

**Sustainable Development Networking Programme,  
Guyana**

**Final Report**

**Seán Ó Siochrú,  
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# Sustainable Development Networking Programme

## Report for Guyana

### 1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

#### 1.1 Background in Guyana

At its launch in 1997, the SDNP in Guyana faced a difficult set of circumstances. Some of the main features were as follows:

- The Internet was at a very low level of development, with a couple of nascent ISPs, high bandwidth costs, a very low level of teledensity outside the urban areas along the coast and a moderately low level within them;
- An incumbent private monopoly telecommunication operator, GT&T, in a position of strength through an inadequate regulatory structure, and limited government and regulatory expertise;
- A government and civil service that was relatively unfamiliar with information technology, and with an embedded culture that did not encourage transparency, information dissemination, or open collaboration - most Ministries had no information dissemination function;
- A weak and poorly developed and funded civil society, lacking fully effective organisations or networks;
- An uncertain economic situation, where recent growth was going into reverse;
- A tense political situation, where the two major parties were at loggerheads, the chasm between them growing.

These factors shaped the initial Project, as well as its evolution over time. Several, such as the low level of internet development and the minimal government interaction, provided the motivation for the introduction of SDNP in the first place.

#### 1.2 Main Phases and Duration of SDNP Guyana

The SDNP project was launched in July 1997, initially for a period of two years. It was subsequently extended several times with UNDP funding. SDNP funding finished in December 2001, but a further year was provided from UNDP (Guyana) with funding under a *Capacity Building for Poverty Eradication Project*. This funding is due to finish in December 2002.

In total, the duration of funded activity was from July 1997 to December 2002 inclusive.

Formally, the Project Document was not significantly amended with each subsequent approval, although the activities and focus evolved somewhat over time. The final year of UNDP funding also entailed different means to account for expenditure, representing at the same time a step in the direction of autonomous accounting.

The SDNP Project and main stakeholders believe that it may have the potential to achieve sustainability. The current phase is regarded as a transition away from its initial grant funding towards more diverse and sustainable sources of income.

### 1.3 Objectives and Goals

The primary objectives of the project, as set down in the Project Document<sup>1</sup> in April 1997 were as follows:

- a) To contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in Guyana by facilitating the dissemination of information to all sectors of the society through the establishment of connectivity between users and suppliers of information;
- b) To contribute to the achievement of sustainable development by enhancing the capacity for informed and participatory decision-making by stakeholders for sustainable development at all levels of the economy and society across Guyana;
- c) Having regard to the above, to propose a sustainable mechanism for facilitating access to information and for encouraging increased collaboration, participation and communication and networking between stakeholders locally, nationally, regionally and internationally;
- d) To enhance the capacity for using computer mediated communication, and especially the Internet as a tool for sharing information, experience, knowledge and for enhancing collaboration between various of users.

These objectives were never formally revised. However, as is noted in the next section, we have amended them somewhat for the purposes of this evaluation.

### 1.4 Summary of Funding and Income

The following table summarises funding received from the Project. It excludes income generated through its activities to which the project has not had access. The UNDP was the sole source of grant funding, administered through the Project Execution Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Table 1: SDNP Annual Grant Income and Expenditure 1997 – 2002 (\$US)**

	1997 (part)	1998	1999	2000	2001	- Dec 2002 (projected)	Total
<b>Grant Income</b>							
<b>UNDP</b>	<b>53,895</b>	<b>67,089</b>	<b>75,744</b>	<b>127,386</b>	<b>121,734</b>	<b>28,244</b>	<b>474,092</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>							
Personnel	8,496	41,214	25,554	42,997	42,761	14,457	<b>175,479</b>
Equipment	25,951	4,651	5,643	3,427	3,346	650	<b>43,668</b>
Office Costs	1,994	2,933	253	788	661	2,560	<b>9,189</b>
GT&T	7,538	16,858	42,201	78,873	73,381	9,100	<b>227,951</b>
Other	9,916	1,433	2,093	1,301	1,585	1,477	<b>17,805</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>53,895</b>	<b>67,089</b>	<b>75,744</b>	<b>127,386</b>	<b>121,734</b>	<b>28,244</b>	<b>474,092</b>

Note: This excludes income of Guyanese \$15.25 million \$GY (approximately US\$82,500) earned since October 1999, which was not at the disposal of SDNP. This includes only income received under the GUY/97/001 programme. Additional income for 2002 under the capacity building programme, is not available at present.

<sup>1</sup> UNDP, Project of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, *Project Document Sustainable Development Networking Programme* GUY/97/001/A/03/99, April 1997.

## 2. ASSESSMENT OF SDNP OBJECTIVES

The presence of some ambiguities and overlap in the objectives as set out in the Project Document, as well as developments in the Internet, resulted in practice in some shifts in emphasis. With the agreement of the Project and UNDP, the original objectives have been reformulated for the purposes of this evaluation. While preserving the content and the spirit of the original objectives, the revised version is more suited to an assessment of progress in each area.

The revised objectives are therefore as follows:

1. To enable **access and connectivity to the Internet** and electronic networking for information users and suppliers, thus facilitating dissemination of information within and between all sectors;
2. To build a more advanced **capacity to utilise the internet** and computer mediated communication, including generating/collating and the introduction onto the Web of **local content**;
3. To contribute towards **the capacity for informed and participatory decision-making** by stakeholders in sustainable development, at all levels of the economy and society, from national policy development to internal decision making, through sharing of information/experience, collaboration and partnerships, and by other means such as workshops, advocacy etc.;
4. To design and implement **a sustainable mechanism** that will continue to encourage and facilitate networking, collaboration, participation and communication between stakeholders locally, nationally, regionally and internationally.

The initial Project Document also specified a set of activities, which are described later.

These objectives were in accordance with those of the global SDNP programme, which can be summarised as:<sup>2</sup>

- To facilitate access to information and decision making in support of sustainable development;
- To encourage broad participation in planning and implementing sustainable development strategies.

Guyana had participated in UNCED, and an Environmental Protection Agency had been set up to strengthen environmental monitoring and conservation. The EPA had links to SDNP from the earliest stages, which continue today.

Yet it is acknowledged by several interviewees that the driving impetus behind SDNP in Guyana was more narrowly to promote Internet use amongst government and civil society stakeholders. Unless its value as a tool for networking and information sharing was first recognised, the argument went, then content on environmental and development issues was unlikely to be generated or used. For this reason, major emphasis was placed initially on simply providing connectivity to relevant actors, gradually building up skills and then introducing the local content elements and supports.

In the national context, this emphasis is consistent with both the national objectives and with the global objectives of the SDNP programme.

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2 Kate Wild *et al*, A Forward Strategy for the SDNP: 1998 – 2000. UNDP, December 1997.

### 3. PROJECT ASSESSMENT: ACTIVITIES, OUTPUTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

#### 3.1 SDNP Pre Launch

The idea of introducing SDNP to Guyana came first in 1995, at the suggestion of the UNDP national office<sup>3</sup> but very much in line with the strong participation of Guyana in Agenda 21 and the subsequent setting up of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). With the agreement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a feasibility study was put out to tender in December 1995 by UNDP, and was completed in May the following year. The report came out strongly in favour of setting up an SDNP.<sup>4</sup>

At that time, many believed that the Internet and ICTs generally could play a significant role in addressing some of the challenges faced, initially by enhancing the capacity for decision-making and the availability and use of information. For this reason, the main focus of the SDNP Programme at the outset was simply to help to introduce the Internet, putting local content online and encouraging a process of information exchange.

The timing was important. In early 1996, the Internet had yet to appear in Guyana, although there was awareness of its exponential growth internationally in industrialised countries and elsewhere. There very quickly emerged an interest, shared by some in government, in its potential to address some of the challenges faced, and specifically its potential to improve decision-making in government and for social and economic development. As it was slowly making its way up the policy agenda, it encountered significant resistance - there was suspicion and concern regarding for instance the potential proliferation of pornography and the possible undermining of broadcasting regulation and laws. This led to a cautious approach by the government - consideration at one point was given to introducing a strict ISP licensing regime<sup>5</sup> - and the uncertainty threatened to seriously delay the emergence of a coherent government response to the entry of ISPs and the introduction of the internet. The telecom operator, GT&T, was ready to introduce the Internet, but was reluctant without a clear government position on ISPs and on Internet regulation generally.

What eventually emerged fell well short of a coherent policy on the Internet (much less on ICTs). But it came out in favour of a largely unregulated introduction of ISPs, introduced a zero-tariff phone access to the Internet from anywhere in the country<sup>6</sup>, and enabled the decision by GT&T to introduce the required technology. During 1996, small ISPs began to emerge, and the internet era began.

