiatives, due to its limited resources and the need to focus on underlying policy and structural issues to the greatest extent possible.

In democratic governance, UNDP Guyana contributed to the peaceful conduct during the 2006 elections and was also successful in promoting new paradigms of social inclusion in the country through the SCP, although it was very difficult to judge whether any of this work produced deeper changes to break down ethnic tensions in the country. So far very little has been done in public administration reform to enhance the institutional or policy frameworks related to accountability and transparency of the public service, which was a planned outcome under the CPD-CPAP. New initiatives currently being planned to strengthen aid coordination and poverty monitoring during the remainder of the programme cycle may address these gaps to some extent at least.

The environment and energy thematic area also made some contributions towards country-led objectives and outcomes, and the scope of work has gradually expanded since 2001. UNDP Guyana contributed to the government's emerging priorities and needs in renewable energy, and support became increasingly focused on natural resource management systems and access to alternative energy sources in under-serviced rural areas. Commendable progress was also made towards strengthening management and protection of natural resources (by government and local communities), as well as economic and social empowerment of Amerindian communities in the hinterlands. The ADR concluded that UNDP Guyana has the strong potential to play a highly strategic role in these sectors in the future.

In natural disaster recovery and risk reduction, UNDP Guyana took a prominent role in coordinating the immediate response to the humanitarian crisis resulting from the 2005 floods and helping to strengthen institutional capacities for more sustained disaster prevention and risk management. The ADR concluded that UNDP contributed to creating an enabling environment for better long-term enforcement of existing standards/codes that govern coastal development and land use planning, as well as community involvement in disaster planning and response.

2. Efficiency and sustainability were variable for the UNDP Guyana programme.

There were many examples of good managerial efficiencies, which included strong synergies among thematic areas, leveraging of resources, and acceptable financial disbursement rates and administrative expense ratios according to UNDP corporate benchmarks. However, many projects had to be extended due to implementation delays and some of the small-scale investments made were possibly inadequate to assure lasting change resulting in developmental inefficiency. At the time of the ADR, the country programme had already begun to initiate some improvements in these areas. Positive examples of sustainability arising from UNDP work in Guyana were mainly at either the individual or organizational levels; fewer examples were found of sustained change being created at the policy and institutional levels. There were on-going challenges with the conduct of small-scale or 'pilot' economic development initiatives in terms of both their financial or organizational viability and their ability to produce lasting development benefits for participants. Lessons learned from pilot initiatives were not always extracted and applied.

3. Programme management was strong, but with room for continued improvements in some areas.

The ADR concluded that the country programme was in the process of overcoming a number of on-going management and resource mobilization challenges—including weaknesses in results formulation and outcome level evaluation and reporting; as well as delays in project planning, approval and implementation—leading to numerous extensions. There were also challenges with on-going follow-up,

monitoring and quality assurance by the country office with project partners and beneficiaries to ensure that problems were identified and corrective action taken in a timely fashion. These issues are now being diagnosed and addressed by an increasingly proactive and systematic management approach in the country office, but they will continue to require sustained effort in the future.

4. UNDP demonstrated its strategic relevance in Guyana since the early 2000s, due to its alignment with country priorities within its four thematic areas.

Overall UNDP comparative advantage corresponds not just to the amount of funding it provided, which was relatively modest in comparison to major international donors, but also the degree to which its strategic inputs in capacity development, small-scale demonstration projects and peace-building, as well as its flexibility and adaptability, were and are highly valued by partners at all levels. In the future UNDP strategic relevance is likely to rely mainly on the quality and precision of its upstream policy work as well as technical or capacity development inputs within and across all four thematic areas. UNDP Guyana has the possibility to maintain its strategic focus on support for key institutional reforms, which will strengthen the country's future successful development as an emerging middle-income country. The ADR noted that the past relevance and overall strategic positioning of UNDP in Guyana has been influenced to some extent by relatively high turnover in the Resident Representative (RR) position.

5. UNDP Guyana was responsive to emerging needs and forged strategic partnerships at many different levels.

The agency reacted quickly to emerging needs in many cases, for example, the 2008 Fast Track Initiative, support for the 2006 elections and the 2005 floods response. UNDP Guyana also responded well to the increasing focus on environment and energy issues in the country by mobilizing more resources and technical support. Overall, the ADR found that UNDP Guyana was able to maintain an adequate balance between short-term responsiveness and longer-term development objectives. However, it was noted that the high demands placed on the country office during 2005 and 2006 due to the floods and elections did create some challenges in terms of maintaining focus on longer-term work. There has also been continuous emphasis on partnership-building with key national and international partners. When possible, UNDP Guyana has consistently reached out to involve civil society and the private sector, with more pronounced and sustained partnerships in the poverty reduction and democratic governance thematic areas and in environment and energy to some extent. Challenges include the need to deepen partnerships with civil society and the private sector, and with non-OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) donors.

