

**USAID Abbreviated Report**  
**MORE RESPONSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE AND RULE OF LAW**  
**IN GUYANA**  
**Grant No. 504-A-00-00-00110-00**  
**April 1, 2001-June 30, 2001**

Years of controversial elections, undemocratic rule and racial tensions in Guyana have led to weakened government institutions and to public disenchantment with the political system. General Elections took place on March 19, 2001, resulted in a win by the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) by 11 percent of the vote. Following the elections, incidents of civil unrest and claims that people were disenfranchised in predominantly Afro-Guyanese communities resulted in violence and vandalism. Although bi-partisan initiatives have taken place since the elections, fragile democratic institutions, a centralized power structure and highly politicized racial divisions and frustrations with the political process still threaten democratic stability in Guyana.

On January 11, 2000, USAID awarded a multi-year Cooperative Agreement to the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) for a program to achieve "More Responsive and Participatory Governance and Rule of Law in Guyana." In cooperation with its partners, The Carter Center (TCC) and the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), NDI has undertaken efforts to strengthen the legislature, civil society, local government, justice system and electoral process. During this reporting period, TCC assumed responsibility for USAID/Guyana's Intermediate Result (IR) 4 in its entirety by incorporating civil society work in the empowerment of women, which was previously under the responsibility of NDI.

This report complements the abbreviated report covering activities and results from the period of January 27 to March 31, 2001. It also complements two previous semi-annual reports, as well as the "Performance Monitoring Plan Review." In this period, the Partners achieved the following results:

- Began discussions with Speaker Ralph Ramkarran, Deputy Speaker Clarisa Rhiel and Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Repu Dman Persaud regarding parliamentary assistance;
- Assisted the Registrar in placing qualified personnel in required positions;
- Planned three separate events for youth, women's groups and Amerindians to enhance skills;
- Organized five strategic planning exercises for target civil society groups;
- Sent technical advisors to review the contract between De la Rue and Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) for identification card production equipment;
- Sent technical advisors to help Information System Department (ISD) develop preliminary results reporting and results publication databases;
- Monitored the GECOM Secretariat's process of developing an electoral calendar and detailed work plan;

- Produced a report, *Local Democracy in Guyana – An analysis of recommendations for Reform and an Outline of Program Activities and Strategies*, incorporating recommendations, priorities and strategies for 2002;
- Hosted a forum on June 27, 2001, to develop a strategy for increasing participation by women in the local government; and
- Developed a strategic plan for August 2001 to June 2002 based on recommendations given during the June 27, 2001, forum.

The Partners' activities under this Agreement build upon more than 30 years of collective experience in the promotion of democracy in Guyana and worldwide.

## **IR1 Improved and More Informed Law and Regulation-Making**

### **I. Background**

As a result of the constitutional reform process, there is a commitment from both the government and opposition to develop a permanent parliamentary committee structure. Such a structure would help advance greater debate and transparency for legislation under consideration by the parliament. However, until July, Conditions Precedent (CPs) prevented NDI work with the parliament.

### **II. Key Accomplishments During the Reporting Period**

#### *IR1.1 Increased Technical Capacity for Law-Making and Regulations*

##### **Guyana Association of Women Lawyers (GAWL): Public Education on the Constitution**

The Guyana Association of Women Lawyers (GAWL) is implementing a program to educate the public about the new Constitution, particularly the election system. The one focus during this reporting period project is the publication of pamphlets/booklets utilizing the material used in the training sessions. Illustrations will be included for each topic to reach semi-literate and illiterate persons. This program complements activities under IR4 designed to improve the status of women and strengthen women's organizations.

### **Results**

- Dozens of participants, including individuals from rural and interior communities, attended meetings organized by GAWL throughout the regions. Women have shown the greatest interest in attending the events. Participants at every session, especially in Mahaicony, requested information on domestic violence, property rights and family law. They also requested assistance in implementing legal aid facilities. Issues of police brutality and discrimination in relation to Constitution rights were highlighted.
- GAWL is developing a booklet that will highlight the recent Constitutional reforms. This booklet will be distributed throughout the region.

- Facilitators were urged to return for additional sessions that will not only discuss the Constitution, but also other areas of law that have impacted on their lives. The Constitutional discussions reflected that Guyanese citizens are interested in acquiring additional information about other legal issues.

### **Challenges**

- Although some workshops in the regions have had a good attendance of approximately 30 participants, others have been poorly attended. GAWL has recognized this problem and plans to work with local organizations in the region in order to increase outreach and attract a broader audience.
- GAWL has struggled to improve their educational methodologies to make their messages accessible to a broad range of citizens. In order to do this, GAWL will need to present the material in a manner in which the participants can relate. In the past, GAWL has used technical legal terms, which has made their presentations difficult to interpret by some audiences.

### *IR1.2 Law/Regulation-Making Procedures Regarding Public Input Improved*

#### **Legislative Strengthening**

With the lifting of the conditions precedent, NDI began discussions about parliamentary assistance with Speaker Ralph Ramkarran, Deputy Speaker Clarisa Rhiel and Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Repu Dman Persaud. All welcomed assistance in developing committees, strengthening legislative drafting abilities, and possible development of specialized committees, such as a women's caucus.

Minister Persaud invited NDI to assist him in identifying measures that would strengthen the workings and role of parliament, including conducting orientation programs with new members and examining comparative committee systems and their applicability to the Guyana National Assembly. There remains some confusion about who should take the lead on drafting legislation, even though the Office of Chief of Parliamentary Council currently holds this responsibility. There is limited to no capacity at the ministry level for drafting legislation, and none within the office of the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs.

#### **Results**

- NDI obtained interest and commitment on the part of senior parliamentary leaders for NDI assistance in areas of committee structure, legislative drafting, and special committees/caucuses. NDI has begun planning with the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs on determining specific mechanisms of assistance.

#### **Challenges**

- The timing regarding a parliamentary orientation for new members on topics such as legislative procedures, committee organization, legislative ethics and assembly resources remains a challenge because members typically will be in Georgetown only on days that the National Assembly is in session.

- Before steps can be taken to address the institutional ability of Parliament to draft legislation, the issue of whose responsibility this will be must be clarified. The Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel is part of the Ministry of Legal Affairs, and is currently solely responsible for drafting the majority of legislation. The Constitutional Reform recommendation would see legislative drafting responsibility devolved to the National Assembly in order to exert influence over the Executive.

### **III. Conclusion and Future Activities**

NDI plans to continue to build its Legislative Strengthening program. Although there has been limited progress in the past due to the Conditions Precedent, NDI has had several meetings with members of Parliament on mechanisms for future NDI assistance. Based upon previous meetings with political leadership, NDI will develop an agenda regarding the creation of Standing Committees. NDI also plans to work with parliamentary leadership to continue developing a parliamentary website and will coordinate an orientation program for new members with the assistance of the Clerk of the National Assembly. This orientation program would take place during the traditional recess period between August and October. In addition, NDI will continue to support GAWL and is considering adapting the model to other areas of law.