#### 3.2 Main Phase Activities

##### OVERVIEW

SDNP Guyana was launched in July 1997 and provided initially with \$150,000 UNDP funding for two years to July 1999.

3 Carlos Felipe Martines was the UNDP Resident Representative at the time, and a very strong champion of SDNP.

4 *Feasibility Study for a Sustainable Development Networking Programme in Guyana*, E. Lance Carberry, Andrew Mancey, Mark Bynoe, Rayman Khan, Martin Williams 29th May 1996.

5 In the end, for over a year, the government required GT&T to use a proxy server and filter web access to bar access to undesirable sites (pornography, incitement and so forth). This would have been at some cost to GT&T.

6 This policy, though well-intentioned, has come in for criticism since GT&T, in effect, loads the cost back on to ISPs through high leased line charges. GT&T claimed in an interview that the regulation was lifted a couple of years ago to allow them to charge for these calls, but that they have chosen not to because of the delicate stage in negotiations with the government. The ISPs, and SDNP, continues to pay very high leased line charges.

It began by putting in place the technical and administrative components. A network information officer specialist, who had participated in the feasibility study, was hired and an administrative assistant: Andrew Mancey and Chloe Noble respectively. Both have remained with the project since.<sup>7</sup> The UNDP Office in New York sent a member of staff<sup>8</sup>, who supplied directly the basic equipment and remained for a week to assist in the set up. Within a few months, the basic equipment and connections were in place. These comprised:

- 1 Pentium Pro server (dual processor) running Redhat Linux (web server and mail server)
- 1 Cisco access server and router (dial up access)
- 16 modems
- A generator, UPS, and a number couple of PCs and peripherals

Bandwidth of 64k (later expanded to 128K) was leased from GT&T. By September 1997, several dialup clients were connected, including the Ministry of Information, and a web site with topic oriented pages of links for environment, education and so forth had been set up.

Delays were encountered in recruiting a Coordinator, but in February 1998 Dr. Rovin Deodat took over though on a non-permanent basis.

There followed a period of intensive promotion of the Internet and of SDNP services, first among the government Ministries and agencies, and then among NGOs and other stakeholders. Given the low level of understanding of the Internet and its potential, and barely existent connectivity, this early focus was central to building a critical mass of users. Dial-up subscribers slowly grew in number, and a few were beginning to implement Websites hosted and supported by SDNP – among the first to be hosted in Guyana. By November 1998, when the Coordinator moved to a position with the Environment Protection Agency, a number of Ministries were becoming increasingly involved. Early sites included Guyana Geology and Mines Commission, Iwokrama, UNDP, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health, and Community-Based Rehabilitation, and the University of Guyana. By December 1998, dial-up clients numbered ninety five, and a total of twelve Websites were hosted locally.

Dr Rovin Deodat remained part time as coordinator (two hours a day) until March 1999, and contributed for some time after. In January 2000 when the current coordinator, Vidyaratha Kissoon was hired. Total staff remained at three. By then, training in Website development, as well as in-house trainees, was also intensified. Attempts at partnerships, and several collaborative projects were conceived. New lobbying and awareness raising actions were taking, and SDNP succeeded in gaining the administration rights over several of the .gy domains. In the meantime, the number of ISPs in Guyana had grown to about half a dozen, and internet usage overall was growing.

The number of dial-up clients peaked at 260 in 2001, the full capacity that SDNP's available bandwidth (now doubled to 128k) could sustain, and has since dropped slightly to about 240. Websites (also requiring bandwidth to sustain) continued to rise, with a total of 67 sites hosted today.

Thus broadly speaking, although there are no clearly distinct phases, SDNP went through a 'normal' business cycle of start-up, during which the technical requirements and business arrangements were put in place; a phase of customer growth during which the emphases was on making the services known; and a stage of maturity during which customers grew apace while, while new activities were sought out and implemented.

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7. The position of Administrative Assistant has since become a Project Finance assistant.

8 Raul Zambrano, now Senior ICT for Development Policy Advisor, Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP.

SDNP now faces perhaps its greatest challenge – how to continue its work, and be faithful to its objectives, in the absence of general grant support.

#### ACTIVITIES.

The activities of SDNP through the course of its existence can be grouped under eight headings. These correspond to the four main Objectives, as revised for the evaluation.

#### *Objective 1: To provide access and connectivity to the Internet*

Providing **dial-up access to the internet** was, from the earliest stages, a major priority and the first activity to get underway. The Internet was very new in Guyana, and SDNP supported a focused extension of access. An early step, maintained since, was to provide a public access point in their own offices. The table below shows the number of dial-up users over the years:

**Table 2: Dial up users annually, new and 'churn'**

Year	No. of Dial-up clients	New clients	Loss of clients
1997	8	8	0
1998	95	87	0
1999	133	40	2
2000	200	75	8
2001	260	74	14
2002	238	0	22

The final column records how many users left the service, giving up the use of the Internet or moving to another ISP. The rising figure at the end is not necessarily indicative of a decline in relative service quality or higher tariffs. SDNP has since 2001 been working at full capacity in terms of the bandwidth required to service their dial-up clients and hosted Websites, and ceased to seek new subscribers, even turning away new applicants.

The current breakdown of dial-up users is:

**Table 3: Breakdown of Dial-up users, 2002**

Types of user	Number
Individual users	69
Government Agencies	40
Non-governmental organisations	33
Educational Institutions	30
Government Ministries	17
UN and Aid agencies	6
Other organisations/institutions	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>238</b>

Thus individual users amount to less than 30% - mostly low-tariff 'insomniac' subscribers with late night use only - with various institutions and organisations taking up the rest.

These services were provided free to all clients until October 1999, in line with SDNP's objective of encouraging users. For governments, this offered not so much a cost incentive – Internet access could in principle be afforded – as a bureaucratic incentive since a new service often required a long lead-in time to establish an internal budget line. Tariffs are now at market rates, though a variety of low-cost options keep their minimal tariffs at the low end. (One such is the 'insomniac service' which provides very cheap access but only between the hours of midnights and six in the morning, when their bandwidth is barely utilised by others.) They also waive the fee where NGOs specifically request it, based on their limited capacity to pay.

A key aspect of the service, and one not offered by commercial ISPs, is the level of service. Dial-up clients are visited, if needed, to set up their computer and establish connectivity. Basic training in e-mail and Web use is provided on site, and ongoing support by phone. All this is included in the basic subscription rate.

A second areas of activity relating to internet access concerns the management of part of the **.gy domain name**.

The management of national domain name is often complex and arbitrary. Yet the availability of domain names, including the national high-level domain (in Guyana this is .gy), is considered an important part of access to the Internet. In Guyana, for reasons associated with the absence of an internet connection during the early years, the .gy domain was managed and administered since 1995 by the University of Guyana but technically supported by an individual in Puerto Rico University. The latter had provided the original CUNET dial-up connections for the University of Guyana.<sup>9</sup> However, the system entails additional costs and time for the applicant. In early 1999, SDNP sought to administer technical support of the org.gy, edu.gy and gov.gy domains from Puerto Rico University, and this was agreed. Since then, SDNP had been running the primary and secondary servers for these three domains, used by the university, the government and non-commercial organisations. Registration is achieved on-line by a very simple procedure, at relatively low cost.

SDNP has been negotiating with the university of Guyana for some time to gain control of registration and hosting of the important co.gy. Although they have wide support, including a submission in May 2000 from the Information Technology Providers Association of Guyana, the University has yet to make a decision. The terms offered by SDNP are reasonable: the university would receive 25% of the (modest) income obtained, while incurring no costs. The interregnum between vice-chancellors (the departing one had indicated support for the proposal) appears to have delayed the decision.

*Objective 2: To enhance the capacity for internet use and to develop local content*

Enhancing the capacity to use the internet, through Websites, training and other means, also came to the fore early on. The growth in **Website hosting** was as follows:

**Table 4: Annual Web Hosting**

Year	No of Web sites hosted
1998	12
1999	27
2000	45
2001	52
2002	67

Combined with dial-up users, the available bandwidth is already operating to capacity. Thus the emphasis is on enhancing the quality of content and design on existing Websites hosted. It is worth noting that bandwidth constraint is not *availability* per se, but the cost of a leased line from GT&T, the telecom operator: Monthly tariffs amounted to US\$5,400. Total GT&T charges came to 60% of total SDNP costs in 2001.

SDNP not only hosts the Websites (and is the only ISP to do so on a server based in Guyana), but sorts them under development-related headings and, in some cases, annotates them, on **their own 'portal'**. Although relatively basic, it also includes links externally under the subject headings. (see [www.sdn.org.gy](http://www.sdn.org.gy))

<sup>9</sup> This division of administration and technical support of a country domain name obtains in a couple of other Caribbean countries, probably for similar reasons.

