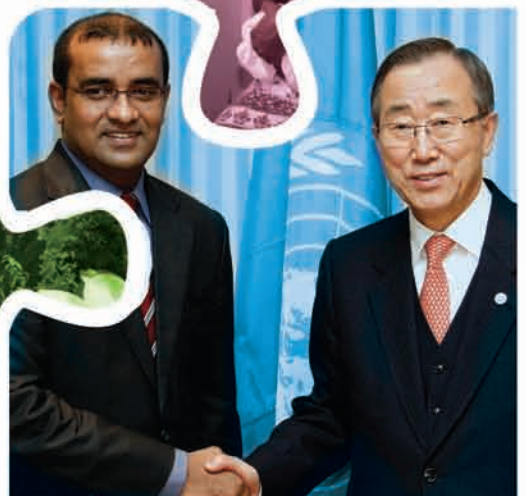




# *Millennium Development Goals*

# GUYANA

*Compact Report 2011*





# Acknowledgements

This third progress report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was produced by the Government of Guyana with financial assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Overall direction and coordination for the preparation of the report was led by the Ministry of Finance.

The report benefited from feedback, guidance and contributions from a wide group of stakeholders and the Ministry of Finance takes this opportunity to gratefully acknowledge the time and effort invested by all individuals, organisations and agencies in the production of the report.

The Ministry of Finance would like to specially thank all individuals across the sectors who candidly shared their experiences in the form of success stories and challenges, and which are highlighted throughout this report.

Finally, the Ministry of Finance wishes to acknowledge the generosity of all facilitators, contributors and photographers who made their work available to ensure the success and impact of this report.



# Foreword



In the year 2000, Guyana, along with 188 other countries, adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration which captured and distilled previously agreed goals on international development in the form of eight concrete and measurable development objectives. These have become widely known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They address extreme poverty, hunger and disease, promote gender equality, education and environmental sustainability, target health care and include a commitment to building a global partnership for development.

This *Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2011* is the third report produced by the Government of Guyana since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration in 2000. Reports which charted the country's progress towards attainment of the eight MDGs were completed in 2003 and 2007. Now, one decade and one year after the historical commitment to cut extreme poverty in half through the implementation of eight measurable and time-bound goals, Guyana completes this latest assessment of its performance against these crucial development objectives.

The main purpose of the *Report* is to assess the progress made thus far in the attainment of the MDGs in Guyana. It is issued at the four year marker before the targeted deadline of 2015, to take stock of the country's position at this critical juncture. This document reports not only on how successful the Government has been in moving towards the goals and their associated targets, but also identifies key priorities for action.

I am particularly pleased to note that Guyana's strong macroeconomic performance since the last status report has served as a solid foundation upon which the country's quest to meet the MDGs has been based. Against a background of global recession and regional uncertainty, our country recorded a fifth consecutive year of positive economic growth in 2010, a trend that has continued through the first half of 2011. By virtue of Guyana's prudent macroeconomic management, there has been increased fiscal space for spending in MDG-related social sectors.

Guyana's progress towards the attainment of the MDGs has been substantial. This *Report* indicates that Guyana has already met the targets for nutrition and child health, and is on track to achieve the goals relating to education, water and sanitation, and HIV/AIDS. However, it is important to note that some targets, such as those relating to maternal health, still require more effort in the years to come.

With four years to go to the targeted completion date of 2015, this *Report* should serve to reinvigorate our country's resolve to successfully meet the MDGs, which are critical elements of our own national development agenda. The *Report* provides a comprehensive set of information on our progress towards the MDGs, and is expected to inform policy and budgetary decisions, dialogue and advocacy at all levels. It is envisaged that this *Report* will be a key input into national decision making on socio-economic investments, public resource allocations and management.

The *MDG Progress Report 2011* has been compiled in collaboration with a wide group of stakeholders and is the result of an intense, broad consultative process based on efforts, resources and inputs from several Government Ministries and Agencies, with the invaluable support of the United Nations in Guyana. The *Report* provides succinct information on key development areas, the promulgation of which will hopefully enrich discussions on national planning and will conduce to concrete actions for the enhancement of living conditions for all Guyanese citizens.