6. UNDP Guyana made a strong and consistent contribution to UN values and coordination.

Support for the MDG led to improved government commitment and stronger systems for tracking the country's progress on global development indicators. UNDP Guyana maintained consistent engagement with vulnerable groups such as Amerindians and the rural poor. The ADR concluded that initiatives with the vulnerable and poor could be further strengthened if there were clear action plans or strategies for the country programme outlining both the proposed coverage of this work and its scope and rationale, particularly with Amerindians in remote, rural communities who are likely to be heavily affected by future economic and environmental initiatives outlined under the LCDS. Weaknesses in gender mainstreaming also demonstrated the need to ensure that gender is thoroughly integrated into the programme in the future. In terms of UN coordination, UNDP played a positive leadership role in UNDAF planning but so far there has been weak implementation of joint programmes. It appeared that more practical steps need to be taken by UNDP as the lead UN Country Team agency in Guyana to help support greater project-level collaboration between the resident UN agencies.

Recommendations

Recommendation No. 1: Policy/upstream orientation

UNDP Guyana should continue to reorient its programming towards higher-level policy change and strategic upstream work in support of the new PRSP-II and LCDS.

UNDP Guyana should continue to strengthen its recent shift towards a policy-oriented or upstream approach as stipulated in the UNDP corporate strategic plan to match the emerging lower-middle income status of Guyana and in close alignment with the strategic directions set in the new PRSP-II and LCDS. Eventually, given the shrinking resource base for this type of work, UNDP should seriously consider the feasibility of gradually and consciously moving its strong focus towards a more strategic upstream approach from small-scale, downstream community-based work over the next five years. During this transition UNDP should also take into account the unique circumstances of the Guyana development context and the need to respond to key national priorities, and also ensure a clear interconnectedness between downstream and upstream work.

Recommendation No. 2: Inclusion and consultation

Consistent with UNDP overall human development approach, UNDP Guyana should continue to strengthen its strategic approach to working with vulnerable groups and communities.

The strategic partnerships with targeted vulnerable groups, such as Amerindians and the rural poor, should be based on clearer criteria, more in-depth planning, consultations and needs assessments, and systematic analyses of the types of upstream (not just downstream) interventions needed with different subgroups. These processes should be carried out jointly with the lead government implementing agencies.

Recommendation No 3: Capacity development

UNDP Guyana should develop a detailed strategy for capacity development that is focused on deep institutional change rather than on individual training or one-off knowledge transfer.

UNDP Guyana, in close consultation with government, should develop a longer-term strategy or specialized plan for capacity development that makes an explicit shift to development of strong, sustainable institutional systems commensurate with Guyana's emerging middle-income status. This strategy should take into account chronic human resource shortages in government and attempt to go beyond superficial, one-off approaches that simply enhance individual awareness or skills. Other potential examples that would require further discussion with government for an agreement to be reached (but which were raised during the ADR research by various partners) include support for more public sector, human resource development, the development of institutional incentives to reduce the brain-drain of skilled personnel, and mobilization of expertise from the diaspora to contribute more systematically to Guyana's economic and political development.

The continued focus on national ownership is a very positive aspect of the UNDP programme, including emphasis on the national execution/implementation (NEX/NIM) modality. However, UNDP should do more in the future to develop managerial capacities and systems of partner agencies via explicitly building institutional capacity development processes into ongoing implementation processes.

Recommendation No. 4: Sustainability

UNDP Guyana should improve sustainability by working with implementing partners and beneficiaries to create realistic exit strategies for projects, extract and apply lessons, and replicate project effects.

UNDP should ensure that initial strategies are built into all project designs upfront so that explicit sustainability aims are set and progress towards sustainability can be monitored on a regular basis. Strategies could include explicit cost-sharing arrangements with lead partners, precise descriptions of how work initiated under UNDP-supported projects will be institutionalized in the long-term, and identification of specific benchmarks against which to assess progress towards sustainability linked to results-based frameworks shown in Annual Work Plans (AWPs). Such approaches would enable both

UNDP and its implementing partners to understand whether results are likely to be sustained over time, as well as what interventions are needed to ensure this does occur as planned.

