

Common Country Analysis

Guyana

October 2021

Foreword by the UN Resident Coordinator

In 2020, Guyana reached a turning point, joining the ranks of oil-producing nations just as COVID-19 devastated the social and economic outlook for countries across the world. The country's overall GDP soared even as people and businesses in the non-oil economy were confronted by the health and socio-economic impact of the pandemic. The country overcame a protracted political and electoral crisis that tested state institutions, ethnic relations, democratic processes and the Constitution to their limits. As the country began its recovery from the dual crises of 2020, it was immediately confronted by unprecedented rainfall and widespread flooding.

Guyana faces many similar challenges as the wider Latin America and Caribbean region, and the world as a whole in grappling with health and social system setbacks, unemployment and inequalities, and the responsibility to ensure the inclusion of *all* people in national development. These complex interconnected issues require deliberate policies and interventions that remedy structural and systemic bottlenecks.

Guyana's intact tropical rainforests in the bio-diverse Guiana Shield are an invaluable carbon sink for the entire world, and their protection is paramount. Offshore oil production underscores the criticality of lowering all other domestic carbon emissions and preventing marine disasters. Meanwhile, Guyana faces serious threats along its coastline from rising sea levels and extreme climatic events. The country-wide flood emergency of 2021 demonstrates the severity of the climate and environmental risks that Guyana faces. The importance of pursuing sustainable, renewable and disaster-resilient economic development models in Guyana could not be higher. The Low Carbon Development Strategy as articulated by the Government in November this year provides the anchor for such development pathways.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for the active participation of the private sector, civil society, communities and citizens – young and old, men and women. On the occasion of the UN's 75th anniversary in 2020, the UN Secretary-General led a global UN75 conversation on "the future world we want". Guyanese youth and diverse members of civil society participated and expressed their aspirations for an equal, fair and harmonious society and their strong interest in actively taking part in the country's governance and development.

Democratic governance goes beyond elections and includes the tenets of SDG16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) that underline the importance of inclusive and participatory decision-making at all levels and effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. Guyana's, and the world's, development challenges are complex, with many interconnected issues and trade-offs. Finding the solutions and making the right choices for a balanced, sustainable and rights-based development pathway requires the participation and cooperation of *all* sectors of society. Robust data systems are instrumental for evidence-based analysis, policy-making and implementation, reporting and communications to citizens and international stakeholders. As Guyana embarks on its transformation in the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs, *how* the Government takes decisions are as crucial as *what* decisions are taken to pursue the country's full potential, leaving no one behind.



Yesim Oruc, UN Resident Coordinator to Guyana, October 2021

The Common Country Analysis

The UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) methodology analyzes underlying causes of SDG gaps and vulnerabilities and cross-sectoral dynamics of the political economy, financing, social exclusion and inequalities, gender, human rights, environment and climate change, governance and institutions, and the “humanitarian-peace-development nexus.”

The CCA has used all available and relevant data sources - secondary and primary - from within and outside the UN system for evidence-based analysis. It draws upon the results from the global UN75 conversation held in 2020 and a set of three focus group discussions held in November of that year. The CCA was led by the Resident Coordinator’s Office, with support from the UN Guyana Country Team.

The CCA is a living document, subject to periodic review and updating. It aims to stimulate strategic reflection and discussion between the UN System and the Government and state institutions, civil society, academia, private sector and international development partners and to contribute to national development strategies and plans to accelerate SDG actions in Guyana. The CCA represents the shared assessment of the UN Country Team in Guyana and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of Guyana.

The CCA directly informed the forthcoming UN Caribbean Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022-2026: this cooperation framework will define the priorities and strategies for the cooperation between the UN Development System and national and international partners in Guyana and the Caribbean towards the SDGs.

Executive summary

Guyana has made significant strides in its national development over the last three decades, reducing the number of people living in extreme income poverty to less than 3 per cent of the national population¹ and dramatically improving its fiscal position.

As income levels have risen, steady improvements were made in the lives of Guyanese people, first during the lifespan of the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015), and subsequently during the first five years of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Indicators of environmental sustainability, health, education, gender equality, digitalisation, and international partnership illustrate the progress made, and continued efforts to update human rights and non-discrimination laws have seen new protections afforded to several segments of society. The discovery of off-shore oil in 2015 elevated expectations inside and outside Guyana for economic opportunities and prosperity.

However, a political and electoral crisis between 2019-2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and widespread floods caused by unprecedented rainfalls in 2021 have been detrimental to the non-oil segment of Guyana’s economy and society. In order to recover from these shocks and achieve the SDGs, Guyana will need to adopt a pathway for social, economic and political transformation that is sustainable, inclusive, equitable and resilient. The Low Carbon Development Strategy which was announced in November of this year provides an anchor for Guyana to pursue a transformational development pathway.

¹ US\$1.90 per day.

1) SDG Progress

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The most comprehensive assessment of Guyana's progress towards Agenda 2030 is the government's Voluntary National Review, completed in 2019 for the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Data gathered for the VNR and future tracking of progress towards the SDGs is an integral component of the current Common Country Analysis because its use of national indicators is not always reflected in global datasets.