I wish to thank all stakeholders for partnering with the Government in our national efforts to realise the Millennium Development Goals, and take the opportunity to exhort the international community to honour its global commitments as we look forward to increased and continuing support in consolidating the significant gains made thus far and in confronting the challenges that remain ahead.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, featuring a stylized, cursive 'A' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

**Honourable Dr. Ashni K. Singh, M.P.**  
*Minister of Finance*  
*Republic of Guyana*

# Introduction

## Background on Millennium Development Goals

In the year 2000 at the General Assembly of the United Nations, a consensus was reached that more needed to be done to assist impoverished nations. A global response was fashioned through the formulation of eight international development ideals which all nation signatories pledged to pursue and meet by the year 2015. These eight ideals, which became known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), aim to improve human welfare through economic and social improvements.

The Millennium Development Goals are to:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability, and
- Develop a global partnership for development

Associated with each Millennium Development Goal are related targets and a series of measurable indicators which provide a more precise framework for pursuit of and reporting on outcomes.

## Objectives of Report

The *Guyana Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Progress Report 2011* is a key monitoring instrument to assess various socio-economic policies. The overall aim of the *Report* is to track and analyse the country's progress towards the achievement of the MDGs, but on a wider level, it serves as a report on national efforts to reduce poverty. The findings of the *Report* are expected to influence Government processes, decision-making and resource mobilisation and allocation efforts. Furthermore, the key findings are expected to be used as a means to both enlighten and heighten development discussions among all national stakeholders, including Guyana's development partners.

The specific objectives of this third *MDG Progress Report*, produced by the Government of Guyana, are to:

- Examine how the country has progressed on the goals, targets and indicators since the last progress report;
- Determine how much further progress is required from the country to meet the goals by 2015;
- Assess the likelihood of the MDG targets being met by the 2015 deadline;
- Review existing policies and strategies which contribute towards achievement of the goals;
- Identify the key challenges and bottlenecks impeding progress on the MDGs; and,
- Highlight for each of the goals, key areas and actions that Government has prioritised to accelerate progress towards achievement of the goals.

## Methodology

In the wake of the dissolution of the Policy Coordination and Programme Management Unit (PCPMU) at the Office of the President, which coordinated the production of the two previous progress reports, the Ministry of Finance assumed responsibility for coordination and production of this report, and benefited from support by the UNDP.

The *MDG Progress Report 2011* is the outcome of a participatory approach utilised in compiling data on the progress Government has made towards achieving the MDGs by 2015. In the first stage of the process, a consultative forum was held with key Government stakeholders from the relevant agencies to explain the objectives of the report as well as their expected roles in contributing to the report through the provision of data and other relevant information.

Follow-up sessions were held with the agencies to retrieve requested data, clarify questions where necessary and to assist in the drafting of sector analyses. To supplement the support provided to agencies, a technical workshop was held, which provided more insight and training on techniques and approaches to produce the desired outcome for the report.

The *Report* relies on quantitative and qualitative data collected largely from routine information systems and national periodic surveys, sourced throughout the document. While the year 1990 serves as the standard global baseline for the assessment of progress towards achieving the MDGs, it has not been possible in all cases to source local data from this reference year. In the current Report, where data from 1990 are not available, the next available data points are utilised. Data collected are analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, average annual rates of change and deviations. For clarity and understanding, the *Report* uses standardised graphs which present data in the format of actual, desired and projected trends, where possible.

Additionally, the *Report* passed through rounds of technical and policy reviews at every stage of the process identified above.

## Organisation of the Report





The *Report* is prefaced by an Executive Summary which presents the key findings of the MDG review. The Executive Summary is followed by a 'Status at a Glance' table which provides a quick reference point of Guyana's likelihood of achieving the MDGs by 2015, given the latest available data (in most cases, 2008/09) and country performance. The *Report* is thereafter organised into eight sections, highlighting both successes and key priorities in each of the Goals for the years to come.