## **IR2 Increased Capacity to Resolve Disputes in a Timely Manner**

### **I. Background**

The Carter Center's efforts to increase the capacity of the judicial system to resolve disputes in a timely manner were limited during this reporting period, but there was some significant progress in underlying factors relevant to this Results Package. Although the CPs were not satisfied by the Government of Guyana, progress was made to reduce the CPs to sub-intermediate conditions, which will enable The Carter Center to achieve greater impact in this area during the next reporting cycle. Activities with the Court Registry and Library remained restricted by the conditions.

Two key judicial appointments were made in May. Desiree Bernard was sworn in as the new Chancellor, and Carl Singh began his tenure as the new Chief Justice. These leaders have demonstrated a keen interest in judicial reform and have asked The Carter Center to provide technical assistance with improving the case management systems and judicial performance through workshops and conferences for judges and provision of information and guidance about Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and other topics.

During June the new Chancellor and Chief Justice were settling into their positions, and many lawyers and judges were preoccupied in advance of the July-August vacation period, when many courts are closed and many legal and judicial personnel go out of town. In addition, the change in the status of the CPs had not been formalized through an amendment to the Cooperative Agreement. Therefore, it was not appropriate to initiate any significant new activities during this reporting period.

Notwithstanding the inability to undertake any structured or formal activities, efforts on an individual basis with judges and court personnel were made in order to continue discussions of judicial reform and to introduce ideas and information on the subject to individuals in the judicial and legal communities. The new Chancellor and Chief Justice initiated some positive action on the basis of discussions with and information provided by The Carter Center.

## **II. Key Accomplishments During the Reporting Period**

### *IR2.1 More efficient judicial processes developed*

#### **Core Judicial Advisory Group**

The Core Judicial Advisory Group will help guide the planning and implementation of The Carter Center's judicial reform activities. Additional discussions about the Advisory Group were held during this reporting period with the new Chief Justice and Chancellor, leaders of the Guyana Bar Association and the Guyana Association of Women Lawyers, and several Senior Counsellors.

#### **Results**

- The Carter Center continued to identify appropriate members of the Core Judicial Advisory Group and began to plan an event to inaugurate the Group when the courts reopen in September or October.

#### **Challenges**

- The Carter Center needed to withhold official invitations, based on the advice of the new Chancellor and Chief Justice, and pending the end of the court vacation season and the selection of a new Field Office Director responsible for carrying forward any activities planned with the Core Group.

### *IR2.2 Management and administration capacity of courts strengthened, particularly for case flow management and court registry*

The Carter Center did not progress toward achieving this sub-IR during this period in concrete, measurable ways. However, a small constituency of reform is growing as a result of continued discussion with key judicial figures and key Senior Counsellors on the concepts of case flow management; ADR; and establishing trial court performance standards, whereby judges take a stronger role in defining the expected performance of the court and reorganize themselves to achieve their goals. Steps toward specific progress are already being taken by the new Chancellor and Chief Justice, and some members of the judiciary and legal profession are speaking publicly about the potential for progress with the leadership of these two individuals.

#### **Assistance to Leadership and Registrar**

The process of hiring a Deputy Registrar, Court Manager and Court Librarian remains stalled. A local consultant hired by The Carter Center drafted job descriptions for each position and the Court Manager position was advertised once in the local *Stabroek News*. A shortlist of candidates was chosen, but no interviews were held and no further progress was made. Carter

Center activity during this reporting period sought to renew the hiring process through discussions with the Registrar, the Chief Justice, the Chancellor and key government officials.

### **Results**

- The Carter Center wrote a summary of the Registrar's progress towards hiring three qualified personnel in the required positions and the Registrar approved of this written summary. This document was circulated to the new Chief Justice and Chancellor, who expressed surprise at the lack of progress in the hiring process. The Registrar is now under increasing pressure to push the hiring process forward.
- Partly as a result of a series of discussions with Carter Center personnel, both the Chancellor and Chief Justice spoke during this reporting period to the Registrar and key government officials on several occasions to emphasize their shared conviction that qualified personnel must be hired immediately.

### **Challenges**

- The Registrar is universally acknowledged to be one of the primary obstacles in the process of hiring the personnel needed to satisfy the CPs. The Carter Center's efforts to record her position on the hiring process and to share these opinions with key judicial officials are designed to create a demand within the judicial system for positive action by the Registrar.
- The reduced CPs continued to prevent other activities directly with the Registrar.

### **Assistance in Specific Programs Related to Sound Court Management and Case Flow Management Practices**

Chief Justice Carl Singh held many discussions with The Carter Center during the past year, when he was a Justice, and received from The Carter Center many documents and suggestions about websites relevant to case management and related themes. Chief Justice Singh began putting some of these ideas into practice during his first six weeks in his new position.

### **Results**

- After being sworn in, Chief Justice Singh immediately asked for an inventory of backlogged cases from each judge and initiated a better system to manage the case overload during this difficult interim period. He is considering whether to impose a moratorium on assignments of new cases until judges clear their current backlog to an acceptable number of cases.
- Chief Justice Singh began to hold regular meetings with the Registrar and with all members of the judiciary to articulate his vision for changes in the way the courts will conduct business.
- Chief Justice Singh indicated that he has been relying heavily on documents and information provided by the Carter Center in formulating his approach to judicial reform.

The Carter Center responded to further requests for publications on relevant themes, including providing copies of the 1995 UK *Access to Justice* report on case management.

### **Challenges**

- Coordination and cooperation with the Registrar are essential for the success of any initiatives undertaken by the Chief Justice and the Chancellor. These judicial officials will also face challenges from judges and lawyers, who must alter their standard practices in order to improve the management of cases through the system.

#### *IR2.3 Increased capacity to address case backlogs through examination and application of promising alternatives such as ADR*

The Carter Center did not progress toward achieving this sub-IR during this period for the reasons described above, including the fact that the Chief Justice and the Chancellor were sworn in towards the end of this reporting period and needed some time to organize themselves in their new positions. Some progress was made towards addressing the issue of case backlogs, as described above, but the timing was not appropriate to pursue the ADR alternative, except by sharing additional documents and information about web sites related to ADR.

### **III. Conclusions and Future Activities**

The reduction of the CPs to sub-intermediate conditions at the end of the reporting period is a significant step forward and will allow The Carter Center to conduct activities with the judiciary and the broader legal community in the near future. The appointments of the new Chancellor and Chief Justice are also very positive developments. These leaders will be instrumental in the process of reforming the Guyanese judiciary. Many people in the legal community were heartened by these appointments and a small, but increasingly vocal, constituency for reform is growing.

The Registrar remains an obstacle to progress in hiring the three court personnel required to eliminate the CPs. However, the two new judicial leaders are putting pressure on the Registrar and government officials to move forward with the hiring process. In addition, there has been some progress toward the collection of baseline data relevant to this IR. The Registrar is expected to provide her Annual Report to The Carter Center in July 2001, and the Chief Justice is completing an inventory and analysis of each judge's current case load.