For so-called ‘pilot’ projects, UNDP should place greater effort on researching and learning lessons from similar initiatives undertaken by UNDP and others before planning and initiation. While pilot projects are actually being implemented, greater efforts should be made to learn from and share lessons to improve the effectiveness and chances for long-term replication of these efforts.

Recommendation No. 5: Strategic partnerships

UNDP Guyana should improve its partnership approach with non-state actors, as well as help strengthen the level of dialogue between these groups and government.

UNDP should continue to work closely with government to find ways of strengthening the meaningful and consistent engagement of non-state actors in development programming. This should include assistance for strengthening the partnerships forged by government with the private sector and civil society groups to implement specific capacity development projects in natural resource management and economic empowerment; in many countries these partnerships have been shown to be the most effective means to increase local ownership and sustainability. In order to guide its own work and establish more meaningful strategic and programmatic relationships with non-state actors, UNDP Guyana may also consider establishing a programme advisory committee for itself that regularly meets with representatives from a wide range of non-state actors, to provide UNDP Guyana with an opportunity to have more sustained strategic dialogue with these groups and ensure that they clearly understand the role of UNDP and its mandate.

Recommendation No 6: Facilitation and coordination

UNDP Guyana should continue to facilitate strong dialogue and relationships between lead development partners including the government and the UN system when requested and appropriate.

UNDP should continue to play a role in leading and/or facilitating dialogue between government and international partners when requested and/or as appropriate, as well as in proactively coordinating donor support within specific sectors when key gaps or opportunities appear. The exact nature of this coordination role may of course vary between programme areas depending on the context and the needs within each sector as well as the role of international partners.

Recommendation No.7: South-South cooperation

UNDP Guyana should develop a strategy and action plan for fostering South-South cooperation in-country, regionally and internationally on a range of key development issues.

South-south cooperation requires a more explicit plan and strategy in the context of the country programme as well as the regional development context, specifically in relation to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and larger movements for economic and social integration across the Caribbean such as the Caribbean Single Market Economy (CSME). UNDP should continue to be proactive and strategic in brokering more South-South exchanges and information-sharing on behalf of Guyana, as well as in response to emerging country needs, in areas such as respect for diversity, peace-building, climate change and environmental protection, alternate energy, small enterprise development, information technology, investment and manufacturing, public sector reform, human resource development, disaster management, and mobilization of investment/development resources from ‘non-traditional’ development and investment partners such as emerging economies in Asia and the Middle East. This would include fostering strategic exchanges both regionally and within Guyana itself.

Recommendation No. 8: Gender equality

UNDP Guyana should develop a strategy and action plan for mainstreaming of gender equality issues.

Given that there has been no gender mainstreaming strategy in place over the past several years and no explicit commitment of resources for working on gender mainstreaming issues in the country programme, UNDP should develop such a strategy to ensure that gender issues are fully integrated within each of the thematic areas and outcomes in the next CPD-CPAP. This should, at a minimum, involve allocation of specialized resources towards gender mainstreaming work, as well as development of measurable aims and indicators to gauge progress towards gender mainstreaming.

Recommendation No. 9: Support for the Regional Representative role

UNDP headquarters should improve its corporate support for the Regional Representative (RR) role in Guyana.

Due to the key role of the RR establishing and maintaining UNDP strategic positioning in Guyana, there should be increased analytical and strategic support from UNDP headquarters for the RR position in Guyana in order to decrease turnover and ensure leadership continuity.

Recommendation No 10: Programme management and oversight

UNDP Guyana should continue to improve its mechanisms and systems to manage for development results.

UNDP Guyana has made substantial progress in improving its management systems in the past two years, but the momentum should be maintained to ensure that these initial measures are built on and expanded. This should include such areas as: continued support to enhancing results management and formulation of realistic and measurable results statements, design of more realistic project timeframes to prevent implementation delays, improved corporate record-keeping for the country programme, continued updating of the new resource mobilization strategy and close attention to options and opportunities for funding, increase in staffing levels commensurate with the programme's evolving needs, and enhanced focus on outcome monitoring and evaluation. There is also a need to continue to inform partners of results-based management (RBM) system requirements for effective project implementation. and to integrate partner capacity development and knowledge-sharing as much as possible into routine project implementation.