Following the discussion on the Goals, the *Report* presents a section which identifies and discusses the major cross-cutting issues that impact upon attainment of the MDGs in Guyana. Without in-depth understanding of and bold actions in these areas, any sector-specific strategies to meet the MDGs will be at best insufficient to achieve the targets set by 2015.

This **compact version** of the MDG Progress Report 2011 reproduces the Status at a Glance table, as well as the Executive Summary of the report, and provides a compact disc which contains a copy of the full Report.

# Guyana & the MDGs: Status at a Glance

The 'Status at a Glance' table below presents an assessment of the likelihood of Guyana meeting the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The assessments of the targets being met by the country as 'likely', 'unlikely' or 'potentially' are based on the linear trend analysis which has been applied to data throughout the MDG Report. It therefore reflects the likelihood of the MDGs being met by 2015, given past performance and available data (which in this *Report* extends to 2008/09). The MDG Report discusses in more detail and contextualises country performance, as well as offers a look ahead to country plans to improve the outlook. These plans may change the current country trajectory which is summarised below, and must be considered in conjunction with this Status at a Glance presentation.

Key				
<i>Will target be met?</i>	Likely 	Potentially 	Unlikely 	Not Assessed 

GOALS AND TARGETS	Will target be met?		
	2011	2007	2003
<b>MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</b>			
Target 1A: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty			
Target 1B: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people			
Target 1C: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people suffering from hunger			
<b>MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education</b>			
Target 2A: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling			
<b>MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women</b>			
Target 3A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005...			
...and to all levels of education no later than 2015			
<b>MDG 4: Reduce child mortality</b>			
Target 4A: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate			
<b>MDG 5: Improve maternal health</b>			
Target 5A: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio			

GOALS AND TARGETS	Will target be met?		
	2011	2007	2003
Target 5B: Achieve by 2015, universal access to reproductive health			
<b>MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases</b>			
Target 6A: Have halted, by 2015, and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS			
Target 6B: Achieve by 2015, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it			
Target 6C: Have halted, by 2015, and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases			
<b>MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability</b>			
Target 7A: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources			
Target 7B: Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss			
Target 7C: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation			
Target 7D: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of slum dwellers			
<b>MDG 8: Develop a global partnership for development</b>			
Target 8A: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading system			
Target 8B: Address the special needs of the least developed countries, in relation to ODA			
Target 8C: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States			
Target 8D: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries			
Target 8E: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries			
Target 8F: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefit of new technologies, especially information and communications			
Note: MDG 8 to develop global partnerships has not been assessed in country. Progress made towards these targets is largely dependent on developments in the international setting.			

Millennium  
Development  
Goals

# GUYANA

## 2011

### Executive Summary



Since the signing of the Millennium Declaration in 2000, the Government of Guyana has shown strong political will which has translated into concrete policies to fight poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The strategies rolled out by the different sectors aim to achieve the Goals by 2015 and to improve the quality of life of the people of Guyana. This report presents an overview of how well the country has performed in reaching some of the Goals and provides an overview of the key priorities to be pursued to accelerate progress across the sectors. As the 2015 deadline is rapidly approaching, this Report intends to celebrate success and set clear priorities and policy options to be addressed to honour the global promise and national commitment to achieve the MDGs by 2015 for the benefit of all Guyanese.



The main findings of the MDG Progress Report 2011 are now summarised below, organised by each Millennium Development Goal:



## ***GOAL 1 – Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger***

**Guyana has made very good progress towards eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. The country has met the target of halving the proportion of people who suffer from hunger, and has improved its performance in reducing poverty and increasing employment. More concretely:**

★ **Success:** The proportion of the population living in extreme poverty has declined from 28.7 percent in 1993 to 18.6 percent in 2006.

☑ **Priority:** In order to meet the MDG target for poverty reduction, the extreme poverty rate must be reduced by a further 4 percentage points by 2015.