As with the dial-up accounts, Web hosting was provided free until October 1999. Since then, government clients are charged but NGOs remain free of charge. Supporting content remains the priority.

The table below presents services supplied in **Web hosting, development and training** over the years, to different client groups (see Annex 2 for list).

**Table 5: Web-Services by client type 1998 - 2002**

<b>Service Clients</b>	<b>Total Websites hosted</b>	<b>Developed/ maintained/hosted</b>	<b>Web training for staff</b>	<b>Hosted only</b>
Gov. ministry or agency	28	12	5	12
Civil Society/ NGO	31	9	6	25
Other (UN, private)	8	6	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>37</b>

Note: Nine of those for whom SDNP developed a Website also received training (columns 3 and 4)

A few points are worth noting:

- The sixty seven Websites hosted are thought to be the only ones hosted on a Guyana based server (if there are others, they are few in number). Commercial ISPs host on servers abroad.
- In twenty seven cases, the Website was developed and maintained by SDNP, and in nine of these the organisations' staff have also received training in Web use. Many are now beginning to maintain their own.
- Basic training given was in-company, from four to eight hours in Web page design and use, initially using Netscape Composer. Later on, training in ftp use was also provided to a number Website owners, and in some cases clients went on to use programmes such as Dreamweaver and FrontPage with some SDNP support and guidance.
- A high level of ongoing support is offered, in that SDNP staff remain available, even to call out to clients, to address problems arising or new development needs.
- Among the thirty seven Websites hosted (who have not received training or development assistance), many maintain them themselves, having obtained the skills elsewhere. A number, however, are not updated on a regular basis.

SDNP does not undertake sophisticated analysis of visitors to the Website. However, a daily average tally of almost 10,000 page hits during a week in August suggests quite a high level of use. Per day, this represented about 93 megabytes of information downloaded (see Annex 3).

More **extended and in-depth training** has also been provided to sixteen of 'interns' or trainees, half during 2001 and the others spread over the full duration (see Annex 3 for details). They were based in SDNP offices, and remained for a period of four months to a year working on specific Web-site content. Most were computer science students; although two were studying environment science. Three received a small stipend, the rest being unpaid volunteers. One went on to do website design for a call centre and several others are working locally in the IT sector where their experience was useful, but most returned to other work or study. All contributed significantly to enhancing the quality and quantity of information available online.

A number of **partnerships and collaborations** were also initiated and are at various stages of development, some dormant, others in the process of ongoing discussion. These include:

- A project with the Ministry of Education for a distance education initiative, which will use internet and communication technologies to share information. A blockage here is

reportedly the absence of a medium or long-term policy in this area, in the University of Ministry of Education .

- A project with the National Library to develop Internet access points throughout the country for research and information (and not just for voice over IP calls). Only the National Library in New Amsterdam has materialised so far, as a donation was made of a computer there. The lack of funding is the obstacle to this proceeding.
- A *Development Gateway portal* for Guyana. SDNP was identified as a potential host for a Guyana portal for the World Bank supported *Development Gateway* project. However, no word has been heard since the visit of a consultant, and it is thought it may have encountered political or other obstacles.
- A proposal to build the capacity within the Government sector to use the Internet to disseminate information and knowledge for the public good. Although no Ministry has been identified to carry it forward, the project may be relevant again when discussions on governance recommence.
- GUYSUCO community access to Internet. SDNP negotiated with Guyana Sugar Company (GUYSUCO: the state owned sugar company) to develop access centres in their community centres located in several areas of Guyana. This was stalled due to the lack of funding for computer equipment and of a dedicated phone line for dial-up access, and the absence of skilled staff. SDNP were to provide training, dial-up access, Web-hosting and technical support.

The relationship between UNDP and SDNP is considerably deeper than is usually found between a funded project and the donor, and could perhaps best be described as a partnership. Sharing a building facilitates cooperation; and SDNP also provides UNDP with its internal and external electronic communication needs. But beyond this, UNDP saw its role in general as promoting the use of ICT for development, and SDNP as a means to achieve this. UNDP thus took many opportunities to promote SDNP and Internet for development purposes, in public and private meetings and in the context of its relations with the Guyanese Ministries and agencies. UNDP and SDNP have maintained a synergistic relationship throughout the period, and are planning to continue this.

*Objective 3: To enhance informed and participatory decision-making by a variety of means*

The objective of enhancing participatory decision-making was the main focus of only a few activities. It was assumed that it would be achieved largely as an outcome of the activities described above. The following were designed (at least in large part) to influence, educate and affect policy and decision-making regarding electronic networking, including in some cases efforts to broaden the decision making process.

Educating in and advocating the use of the Internet for development purposes was carried on initially alongside the promotion work of SDNP itself. About half the time of the first coordinator was spent simply in **meetings with senior Ministry officials**, explaining the utility of the internet and arguing for the benefits to efficiency and decision making – seeking agreement to subscribe to SDNP. This work soon moved outside the Ministries to government agencies, NGOs and others. The current coordinator continues the work, but since the general level of understanding of the Internet has risen, this activity is less frequent and less intensive. More recently, it also takes a more explicit policy orientation.

**Specific educational interventions** were undertaken:

- In September 2001, SDNP delivered a series of talks and demonstrations to lecturers in the Computer Science Department of the University of Guyana on the use of Linux, underlining the extent of practical expertise developed by SDNP. Over recent years several

final year students in Computer Science at UG have opted to do a project using Linux, and have come to SDNP for assistance and/or supervision.

- In October 2001, SDNP facilitated a forum on the *Role of ICT in Guyana's Development* for the International Day for Eradication of Poverty. A proposal is in train for follow up activities, some likely to be undertaken in collaboration with the National Library.
- In November 2001 and March 2002 respectively, presentations on the use of ICTs were delivered to the Foreign Service Institute and to a Junior Chamber Commerce event.
- In 2002, SDNP organised presentations to the media on the use of the Internet to research environmental issues.
- SDNP participated in a science popularisation fair hosted by the Caribbean Academy of Sciences.

Outside of Guyana, SDNP staff became involved in SIDSNet, as a tutor at a couple of workshops; and also participated in the Global Knowledge II meeting in Kuala Lumpur in March 2000.

Several **consultancy projects** also aimed at enhancing skills and decision-making capacity. These were:

- A review of the use of computers in the Ministry of Legal Affairs, in November 2001;
- Support for the preparation and implementation of a computerisation strategy in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Trade and International Co-operation;
- System Administration for a private sector ISP, which switched to a Linux based system;
- Consultancy with the National Insurance Scheme to review a data entry outsourcing project.

In relation to **direct policy influence**, SDNP has been active in a few areas:

- They participated in the telecommunication sector reform discussions, which are now in a hiatus;
- Working with others, they drafted the IT chapter of the National Development Strategy, and also worked with the team that refined the Strategy to become part of the IDB/Government funded ICT project (currently awaiting approval)<sup>10</sup>;
- SDNP participated in the preparation of a report on e-commerce, funded by the Commonwealth Secretariat for CARICOM. SDNP also organised a forum on e-commerce when the consultant, Mr Didar Singh, offered to share his knowledge while in Guyana preparing his final report for CARICOM.

SDNP also contributed to efforts to **organise the ICT sector** in Guyana to undertake more effective advocacy:

- In 2000, SDNP assisted in the formation of the *IT Providers Association of Guyana* (ITPAG: <http://www.itpag.org.gy> ). Amongst other matters, it developed and circulated a position paper on the use of the .gy domain, proposing that SDNP become the registrar.
- More recently, Internet Service Providers including SDNP have formed a *Bandwidth Resellers Group*. The group met with GT&T to discuss the cost and quality of bandwidth and to lobby for reduced costs and fairer competition.

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10 The Information and Communication Technology project (GY-066) has total funding of US\$22.5 million, US\$18 million from the IDB. See further on for detail. It is held up through a legal action taken by GT&T in the United States, claiming that it discriminates against them by being conditional on aspects of telecommunication sector reform.

**Electronic Mailing lists** can also be an effective means to exchange information, develop common understanding, and in effect extend the decision making process. About a dozen lists were set up at different times, usually at the suggestion of SDNP. Their aim was to begin to generate a dynamic of sharing and exchange, thereby contributing to decision-making capacities of selected groups. Only a couple, however, were considered successful. SDNP concluded that a critical mass of connected and skilled users, oriented towards sharing and a collective dynamic, was not present. It is no coincidence that the more successful groups were both technically oriented: the Information Technology Association of Guyana; and the Bandwidth Resellers group. Their main activities have been externally oriented, in joint position development and lobbying, which also probably contributed to success.