The Carter Center will take advantage of this positive momentum during the remainder of this reporting period and in the development of next year's Workplan. The establishment of the Core Judicial Advisory Group is a priority. This group will help define the issues of primary concern to the judicial and legal communities, and will help strategize and plan an approach for the next year. The Carter Center also will begin to organize workshops for judges and others in the legal field on topics such as the relevance of technology to case management. During August, the Chief Justice will attend a Court Technology Conference in Baltimore, Maryland, hosted by the National Center for State Courts. In addition, the Chancellor has requested help from The Carter Center to organize a Judicial Conference in Guyana that would include educational

sessions focused on court management, Judicial Codes of Conduct, and other themes relevant to the judicial system's capacity to resolve disputes in a timely manner.

### **IR3 Sustained institutional capacity to conduct free and fair elections**

#### **I. Background**

The International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) provided technical assistance to the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) and the Elections Secretariat in preparation for the 2001 national elections. After initial stakeholder meetings in March 2000, IFES began its assistance by sending its first technical team to Guyana, including former Ambassador George Jones, Information Technology Advisor Michael Yard and Chief Technical Advisor candidate Jerry Henderson in August 2000. IFES technical advisors traveled to Guyana periodically throughout the period prior to the elections in order to work with GECOM to ensure its long-term institutional capacity. Ambassador George Jones and IFES staff member Rebecca Reichert traveled to Guyana prior to the Elections to provide additional assistance to the IFES team.

#### **II. Key Accomplishments During the Reporting Period**

*IR3.1 Establish and Institutionalize a Permanent Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM): Strengthened Capacity of Permanent GECOM*

##### **National Identification Cards**

Early in the electoral process, GECOM decided to produce National Identification Cards that would be used as a means of voter identification on election day. Many of the voter identification cards produced for the 1997 General Elections were deposited in ballot boxes and were stored at the Elections Commission, pending a legal suit. High Court Justice Claudette Singh subsequently ruled that the use of the voter identification card as the sole means of identification was unconstitutional. For the 2001 election, the commission decided to use existing De la Rue equipment to produce the national identification cards.

##### **Results**

- The IFES Information Technology Advisor reviewed the terms of the contract between De la Rue and GECOM to ensure that all cards could be produced in time to distribute them and enable citizens to vote. While great efforts were made to distribute these cards before the elections, there was an insufficient amount of time to achieve this goal.

##### **Challenges**

- Card production began after the claims and objections period of the voters list closed, and verified corrections had been made to the list. To allow citizens more time to check the list, the claims and objections period was extended, thereby shortening the time available to produce and distribute cards. Although great care was taken to ensure quality production, the number of cards to be produced in such a short period of time created a challenge. Personnel loaned from other divisions of the Secretariat worked around the clock to finish the cards, leaving other tasks and responsibilities delayed or incomplete.

- Distribution of the cards proved to be an even greater challenge. Although the Guyana Postal Service was brought in to assist with the sorting and distribution process, it was not feasible for all voting-age citizens to receive their cards in time for the elections. In the days leading up to the elections, GECOM announced other forms of identification that would be accepted on election day. Unfortunately this announcement came too late to be incorporated into election worker training sessions.

### **Election Results Processing and Reporting**

To avoid delays and confusion regarding the release of election results, which plagued the 1997 General Election, a plan was developed to transmit preliminary election results to the Elections Secretariat in the hours immediately after closing the polls. To facilitate the transmission of results despite the poor quality of telecommunications infrastructure in Guyana, the election authority entered into an agreement with the telephone company to install additional telephone lines at GECOM headquarters and Georgetown - Region 4, the most populous region.

### **Results**

- IFES Information Technology Consultant Fitzgerald Jean traveled to Guyana in February 2001 to help the Information System Department (ISD) develop preliminary results reporting and results publication databases. He assisted in procuring computers, faxes and printers. The delay in identifying polling station locations adversely affected development of the preliminary results and results publication databases. Programming was still being finished as election results were received by the Chief Elections Officer.

### **Challenges**

- In the future, determining polling station locations well in advance of the election would greatly aid election authorities in processing election results and would help voters find their designated voting sites.
- Unfortunately, not all telephone lines were installed, so an unprecedented number of cellular phones had to be brought into the country used for elections. An extraordinary effort was made to distribute these phones, but in the end, the network was overtaxed and the communications systems broke down. Within the first day after the elections, the plan to collect preliminary results was abandoned, and the election authority focused on the official vote count.
- In the future, plans for results transmission need to be followed and reinforced, including staff exclusively trained and dedicated to this activity. Nevertheless, the collection of election results in Guyana will remain difficult unless the country's infrastructure is improved, including roads and telecommunications, and unless more staff is recruited and dedicated exclusively to the tasks of collecting, transmitting and counting results.

### **Administration and Personnel**

The GECOM was established in May 2000, and the Elections Secretariat staff chosen in the following months. GECOM and the Secretariat did not request administrative and personnel assistance until much later. While recruiting efforts for an IFES advisor were ongoing, many of

the personnel choices had already been made by GECOM, and it was too late to make structural reforms.

## **Results**

- IFES Administration and Personnel Advisor Mersada Elcock traveled to Guyana prior to the elections in March 2001. She observed the staff performing its tasks as the Election Secretariat staff prepared to hold the General and Regional Elections. Training Officer Yvonne Mbozi carried out election worker training, despite severe time constraints. On the other hand, personnel lacked clearly defined goals and objectives as well as the empowerment necessary to take initiatives, make decisions and accept responsibility to carry out tasks. In addition, individuals were asked to perform many different tasks, depending on which seemed most pressing at the time.
- The IFES Chief Technical Advisor assisted the Secretariat in developing a comprehensive electoral calendar and detailed work plan. IFES also assisted in monitoring the process, and notified U.S./Guyanese and international authorities of any deviation from, the work plan. However, unclear lines of communication and authority, lack of personnel coordinating activities, and absence of guidance mechanisms adversely affected successful completion of the work plan. (See Appendix A)

### *IR3.2 Strengthened Capacity to Conduct Free and Fair Elections*

#### **Information Technology Assistance**

Due to errors perceived in the voters list used in the 1997 General Election, the new list was under intense scrutiny. In an effort to include all eligible voters in the voters list, the GECOM extended the registration period and the time allotted to citizens to have their identification photographs taken. GECOM also extended the claims and objections period so that political parties had more opportunity to correct mistakes on the list. There were five versions of the voters list: the Provisional Preliminary List, the Preliminary List, the Revised List, the Final List and the Official List of Electors (OLE). All steps of the registration process were documented and approved by GECOM.