★ **Success:** The overall unemployment rate fell from 11.7 percent in 1992 to 10.7 percent in 2006. The female unemployment rate declined from 18.1 percent in 1992 to 13.9 percent in 2006, and the percentage of youths who constitute the employed labour force increased from 8.7 percent to 15.8 percent over the same time period. Achieving full and productive employment for all is an effective tool to improve living conditions and to eliminate extreme poverty. Government has focused on increasing the number of jobs available, and importantly, on empowering job-seekers to adequately fill the jobs created through training initiatives.

☑ **Priority:** The main priorities for the Government in its efforts to boost employment for vulnerable individuals are to improve the system of matching of jobs to available workers, reinforce linkages between education, training and the labour market, and to more effectively measure progress in job creation.

★ **Success:** Nutrition levels have improved. Malnutrition among children was 11.8 percent in 1997, and in 2008, data showed that 6 percent of under-five children in 2008 experienced mild to moderate malnutrition, and less than 1 percent suffered severe malnutrition. The pace of the decline in the proportion of the population suffering from hunger has resulted in early achievement of this MDG target, and has been accomplished by a range of programmes targeting the nutritional status of vulnerable groups. These include the Grow More Food campaign focused on improving food security, the Basic Nutrition Programme, the national School Feeding Programme and breast feeding support strategies.

☑ **Priority:** The key priorities in maintaining the progress made in nutrition lie in reaching the most vulnerable groups and in designing sustainable strategies.





## ***GOAL 2 – Achieve universal primary education***

**Guyana has made excellent progress towards achieving universal primary education. The country is on track to meet the education target, ensuring that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. More concretely:**

★ **Success:** The net primary school enrolment rate has consistently been above 95 percent since 2000 according to survey data and all indications are that access to education is virtually universal. The survival rate, or proportion of students entering Grade 1 who reach Grade 6 of primary schooling, has consistently been above 90 percent from 2006–2009. Government policies on primary education are focused on improving access for students in hinterland regions as well as improving the inclusiveness of education with regard to students with learning disabilities.

☑ **Priority:** In addition to access to and completion of primary schooling, Government is committed to the improvement of the quality of education offered. To this end, the Government has identified two key priorities: improving the training and availability of qualified teachers and increasing the attendance rates of both students and teachers.





## GOAL 3 – Promote gender equality and empower women

**Guyana has made very good progress towards promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. The country met the target of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education, and strives towards parity at the tertiary level. Employment of women is targeted for improvement and female political representation in Parliament has substantially increased. More concretely:**

- ★ **Success:** The targets of having gender parity in primary and secondary education have been achieved since boys and girls are equally represented at these levels. Moreover, at the University level, there are twice as many girls as there are boys enrolled.
- ★ **Success:** The proportion of women employed in the non-agricultural sector has increased from 29 percent in 1991 to 33 percent in 2006, signalling the opening up of labour markets to women.
- ★ **Success:** Female representation in Parliament has increased from twelve members (18.5 percent) in 1992 to twenty members (30.7 percent) in 2009. Women are well represented in public life generally and hold a variety of senior technical positions in the public service.
- ☑ **Priority:** To further promote the equality of women in all spheres of life, Government's priorities include ensuring the implementation of proactive legislation and various initiatives including micro-credit schemes and training programmes.



## GOAL 4 – Reduce child mortality

**Guyana is making very good progress towards reducing child mortality. The country has already met the target of reducing the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds by 2015, and aims to further improve its record of reducing child mortality. More concretely:**

- ★ **Success:** Both infant and child mortality have shown decreasing trends over the years. The under-five mortality rate in Guyana has declined from 120 per 1,000 live births in 1991 to 17 per 1,000 live births in 2008, resulting in early achievement of the MDG target. The decrease is due to successful implementation of nutrition and maternal and child care initiatives, including programmes for comprehensive child immunisation coverage, an integrated approach to child health and development and in HIV/AIDS, the Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission (PMTCT) programme.

★ **Success:** The above mentioned measures resulted in child immunisation coverage reaching above 90 percent for all major vaccinations and across the entire country. Moreover, the proportion of 1 year old children immunised against measles has increased from 89 percent in 1999 to 97 percent in 2009. Finally, HIV/AIDS deaths among children declined from 7.1 percent in 2001 to 1.9 percent in 2008, an accomplishment largely attributable to the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) programme.

