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**Country note\*\*****Guyana***Summary*

The Executive Director presents the country note for Guyana for a programme of cooperation for the period 2001 to 2005.

**The situation of children and women**

1. In Guyana, the quality of life of children and their families has deteriorated in recent years, as a result of the downturn in the economy. Real growth in gross domestic product has declined drastically, from 7.9 per cent in 1996 to -1.3 per cent in 1998; 1999 growth is projected at 1.8 per cent. The 1997 election victory of the People's Progressive Party/Civic, with 54 per cent of the vote, remains contested by the People's National Congress, the main opposition party. Post-election parliamentary disruptions, political demonstrations and street protests resulted in intervention by the Caribbean Community,

which brokered the 1998 Herdmanston Accord, an agreement containing guidelines for dispute settlement. Dissatisfaction of public servants peaked in May 1999, when a 57-day strike was launched following the government counter-offer of a 4 per cent increase in salaries to a worker request of 40 per cent. The matter went to arbitration, and in 1999 the public service pay tribunal awarded a 31.06 per cent increase over 1998 salaries; in 2000, a 26.67 per cent increase over 1999 salaries will be awarded.

2. According to the 1996 Guyana *Human Development Report*, 79 per cent of those in hinterland communities and 45 per cent in rural coastal households were living below the poverty line. Female-headed households represented the majority of the poorer segments of society, and Amerindian women were the poorest group, with 88 per cent living below the poverty line. Help and Shelter, a non-governmental organization (NGO), recorded a dramatic increase in the number of sexually abused children

\* E/ICEF/2000/2.

\*\* An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its second regular session of 2000.

receiving treatment between 1997 and 1999. Trends in HIV/AIDS have reached alarming proportions, with 75 per cent of cases occurring among 19- to 35-year-olds. In 1997, the Ministry of Health conducted a survey of those attending a sexually transmitted disease (STD) clinic in Georgetown. The study revealed that among 14- to 19-year-olds, 19 per cent of males and 16.7 per cent of females were HIV-infected. In 1992, of all women who were HIV-infected, 80 per cent were of child-bearing age; by 1998, that number had increased to 92 per cent.

3. The health sector has reported that 25 per cent of infants will low birth weight and 22 per cent of births at the Georgetown Public Hospital were from mothers under the age of 19; the highest proportion of infant deaths occurred among mothers under the age of 15. In 1998, the infant mortality rate (IMR) and under-five mortality rate (U5MR) were 22.9 and 28 per 1,000 live births, respectively. The major causes of death among children continue to be diarrhoeal diseases, acute respiratory infections and malnutrition. In 1998, the maternal mortality rate (MMR) was estimated at 125 per 100,000 live births; however, figures show a higher MMR in hinterland areas because of lack of skilled personnel. Major concerns with respect to adolescents are substance abuse and sexual and reproductive health.

4. In the area of education, during the 1995-1998 period, the average rate of absenteeism in primary schools was above 20 per cent, while in secondary schools it was approximately 44 per cent. The growing drop-out rate, poor teaching methods, high numbers of untrained teachers and lack of teaching materials have directly affected public school enrolment. In 1997/98, 49 per cent of students in the system were enrolled at the primary level and 29 per cent at the secondary level. This statistic does not account for the private schools (nursery through secondary) which have been established recently. Performance measured in secondary schools showed that girls outperformed boys.

5. The new Head of State has been actively consulting with the private sector in order to strengthen public-, private- and civil society-sector linkages. The National Development Strategy (NDS) process has been resuscitated and a draft document will be presented to the cabinet for approval. The Guyana Constitutional Reform Commission has submitted its proposals, which include the four fundamental rights of children: the right to a name and nationality; non-discrimination; survival, development and protection; and having one's view heard.

6. Gains were made in achieving some of the World Summit for Children goals in the areas of immunization

coverage and access to education, but the country faces an uphill struggle to reverse socio-economic deterioration. Guyana ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in January 1991 and established a National Commission. Legislative reform based on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women includes the 1997 Prevention of Discrimination against Women Act and the 1996 Domestic Violence Act. As acts of abuse against women and children are increasing, the challenge is to strengthen enforcement systems and monitoring mechanisms.

## Lessons learned from past cooperation

7. During the extended 1995-1999 country programme, programme delivery, especially in the hinterland and savannah regions, depended heavily on transportation, which is often lacking. As a result, provisions needed to be made, at extra cost. The language barrier is also a major constraint in the hinterland community, where 45,000 Amerindians, who live in an area covering 65,000 square kilometres, speak nine languages. In addition, the low level of literacy in the programme areas has reduced positive efforts in project execution. Basic literacy is estimated at below 70 per cent and functional literacy below 55 per cent.

8. Programmes carried out between 1995 and 1999 - in Managing Social and Sensitive Issues (in primary education), immunization, nutrition and breastfeeding — demonstrated the importance of programme integration, inter-agency/intersectoral collaboration and targeting interventions to maximize programme impact on beneficiaries. Participatory networks established with government and civic and civil society partners in programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation were critical to programme delivery. Networks with multilateral and bilateral development partners, in particular the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)/World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department for International Development (DfID) of the United Kingdom, also served to enhance programme outputs and objectives.