*Objective 4: To design and implement a sustainable mechanism for SDNP.*

The original Project Document states that at the end of the first two years, “it is expected that the SDNP will become self-sustaining and expanded”. This did not happen, and additional funding was found to sustain its activities. The objective has been addressed as a high priority only in more recent months.

In July 2002, a draft Business Plan was presented by SDNP to the Steering Committee. It decided that SDNP should become a non-governmental organisation under the Burial and Friendly Societies’ Act (the only available legal instrument). It also decided that the accumulated earnings of SDNP should be utilised to renew some of the equipment, the remainder to be transferred to the new entity upon its formation.

SDNP has also begun the process of revising its relationship with UNDP, restructuring the services it already provides to the latter into a contractual agreement. The transition to a self-sustaining autonomous entity is also the subject of a draft Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNDP-Guyana.

## 4. ACHIEVEMENTS

It should be noted that few quantitative targets or indicators of success were included in the original Project Document. This was perhaps understandable, given that the Internet had not yet arrived in Guyana at the time the document was drafted, and expectations were vague. It is thus quite difficult to assess quantitatively the level of success, as compared to original expectations.

Below, each of the activities described above is considered from the point of view of its contribution to achieving the objectives of SDNP, prefaced with any targets or general indicators provided in the Project Document. After that, any wider influence of SDNP on the national agenda is noted.

### 4.1 Measuring against SDNP Objectives

Each of the objectives is considered in turn. Some activities influenced more than one objectives. In such cases they are presented under the one to which they contributed most, and their influence elsewhere is noted.

#### *Objective 1: To provide access and connectivity to the Internet*

The Project Document in several places puts the provision of basic Internet service to the fore: e.g. "... the initial approach should focus on the provision of a minimum service option to all stakeholders. This ... envisages the need to run a non-profit ISP as part of SDNP with training and other services to be offered from the very start and the establishment of at least one public access point."

The detailed plan gives no quantitative indicators. However, among the proposed activities were:

- A public awareness campaign on computer mediated communication;
- The establishment of SDNP nodes, especially in urban centres, to create a nationwide network;
- Identify key institutions involved in the process of sustainable development in Guyana;
- Conduct user-training and user-education for potential users of Internet services.

The actual outputs varied somewhat, chiefly because of developments in the Internet in the intervening time. The creation of a nationwide network of "SDNP nodes" was redundant once the Internet and ISPs had been introduced, and the decision taken to provide tariff-free internet dial-up nationwide. (Shortcomings in the network continue to hamper access outside the main urban areas of the densely populated coastal strip. SDNP could never have addressed such infrastructural limitations.) Also, a public awareness campaign was not undertaken.

However, the activities pursued did achieve considerable progress in relation to the objective. Although there was no public campaign, more confined efforts to persuade government ministries, agencies and NGOs to become involved in the Internet were successful.

Several interviewees noted the extreme reluctance initially of ministries and agencies to utilise the internet as a medium for internal and external communication, due to a general lack of awareness, possibly a fear of new technology, and a culture that in general was not receptive to information sharing and dissemination. Commercial ISPs had little interest in attracting government entities as customers, reportedly in part because government is slow to pay, but also because ISPs were limited in the number of dial-up accounts they could offer in the early years – and commercial customers were much more attractive.

Indeed, the SDNP project may be regarded as subsidising the early growth of the Internet and extending the absolute numbers connected through leasing its own bandwidth.

It is reasonable to conclude a large proportion of the SDNP users would most likely not have chosen to connect to the Internet in the absence of SDNP promotion activities. The huge investment of the coordinator's time, in encouraging subscriptions through meetings with all government Ministries and many agencies, paid off. Certainly, a large majority of SDNP dial-up users went online significantly earlier than they otherwise would have.

The fact that the service was free for the first couple of years was also a factor that attracted a number of users, amongst government (where budgets for such matters can be difficult and slow to procure) and amongst NGOs.

The quantity and quality of subscribers would also suggest a potentially strong development orientation. Almost a quarter (57) of the 238 are government ministries and agencies; and 13% and 14% are from educational institutions and NGOs respectively. These represent a large proportion of actors relevant to sustainable development in Guyana.

Of the 29% (69) individual users, most are subscribed at 'insomniac' tariffs, available for late night usage and considerably lower than commercial ISPs. Although there is no knowledge of whether these individuals contribute to development objectives, it is reasonable to assume that they could not otherwise afford to subscribe to the Internet and therefore that they come from a low-income group.

The quality of service provided, according to those interviewed, was also a strong incentive. The individual tutoring at the beginning, and ongoing support to the level needed, encouraged continuing use.

Security issues were also promoted, reportedly working against a distinct lack of interest. Activities included sorting out virus infections and encouraging the use of anti-virus software; setting up firewalls; suspending the accounts of those consistently circulating viruses, assisting local ISPs to make their systems more secure, and advising (at the request of UNDP) on the integrity of the computer systems used in the last general election.

It is more difficult to determine whether benefits actually accrue to users as a result of Internet use. Internet use amongst government is still sporadic, and there is reportedly still little genuine exchange and interaction within and between most government areas. Nevertheless, some Ministries have embraced the technologies with resultant benefits at least in efficiency if not transparency and decision-making. The Ministry of Health Procurement officer claimed significant savings in fax costs.

The University of Guyana also benefited for several years through the provision by SDNP of a free local UUCP dialup connection for the BBS-type email service used by UG at that time. Previously a UUCP connection was available only by dialling directly to Puerto Rico (part of the CUNET project) once or twice per day to exchange mail. This call had been paid for by UG at normal overseas rates, and was expensive and unreliable. No other local ISP could offer a UUCP connection. The service ended when the BBS-type email service was closed down by the University.

The SDNP's efforts in relation to administering the .gy high level domain (org.gy, edu.gy, and gov.gy) also yielded benefits, according to several people interviewed. Currently, there are four registered for edu.gy; fifteen for gov.gy; and forty six for the org.gy domain. First, in the absence of SDNP the process would have been considerably more time consuming and expensive, undoubtedly discouraging some from registering. Thus SDNP has resulted in a higher number of registrations overall and in the .gy domain. Second, organisations prefer to

have a .gy address partly because it identifies their nationality, but also because desired or appropriate .org high level domain names are very difficult to obtain since so many variations have already registered.

SDNP continues negotiating with the University of Guyana for the right to administer the entire .gy high level domain, which would include co.gy, where the problem mentioned above is especially acute, as well as info.gy and others. One company interviewed indicated that the ability to register their name of choice in the co.gy domain (as distinct from an unsuitable address in the .com domain) would provide a significant boost to marketing and identity.

*Objective 2: To enhance the capacity for internet use and to develop local content*

There was a similar paucity of quantitative targets in relation to enhancing the capacity to use the Internet, and in developing local content. Chief among the among the relevant activities proposed in the Project Document were:

- Encourage the creation and/or acquisition and/or linking of Guyanese information resources especially electronic sources of information to sustainable development;
- Encourage users and subscribers to load information on the SDNP computer server and to use Internet applications to share this information as appropriate;
- Acquire the resources to permit access to this server throughout Guyana by negotiating better terms and conditions of access and by encouraging participants to make best use of their own resources to connect to the SDNP server;
- A training programme for SDNP Hosts and users to provide introductory and on-going support.

Again the terminology used reveals their provenance in the early days of the Internet. In reality, the Web became the key tool here, and these activities translated into Web hosting, design, support, content development, and training. The actual figures are impressive given the limitations in Guyana: A total of 67 sites hosted, 27 of which were designed, maintained and hosted by SDNP itself. All but a few are in government Ministries and agencies, NGO, and aid organisations. Although some are little more than electronic brochures, most at least offer documentation that can be downloaded that would previously have been available only by post or visit, and a number offer regularly updated new information that would be otherwise been unavailable.

The organisations interviewed all claimed significant benefits from use. Examples include:

- The Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana (CIOG), an NGO with an Islamic background but targeting a wider range of poor Guyanese, hosts a Website with SDNP who also provide support and training. They current update it themselves. They survive on mainly individual donations, in Guyana but more so from the USA, Canada and the Caribbean. E-mail and the Web they use very regularly and extensively to provide updates and information to their donors, who often sponsor individual activities and so are interested in specific outcomes. This has saved considerable expense as compared to previous communications, and also through the electronic distribution of their accounts and annual report.