☑ **Priority:** Key government priorities in this area include improving the quality of care of under-one children, especially at and around the time of birth, and improving the nutritional intake of both mothers and children.



## GOAL 5 – *Improve maternal health*

**Guyana has made good progress towards improving maternal health and has succeeded in reducing the number of maternal deaths and increasing the availability of skilled health personnel at births. Antenatal care coverage and contraceptive prevalence are on the rise. The country is currently assessed as having the potential to meet the MDG target of reducing the maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters, and has a mixed outlook on the target to achieve universal access to reproductive health. More concretely:**

★ **Success:** Maternal mortality has been on a decreasing trend in recent years. The maternal mortality ratio declined from an adjusted baseline of 320 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1991 to 86 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2008. In general maternal health has improved, bolstered by almost universal antenatal care coverage, increased access to improved facilities and – a key indicator of success – that over 96 percent of births are now attended by skilled health personnel.

☑ **Priority:** The key priority in maternal health is the improvement of the quality of care offered by the maternal health care team, including nurses and obstetricians.

★ **Success:** Access to reproductive health has increased. The proportion of mothers to receive at least one session of antenatal care has increased from 92 percent in 2000 to 97.2 percent in 2009. Contraceptive use was estimated to be 42.5 percent in 2009 and presents one area in which Government intends to redouble its efforts.

☑ **Priority:** Government has identified the following priority areas for further investment: increased availability of blood and fluids in all health centres, greater availability of specialist staff trained in obstetrics and gynaecology, wider geographic coverage of skilled medical staff and of medical evacuation, promoting better prenatal nutrition and strengthening the system of high-risk referrals.





## GOAL 6 – *Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases*



**Guyana records overall steady progress towards this sixth MDG Goal of combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. The country shows signs of beginning to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS and is projected to meet the target of achieving universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it. There is positive news for malaria control as well, with prevalence rates confirming that the country has succeeded in meeting the target of reducing the incidence of the disease. The prevalence of tuberculosis shows tentative signs of a decline, with reduced incidence over the 2008–2009 reporting period. More concretely:**

★ **Success:** The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the population has decreased from 7.1 percent in 1995 to 1.1 percent in 2009, and access to antiretroviral drugs has more than quadrupled in five years, representing an increase from 18.4 percent in 2004 to 83.5 percent in 2009.

★ **Success:** Government has been successful in its use of a multi-pronged approach to combating HIV/AIDS. Work has been done to increase knowledge and awareness of the disease, promote and provide testing and the use of preventative measures, as well as to expand and ensure the availability of treatment. Together, these actions have resulted in the decline in HIV/AIDS prevalence and increased survival for those infected.

☑ **Priority:** Government will continue to focus on intensifying its activities to raise awareness, to increase prevention, to focus on high-risk groups and to improve treatment. A key priority in addressing all strategies, and particularly treatment, is that of ensuring the sustainability of the current programmes, currently primarily donor-funded.

★ **Success:** The prevalence of malaria has decreased from 5,084 per 100,000 persons in 2005 to 1,541 per 100,000 persons in 2008. This improvement can be attributed to successes in prevention efforts as well as in the detection and treatment of contracted cases.

☑ **Priority:** The priorities include improving compliance with treatment as well as overcoming the logistical difficulties associated with detection, treatment and monitoring of interventions.

★ **Success:** The tuberculosis death rate has reduced from 15.7 per 100,000 persons in 2004 to 11.1 per 100,000 in 2008. The prevalence of tuberculosis increased in Guyana from 38.7 per 100,000 persons in 1995 to 82 per 100,000 persons in 2009. This trend may be partially explained by a genuine increase in transmission but also reflects the success of the country's programmes in improving detection.

☑ **Priority:** The main issues to be addressed in the fight against tuberculosis are co-infection with HIV/AIDS, patients defaulting on treatment, and the need to improve data collection and analysis.