9. The success of UNICEF-supported community-based interventions, such as the *escuela nueva* initiative and Child Development Centre (CDC), was rooted in the implementation of a sound social mobilization strategy, combining training workshops, the media and school participation. This strategy will be retained and expanded in the next five-year programme of cooperation. UNICEF

Guyana is learning to work in a relatively difficult political and social environment. The current situation is envisaged to continue over the short to medium term and to have an impact on programme implementation. Emergency and rapid-response measures should be included in the new programme. In addition, the Government needs to manage social development projects which will strengthen ongoing advocacy and commitments for children.

## Proposed country programme strategy

10. The 2001-2005 country programme strategy is being developed within the context of the NDS, whose goals are: (a) rapid and sustained economic growth; (b) alleviation of poverty, to cushion the short-term effects of structural adjustment programmes and create an environment in the long term for growth and employment, with less poverty; (c) equitable distribution of economic opportunities; (d) equitable distribution of income at the country level; and (e) overall human resource development. Within this framework, the new country programme will aim to strengthen the capacity of the Government to: (a) bring about national and societal consensus on the formulation of social policies and legislation related to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; (b) reduce overall IMR, U5MR and MMR; (c) strengthen and expand early childhood education as a basis for enhancing early stimulation, growth and development, and improve parents' knowledge and skills in early childhood care; (d) improve the situation of selected urban and rural communities through an active and collaborative approach in addressing the most basic needs, within an integrated system of support for the protection of children; (e) promote the survival and development of children and the empowerment of women, particularly among the indigenous population, and the reduction of disparities in human development between the excluded (which includes the indigenous population) and the country as a whole; and (f) strengthen government information and analysis for monitoring national goals, social policies and children's and women's rights.

11. Three areas of focus are contained in the proposed programme of cooperation: social policies and rights; education and life skills; and local systems for integrated child protection. The objective of the *social policies and rights* component is to support the formulation of national policies and legislation and to reduce inequities. Emphasis will be placed on data collection and analysis within

government and NGOs. The rights of women and children will be further strengthened and integrated at the community level. Efforts will be made to help line ministries streamline budgets for social action and finance the health and education reform process. Multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS) will support government efforts to improve its capacity to manage social data at all levels. The programme will also focus on fostering participation of civic and civil society, in order to advance the rights of women and children in Guyana.

12. The *education and life skills* component will focus on the process of development of the child, from early childhood through adolescence. It will emphasize integrated delivery of services and the process of transition from pre-primary to primary school, and from primary to secondary school. The programme also seeks to create an adequate learning environment for early childhood development. Actions will be linked to the need to streamline national policies and legislation. Technical and financial support will be given to communities and local institutions to foster improvements in communication. The *escuela nueva* model will be further integrated into school systems, using its functional approach to learning, which is geared to providing revised teaching methodologies within the context of early childhood care for survival, growth and development, and the Health and Family Education Initiative in the Caribbean.

13. *Local systems for integrated child protection* will focus on the delivery of basic social services at the community and regional levels. It will expand the present integrated area-based programme, within which the Amazon Programme is framed, with a substantive boost to the development of regional and community capacity for project cycle management. It will also target depressed peri-urban areas in Linden, New Amsterdam and Georgetown. Technical and financial support will be provided to selected communities and local institutions responsible for the delivery of services in health, education, nutrition and water and sanitation. At the local level, UNICEF will work through the decentralized regional health authorities, municipalities and other democratic organs of civil society. Another focus of this programme area is families and children at risk. Support will be given to government, NGOs and civil society partners that cater to the protection of the rights of abused children, juvenile delinquents and battered women. Micro-enterprise activities will be targeted to women in the most vulnerable communities, with a view to empowering them and encouraging their participation in the decision-making process. Further assistance will be provided to the CDC

and to “counseling areas” (where women and youth are counseled by trained social workers), in selected peri-urban areas.

14. These programme initiatives will be implemented in the context of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, the Common Country Assessment and the NDS. UNICEF will work closely with other United Nations agencies and international development aid organizations, primarily UNDP and PAHO/WHO. A particular focus of these cooperating agencies will be to facilitate the development of legislation to improve the status of women and children in Guyana. The Ministry of Health has agreed to support and strengthen efforts and mechanisms for monitoring the system of social indicators, including child registration, salt iodization, deworming, HIV/AIDS and maternal mortality. The Peace Corps and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) will cooperate with UNICEF in the development of an integrated system for child protection. In addition, IICA will provide

technical assistance to small enterprise development, focusing on women’s empowerment. Planning and monitoring of community efforts in the priority regions will be a primary goal of UNICEF, with assistance from cooperating agencies. For example, DfID has provided a project officer to the UNICEF office to oversee the implementation of the Amazon programme.

15. UNICEF is working within the management excellence programme to reorganize its cadres to be better equipped to deal with new challenges. Training and capacity-building are the cornerstones of this effort and will be extended to government counterparts and other partners. The programme will also support the capacity of UNICEF counterparts by strengthening managerial skills.

## Estimated programme budget

### Estimated programme cooperation, 2001-2005<sup>a</sup>

(In thousands of United States dollars)

	<i>Regular resources</i>	<i>Other resources</i>	<i>Total</i>
Social policies and rights	1 000	250	1 250
Education and life skills	1 250	500	1 750
Local systems for integrated child protection	1 025	500	1 525
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 275</b>	<b>1 250</b>	<b>4 525</b>

<sup>a</sup> These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.