They have also attracted new donors. An example is of donations received to rebuild the house of a mother of nine children that had burned down. They posted the appeal on their site – a scanned report from a local newspaper – and had received donations by the following day with a steady stream following. The money itself is received by cheque, and by money transfer, and they have representatives in the USA. They believe that a large number people have got to know CIOG through the Web, often with existing

members forwarding on CIOG messages to others. They also now send a monthly newsletter.

- *Red Thread* is an NGO concerned with women and gender issues, more recently with a focus also on HIV/AIDS. It subsists on extremely limited external support and is primarily volunteer based. The main benefits from their SDNP connection have been in accessing international information on areas of their concern via the Web; and to connect them up with other NGOs internationally and nationally. Both in terms of costs savings as compared to other means of communication, and the improved volume and quality of relevant information available, the benefits were described as ‘very significant’. They also regard the level of support and service as excellent, though the speed of access was, they say, often slow.

They had also considered developing an e-commerce project around women’s craft production, but found that the financial services in Guyana were insufficiently developed to enable secure and easy payment.

A project to establish a cultural link between women from the Indian community in Georgetown and progressive women’s groups and communities in India may be down the road, as a way of countering the conservative and male-dominated Indian community culture in Guyana.

- The University of Guyana was an early recipient of support from SDNP in developing a Website. From very early on, they recorded a large number of hits, and believe that it has significantly heightened their profile and greatly facilitated the wide dissemination of detailed information even to Guyanese living abroad.
- GoInvest, the state agency for attracting and encouraging investment in Guyana, has also found their Website to be ‘very useful’ and to have ‘definitely benefited’ their activities. All their basic documentation is available from the Web, and they record a significant number of hits (about 2,000) a week, especially from outside Guyana. It is in relation to overseas access that they believe they benefit most, the norm being to communicate by e-mail and the Web initial stages of investor contact.
- The Environment Protection Agency commented that access to the internet in 1999 was certainly “a big plus” as at that time did not have the resources to get service from one of the new commercial ISP’s. Encouragement and assistance in developing the EPA Web page was also “a major advancement in the IT sector” for the agency; and they claim that the Webpage was a “major benefit”.

SDNP did not develop a conventional training course, as was originally envisaged. However, they trained about thirty organisation in Web use (and many more in e-mail use) which, since it accompanied the development and hosting of a Website, probably better targeted training needs than a general training course would have. The quality, nature and duration of training and support received was praised by those interviewed. Although regarded as basic, it was adequate to needs. The personal relationships established with SDNP staff were seen as especially productive, and not available from commercial ISPs.

Furthermore, sixteen interns also received training for a period between four months and a year, in designing and populating a Website – which considerably added to the body of content available. Several went on to employment in the IT area.

SDNP was also instrumental in the creation of a Guyana Linux Users Group, including an electronic list and website, the first such group there.

There can thus be little doubt that the project would have at least fulfilled the initial expectations, had they been quantified at the time. This success is due partly to developments in the Internet itself, which simplified the process of Web page construction and information dissemination more generally – thus more could be achieved with less effort. But the quality of the services provided was also high, and SDNP successfully undertook outreach that encouraged and then assisted organisations to put information online that would otherwise not have done so. And benefits have accrued to these organisations and their clients.

Beyond the stated aims, SDNP also began to explore partnerships and collaboration that could lead to further and significant growth in capacities and content, including projects with the Ministry of Education, National Library, GUYSUCO, Development Gateway and others. These could have the potential to exponentially increase the content available, as well as greatly improve accessibility; but adverse circumstances have so far prevented this potential being realised. Nevertheless, they stand to SDNP as an achievement beyond the original aims. The whole area of partnership and collaboration is one that has attained a higher profile only more recently.

*Objective 3: To enhance informed and participatory decision-making by a variety of means*

Proposed outputs in the project Document relating to this objectives were twofold:

- A "Sourcebook" of information and other resources, including people and their expertise, on sustainable development in Guyana prepared and disseminated.
- Products and services to meet the needs of key stakeholders for sustainable development.

Again, expected and actual outputs did not fully match. The 'Sourcebook' never materialised, for reasons that this evaluation has not determined.

However, there were significant achievements in the second proposed output, and in areas not specified in the Project Document that nevertheless may have an impact on the capacity for decision-making. Products and services provided to clients by SDNP have been outlined above. In particular SDNP appears to be developing expertise in management of information systems, in the context of development. And potentially more significant in terms of enhancing decision-making capacity in the long-term are the outreach, educational, lobbying, and ICT sector organising.

It was not possible to determine the precise influence of SDNP on either the decision-making capacity of stakeholders in sustainable development, or on the decisions themselves relating to ICTs for development. This would require an in-depth investigation. Several of the interventions have anyhow not yet had an opportunity to influence their intended targets, such as the two sector lobby groups (ITPAG and Bandwidth Resellers Group); and the long-anticipated IDB-funded ICT Project has yet to receive the final go-ahead. The extent to which the National Development Strategy reaches into policy is also unclear in the current political climate.

Nevertheless, we can reasonably conclude that the initiatives pursued in this area:

1. In themselves has some limited immediate impact on their intended target group, in terms of considering the views, arguments and proposals put forward;
2. Potentially, could have further influence in the future, especially if they continue to be pursued;
3. Demonstrate initiative and innovation on the part of SDNP staff, and the capacity to conceive and implement activities of this nature.

*Objective 4: To design and implement a sustainable mechanism for SDNP.*

As mentioned, the Sustainability Plan has become a priority only in recent months, as the prospect of the elimination of grant-funding looms. Considerable progress has been made, but much work remains to be done if SDNP is realistically to have a chance of autonomous survival (see further on).

*Horizontal Objectives: Addressing Disadvantage.*

The Project Document, in a section entitled *Special Considerations*, noted a horizontal objectives for SDNP: "... it is expected to focus on the promotion of sustainable development for women, the indigenous community and other disadvantaged groups within the Guyanese society as well as community based organisations... It is expected that this project will provide support for and assist in alleviating some of the problems of poverty and deprivation".

There is no evidence that SDNP devoted specific resources or significant attention to the groups specified here. Certainly, SDNP services were generally geared towards including disadvantaged groups, through low cost access and Web development, the high level of support, and so forth. They host Websites for gender/women's groups and an indigenous peoples' group. And the significant take up amongst NGOs and community based organisations suggests that they succeeded here. Yet a dedicated and sustained focus on women, on indigenous groups or on other disadvantaged groups was not in evidence, for instance in the form of targeted information campaigns, training sessions, information compilations, partnerships, and so forth.

There are obstacles to maintaining such a focus. The relatively low level of organisation of civil society makes it difficult to identify and reach out to target groups. The poor level of telecommunication access in the interior of the country, where indigenous groups live, also hampers efforts to utilise ICTs there. Yet there are some umbrella groups through which specific ideas might have been developed.

## **4.2 Partners, Beneficiary and Partnership Strategies**

It is worth noting at the outset that the term 'partnership' appears nowhere in the Project Document, and even 'partners' is used loosely to refer to those centrally involved in the project. The expectations, or aspirations, that partnerships can comprise a key instrument for leveraging benefits and outcomes is more recent. Thus building partnerships and collaborative projects were not envisaged for SDNP in Guyana, and there was no strategy to do so.

As outlined above the main partners in practice were UNDP, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Information. The relationship between UNDP and SDNP seems to work particularly well, with both sides deriving benefits in terms of furthering their goals. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also worked constructively throughout the Project, and continues to. The Ministry of Information was originally designated as the executing agency, but was abolished during the course of the Project,. They appeared to have worked well up to then.

Secondarily were a number of other 'partners', with whom the Project worked closely and developed a good relationship. These included the ministry of Information, the Guyana Forestry Commission, and of Education; and the Environmental Protection Agency. As mentioned above, in some cases, collaboration did begin on specific projects that might yet lead to joint project implementation. A number of NGOs, such as Red Thread and the CIOG, also developed close relations with SDNP, but these may be categorised as beneficiaries.

The ICT sector entities, the setting up of which SDNP contributed to, might also be considered as partnerships, though they were narrowly focused on achieving sectoral aims through sharing and lobbying.

There are a number of barriers to developing partnerships. One is funding – investment in ICT for development is basically stalled until the IDB ICT Project can move ahead, and was insignificant in previous. Another, as mentioned, is the relatively low level of organisation of civil society, but its access to funding is also very limited from national and international sources, leaving it little scope to develop joint projects.

### 4.3 SDNP's Wider Influences

#### ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR ICTD.

There is some evidence that the proposal and concept-development stage of SDNP, from late 1995 onwards, *hastened an early resolution of at least some key policy issues* at national level in relation to the Internet.