## GOAL 7 – *Ensure environmental sustainability*

Guyana has recorded multiple successes in the national quest to ensure environmental sustainability. The country has satisfied the target of integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and is committed to significantly reducing biodiversity loss. The MDG targets of halving the proportion of the population without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation have been met, and there have been notable increases in the population's access to adequate housing. Government continues to pursue aggressive strategies to ensure that the entire nation benefits from access to safe water, improved sanitation and adequate and affordable housing. More concretely:

★ **Success:** The target of integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes has been achieved through the implementation of Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy. This bold environmental initiative outlines a sustainable development strategy, under which Guyana will deploy its forests to mitigate global climate change in return for payments from the world for the service its forests provide. These payments will then be used to support low-carbon economic investments.

☑ **Priority:** The first key to the success of the LCDS initiative lies in addressing the challenge of mobilising the international community to adequately value the services provided by forests.

☑ **Priority:** A key area of focus in the environmental sector is the improvement of knowledge of present biological systems.

★ **Success:** Vast improvements in access to safe drinking water have been made, which place Guyana ahead of its MDG target. Survey data in 2006 found that 91 percent of households had access to safe drinking water compared to 83 percent in 2000, and an estimated 50 percent in 1991.

☑ **Priority:** The key priority in the provision of safe water is to expand access in the hinterland regions and in remote areas.

★ **Success:** There have been substantial improvements in access to sanitation. Census results in 1991 showed a high level of sanitation coverage at 96.9 percent of households. Preliminary survey data from 2009 point to almost universal access to sanitation. This survey also suggests that 84 percent of households are using facilities which are categorised as improved.

☑ **Priority:** The key priorities for the Government in improving sanitation include increasing access to facilities in hinterland regions, maintaining existing facilities and promoting up to standard sanitary practices.

★ **Success:** Access to adequate and affordable shelter has been a priority of the Government which has a multi-pronged approach of facilitating property acquisition by low to moderate income groups, improving the living conditions of those occupying land in unplanned settlements, and providing appropriate care and re-integration services for homeless people. Government has distributed approximately 82,000 house lots between 1993 and 2009, and continues to prioritise the expansion of access to housing to the lowest income groups.





## GOAL 8 – *Develop a global partnership for development*

**This Millennium Development Goal is arguably the most critical element in the overall structure of the MDGs. Its overarching emphasis on developing global partnerships was born out of the recognition that for countries like Guyana to sustainably achieve the rest of the goals, an international environment which is conducive to their attainment must be sought and sustained.**

Targets to be met under this goal reflect commitments made by member states to strengthen cooperation in the areas of trade, official development assistance, external debt, and access to medicines and technology.

Well-functioning trading and financial systems can yield enormous economic and developmental benefits for Guyana, which would support the achievement of the Goals. This section highlights that the creation of, and participation in, such trading and financial systems cannot be achieved by country efforts alone, but are also dependent on the negotiation and execution of successful global partnerships.

**✓ Priority:** The unique development challenges faced by Guyana are its special needs as a small state, its vulnerability to external shocks, its underdeveloped resource base and heightened exposure to global environmental challenges.

**★ Success:** Official Development Assistance (ODA) has shown an overall increase in volume over the past five years. Total foreign assistance to Guyana at the end of 2009 was US\$173 million, which represents an increase of 19 percent from the 2004 level of US\$145 million.

**★ Success:** Guyana has moved from being a heavily indebted poor country to one that has achieved debt sustainability. Its debt profile has improved from having a stock of external debt worth approximately US\$2.1 billion in 1992 to half that amount, at US\$0.9 billion at the end of 2009. Debt service payments as a percentage of Government revenue have also declined from 59 percent (approximately US\$130.1 million in 1998) to 3.8 percent (approximately US\$17.7 million) in 2009. These improvements have expanded the fiscal space available to the Government to carry out social and other investments towards the MDGs.

**✓ Priority:** The country remains at moderate risk of debt distress and is vulnerable to external shocks. In view of this, Government is very proactive in maintaining long-term debt sustainability.

**★ Success:** A number of measures have been put in place to improve the population's access to essential drugs: namely, the updating of the official list of essential drugs and the strengthening of the pharmaceutical supply chain, including improvements in the management of the Government's drugs warehouse.