## **Results**

- IFES Information Technology Advisor Michael Yard assisted the Elections Secretariat's ISD. His responsibilities included migrating the voter registry database to a more efficient, secure program; troubleshooting any problems with the voter registry program and the printing of the Voters List; reviewing the plan for transmission of election results; and analyzing the seat allocation formula. The presence of an international election information technology expert was instrumental in providing objective, technical answers to questions regarding the process and procedures.
- IFES provided assistance to the ISD in developing several database systems prior to the elections, including a Logistics Tracking Database, a Preliminary Results Reporting Database, a Statement of Polls Processing System, Seat Allocation Programming and a Results Publication System. These database systems significantly improved the

performance of the election authorities and reduced the amount of time needed for election workers to perform tasks. (See Appendix B)

### **Challenges**

- The short timeframe allotted for each task of the voter registration process, as well as the lengthy process of consensus decision-making by the Election Commission greatly influenced the registration process. Due to lack of sufficient time for solving programming and data entry problems, errors continued to appear throughout the process. The voters list was clean and accurate to a standard that fell well within international norms; however, the low level of public confidence in Guyana's electoral system resulted in the perception of systemic problems when errors were only isolated. A built-in verification process for data entered into the registry would have helped to eliminate many simple errors. (See Appendix C)

### **Voter Education and Public Media**

After numerous visits by international consultants and months of inadequate and uncoordinated voter information messages released to the public, Hugh Chomondeley was hired by GECOM with Canadian financial support to design an intensive media campaign that would inform voters about changes to the electoral process, distribution of the national ID card, and general information on election-day procedures. His plan was ambitious and included a televised debate between the presidential candidates and the establishment of an election media center to announce election results via television, radio and newspaper.

### **Results**

- At the request of USAID, IFES asked Public Relations and Media Advisor Hank Valentino to return to Guyana to assist GECOM with the media preparations for the elections. The media center was set up approximately one week before the elections at the Tower Hotel and remained open until official results were announced four days after the elections. Election results were displayed at the center and updates to these results were to be broadcast nationwide. A presidential debate was also televised from the center.

### **Challenges**

- In the future, it would be useful for the electoral authorities to provide more information to voters via the media, disseminating registration information, election-day procedures, location of polling stations and changes in the electoral system earlier in the process. A full time media expert is needed on staff, and the Elections Commission needs to release information regularly to the news media as well as offer opportunities to the media, political parties and civil society organizations to ask questions regarding the process. Finally, close coordination with vote tabulation is necessary if results are to be displayed and broadcast in future elections.

### **Procurement of Equipment for Elections Secretariat**

## **Results**

- IFES/USAID funded, in collaboration with the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), all items listed on an inventory developed by the Elections Secretariat Stores Division. (See attached Matrix and Inventory of Equipment Procured). The CTA worked along side the Elections Secretariat Financial Manager to make sure that USAID and IFES procurement regulations were followed. The CTA kept track of all deliveries made to the Secretariat, and received the Chief Election Officer's signature acknowledging receipt of all equipment. Items procured include photocopiers (large and small capacity), desktop and laptop computers, printers, fax machines, file cabinets, reams of paper, toner cartridges and scanners. As needs were identified, written requests with justifications were submitted to IFES and USAID, and USAID approval was obtained to purchase additional photocopiers and scanners.

## **Challenges**

- Although the CTA tediously reviewed the equipment quotations, delivery of some equipment was delayed and some equipment arrived broken, incomplete or became inoperable after a short period of use.

## **Election Logistics**

### **Results**

- IFES Logistics Technical Advisor Theo Noel worked closely with Elections Secretariat Logistics Officer Keith Lowenfield in developing and implementing the logistics and communications plan. The advisor assisted in developing a logistics and communications manual for staff, which was used to train staff and as a reference as materials were being delivered to the regions. Checklists and forms were also developed for the election workers to ensure that shipments were complete. The Logistics Officer recommended recruitment of additional logistics staff to help with the distribution and collection of materials. This recommendation proved instrumental in the success and smooth operation of logistics before and on election day. While materials were still being delivered throughout election day, for the most part electoral materials were available at each polling station and presiding officers were in place on time and voter turnout proved to be one of the highest in the history of Guyana.

### **Challenges**

- Although the IFES Logistics Advisor had strongly advocated sorting the materials at the central Secretariat location and sending pre-packaged materials out to the regions, materials were instead sent in bulk to be sorted in the regions, where storage facilities and human resources were scarce.
- An additional problem was posed by the fact that the locations of polling stations and subdivisions (where applicable) were not finalized until shortly before the elections. Had these locations been established and posted earlier, the number of errors in assigning voters to polling stations and polling station divisions could have been reduced. In addition, this determination would have permitted the reduction in the number of polling stations—greatly reducing the cost for and number of poll workers as well as improving

the quality of poll workers—and the incorporation of this in pollworker training and voter information campaigns.

### **III. Conclusion and Future Activities**

Guyana can take pride in having successfully held these elections. While the Elections Commission's decisions to function by consensus may appeal to the private sector, the decision to announce acceptable forms of identification to vote and to involve the Postal Services in National Identification Card distribution, although excellent initiatives, came too late in the process to be effective. The difficulties and errors detailed in this report indicate that a great deal remains to be done to improve the country's electoral system.

The report on the elections from the Chief Elections Officer is due to the GECOM Chairman shortly. Unfortunately, the Chairman of the Elections Commission stepped down from his position July 31, 2001, and the process to identify a replacement has not yet been concluded. Until there is a new Chairperson in place, suggested reforms to the electoral law and institutional changes to the Secretariat will not likely take place. Meanwhile, there is ongoing dialogue on recommendations and suggestions concerning the structure and makeup of the Elections Commission.

IFES will need to carefully consider the best time to start its post-election activities. Emphasis will be placed on providing technical assistance for legal reforms to the electoral law, clarification of administration and personnel issues, training for staff in information technology, institutional public and media outreach efforts, and promoting voter education campaigns.

Two representatives of the Elections Secretariat will attend the Second General Assembly of the Association of Caribbean Electoral Organizations (ACEO) in Kingston, Jamaica, July 30 to 31, 2001. The conference will provide the representatives the opportunity to interact with other election administrators of the region, as well as learn about new technological applications and transparent procedures to incorporate civil society and political parties in the electoral process.

## **IR4 Civil Society Influences Public Policy (Women, Youth/Children, Indigenous People)**

### **I. Background**

This period The Carter Center continued to help civil society organizations influence public policy relevant to improving the status of women, youth and Amerindians. The Carter Center succeeded in creating criteria for the selection of target non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the Center is now waiting for consideration of the criteria by USAID's Expanded Strategic Objective Team (ESOT). Although the Center was unable to select specific target NGOs with whom to work, organizations within all three target populations did receive technical support and guidance that contributed to the achievement of several sub-intermediate results.

Workshops on strategic planning and setting priorities were held with representatives of four youth groups and one Amerindian group during this reporting period. Representatives of all of these groups benefited from additional training on proposal-writing, and three of the organizations developed concrete proposals. Interactions with these groups enabled The Carter Center to gather valuable insight about them that will be relevant to the process of choosing partner NGOs in the future.

The Carter Center supported one major activity related to youth and the use of information technology as an information-gathering and advocacy tool. Three other significant events related to this IR were under development during this reporting period. First, a “Women’s Economic Literacy Forum” was planned for July 7, 2001, to include representatives of a wide range of women’s groups and other organizations that work to improve the status of women. This forum was designed to take advantage of the advocacy opportunity presented by the Government of Guyana’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) public consultation process. Second, a Youth Forum on the PRSP was being planned for July. Third, The Carter Center agreed to fund an Amerindian Touchaus Council meeting in Region 9 at the end of July that would focus on the PRSP and the long-term process of strengthening the institutional capacity of the Council.