During this period, a communication policy advisor to the Office of the President<sup>11</sup>, familiar with the Internet after a number of years in Canada, combined with UNDP to make the case for SDNP, at the political level. At the time, as described earlier, a cautious approach was taken by the government towards the Internet, due to a variety of concerns, that risked serious delay. The SDNP concept as proposed emphasised the development potential of the Internet to a government that understood little at that time. It also offered the prospect of a means to ensure that the government would not get left behind in what was, despite the reservations, increasingly recognised as a key technology of the future, and one that would enhance its decision making capacity.

If this is the case, SDNP, in an effort to create an environment more conducive to its own launch, at the same time hastened the introduction of the Internet. In the context of Guyana at the time, is it reasonable to assume that this would indirectly contribute to development objectives, through the earlier appearance of ISPs and the relatively benign regulatory environment in which they worked.

The other areas of potential influence on ICT for development were outlined under Objective 3 above. There, it was argued that their lobbying, educational, and other outreach actions may reasonably be assumed to enhance decision-making in the long-term, and also to influence the outcome of those decisions. Since many of the decisions concern for instance reform of the telecommunication sector (regarding which SDNP contributed to discussions), ICTs in the National Development Strategy (to which SDNP with other contributed an extended Annex in ICTD issues) and the IDB ICT Project, the specific experience and knowledge of SDNP may yet influence the outcomes in this area. If it does, it is likely to be small, but appreciable.

#### INFLUENCES ON BROADER NATIONAL AGENDA

The evaluation revealed no influence of SDNP on the country's wider development agenda.

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11 Dr. Rovin Deodat, now Director of Education, Information and training at the Environmental Protection Agency, believes that the SDNP Proposal and related discussions brought forward the introduction of the Internet to Guyana by about a year. He was also the first coordinator of SDNP.

## 5. MANAGEMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Project Document presented draft terms of reference for the Steering Committee, similar to those elsewhere. It combines a number of functions, in terms of ongoing management support, representation and future evolution :

“The role of the SDNP Steering Committee is to provide advice, direction and support to the SDNP Coordinator and the Coordination Unit staff on an ongoing basis.” It is also seen as “the vehicle for reflecting stakeholder participation in the management and operation of SDNP. In due course a key task will be to review the business plan and forecast expenditure and revenues and slowly introduce a sliding scale for cost recovery based on ability to pay.”

Project management was to be the responsibility of the Coordinator, working in a team of three staff.

Overall, the informal and loose management practices and structures, especially between the key actors in SDNP, UNDP and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, appears to have served the project needs of SDNP well. Its small scale and the continuity of some key staff facilitated this.

There were some weaknesses. Targets and milestones regarding success were never set. Monitoring, from operational and business perspectives, has been very limited. Information and analysis regarding for instance the extent and nature of use of the Web site and pages might be useful to determine levels and reasons for success and failure. Mechanisms to enable reflection on the causes of failure, and of success, might yield useful lessons.

But overall, management appears to have been able to respond to project needs as they emerged, to flexibly and sensibly interpret objectives, and to spot new possibilities. The Steering Committee also deserves some credit for this. In general, also, it has not impeded the development of SDNP, and has facilitated generous continuation of funding.

Membership varied between about nine and fourteen members, rising in recent years to include additional NGO members and other stakeholders who emerged as interesting and relevant. Its composition towards the end represents a reasonable balance of: three from government<sup>12</sup>, three loosely representing civil society, two from UNDP and EPA, and one each from private sector, CARICOM, University, and the National Library. It met twice to three times a year, and attendance was described as ‘adequate’ but not great.

It did not quite as anticipated in the Project Document. In the early period, in particular, the Steering Committee eased access especially to key government stakeholders. In fact, rather than representing stakeholder’ interests within the Project, it tended to work the other way around, as a channel for SDNP to secure its interests within stakeholders. The Steering Committee was thus a way to bring in and secure the commitment of stakeholders who understood little of the objectives of SDNP and of the use of ICTs.

This generally low level of understanding of ICTs was also reflected among Steering Committee members – for some, it is likely that the experience of sitting on the Steering Committee was an education in the potential of ICTs, and in the business of running an ISP. But this worked to the benefit of SDNP, giving a sense of ownership to stakeholders.

But it also reduced the extent to which strategic guidance and advice could be provided. This was a new area, and few people anywhere in Guyana were adequately equipped to advise on

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12 As the Ministry of Information no longer exists, this seat is vacated, leaving in practice two.

this development. As far as can be determined, this need not be seen as a failure of the Steering Committee; rather, such guidance was obviated by SDNP's status as a project, with a relatively clear set of goals operating in a relatively static environment. SDNP staff themselves were well qualified to carry this through successfully and did so.

The above comments apply primarily to the requirements of SDNP as a funded project. A key objective is also to map the way, and provide the guidance, for the evolution of SDNP from project status with its relatively secure funding and clear objectives, through to an institutional status with a self-sustaining base.

The current management structures and practices are less well able to cope with this new phase. As discussed later, the functions of the Steering Committee necessarily change, including the extent to which it represents the interests of stakeholders. It must evolve towards a board of management style, where members are selected for their individual contribution to strategic management. The transition on the side of the Steering Committee can only really be finalised with the reconstitution of SDNP as a new legal entity. Management inside SDNP, however, must evolve more rapidly, setting the new skills and practices in place as early as possible. These are discussed in the next section.

## 6. SUSTAINABILITY AND THE FUTURE:

There is clearly a willingness, indeed eagerness, amongst major SDNP stakeholders for the Project to continue beyond its current grant-aided lifetime. A desire to build on its achievements is testimony to the high regard in which it is held by these stakeholders.

This evaluation backs up this assessment, in terms of its potential to provide necessary services and become sustainable, and of its capacity to contribute to development – though neither is inevitable and a successful conclusion will require a high degree of commitment and innovation on all sides. In addition, it will require the emergence of an environment more conducive to its development in sustainable directions.

### 3.1 A Conducive Environment

In the medium term, the extent to which SDNP can make a significant contribution to development and the nature of this contribution, and the likelihood of a self sustaining existence, depend largely on external factors. These include:

- 1) Significant progress in the telecommunication sector and regulatory environment, especially the renegotiation of the GT&T license conditions and a more constructive relationship with government (which both sides desire). Ideally, the opening of data and other sectors to new suppliers would result in lower costs and wider availability. But more important than lower costs for ISPs is rapid extension of the telecommunication network to rural areas and to the interior using a variety of technologies. This would offer greater opportunities for SDNP to address marginalised communities, and to develop innovative ways of bringing electronic communication and applications to communities more widely throughout the country.
- 2) The launch of the ICT project, in the context of an emerging coherent and comprehensive ICT strategy, will offer very significant opportunities to SDNP and others to innovate in ICTs for development. This should reinforce regulatory reforms; enhance e-governance, possibly leading to significant changes in the information culture; provide ICT accessibility to remote and disadvantaged communities; and extend connectivity.
- 3) A third factor, for the medium term, is more comprehensive and coherent organisation of, and role for civil society and community based organisations, a key stakeholder in the development process. Collaboration and partnerships with such organisations and umbrella groups, where they become accepted as a major mechanism for channelling and implementing project at local level, will offer SDNP huge scope to innovate and support development at local and community level.

With the gradual easing of the regulatory and bandwidth log jam and the growth of the network; a major injection of investment into ICT strategy and deployment; the enhancement of opportunities for cooperation with a better endowed and organised civil society, a number of medium term possibilities open up for SDNP. These should enable it to develop coherent and ambitious objectives within this broader context, and move on to deeper and more sophisticated activities, probably leaving conventional ISP services behind.

Preparations for this should begin immediately, and an assumption that these conditions will pertain should be included at this stage in redesigning the future of SDNP.

### 3.2 The Income Challenge Facing SDNP

Even given the existence of a conducive environment, the challenge facing SDNP in finding new sources of income is significant.

On average, over the three years to December 2001, SDNP has received about US \$108,000 per year.

SDNP also earned income, primarily from its services as an ISP, since it began charging for its services in October 1999. Due to the status of SDNP as a grant-aided project and the attendant uncertainty as to how and where to dispose of this, it has been kept to one side throughout the project. The table below summarises that income.