**✓ Priority:** There are a number of areas earmarked for improvement, including the estimation and evaluation of drug needs, the storage and transportation of drugs and monitoring of usage at health facilities across the country.

**★ Success:** The benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication, have become more widespread in Guyana. Between 1990 and 2009, landline telephone access increased by over 630 percent, moving from 3 landlines per 100 population in 1990 to 19 landlines per 100 of the population in 2009. Incorporating the element of shared household access to a telephone line, approximately 86 percent of households had access to a landline telephone service in 2009. The use of cellular phones has rapidly increased as well, at an average annual growth rate of 54.7 percent since the introduction of this technology to the market in 2005. In 2009, there were 76 such subscriptions per 100 of the population. The number of internet subscribers has increased over the years and bandwidth capacity in the country has recently had a major boost in the form of a new fibre-optic cable being commissioned.

**✓ Priority:** These technological advances have opened many opportunities for growth and underscore Government's role in effectively managing a growing sector, expanding affordable access to all groups and empowering the population to take advantage of the new services available.

# *Cross-cutting issues*

Each chapter of this report identifies the goal-specific priorities associated with progress towards the MDG targets. However, it is important to be cognisant of the cross-cutting issues which shape Guyana's unique development context and which impact upon achievement of the goals. The report therefore presents, after the discussion on the Goals, an overview of the key cross-cutting issues in the Guyanese context. These are: (1) the country's **geography**, (2) its **multiculturalism**, (3) **human resource constraints**, (4) **monitoring and evaluation capabilities**, (5) the bottom-line factor of the **costs** of meeting the MDGs, and (6) the implications of these factors for **innovative policy design and implementation**.

**GEOGRAPHY** – Guyana's geographical make-up, with its attendant challenges of infrastructure development, has an impact on service delivery. Beyond the more developed coastal regions exists a sparsely distributed population in areas with difficult terrain and weaker transport infrastructure. These limitations in accessing remote areas present a pervasive challenge in delivering public services throughout Guyana. The relative complexity and costs of reaching outlying sections of the population are enormous.

**MULTICULTURALISM** – The combination of various ethnic and religious backgrounds presents unique challenges and opportunities for national efforts towards the achievement of the MDGs, and broader national development. As a result of the multicultural nature of Guyanese society, it is necessary for country plans to be tailored to various groupings to ensure their impact. One example of this practice is the stratification of HIV/AIDS strategies which takes into consideration the religious and cultural backgrounds of the target population groups.

**HUMAN CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS** – Progress towards the MDGs has been hindered by capacity constraints which relate to both adequate numbers and skill levels in the health and education sectors. The analysis of health and education related goals points to overall shortages of trained medical staff and teachers, a problem which has been exacerbated by aggressive recruiting of such personnel by developed countries, but is now being addressed by a focused agenda to recruit, train and retain personnel for these sectors.

**MONITORING AND EVALUATION CAPACITY** – Current and previous progress reports have been limited by data availability and quality. Lack of adequate data can result in analysis being sometimes based more on assumptions and/or approximations. Monitoring and evaluation systems across the Government have improved but are in need of further strengthening. Well-functioning and cost-effective monitoring and evaluation systems are critical to the successful design of policies and programmes, effective planning and evaluation of plans implemented.

**FINANCIAL GAPS** – Although this is not a challenge that only Guyana faces in its efforts to achieve the MDGs, the lack of adequate and predictable financing has been and still is an important constraint in meeting the MDGs. The flow of resources from developed to developing countries, including Guyana, has simply not been sufficient to support the achievement of the MDGs.

**INNOVATION IN POLICY DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION** – The design of effective policies and programmes is a critical element in the Government planning cycle. Given the country's specific cross-cutting issues identified thus far it can be argued that policy and programme design has to be as flexible as it is rigorous and as innovative as it is practical.

It is useful to bear in mind these cross-cutting issues when reviewing progress towards the MDGs as well as future priorities and policy actions for acceleration of progress towards the Goals.