Overall SDG performance

This CCA complements the VNR by using the Sustainable Development Index and associated dashboard to summarise and describe progress towards Agenda 2030. The SDI ranks countries regarding their status on the 17 SDGs, drawing directly on internationally available and quality assured datasets. When first launched in 2015, the SDI ranked Guyana 101 out of 149 countries with a score of 52.4. In 2018, Guyana ranked 104 out of 156 countries with a score of 61.9 (Figure 1). As of 2020, Guyana's SDG Index score was 59.7 (124 of 166 countries). Its score can be interpreted as signifying that the country is nearly 60 per cent of the way to the best possible outcomes across the 17 SDGs. The regional average SDI score is 70.4.

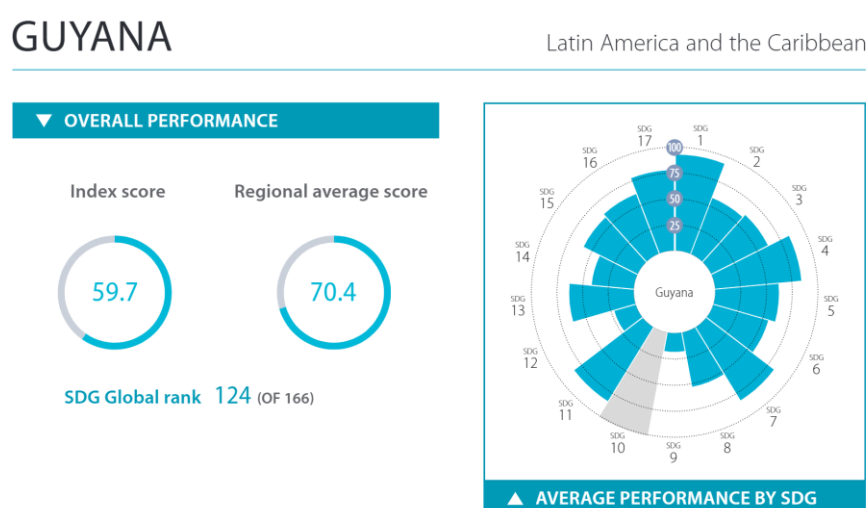


Figure 1: Guyana's overall SDI performance, 2020

Current Assessment

The 2020 SDI suggests that in absolute terms, Guyana has the greatest distance to travel to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good health), 6 (Clean water and sanitation), 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 9 (Industry, innovation & infrastructure), 12 (Responsible consumption & production), and 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions). For all these goals, the SDI indicates that 'major challenges remain'.

'Significant challenges remain' for Goals 2 (Zero hunger), 5 (Gender equality), 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), 13 (Climate action), 14 (Life below water), and 15 (Life on land).



Figure 2: Sustainable Development Index - Current Assessment for Guyana, 2020

Trends analysis for Guyana

The SDI suggests that Guyana is currently 'on track' to achieve SDGs 1 (No poverty), 7 (Affordable and clean energy), and 15 (Life on land) by 2030.

The SDI also suggests that progress is being made on Goal 16 (Peace, justice & strong institutions), though this is also one of the six SDGs furthest behind in absolute terms. The COVID-19 pandemic, and Guyana's political crisis of 2018-2020 (which culminated in attempts to fraudulently influence the outcome of elections) are almost certain to reveal setbacks to the SDG indicators in general, and Goal 16 in particular.

The SDI trend assessment suggests that ground is being lost for SDGs 8 (Decent work and economic growth) and 13 (Climate action). For SDGs 9 (Industry, innovation & infrastructure), 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), and 17 (Partnerships for the goals), their transformation is currently taking place at a significantly slower pace than is required to achieve the SDG target.



Figure 3: Sustainable Development Index - SDG Trends Analysis - Guyana, 2020

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: performance by SDG

Data gaps are a significant challenge in charting developmental progress. A 2018 CARICOM Secretariat report on 109 'Core SDG Indicators' found that 61 per cent of indicators were available from Guyana's national statistical system. No data was available in 38 per cent of cases.²

In its 2019 VNR, Guyana found that some SDG data in the required international format were available for 16 of the 17 *Goals* overall (only for Goal 12, Responsible Consumption and Production was no data available). At the individual indicator level, information was available

for 16 per cent of the approved global indicators while proxy (i.e. national) indicators accounted for 26 per cent of the data overall. However, for more than half of the indicators (58 per cent), data was unavailable (Figure 4).³

Because of its criticality in identifying people and communities and its importance to a wide range of governance and evidence-informed policy issues, Guyana's stated determination to strengthen its statistical capacities and extend the range of tracked SDG indicators represents an important commitment to sustainable development in itself.

Figure 1: Availability of SDG Indicators by Goal, Guyana: 2019

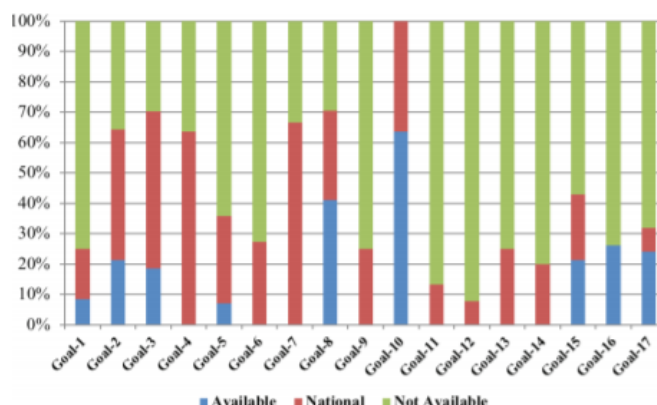


Figure 4: Voluntary National Review - SDG Data Availability Assessment

The following section presents a summary of Guyana's progress by individual SDG. This summary is supported by detailed analysis which is not included in this report. Typically, Guyana's 2019 Voluntary National Review of SDG progress is the first point of reference. This is supplemented by reference to additional sources where applicable, and the section begins with the Sustainable Development Index's high-level summary of Guyana's progress towards Agenda 2030 across 100 SDG-related indicators. These are consistent with (though not always identical to) the 231 unique SDG Indicators and are set out below (Figure 5).