## **II. Key Accomplishments During the Reporting Period:**

### *IR4.1 Increased networking and consensus-building capacity among NGOs within the three identified populations*

The Carter Center helped several youth groups make significant progress in strengthening their internal capacity through strategic planning; selection of priority issues; and building networks nationally, regionally and internationally. No specific civil society organizations (CSOs, used interchangeably with “NGOs”) were chosen as specific partners, but a range of women’s, youth and Amerindian groups benefited from activities completed during this period.

### **Selection of Priority Issues for each Target NGO**

The Carter Center organized five strategic planning exercises for target NGOs in May and June in order to increase their internal capacity and help them identify and prioritize organizational development objectives and programmatic goals. Youth groups that benefited from these gatherings were the Hinterland Student Association, representing Amerindian communities in interior regions; Guybernet, a youth group devoted to information technology (IT); Youth in Development (YID), a nascent organization of youth from many regions and ethnic backgrounds; and Youth and Technology (Y&T), a coalition of organizations working on issues related to youth and IT. The Amerindian group included representatives from the Touchaus Council in Region 9. Two less formal planning meetings were held in June with the Consumers Association (whose members are primarily women) and the Youth Arm of the Trade Union of Guyana.

### **Results**

- The Carter Center facilitated a planning session in June for the Hinterland Student Association. This group is composed of university students from interior regions (some

of whom are recipients of government-sponsored, merit-based Hinterland Scholarships), and especially those from Region 9. Information Technology was identified as a priority for the interior region, where communication with other regions and the international community is limited. Another priority noted by the group is to have a central location for community meetings in order to provide a venue for regional dialogue and decision-making. The Hinterland group decided to develop a project addressing both of these issues. The planning session organized by The Carter Center resulted in a draft document ready for further consultation with Amerindian leaders in Region 9.

- Through a series of strategic planning sessions led by The Carter Center, Youth in Development (YID) elected co-leaders (one man and one woman) and identified three priorities for programming: the relevance to Guyana's ethnic tensions of the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) to be held in Durban, South Africa, August 30 to September 6, 2001; the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) public consultation process; and support for IT youth groups, including the Hinterland Student Association.
- The Carter Center facilitated a meeting among five youth groups that were potentially duplicating efforts in their work on IT. The meeting resulted in a coalition among the groups, which is called Youth and Technology (Y&T). Y&T began to strategize about how best to combine efforts to reach common goals. Participants designed an electronic mass media project at a second planning meeting facilitated by The Carter Center.
- After a planning session with The Carter Center, Guybernet secured support from the Commonwealth Youth Programme for a longer-term capacity-building and strategic partnership.
- Representatives of Amerindian communities from Region 9, with guidance from The Carter Center, determined priority topics for organizational development and programming. These include institutional strengthening for the Touchaus Council, including writing a constitution and electing an executive group; the PRSP public consultation process; and coordinating donor efforts in Region 9.
- Planning the "Women's Economic Literacy Forum," to be held on July 7, 2001, focused on enabling women from a wide range of civil society groups to identify priorities for collective action; to build a network of partnerships among women from a wide range of professions and perspectives; and to increase their analytical abilities regarding economic development themes. Groups involved in planning the event, including Red Thread and YID, benefited from the process during this period. YID members worked closely with The Carter Center for several weeks and gained valuable experience organizing a major event, both logistically and in terms of the substance of the forum, thereby strengthening the groups' internal organizational capacity.

### **Challenges**

- The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and its implementing agency, Building Community Capacity Project (BCCP), conducted a study during this period of the organizational capacity needs of NGOs/CSOs in Guyana. The study has not been

released publicly, but CIDA representatives indicate that the study reveals significant challenges in donor efforts to support civil society groups. For example, the study indicates that most groups remain unregistered and that the staff of most NGOs lack some of the basic financial and management skills needed to run an organization effectively. The implication of the study is that long-term, intensive interventions for individual organizations are needed in order to have any sustainable impact.

### **Building Networking / Advocacy Skills**

In addition to internal organizational development, The Carter Center has focused on target NGOs' need for greater outreach and networking during this reporting period. As specifically noted in the Workplan, The Carter Center recognizes the increasing power of the Internet as a tool for networking and advocacy, as well as for information gathering. The Carter Center's efforts to improve target NGOs' external functioning have focused both on coalition building among groups and on using IT as an outreach and advocacy tool. Youth, women and Amerindian communities benefited from activities related to both of these themes during this period.

### **Results**

- The Hinterland Student Association, with advice and guidance from The Carter Center, developed a project to establish a community center where youth and others could take computer classes, hold community development meetings, and sell local crafts. The purposes of the center would be to strengthen IT skills among people in Region 9 in order to improve their communication with the rest of the world and to provide a forum for community decision-making and planning. At first the group was planning its project in isolation. The Carter Center was aware that various community leaders in Region 9 were discussing similar projects. Ultimately, the Hinterland Students recognized the need to coordinate its efforts with a network of leaders including MP Shirley Melville, Regional Chairman Vincent Henry, the Touchaus Council, and other potential allies in order to accomplish their goals. The group met with all of these officials and succeeded in winning approval for its community center design.
- The Carter Center helped YID use the Internet to find information related to the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR); register as an organization for the conference; connect with other youth groups that hope to attend the conference; and identify funding sources to send several members to the WCAR. The Carter Center provided access to a computer and the Internet, as well as guidance throughout the research and outreach process. YID members were amazed at the depth and breadth of practical information available online about themes of concern to Guyana, youth, and their organization. Their collective learning on the Internet enabled them to plan more effectively and equitably, ensuring that all members of the group had the same access to information, and encouraging them to give all members equal opportunity to be elected as representatives to the conference through a transparent and fair voting procedure. This process was valuable both as a lesson in international outreach and for its contributions to YID's internal capacity and team-building.

- As a result of the initial planning session with The Carter Center, Y&T decided to develop a project that IT groups could implement jointly. At a second meeting at The Carter Center, Y&T designed a media project to educate the public about the accessibility, practical uses, and power of IT (a motivational component) and also to teach people basic computer skills (a technical component). Y&T recognized the importance of mass electronic media as a tool for getting messages to the public, and especially to youth. The Y&T project involved production of videotapes to be broadcast on television and distributed to schools. The group also planned to broadcast the motivational messages on the radio for wider outreach.
  
- Amerindian leaders in Region 9 made progress during this reporting period in creating a stronger network for coordinated action within the region. Planning sessions with The Carter Center led to meetings with the most active CSOs in the region, including the Rupununi Weavers, Helping Hands Women’s Organization, the North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB) and the South Central Planning and Development Association (SCPDA). Regional leaders also reached out to Conservation International, UNICEF and others to request greater coordination among donors involved in the Rupununi.
  