**Table 6: Annual Earned Income to SDNP Guyana 1997 – 2002 (in \$US unless otherwise stated)**

	<b>Oct-Dec '99</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>Jan – Jun '02</b>	<b>Total</b>
Gov. agencies & Departments	118,500	1,441,900	1,726,500	783,500	22,000
Government ministries	208,500	1,351,500	926,500	732,500	17,400
Individuals	3,000	168,000	1,188,250	500,000	10,050
NGOs	141,000	561,500	494,500	204,000	7,573
Other org. and agencies	131,500	835,300	977,900	614,900	13,835
Schools & educ. institutions	45,000	473,500	582,000	321,800	7,688
UN/aid Agencies	18,000	237,000	334,500	122,661	3,850
<b>Total US\$ (approx)</b>	<b>3,597</b>	<b>27,398</b>	<b>33,676</b>	<b>17,726</b>	<b>82,396</b>
<b>Total Guyana \$</b>	<b>665,500</b>	<b>5,068,700</b>	<b>6,230,150</b>	<b>3,279,361</b>	<b>15,243,711</b>

Note: Exchange rate of US\$1 = Guyana\$185. Average rate in 1999 was 176.2, and has risen slightly.

The Steering Committee recently agreed that earned income totalling over US\$82,000 in three years can be utilised to further efforts of the project to achieve independent self-sufficiency. This will certainly be useful in the transition phase, for upgrading equipment, and other costs. But it would not sustain the current income deficit for long, and anyhow should not be used for this.

The figures show current annual income of about US\$34,000, leaving a shortfall of about US\$65,000 annually if just costs are to be covered.

The ISP sector is likely to become volatile as telecommunication sector reforms get underway, and there is no certainty regarding expanding or even retaining this income. Indeed a strategic decision will have to be taken regarding how to develop ISP services in an increasingly commercial and crowded marketplace.

Thus, SDNP faces a major challenge in making up this shortfall.

A number of other streams of income are already in train:

- Services to UNDP Guyana will be charged for, under a service contract to be drafted. These services are already being provided by SDNP, but funded (by agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) under project GUY/01/005 *Capacity Building for Poverty Eradication*. From January 2003, all services will be paid for under a UNDP

administrative budget. The charge for each service is yet to be negotiated and will be in line with going market rates. Notionally, SDNP's recent Sustainability Plan puts this income at US\$24,000.

- The .gy domain activities already bring in a small income. If SDNP is successful in gaining access to the co.gy domain a regular stream of income might ensure. However, it will be modest. The proposal is to charge about US\$25 annually per domain registered (US\$200 for a limited number of higher level domains). The value of this work is probably higher in terms of establishing an identity, than it is in terms of income generated. Nevertheless, income could come to several thousand.

Using these back-of-the-envelope figures, and bearing in mind that none of these streams of income are secure, there remains a difference between current expenditure and anticipated income in the region of US\$35,000. This excludes renewal of equipment, expansion or a development fund.

Further on we refer to other opportunities for generating income, identified by the project.

### 3.3 Key Strengths and Weaknesses

The Sustainability Plan submitted by SDNP management to the Steering Committee in July 2002 recognises some strengths in terms of gaining commercial contracts and tenders. Somewhat revised and re-sorted, **strengths** include:

#### *Technical:*

- Intimate knowledge of setting up and managing an ISP (potentially useful if SDNP decides to pull out of this area in a growing market);
- Internet and server security expertise;
- Website design, maintenance and hosting;
- Linux and open sources applications installation and development;
- Ready access to a network of technical specialists to supplement in-house skills

#### *Policy, Strategic and Networking :*

- A good reputation among the development community generally, for good value, quality service, and technical and policy expertise;
- ICT project and strategy design and implementation;
- Intimate knowledge of ICTD policy domains and extensive contacts at all levels;
- Experience of contact and collaboration with civil society, NGOs, the educational and other sectors;
- Experience on collaborative development with government and stage agencies, and a close relationship with several Ministries;
- Close collaborative experience of UNDP and aid agencies, and contacts within the international donor community.

#### *Internally:*

- An efficient ISP business and technological base;
- A committed Steering Committee, from different stakeholders.

There are also **weaknesses**:

- Limited experience of operating in the private sector commercial context;
- Absence of effective internal business monitoring and management systems;
- Lack of marketing and business experience;
- Limited financial resources, and imminent discontinuation of current sources.

### 3.4 Requirements for Renewal

In this context a number of early priorities and requirements are apparent in the context of planning and implementing an autonomous entity to take SDNP forward.

#### CLARIFY OBJECTIVES FOR THE INITIATIVE:

For several reasons, it is important that objectives for the new entity are clearly articulated, and that they should retain development goals at their core. This will allow the entity, and hence the services it provides and activities it undertakes, to be clearly differentiated from those of the private sector, and indeed from the government. Given that the organisation has a unique set of strengths – there are no immediate competitors with their combination of technical skills, policy and strategy understanding, contacts and networks, and positively viewed history – clear objectives, with their development content articulated clearly in relation to the commercial services offered, will serve to consolidate this position among potential customers.

There may be concern that such a reputation may not be conducive to attracting private sector contracts, in that it is not sufficiently commercial in orientation. However, the advantage of being able to clearly distinguish oneself from the competition, combined with efforts to establish a reputation for quality and good value, is likely to outweigh any disadvantage in the medium term.

The objectives of the new entity could thus represent the logical progression of the SDNP aims<sup>13</sup>. But they should be clearly and simply stated, for example:

To contribute to sustainable development, using Internet and ICT technology, by helping to:

- provide efficient and cost effective access to the Internet for marginalised groups and in a development context;
- build high-quality applications for the collation, dissemination, and exchange of information and knowledge between all sectors of Guyanese society;
- design and implement innovative projects that bring new approaches to the use of ICTs for development, such as telecentres, community networking, interactive teleservices, and e-commerce.

Alongside such objectives (or some variation of the above, stated as clearly as possible), it should also be clear to clients how this can be achieved, working with whom.

It could state that SDNP will explicitly balance its work to maximise development potential, cross-subsidising its activities and focusing marketing efforts in areas that will yield the maximum development return. Target clients are thus varied: including government Ministries and agencies, private sector, NGOs and community based organisations; as well as international donors and agencies.

#### A PRO-ACTIVE ROLE TO A DIVERSITY OF CLIENTS

To fulfil this mandate SDNP must take a more pro-active approach to developing business (and achieving its objectives) than do most private competitors, as well as targeting a more diverse set of clients. In the long-term, simply responding to commercial opportunities emerging from public, private and civil societies sectors, no matter how successfully these are executed, will not suffice for SDNP to achieve its mandate. Indeed, were it to confine itself to these, it would ultimately fail to differentiate itself from private sector consultants.

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13 This may also smooth to way for the transfer of equipment and capital resources from SDNP to the new entity.

Business development should therefore pursue a number of directions, to be mapped out in its Business Plan:

- a) Responding to open or restricted tenders in the public sector.

SDNP is well positioned to tender for work emerging in the government sectors, related to the ICT Project but also to a variety of other areas across many ministries, of health, education and others. An important point here is to ensure that SDNP is seen to have no unfair advantage from, for instance, participation in the pre-tender design phase of a project; or from the reassurance given to government from the presence of a representative on the Board. In general such work will have a clear development goal. Where it does not, it should be justified on the basis of cross-subsidy (or other benefits to) development oriented work.

- b) Responding to open or restricted tenders in the private sector.

Here there is little danger of the perception of unfair competitive practice. Yet competition will be tough, and a reputation will take some time to build up. Where such work is not clearly contributing to development aims – which would be usually the case in working for larger companies – the rationale for undertaking the work should be made clear.

- c) Generating new project concepts in partnership with government and civil society organisations.

Potentially, this is an area that SDNP could carve out a unique and strong position for itself, though the investment in time is significant. Long-term partnerships, with organisations with overlapping goals, have the potential to deliver steady streams of income while contributing to development aims. SDNP could provide technical assistance and backstopping, or could be more intimately bound up with other stakeholders in such projects.

SDNP's project and policy background position it well to collaborate on concept-development for ICTD projects, then designing and implementing them in partnerships. These might pave the way for funding from external sources, from bilateral and multilateral donors, aid agencies, foundations and development institutions.

So far, because of its small size but possibly also because of apparent blockages to development, there has been only limited aid in Guyana in the areas of ICTs for development. If the national developments anticipated come about, this is likely to change and SDNP will be in a position to take advantage of new sources of funding.

#### A BREAK WITH THE PAST

The re-launch of a newly constituted SDNP (under that name or another) should represent a clear and definitive break from its current existence. An 'existential break' is called for, that goes beyond the creation of a new legal entity. There are several aspects to this:

- a) A 'rebranding' will be required in the eyes of potential clients in government, private sector and NGOs, so that the current perception as a development-oriented but grant-aided ISP can be changed, and its wider range of services can be clearly profiled and lodged in their minds. This may or may not involve discarding 'SDNP' and the adoption of a new name – there are obvious pros and cons to this, and a decision will be based on the value of the existing reputation in the context of the new set of services that will be offered and clients to be attracted.