GUYANA

Performance by Indicator

SDG1 – No Poverty				SDG9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure			
Value	Year	Rating	Trend	Value	Year	Rating	Trend
Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90/day (%)	2.5	2020	● ↑	Population using the internet (%)	37.3	2017	● →
Poverty headcount ratio at \$3.20/day (%)	4.5	2020	● ↑	Mobile broadband subscriptions (per 100 population)	26.4	2017	● ↑
SDG2 – Zero Hunger				Logistics Performance Index: Quality of trade and transport-related infrastructure (worst 1–5 best)	2.1	2018	● ↓
Prevalence of undernourishment (%)	8.1	2017	● ↑	The Times Higher Education Universities Ranking: Average score of top 3 universities (worst 0–100 best)	0.0	2020	● ●
Prevalence of stunting in children under 5 years of age (%)	12.0	2014	● ↑	Scientific and technical journal articles (per 1,000 population)	0.0	2018	● →
Prevalence of wasting in children under 5 years of age (%)	6.4	2014	● →	Expenditure on research and development (% of GDP)	NA	NA	● ●
Prevalence of obesity, BMI ≥ 30 (% of adult population)	20.2	2016	● ↓	SDG10 – Reduced Inequalities			
Human Trophic Level (best 2–3 worst)	2.2	2017	● ↑	Gini coefficient adjusted for top income	NA	NA	● ●
Cereal yield (tonnes per hectare of harvested land)	3.6	2017	● ↑	SDG11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities			
Sustainable Nitrogen Management Index (best 0–1.41 worst)	0.7	2015	● ↓	Annual mean concentration of particulate matter of less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5) (µg/m³)	22.4	2017	● →
SDG3 – Good Health and Well-Being				Access to improved water source, piped (% of urban population)	86.8	2017	● →
Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births)	169	2017	● →	Satisfaction with public transport (%)	71.8	2007	● ●
Neonatal mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	18.2	2018	● ↑	SDG12 – Responsible Consumption and Production			
Mortality rate, under-5 (per 1,000 live births)	30.1	2018	● ↑	Municipal solid waste (kg/capita/day)	2.4	2010	● ●
Incidence of tuberculosis (per 100,000 population)	83.0	2018	● →	Electronic waste (kg/capita)	6.1	2016	● ●
New HIV infections (per 1,000 uninfected population)	0.5	2018	● →	Production-based SO ₂ emissions (kg/capita)	438.2	2012	● ●
Age-standardized death rate due to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, or chronic respiratory disease in adults aged 30–70 years (%)	30.5	2016	● →	SO ₂ emissions embodied in imports (kg/capita)	134.3	2012	● ●
Age-standardized death rate attributable to household air pollution and ambient air pollution (per 100,000 population)	108	2016	● ●	Production-based nitrogen emissions (kg/capita)	234.2	2010	● ●
Traffic deaths (per 100,000 population)	24.6	2016	● ↓	Nitrogen emissions embodied in imports (kg/capita)	166.9	2010	● ●
Life expectancy at birth (years)	66.2	2016	● →	SDG13 – Climate Action			
Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 adolescent females aged 15 to 19)	74.4	2017	● →	Energy-related CO ₂ emissions (tCO ₂ /capita)	2.7	2017	● →
Births attended by skilled health personnel (%)	85.7	2014	● ●	CO ₂ emissions embodied in imports (tCO ₂ /capita)	36.7	2015	● ↓
Percentage of surviving infants who received 2 WHO-recommended vaccines (%)	95	2018	● ↑	CO ₂ emissions embodied in fossil fuel exports (kg/capita)	0.0	2018	● ●
Universal health coverage (UHC) index of service coverage (worst 0–100 best)	72.0	2017	● ↑	SDG14 – Life Below Water			
Subjective well-being (average ladder score, worst 0–10 best)	6.0	2007	● ●	Mean area that is protected in marine sites important to biodiversity (%)	NA	NA	● ●
SDG4 – Quality Education				Ocean Health Index: Clean Waters score (worst 0–100 best)	74.8	2019	● ↑
Net primary enrollment rate (%)	93.1	2012	● ●	Fish caught from overexploited or collapsed stocks (% of total catch)	35.4	2014	● ↑
Lower secondary completion rate (%)	79.1	2010	● ●	Fish caught by trawling (%)	54.8	2014	● ↓
Literacy rate (% of population aged 15 to 24)	96.7	2014	● ●	Marine biodiversity threats embodied in imports (per million population)	5.4	2018	● ●
SDG5 – Gender Equality				SDG15 – Life on Land			
Demand for family planning satisfied by modern methods (% of females aged 15 to 49 who are married or in unions)	51.5	2014	● →	Mean area that is protected in terrestrial sites important to biodiversity (%)	NA	NA	● ●
Ratio of female-to-male mean years of education received (%)	111.3	2018	● ↑	Mean area that is protected in freshwater sites important to biodiversity (%)	NA	NA	● ●
Ratio of female-to-male labor force participation rate (%)	56.2	2019	● →	Red List Index of species survival (worst 0–1 best)	0.9	2019	● ↑
Seats held by women in national parliament (%)	31.9	2019	● →	Permanent deforestation (% of forest area, 5-year average)	0.0	2018	● ●
SDG6 – Clean Water and Sanitation				Terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity threats embodied in imports (per million population)	47.2	2018	● ●
Population using at least basic drinking water services (%)	95.5	2017	● ↑	SDG16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions			
Population using at least basic sanitation services (%)	85.8	2017	● →	Homicides (per 100,000 population)	14.8	2017	● ↑
Freshwater withdrawal (% of available freshwater resources)	3.3	2010	● ●	Unsented detainees (% of prison population)	32.1	2018	● ↑
Anthropogenic wastewater that receives treatment (%)	0.0	2018	● ●	Percentage of population who feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live (%)	46.7	2007	● ●
Scarce water consumption embodied in imports (m³/capita)	101.6	2013	● ↑	Property Rights (worst 1–7 best)	NA	NA	● ●
SDG7 – Affordable and Clean Energy				Birth registrations with civil authority (% of children under age 5)	88.7	2018	● ●
Population with access to electricity (%)	90.9	2017	● ↑	Corruption Perception Index (worst 0–100 best)	40	2019	● ↑
Population with access to clean fuels and technology for cooking (%)	74.5	2016	● ↑	Children involved in child labor (% of population aged 5 to 14)	18.3	2016	● ●
CO ₂ emissions from fuel combustion for electricity and heating per total electricity output (MtCO ₂ /TWh)	NA	NA	● ●	Exports of major conventional weapons (TIV constant million USD per 100,000 population)	0.0	2019	● ●
SDG8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth				Press Freedom Index (best 0–100 worst)	26.6	2019	● ↑
Adjusted GDP growth (%)	-1.9	2018	● ●	SDG17 – Partnerships for the Goals			
Victims of modern slavery (per 1,000 population)	2.6	2018	● ●	Government spending on health and education (% of GDP)	8.6	2016	● →
Adults with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider (% of population aged 15 or over)	NA	NA	● ●	For high-income and all OECD DAC countries: International concessional public finance, including official development assistance (% of GNI)	NA	NA	● ●
Unemployment rate (% of total labor force)	11.9	2019	● →	Other countries: Government revenue excluding grants (% of GDP)	NA	NA	● ●
Fatal work-related accidents embodied in imports (per 100,000 population)	20.1	2010	● ↓	Corporate Tax Haven Score (best 0–100 worst)	0.0	2019	● ●