- The Carter Center sponsored one activity targeted for youth and specifically related to using the Internet as a tool for information gathering, outreach and advocacy. Makonnen Blake Hannah, 16-year-old Youth Consultant to the Jamaican Ministry of Industry, Commerce & Technology, and his mother traveled to Guyana to conduct motivational and informational sessions for youth in four cities from May 21 to 27, 2001. The goals of the activity were to create an awareness of the many applications of IT in the education system, job training, advocacy and raising awareness of issues of concern to youth nationally and internationally; and to inspire youth to learn about and make use of this powerful tool for advocacy and information gathering.
  - Y&T youth groups focused on IT were inspired to coordinate their efforts, as described above, as a result of Makonnen Blake Hannah’s visit, in order to become more effective advocates as a coalition.
  - The Hinterland Student Association improved its project design after hearing Makonnen Blake Hannah speak, and benefited from the community demand for IT created by his visit to Lethem in Region 9.
  - Makonnen Blake Hannah’s public presentations echoed themes articulated in President Jagdeo’s Youth Initiative, which focuses on the importance of IT, and the presentations received wide support from national and community leaders. Youth groups recognized the opportunity that the visit had created to build support for their various projects among government officials and donors by emphasizing the connection to the President’s initiative.
  
- Planning for the “Women’s Economic Literacy Forum” included organizing a multimedia installation of wireless Internet connections, video, and published materials by YID in order to demonstrate the power of various media to communicate advocacy messages. The IT component was designed to give participants access to specially selected websites

related to women and economic development, including local and international NGO sites.

### **Challenges**

- In order to make effective use of their new networking and outreach abilities, NGOs need training sessions on the wide range of advocacy strategies, including formulation of clear policy positions. The PRSP public consultation process offers a timely opportunity for advocacy activities, though time constraints will not allow for formal advocacy training in advance of PRSP activities.
- CSOs in Guyana, and especially women's groups, have initiated networks in the past that have not been consolidated over time. It will be important to make new efforts help build stronger networks, but to enable the CSOs to have a sense of ownership over the process so that the connections are not donor-driven and donor-dependent.

### **Facilitation of Regional and International Advocacy and Networking**

The Carter Center helped youth groups strengthen their capacity to build networks among youth regionally and internationally through technical advice, support for attendance at an international conference, and Makonnen Blake Hannah's visit.

### **Results**

- YID's work on the World Conference Against Racism, with guidance from The Carter Center, helped the group establish regional and international connections with youth groups interested in racial and ethnic discrimination and the potential role of youth in conflict resolution.
- The Carter Center and NDI co-sponsored two YID members' attendance at the Model Organization of American States (OAS) Assembly for Universities in San Martin de los Andres, Argentina, April 29 to May 4, 2001. The students joined delegations of young people from around the region in a mock OAS session to learn about formulating policy, presenting resolutions through formal rules of procedure, and articulating persuasive arguments on important issues facing Guyana and neighboring countries. The students met peers from other member states of the OAS, and made strong connections with young people from the Caribbean. The Guyana delegation met with representatives of the Venezuelan delegation, who agreed to host a session in November 2001 to discuss the Guyana-Venezuela border dispute, its economic implications, and the role of youth in resolving the issue through advocacy in their respective countries.
- Representatives from Guybernet, the Hinterland Student Association and Y&T formed bonds with Makonnen Blake Hannah that have enabled them to plan joint projects in Jamaica and Guyana. For example, Makonnen Blake Hannah has pledged to support the Hinterland group with a donation of computers from Jamaica for the Region 9 community center and a series of training sessions.

## **Challenges**

- NGOs will need to identify other opportunities for regional and international networking, such as Caribbean Community (CARICOM) conferences, the Financing for Development conference in March 2002, and follow-up to the World Conference Against Racism.
- Guyanese CSOs are relatively isolated, even from other nations in the Caribbean. They would benefit significantly from increased opportunities to travel and learn from their peers in neighboring countries.

*IR 4.2 Increased organizational and analytical capacity of a subset of women and youth NGOs and of target Amerindian CSOs*

## **Conduct of Specific Training and Skills Building Workshops**

As described above, The Carter Center organized working sessions for several target NGOs on several themes relevant to this sub-IR. Strategic planning exercises always included discussions of organizations' missions and objectives, leadership and management, and project design. Carter Center activities also focused on helping groups to gather relevant national, regional and international information, and to use the Internet as a resource to receive and disseminate information.

## **Results**

- Representatives of the Region 9 Touchaus Council specifically identified their need to develop an organizational constitution and internal rules and regulations in order to further institutionalize and strengthen the Council. This theme was one of their priority issues for organizational development, and they requested technical assistance from The Carter Center.
- With guidance from The Carter Center, YID has been diligent in its efforts to be transparent and egalitarian in the management of the organization. One of the reasons that YID members wanted to form a new group is that many youth groups are dominated by only one ethnic group and are led exclusively by young men. YID members articulated gender equality and racial diversity as two of their goals in the leadership and management of the group. YID organized two carefully planned, transparent elections, first for co-leaders of the group and then to choose representatives to travel to South Africa for the WCAR.

## **Challenges**

- Specific training and skills-building workshops will continue with a range of organizations in each target group, but these sessions will be even more effective after the CSO criteria are approved and The Carter Center is able to choose specific NGOs as long-term partners for skills development.

*IR 4.3 Increased capacity to advocate for improvements in the status of women, youth and Amerindians*

Financial resources are necessary to permit sustained existence of any CSO and sustained advocacy campaigns on critical issues. The Carter Center has emphasized the importance of fundraising, identification of donors, proposal-writing and income generation in all strategic planning sessions with target NGOs. In particular, planning meetings with Guybernet, the Hinterland Student Association, YID and Y&T have stressed these themes. In the case of the first two organizations, there is potential for income-generating activities to support the other community service goals of the groups. Four groups that received training from The Carter Center during this period drafted project proposals or made other specific efforts to seek support from international donors.

## **Results**

- The Hinterland Student Association drafted a proposal for submission to donors, with guidance and advice from The Carter Center. The proposal involves a design for a community center where youth and others can take computer classes, hold meetings, and sell local crafts. This proposal has received approval from community leaders in Region 9. The group has also gotten a promise of computer equipment from Makonnen Blake Hannah.
- YID wrote a proposal for funding for two members to travel to South Africa for the WCAR. Individuals in the group have used the proposal to seek funding from corporate and international NGO sources. YID also secured donations in-kind from a Guyanese citizen living in Durban.
- At a third meeting with The Carter Center, Y&T began the process of writing a proposal for submission to donors that envisions a media project to encourage young people to use IT for educational and advocacy purposes and to learn specific computer skills.
- Guybernet secured support from the Commonwealth Youth Programme for a long-term capacity-building partnership.
- Representatives of the Touchaus Council in Region 9 wrote a proposal for funding of a Council meeting to be held in July 2001. The process of drafting the proposal was a successful skills-building exercise for Amerindian leaders.
- The Carter Center included a session with donors as part of the “Women’s Economic and Literacy Forum” on July 7, 2001, to introduce women representing CSOs to potential sources of funding.

## **Challenges**

- Most CSOs in Guyana have focused on project-related funding, but lack the skills to develop proposals for core institutional support, including funds for professional development, capital investments and basic operating expenses. CSOs therefore lurch from one project to another, without being able to plan long-term advocacy campaigns or respond quickly to opportunities that arise.