* Imputed data point

Figure 5: Sustainable Development Index - Summary by Indicator: Guyana, 2020

SDG 1: No poverty

Extreme poverty (SDG 1) has been reduced markedly over the last 25 years to less than 3 percent. Progress since 2010 (when 8.8 percent of the population were in extreme poverty) has been significant.⁴ When the US\$3.20 per day poverty line is applied, the proportion of the population living in poverty is 4.47 per cent.⁵ The 2014 Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) shows that 3.4 per cent of the population is multidimensionally poor (i.e. poor in terms of health and education and living standards). The combined factors of the 2020 political crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the widespread national flooding of 2021 will likely increase poverty vulnerability.

SDG 2: Zero hunger

Guyana continues to reduce rates of undernourishment, and the incidence of stunting and wasting in Guyana continues to fall. Prevalence of anaemia amongst pregnant women came down from 23 per cent in 2015 to 17.1 per cent in 2018 and only a very small proportion of the population (0.4 percent, 2018) are severely malnourished. Meanwhile, prevalence of stunting among children under 5 is at 1.5 per cent, wasting at 0.2 per cent. By contrast, the prevalence of malnutrition (overweight) stands at 2.9 per cent⁶: this is a source of concern given its implications for the prevalence of non-communicable diseases.

Agriculture remains critical to Guyana's long-term prosperity. In 2021, Guyana embraced the opportunity to participate in national, regional and international dialogues on food systems as part of the Global Summit, recognising that food security and food chains present solutions to domestic poverty and health challenges: they also offer national and export markets to Guyana's farming and aquaculture communities.

Guyana's Sustainable Nitrogen Management Index of 0.71 (2015)⁷ remains largely unchanged over the last 20 years, and is just one measure of the potentially harmful effects of commercial agriculture on the environment.

SDG 3: Good health

The recognition of health as a human right, efforts to achieve comprehensive healthcare coverage, and high vaccination levels among the infant population are notable achievements, whilst advances are being made in reducing neonatal and under-five mortality. However, maternal mortality rates remain elevated, and trends with respect to non-communicable diseases are a concern. Rates of both traffic-related deaths and suicide are high and, as a result, require greater focus to be placed on substance abuse and mental health.

SDG 4: Quality education

Guyana continues to invest heavily in children's education, and rates of enrolment and literacy are high. Educational attainment in Mathematics and English particularly among boys at the

⁴ (Sachs, et al., Sustainable Development Index: Dashboards, 2020b)

⁵ (Sachs, et al., Sustainable Development Index: Dashboards, 2020b).

⁶ Other datasets offer different findings. At a technical level, further work is required to ensure that Guyana's nationally-reported progress is reflected in global scoring and ranking systems. For example, the Sustainable Development Index puts undernourishment among the population at large at 8.1 per cent for 2017. Reporting by FAO in 2020 estimates the prevalence of undernourishment in Guyana at 5.7 per cent for the period 2017-19. The SDI estimates rates of stunting and wasting among children under 5 at 13.4 per cent and 6.2 per cent respectively. As of 2016, the SDI puts rates of obesity among the population at 20 per cent. See: (Sachs, et al., Sustainable Development Index: Dashboards, 2020b).

⁷ (Sachs, et al., Sustainable Development Index: Dashboards, 2020b)

secondary level is lower than regional averages. Access (both to classrooms and online resources) poses challenges in Guyana's hinterland. The government recognises the need to reduce student-teacher ratios and update teachers' qualifications and pedagogical skills.

SDG 5: Gender equality

Women and girls in Guyana experience very high rates of sexual and gender-based violence. This comparative insecurity detracts from the advances made in the educational attainment of women and girls and in political engagement (more than a third of the country's parliamentarians are women). Women's participation in the income-generating economy is substantially lower than men, and wage disparities outside the public sector are high, despite women being more qualified.

SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation

Guyana has abundant freshwater sources and can provide a high proportion of its population with access to improved water sources. There remains space to scale up the testing of water quality. With a limited sewerage network, the majority of Guyana's sanitation provision is via pit latrines and septic tanks, and the country has no wastewater treatment facility. As such, the wastewater disposal elements of SDG 6 require the most attention.

SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy

Clean cooking fuels (electricity and gas) are available to the majority of the Guyanese population. Renewable energy generation has also been increased, notably through photovoltaic installations, though the country's immense potential for renewable energy generation (in solar, wind and hydro) is yet to be achieved. The construction of a gas-fired power station using gas from the off-shore oil holds the promise of reducing energy costs for domestic and commercial consumers and presents a cleaner alternative to existing heavy diesel oil in the short term.

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth

In the short- to medium-term, economic growth is assured owing to the rapid expansion of the oil and gas sectors. Unemployment rates remain elevated, and there are significant economic participation and wage disparities between men and women. Small business owners continue to find the cost of credit high. Guyana has the scope to enhance the 'decency' of employment by extending protective labour rights, enforcing laws to eliminate discriminatory practices, and reducing the incidence of workplace accidents.

SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure

Industry and manufacturing (particularly in Guyana's non-oil economy where there is more job creation potential) remain critical to the country's long-term prosperity. The country has invested in improving basic infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Even so, logistical costs remain high for businesses, constraining exports. Internet connectivity is not yet universal. In order to advance all sectors of the economy along regional and international value chains, Guyana's production of high quality research and innovation must increase.

SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

Estimates suggest that levels of income inequality are high. An updated household poverty survey would serve to better determine levels of inequality. The rapid growth of the oil and gas

sector is both an opportunity and a risk for correcting inequalities or creating new ones, respectively. Social protection programme coverage and value have grown steadily, though not sufficiently to correct income inequalities. Remittance transaction costs remain above target levels, affecting the poor disproportionately. Constitutional provisions and legal codes prohibit discriminatory practices, though reporting across several population segments suggests that sex, sexuality, age, disability, ethnicity, and migrant status can affect welfare and wellbeing.

SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities

Approximately one-quarter of Guyana's population lives in urban areas. National estimates suggest that around 15 per cent of the population live in informal settlements, which are comparatively underserved by services and amenities. Guyana's formalising and regularising of human settlements is made more urgent by the long-term high demand for housing. Guyana has not yet met air quality standards in urban areas, while its capacity to sustainably manage solid wastes and wastewater is also a concern.

SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production

Guyana's efficiency in material consumption per unit of GDP has improved over time, and its consumption of primary forest materials has also reduced since 2015. Regulatory measures in the mining sector are indicative of efforts to make production methods more sustainable. However, estimates of sulphur dioxide emissions and nitrogen emissions (both from production and imports) remain significantly above SDG targets. Further efforts are required to eliminate the use of mercury in mining. In 2011-2013, fuel subsidies in Guyana were estimated at 1.7 per cent of GDP⁸ and at 0.96 per cent of GDP in 2019.⁹ Accordingly, Guyana's pledge to end fossil fuel subsidies is a welcome sign of intent.

SDG 13: Climate action

The consequences of climate and environmental change in Guyana are significant, and the country has invested heavily in climate-resilient infrastructure and participatory disaster risk preparedness. In addition, by protecting the Guiana Shield from deforestation (SDG 15), the country is preserving a vast carbon sink. By contrast, carbon dioxide emissions per capita (resulting from imports, domestic production and oil and gas production) are rising quickly. SDG 13 also measures carbon dioxide emissions embodied in Guyana's fossil fuel exports.