*IR 4.4            Increased public debate on issues affecting women, youth and Amerindians*

During this reporting period, following advice from USAID, The Carter Center planned events designed to encourage representatives from target NGOs in each target population to become involved in the PRSP public consultation process. The PRSP provides a timely opportunity to increase public debate on issues affecting women, youth and Amerindians, particularly since the Government of Guyana will initiate a country-wide consultation process among members of the public. CSOs have an important role to play in helping communities articulate their economic development priorities in advance of the consultations organized by the government. The Carter Center is particularly interested in this issue because of the Center's contributions to the development of the National Development Strategy (NDS), on which the Interim PRSP is based, and the Center's commitment through our democracy project to help independent, non-governmental organizations influence public policy without government interference.

### **Provide Resources for the Publicizing of Issues Affecting Women, Youth and Amerindians**

Beginning in April 2001, The Carter Center distributed more than 200 copies of the Interim PRSP and related documents to representatives of dozens of target NGOs for further distribution in communities around the country. Hundreds of copies of the PRSP Secretariat's one-page summary of the Interim PRSP were also distributed. The Center, with help from YID, also developed a "Women's Economic Literacy Sourcebook" for participants at the forum planned for July 7, 2001. The Sourcebook includes a wide range of documents from the Internet on women's economic empowerment, development themes, and the Guyanese economy and budget. In addition, The Carter Center provided many NGOs with copies of the NDS.

### **Results**

- Until late June 2001, most people to whom the Center provided a copy of the PRSP commented either that they had not previously known about the document or that they had not known where to get a copy.
- Many groups made their own copies of the one-page summary of the Interim PRSP to distribute widely in their communities in advance of the PRSP consultations. The groups reported that this was the only information most people had before the consultation process began.
- The Carter Center planned to include references to all Internet sources in the "Women's Economic Literacy Sourcebook" so that readers could access the World Wide Web for further information. YID representatives who helped compile the book used the experience for their own research and project planning. They commented that they had never heard of such a wide range of documents being presented at a workshop and that they had learned a great deal from helping to put the Sourcebook together.

### **Challenges**

- Most civil society groups do not have access to the Internet or to other sources of current information that would help them publicize issues affecting their constituencies. For example, most groups did not know about the PRSP or the consultation process until it was almost too late to plan a project and have an impact. Many CSOs rely heavily on

donor agencies and international organizations like The Carter Center for access to information about their country, their region and the international community. Civil society representatives mentioned in each strategic planning session with The Carter Center that they wanted to try to influence the government to share information with the public more consistently.

- NGOs face significant challenges in their efforts to remain independent of the government as they conduct activities. For example, the government Secretariat responsible for the PRSP required that all NGOs apply through the Secretariat for funding to conduct public consultations. NGOs were not permitted to seek independent sources of support. It is necessary to vigilantly protect NGOs' right to conduct any advocacy activities designed to influence any public policy without government oversight or involvement.

### **III. Conclusion and Future Activities**

The Carter Center made significant progress during this reporting period in building relationships with potential partner NGOs in all three target populations (women, youth and Amerindians); strengthening the internal capacity of four youth groups and one Amerindian Touchaus Council; and helping groups focus on the specific advocacy issue of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. Carter Center activities helped a range of groups develop skills in strategic planning, prioritizing goals, designing projects and writing proposals. As specifically envisioned in the Workplan, the Center designed a youth project related to information technology (IT) as an advocacy tool and worked with several youth groups that have prioritized IT as an issue of concern.

Series of workshops on advocacy, fundraising and other themes will be organized for small groups of NGOs around the country. The Carter Center will focus on hosting events outside of Georgetown and involving NGOs from as many regions as possible. The NDS and PRSP will continue to be advocacy issues of importance.

Three events will take place in July 2001. First, The "Women's Economic Literacy Forum" will be held on July 7<sup>th</sup>. Representatives have been invited from a wide range of women's groups and other organizations that work to improve the status of women. The forum will include discussions about household and national budgeting, the NDS and PRSP, international initiatives like the Financing for Development conference, and local community development. A donor panel will enable civil society representatives to ask questions about funding for projects related to women and economic development. A multimedia installation will provide information about related topics in printed documents, on video and on the Internet. Participants will be encouraged to develop a collective Action Plan for 2001 and beyond, and The Carter Center will facilitate the process of implementing that plan, as appropriate.

Second, YID is planning to host a Youth Forum on the PRSP with Carter Center support and technical assistance. Participants will be invited from seven of the ten regions in Guyana. The goal of the forum will be to develop a youth agenda on poverty for submission to the PRSP Secretariat. Third, The Carter Center agreed to fund an Amerindian Touchaus Council meeting

in Region 9 on July 26-27, 2001. In addition to the Touchaus, one woman and one youth from each sub-district have been invited to the meeting. The agenda will include the PRSP; strengthening the institutional capacity of the Council, registering the Council, and writing an organizational constitution; and coordinating donor efforts in Region 9.

## **IR5                    Strengthening Local Governance**

### **I.            Background**

NDI became actively involved in two timely opportunities regarding local government in Guyana. First, local elections are likely to occur in the next 12 months. Building on the increase numbers of women candidates in the recent national election (over 30 percent in parliament), NDI launched a strictly nonpartisan training program to provide political dialogue skills for women at the local level. NDI also began work with the recently formed Local Government Task Force, a bipartisan body established to advance important decentralization legislation.

### **II.          Key Accomplishments During the Reporting Period**

*IR5.1                    Strengthened Management and Technical Capacity of Local Government to Respond to Communities' Needs*

#### **Making Cities Work**

The Making Cities Work (MCW) partnership initiative is a USAID program designed to promote and demonstrate that multi-sectoral approaches are the best way to “make cities work” by addressing the complex issues that converge in urban areas. In July, USAID suggested that NDI look into the possibility of implementing such a program in the city of New Amsterdam. Preliminary conversations with civic, government, and business leaders indicated a low level of satisfaction with the delivery of services, particularly in the areas of waste management and cooperation between the groups on local policy challenges.

#### **Results**

- The consultations identified specific areas in which public, business, and government bodies could collaborate to address public policy challenges. In this matter, the meetings also have laid the foundation for future public-private collaborative initiatives on these issues.

#### **Challenges**

- Public policy matters in New Amsterdam, as in most of Guyana, have typically been addressed in a piecemeal fashion led by the government. Given that New Amsterdam has never implemented a multi-sectoral approach, it would be necessary to overcome initial inertia and build trust.
- NDI will need to conduct a more thorough assessment of existing policy problems that would be targeted for improvement under this program.

### **Follow-up Meeting with Amerindian Communities**

The follow-up meeting planned to discuss the findings of Gordon Forte's report, *Needs Assessment Survey and Baseline Data on Local Governance in the Amerindian Communities of Mainstay/Whyaka, Tapakuma and Capoey*, and its implications for working with the respective Amerindian communities had to be rescheduled for a later date, not yet determined, due to pressing issues being addressed by the communities.

### **Result**

- There are no results due to the rescheduling of the meeting with the communities. Plans are being made to organize this meeting as soon as possible.