SDG 14: Life below water

Guyana's coastal waters are clean and biodiverse relative to the global average, but cleanliness has declined, and performance is weaker with respect to the sustainability of ocean-related food production. Steps initiated to strengthen coastal zone protection, restore coastal mangrove forests, and combat fishing practices known to be unsustainable need to be accelerated. There remains substantial ground to make up: as a result of the practices of both the domestic and international fleets (including illegal practices) fishing remains unsustainable. In addition, only 1 per cent of Guyana's coastal zones are protected, and mangrove forest restoration is so far inadequate to compensate for losses. Mitigating and managing the risk of oil spills is a new and urgent imperative.

⁸ (IMF, 2015).

⁹ (UN Statistics Division, 2019).

SDG 15: Life on land

Rainforest protection in Guyana is a remarkable success story, and 87 per cent of the country remains forested, and deforestation rates are low. The biodiversity of species within the rainforests has also been preserved. Ongoing challenges are the management of unregulated or artisanal mining operations (and use of mercury) and the continued engagement of Guyana's indigenous communities in rainforest management.

SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

Measures of democracy, media freedom, political participation and corruption have improved over the long term. Guyana has also achieved success in reducing the risks of money laundering and trafficking-in-persons on its soil. Indicative of challenges to security and safety, rates of homicide are high, and public perceptions indicate persistent and prevalent concerns about crime and insecurity. In addition, abuse of children and sexual and gender-based violence remains high. The proportion of unsentenced detainees is indicative of capacity challenges in the courts. In 2020, Guyana's democratic and judicial institutions withstood a severe attempt at subversion. Increased capacity of the public administration will enhance implementation of government policy.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals

Guyana has transformed its fiscal position through prudent economic management. In time, oil revenues, if managed for the long-term, will provide additional fiscal space to invest domestic resources in sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs. The last decade has tended to see increased investments in health and education, though expenditure on social protection does not yet offer a universal social protection 'floor'. Guyana's main strategic challenge is the conversion of revenues into improved human development outcomes and reduced inequality. Governance and implementation capacities need to be strengthened. Investments in statistical institutions and data analysis capabilities will be crucial for identifying Guyana's most marginalised communities and assessing progress. International technical assistance and international finance (notably climate finance), if properly deployed, will continue to contribute to the mitigation of economic and climate/environment shocks that Guyana faces.

2) Impacts of COVID-19 on SDG Progress

In 2020, the non-oil economy contracted by more than 7 per cent, and government revenues declined by 15 per cent. Rates of unemployment have increased from 12.8 per cent at the end of Q1 2020 to 15.6 per cent a year later. Rates of youth unemployment in 2021 were 31.4 per cent, and the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training rose from 34.3 per cent to 35.9 per cent in the year 2020-21. The available evidence indicates a greater incidence of food insecurity and changes in dietary and other consumption habits due to the pandemic. In addition, there have been major impacts on learning, with large numbers of children unable to attend school and temporarily or permanently unable to use online learning resources.

3) Leaving no one behind and social inclusion

The UN's conceptual 'leave no-one behind' model proposes five factors that might result in particular segments of the population being marginalised from national development: (i) governance; (ii) socio-economic status; (iii) geography; (iv) discrimination, and (v) vulnerability to shocks.

This CCA considers how these dimensions apply to multiple segments of Guyana's population, namely (a) women and girls; (b) men and boys; (c) children and youth; (d) indigenous peoples; (e) lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons; (f) prisoners and detainees; (g) migrants and other vulnerable foreign persons; (h) other ethnicities.

With respect to governance, Guyana's ratification of many international conventions, paired with Constitutional provisions and the domestic legal framework, provides a solid commitment to social justice, equality, inclusion and non-discrimination. Guyana is not a State Party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Some groups face disparities in their fundamental rights (e.g. LGBTQI persons). More generally, the more significant challenge in governance terms appears to be the capacity of public administrative bodies to collect accurate and timely data and then tailor and adapt specific services such that they reach the most marginalised.

Next, with respect to geography, rural areas tend to be comparatively poorer than urban areas, and rural areas in the hinterland tend to be poorer than rural areas on the coastal plains. In turn, Guyana's indigenous peoples, living predominantly in hinterland areas, are more likely than other population segments to experience multi-dimensional poverty (i.e. combinations of deficits in health, education, and living standards).

Regarding socio-economic status, the significant numbers of people working in Guyana's informal (and informal services) sectors merit particular attention as they typically fall outside social protection mechanisms. Additionally, once categorised in the informal sector, these persons find it more challenging to gain the skills needed to find better or higher 'value added' jobs. Unemployment rates and the proportion of youths not in employment, education or training (NEET) also suggest that Guyana's younger people generally find it challenging to locate themselves in labour markets. Female-headed households tend to have lower levels of income than male-headed households.

Measured by numbers of people affected, and by effects on health, security and income, a reasonable assumption is that the most prevalent form of discrimination is towards women.

Regarding vulnerability to shocks, poorer socio-economic segments of society are invariably the most at risk from exogenous shocks, such as global economic price shocks or climatic and weather-related events. Guyana's coastal zones (both rural and urban) appear to be at particular risk of coastal flooding, but the widespread inundations of 2021 have demonstrated that riverine communities across the country are at risk of natural hazards and climate-change-related disasters.

4) Humanitarian need, protection of vulnerable persons

Owing to its geography, migration patterns, and climatic and environmental hazards, Guyana and its international partners are periodically required to provide emergency assistance, humanitarian response, and durable solutions for people on Guyanese soil. In 2021, more than 45,000 households were affected by major nationwide floods during Guyana's rainy season, resulting in a domestic response supported by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). Climate change projections indicate that annual precipitation levels in Guyana may fall overall, but precipitation events are likely to be more intense. Meanwhile, sea level rises are likely to put large numbers of people living in coastal areas at risk, and in need of emergency assistance.

In addition, Guyana hosts significant numbers of migrants from Venezuela, Haiti and Cuba, all with varying needs for support. By the end of 2021, there are projected to be as many as 39,000 migrants from Venezuela. Nearly 80 per cent of migrants from Venezuela (as well as the 10,000 Guyanese that host them) require some form of support or assistance due to the precarity of their living conditions. Needs range from food and healthcare, protection services, documentation and registration, to educational access and livelihoods support.

5) Economic transformation

The start of oil production in Guyana, soon to be followed by gas production, presents the country with a wealth of opportunities, particularly because the country does not have a significant debt burden, thanks to a long period of disciplined economic management.

In addition, through multiple rounds of national strategic planning, Guyana has already determined a course for its transformation, committing itself to low carbon economic diversification, job creation, and progression towards Agenda 2030. Agriculture, agro-processing, aquaculture, manufacturing, services and tourism (among others) have all been identified as key growth sectors.

A number of the enablers of economic transformation are already well understood. These include strengthened human capital, notably higher levels of education, higher levels of technical and vocational skills, and coherent migration policies to ensure that Guyana can attract and deploy the most capable labour force.

Other enablers include major infrastructure projects (affordable energy, ICT, roads, and ports), an improved business environment, as well as international backing from public and private lenders and investors.

Furthermore, if the transformation is to be genuinely successful, Guyana will have to negotiate a series of challenges relating particularly to environmental sustainability and inclusion. The Low Carbon Development Strategy which was announced in November of this year provided the much needed anchor for this transformation.

6) SDG Financing

Though the effects of COVID-19 on the national economy have been significant (and resulted in growth in 2020 falling from a projected 80 percent to a little over 40 percent (due to falling oil prices and a slowdown in the traditional non-oil economy), Guyana still enjoys a promising macro-economic outlook for the medium- and long-term, and a favourable environment for financing sustainable development. This results from reductions in international public debt over two decades, tax policy and administration changes, ODA allocations, and, most recently, substantial additional revenues derived from oil production.

From 2010-2019 (i.e., immediately before oil production), Guyana's GNP rose from around US\$2.98 billion to \$US5.17 billion (an increase of 73.4 per cent). In the same period, total government revenues rose from 22 per cent to 25.8 per cent of GDP (a total increase of 17 per cent)¹⁰, although 2020 witnessed a 15.8 per cent downturn in government revenues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Looking ahead, domestic revenue mobilisation is likely to bounce back robustly: The IDB anticipates that oil revenues from the projects in Guyana's Stabroek block could generate some US\$49 billion in additional resource flows by 2055¹¹,

¹⁰ IMF. World Economic Outlook (WEO) Database, April 2021.

¹¹ (IDB, 2020d).

approximately US\$1.44 billion a year, equivalent to a doubling of the 2019 state budget, after sunk investment costs are recouped.

Central government debt, recorded as high as 461 per cent of GDP in 1993 and 183 per cent of GDP in 1997¹², stood at 43.8 per cent in 2019, well within sustainable levels, principally as a result of Guyana's successful engagement in debt relief programmes and continued fiscal discipline thereafter.¹³ Assuming a modest COVID-19 recovery and greater stability in oil prices, the IMF projects that debt could drop to less than 30 per cent of GDP over the next two years.

With respect to concessional development financing, Guyana has received an average of US\$121 million per year in ODA since 2000, or US\$112 million a year in the 5 years 2013-2018.¹⁴ Over time, assuming current systems for allocation endure, ODA is likely to decline both in relative and net terms, and Guyana will likely find it more difficult to secure loans on highly concessional terms. On the other hand, and notwithstanding global financial constraints exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, Guyana's new oil-producing status is attracting international loan financing for high-potential investments.

FDI has risen sharply from around 5 per cent of GDP in 2017 to almost 45 per cent of GDP in 2019, driven largely by oil and gas finds. Remittances as a proportion of GDP have fluctuated significantly, from less than 1 per cent in 1995 to nearly 25 per cent in 2005 before stabilising between 6 per cent and 8 per cent since 2013.

Fiscal space

Taken together, Guyana's improving economic fundamentals mean that the country is set to enjoy greater fiscal space than ever before. One simple expression of fiscal space, namely government revenues divided by total population, sees the state budget per citizen increasing from just over US\$1000 (2014) to a little over US\$1800 (2021).¹⁵

Guyana's positive outlook with respect to fiscal space has been hard-won and pre-dates oil and gas finds. Successive administrations have acknowledged that prudent fiscal management will be required if this position is to be protected. Assuming it is, the principal constraints on Guyana's ability to achieve the SDGs and fulfil its citizens' economic, social and cultural rights are less likely to be financial, but rather the quality of financial investments and management.