### **Challenges**

- Amerindian communities are scattered, inaccessible, and have poor access to telephones and other means of communication. NDI relies on the regional offices to contact these communities, which can be very time-consuming.

## *IR5.2 Role of Local Government Further Defined and Rationalized*

### **Report on Local Government Reform Recommendations**

NDI's Program Officer, Cara Hesse; consultant Wallace Rogers; and Caribbean Center for Development Administration (CARICAD), Management Systems International (MSI), the Urban Development Program (UDP), the Constitution Reform Commission (CRC), the National Development Strategy (NDS) and the PPP/C and People's National Congress (PNC) political party manifestoes submitted reports outlining recommendations for local government reform.

### **Results**

- NDI produced a report, *Local Democracy in Guyana - Recommendations for Reform and an Outline of Program Activities and Strategies*, summarizing and incorporating these recommendations. While NDI had originally planned to present this report to the Ministry of Local Government, the Institute decided to present it to the newly created bipartisan Local Government Task Force, which includes senior representatives from the Ministry of Local Government. The compilation offers the Task Force an easy-to-access resource of several in-depth analyses of the local government structure and reform options – exactly the types of issues its members are grappling with. The report was well received, with all members asking for additional copies.

### **Challenges**

- NDI waited several months for the Task Force to establish itself before deciding that it was the most appropriate body to which to advance the recommendations.

### **Support for the Task Force on Local Government Reform**

After the recent post-election unrest, President Jagdeo and opposition leader Desmond Hoyte agreed on the formation of several committees to study key issues, from bauxite to local government reform. The local government committee offers a unique opportunity to influence new decentralization legislation likely be advanced this year. Important legislation that

otherwise would have simply been sent to the parliament is now subject to public scrutiny. Furthermore, one of the committee's mandates is public education.

NDI's ability to assist the Local Government Task Force will be tied to the committee's viability. Many of the other post-election committees have done little to no work, with the local government committee being the exception. Nonetheless, the committee also appears to suffer from political infighting and a lack of momentum.

## **Results**

- NDI provided the Local Government Task Force with preliminary comparative materials on local government commissions, decentralization in Southern Africa, local government financing and a policy framework for decentralization in Namibia. The materials have helped the committee identify appropriate models that its members would like to recommend for eventual legislation. The materials have also been helpful in narrowing the options for models upon which the committee would seek additional expert advice to be provided by NDI.
- The local government committee accepted NDI's offer of assistance and discussions with the co-chairs on potential areas of assistance have been conducted. The co-chairs recommended that NDI assist the Task Force by providing comparative information on best practices, international expertise in the area of revenue allocation and generation, and assistance in conducting public education. NDI intends to seek an overlap of the public education component with the training of women candidates.

## **Challenges**

- The work of the Task Force has been slow and will need to gather momentum in order to fulfill its mandate by the June 2002 deadline established by the agreement between President Jagdeo and opposition leader Desmond Hoyte. NDI understands that a contributing factor for the delay is that the Minister, who is one of the co-chairs, has to consult with his political principals before giving his final endorsement to decisions. This has adversely affected the rate of output.

*IR5.3 Dialogue Promoted Between Local Government Entities and Affected Communities*

### **Promoting Women's Political Participation**

Women in Guyana have limited opportunities for political dialogue at the local level because they are afforded a limited voice. Government statistics show that of the current 1,125 councilors in 65 National Democratic Councils (NDCs), only two chairs, eight deputy chairs and 132 councilors are women. NDI hosted a consultation on June 27, 2001, with representatives from women's organizations, past and current local government officials and individual women to develop a strategy to increase participation of women in local government elections. Through the consultations NDI learned that there is a great demand for skills such as leadership, negotiation, and communication, which would strengthen the dialogue between women and local government. NDI also identified the need to overcome existing barriers and attitudes that discourage women's participation at the local level. Sixty women from around the country

attended this event, which received excellent media coverage. Representatives from the U.S. embassy, USAID, The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and UNESCO also attended.

Prior to the consultation, a NDI team met with party officials from the PNC, PPP/C and Working People's Alliance (WPA) as well as local government officials in Georgetown and New Amsterdam to discuss the women in local government program. All indicated their support for the program. Party officials facilitated meetings with organizers to assist with organizing regional meetings with potential candidates. In addition, NDI met with the editors of the two major daily newspapers and representatives of the electronic media in Georgetown as well as the editor of a New Amsterdam television station. Media representatives agreed to assist with the media-training module.

## **Results**

- Through its strategy workshop, NDI identified multiple topics of potential trainings to strengthen dialogue between women and local government.
- A strategic plan was developed for the next year with the assistance of Hazel Brown, Network Coordinator for the "Engendering Local Government" project in Trinidad and Tobago. Hazel Brown presented the Trinidad and Tobago experience in training women in local government at the consultation on women in local government.
- NDI began to identify potential participants and trainers for the program. NDI held meetings with 25 women in Bartica and 35 women in Rose Hall, and had initial meetings with community leaders in Region 3 and Region 5. Meetings are scheduled for the other regions throughout the month of August.
- More experienced leaders have been identified as mentors and assigned to small groups of politically diverse women interested in beginning political careers. These small groups are politically mixed. As a result of these meetings, a group of women in Region 6 have begun to attend council meetings; women in Region 5 have committed to attending council meetings and intend to form a delegation in order to attend bipartisan Committee dealing with Local Government; and women in Region 7 have been actively engaged in outreach, submitting an additional 19 names as potential candidates for the training program.
- Nationally elected women, as well as local activists, have begun to gain a greater understanding of how the decentralization legislation can impact their ability to increase women's participation and dialogue at the local level.

## **Challenges**

- NDI experienced difficulties in establishing contact with women from outlying regions, specifically Region 8, where telephone communication does not exist. Furthermore, while there is a great deal of interest in participation among women from the two major political parties, there has been some difficulty in obtaining the participation of women from the

smaller parties. NDI will work more closely with party and community leaders to overcome this challenge.

- Women will continue to be constrained in their ability to advocate for gender related issues by the male dominated party leadership that characterizes local government. While this is a larger party reform problem (an area USAID is not involved in), there are opportunities to draw women into the public education efforts of the Local Government Task Force, in turn adding greater voices to the effort for substantive decentralization legislation allowing greater authority at the local level.

### **III. Conclusion and Future Activities**

NDI is encouraged by the accomplishments and progress of the Strengthening Local Governance Program during this report period: foundations for a making cities work have been established; NDI produced a report highlighting recommendations on reforming local democracy; and the local government committee has accepted NDI's offer to collaborate. Furthermore, the recent initiative to train women to participate in local government has been very successful.

In the future, NDI will build upon its accomplishments in local government by conducting town meetings to help collect specific baseline data on the public policies changes that may impact the making cities work program, and will meet with the local government task force to develop future joint activities. With regard to increasing women's participation and dialogue at the local level, NDI will continue to implement its nationwide training program and will expand its mentorship program in which senior women provide support to those looking to play a greater role at the local level. In addition, NDI plans to educate women about decentralization legislation and how it can impact their ability to participate at the local level.