Investing in development

Although government expenditure can be assessed through the national budget by allocation per ministry, significant additional data analytics and synthesis are required to determine national expenditures across sectors and across SDGs, particularly where multiple ministries and agencies, and multiple layers (national, regional, local) of government are involved.

¹² (IMF, 1999)

¹³ Specifically the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) mechanism and Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI).

¹⁴ World Bank, World Development Indicators. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/DT.ODA.ODAT.PC.ZS?end=2018&locations=GY-XT-TT-NE-CD-SO-XM&start=1960&view=chart>

¹⁵ Domestic Revenue Mobilisation: Source: IMF. Available at: <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/guyana/forecast-government-revenue#:~:text=lt per cent20records per cent20an per cent20increase per cent20from,GYD per cent20bn per cent20in per cent20Dec per cent202025.&text=WEO per cent3A per cent20General per cent20Government per cent20Revenue>.

Guyana's 2019 VNR reports the country as directing 15.4 per cent of total government spending towards education, 12.6 per cent of total government spending on health, and 6.0 per cent on social protection (2017). This puts combined government expenditure on pro-poor social development sectors at 34.8 per cent of total government spending in 2017.

The World Bank's Human Capital Report, drawing on 2017 data, expresses Guyana's pro-poor development spending as a proportion of total GDP, suggesting that an equivalent of 3.1 per cent¹⁶ and 5.9 per cent of Guyana's GDP was invested in health and education in that year. WHO's 2010 advice is that it is "difficult to get universal health coverage at less than 4 percent - 5 per cent of GDP".

With respect to education, and using the Incheon Declaration, which sets an international standard of between 4 per cent and 6 per cent GDP equivalent as a recommended proportion of educational expenditure, Guyana is making sufficient financial investments in learning (World Bank, 2020f) (WHO, 2010) (UNESCO, 2015).

7) Peace, strong institutions, and Guyana's political economy

Guyana has a deep rooted history of constructive international engagement and partnership, as demonstrated by its record of convention signature and ratification, and participation in regional bodies such as CARICOM, the OAS, and the SIDS and Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) mechanisms. In 2020, Guyana successfully chaired the G77 and China group of nations, highlighting once again the urgency of the climate crisis and the need to revise climate finance architecture.

Democratic institutions have evolved markedly since the 1990s following electoral reforms instituted with international facilitation. Guyana's political institutions have withstood substantial pressures resulting from political discord, most recently in 2020, when the Supreme Court (and subsequently the Caribbean Court of Justice) was asked to adjudicate alleged attempts to subvert democracy.

Meanwhile, Guyana's protection of many fundamental political freedoms and civil liberties, backed by the establishment of constitutional rights and services commissions, are essential features of Guyana's governance landscape and are characteristic of efforts to boost inclusion and participation.

Governance challenges include the overall capacity of the public sector to respond to numerous domestic pressures and international demands placed upon it; and the political economy. Guyana has taken numerous steps to boost inclusion and root out discrimination. Given the dramatic expansion of the country's economy in the coming years, successive governments will continue to have to make deliberate efforts to ensure that Guyana's growth story is based on equity, inclusion and equality.

8) Risks and challenges

Climate & environment

First, regardless of how well it manages its own natural heritage, Guyana is vulnerable to severe climate-related risks, of which by far the most serious is flooding. Both Guyana's interior/riverine areas and coastal plains are susceptible to flooding, the former owing to intense or extended rainfall, and the latter because much of Guyana's coastal zone lies below

¹⁶ FACTCHECK: MoF record a figure of 4.19 per cent using 2012 as the base year.

sea level. Guyana's coastal water management systems are dependent upon canals and sluices, themselves reliant upon low tides to expel water into the sea. As sea levels rise, these systems become less able to cope with extreme rainfall events and the costs of pumping excess water increase. Separately, sea-level rise increases the likelihood of seawater ingress and saline contamination of coastal and agricultural zones. At this stage of the international climate crisis, climate change trends are largely beyond Guyana's control. Guyana requires big investments in major disaster and climate change resilient infrastructure.

Secondly, economic development in Guyana must take a holistic and integrated view of the three main elements of Guyana's environmental equation: these elements are (i) the rainforests of the Guiana Shield; (ii) the carbon neutrality of national economic diversification; and (iii) the production of oil and gas in the Guyana-Suriname basin and its global heating effects at the point of consumption. The Low Carbon Development Strategy provides an integrated view of Guyana's environmental equation, anticipates risks and aligns Guyana with global goals.

Resource Wealth

Lastly, Guyana will face a major test in the overall management of the national economy, and specifically natural resource revenues. This requires a level of skill and care that few countries with comparable resource endowments have demonstrated. If Guyana spends its oil wealth too slowly, it will not be able to achieve the SDGs. Spend it too quickly, and there are risks that the injection of cash into the economy will undermine competitiveness and result in an unbalanced and unsustainable economic model. Guyana's establishment of a Natural Resource Fund with robust governance arrangements is a promising start to ensuring continued financial responsibility: complementing existing arrangements with establishing a formal 'fiscal rule' to control expenditures would provide further assurances and confidence. Resource rich countries also face escalated corruption risks, sapping public trust in institutions and undermining competitiveness. Guyana will need to ensure the highest standards of transparency to identify and penalise corrupt practices.