A major decision here is whether and how long to continue with its ISP activities, and which services to retain. The question relates to both business survival and development objectives— an analysis will be required as to the level of subsidy or otherwise it receives, and the development benefits accruing, in the context of a dynamic market that will sooner or later mushroom, at least in urban areas.<sup>14</sup>

A vehicle worthy of further development in terms of establishing a presence, and urged by several NGOs, is the continued expansion of a ‘portal’ for development and environmental information on Guyana. The Development Gateway option could be further explored, as a way of funding this.

- b) Internally, a new set of management structures, practices and accounting systems will have to be created. This will have a number of functions that are either not currently present or are poorly developed:
- To produce effective management accounts for decision making, including a clear allocation of costs and income to different activities. A particular challenge here is to identify and quantify development benefits in the context of choosing between alternative services and business strategies. But basic profit and loss, cash-flow projections, and other accounting tools are needed urgently.
  - To improve monitoring and self-evaluation that will enable lessons to be recognised and acted upon. Typically, the transition to a commercial environment tends to result in the neglect of these aspects, which in fact make business as well as development sense.
  - To develop a Business Plan and Marketing Strategy, including different options. Such plans will incorporate a mid-term strategy during which the necessary changes will come about; and a long-term strategy based on assumptions concerning the development of the market for its services.
- c) The transition from project status to that of an autonomous initiative with ongoing income generations requirements from a diversity of sources, and a more flexible approach to achieving its objectives within a dynamic environment, also has a *psychological* dimension. All direct stakeholders, SDNP staff, UNDP, government and others, will need to adopt a new way of thinking about the initiative, and a reassessment of the relations between themselves – not just formally but also in how they interest and relate to each other. Such relations, and dependencies, will necessarily become more complex and nuanced.

The timing, handling and presentation of these developments will be important. They will not all happen together: the first (as an issue of public perception) may be launched all at once after a period of planning; the second will be done in careful steps; and the third more of a gradual process.

The overall transition has already begun, and the termination of funding in December will represent a milestone. However, the full transition will continue at least well into 2003.

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14 The Sustainability Plan already produced presents three scenarios for income and expenditure, based on decisions relating to bandwidth cost. This is a useful exercise, but much deeper and broader more analysis is required for a decision to be taken on business and development grounds..

### 3.5 Institutional Structure and Management

SDNP has already decided to constitute itself under the *Burial and Friendly Societies Act*. This appears to be the only option under existing law in Guyana<sup>15</sup>. The main consideration in the institutional structure is to ensure that it provides legal safeguards for both members and clients; that it allows sufficient flexibility to manage effectively, and that it does not compromise the ability to raise credit or engage in various partnerships and business arrangements.

#### STEERING COMMITTEE

The constitution of the steering committee, and its activities, will take on a number of challenges. It must:

- Consider the ownership situation from which SDNP is emerging;
- Provide board-of-management style advice and direction;
- Ensure there is no conflict of interest between its members and SDNP interests;
- Ensure that no unfair advantage is given to SDNP over private sector in going for work.

These suggests that:

- UNDP and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (or another nominated department) will have the option of taking up a special position on the Steering Committee;
- Members should be nominated, in general, for what they bring that will benefit SDNP and its progression;
- There should be some form of balance, in terms of experience and linkages, to key development stakeholders groups;
- Members should (with possible exceptions above) serve in an individual capacity, rather than represent the interest of stakeholder groups;
- Deliberations of the Steering Committee will be transparent, as much as will not compromise its commercial interests.

The initial Steering Committee offers a good starting point, and continuity might be important. However, at some point, a renewal will be needed, and procedures will have to be adopted to enable this to happen. Often, this is achieved through a mixture of nominees by key stakeholders, and agreement among the existing board to nominate new members following agreed and transparent criteria.

#### MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING

Existing staff have proved effective, and work well together. They have been well suited to the activities pursued to date. With the creation of a new entity, the Sustainability Plan recognises shortcomings in the areas of business and marketing expertise.

A number of immediate requirements can be provided by consultancy support. These include the setting up of management accounting systems, and putting in place monitoring and evaluation procedures, and the production of a business and marketing plan. Of course existing staff must be very involved here.

Beyond this, the ongoing implementation of business, accounting and monitoring systems will require an additional skilled input, which could probably be achieved through further training.

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15 The original Feasibility Study mentioned the possibility of a Company Limited by Guarantee without Share Capital. This might also offer possibilities.

An upgrading of the position of Project Finance Assistant to Business and Accounting Officer, and the engagement of (external or part-time staff) administrative services might be a solution.

Marketing and Business Development requirements, however, which would go beyond what is usually demanded even in the private sector to include building partnerships and conceiving and designing projects, will also need further strengthening. A temporary position, to support and skill the current Coordinator for this role, could be sourced externally, though a high level and broad breadth of experience would be required from such a person. Alternatively, carefully targeted and scheduled consultancy support may produce the same result.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

We can conclude with confidence that SDNP in Guyana has succeeded well in relation to its original objectives. Despite the absence of quantitative targets, a number of notable achievements can be listed:

1. SDNP successfully launched its dial-up service and, crucially, attracted significant numbers of users from government and other development-oriented sectors that are unlikely otherwise to have gained connectivity, because of either lack of knowledge or cost. The quality of service delivered to dial-up customers, in terms of set-up and support, was also valuable and otherwise unavailable. Although there is still a long way to go overall, SDNP contributed significantly to sensitising government, public and civil society sectors to the Internet and its potential.
2. In terms of Web access and content, SDNP is by far the most important site in Guyana, both to host content of Guyanese origin and to host it on a server in Guyana. The information available has in several identified cases benefited the organisations involved, in terms of achieving development-related goals, but has also greatly increased the amount of information available to all users. The quality of the training is highly regarded and the personal relationships established considered important.
3. SDNP engaged in a further set of activities, from consultancy services, to sector organisation, to lobbying, researching and advising. Arguably, these (combined with the above areas) have contributed indirectly to enhancing the capacity for effective and participative decision making. Several partnerships and collaborations are also at various stages of development.
4. Through these same activities, as well as during the pre-project phase as pursued by UNDP and others, SDNP has probably furthered the ICTD thinking and agenda not just in the area of the Internet, but more generally. If this is so, however, the impact has yet to be felt given current blockages to this sector.

Although this evaluation has undertaken only a limited review of the history of this project, the indications are that it was effective and provided value for money.

It is in some of the latter areas – developing and offering advanced and value-added services, building partnerships and consortia – that the greatest development potential, as well as the potential for self-sustainability, may lie in the future. Yet is also here that progress has been often been slow.

The project's initial objectives were to cover only a two year period. Yet in its five years of existence, it has been unable to move beyond these initial objectives, which involved a relatively unsophisticated basic level and type of services, and primarily straightforward project-client relationships.

Online database development; more sophisticated applications in areas such as elections, e-government and transparency, health, education, e-commerce, and so forth have not emerged; the development potential of Linux is barely tapped. And we have not seen the emergence of a wider networks of, and mechanisms for, deeper collaboration with stakeholders. Partnerships and joint projects, reaching out (beyond connectivity and Web provision) especially to excluded groups such as women, rural populations, smaller community organisations, indigenous groups have barely moved forward, and such things as rural telecentres and links to community radio have yet to emerge.

This demands an explanation, as the project lacked neither the skills nor the capacity to innovate and take risks. Opportunities as they arose were seized upon, but the scope for further development appears to have been denied them.

Largely, we believe that this has not been the fault of the Project. In reality, little real progress has been made nationally on the challenges that faced Guyana, and the project, in 1997.

There are a number of interconnected reasons.

1. The Internet has not taken off to the same extent and at the same rate as has been experienced elsewhere; and there has been only modest expansion of the network. There has been very limited network extension since 1997. New services, such as DSL, are currently being rolled out, but these are likely to be affordable only to high paying business customers and there are limitations on where they can be obtained (DSL is copper sensitive). Among the causes are the continuing absence of a coherent ICT policy and effective regulation, and the poor relations between the government and the mainly privately-owned monopoly telecom operator GT&T.

Thus the experience in some other countries, where the SDNP quickly becomes redundant as an ISP and so switched to more advanced development-oriented activities, was not an option in Guyana. The entire ISP sector – comprising about eight commercial firms and twenty or so commercial telecentres subsisting mainly on VOIP - is still in the doldrums, with high bandwidth costs and poor access outside major centres.

2. Despite many calls to liberalise the telecommunication regime<sup>16</sup> and review the monopoly (including, in certain aspects from GT&T itself), little has moved since 1997.

However, here is hope for imminent change. Several factors combine to put pressure on all parties to reach a conclusion, and a breakthrough is possible within the foreseeable future. This is likely to be followed by a significant decrease in bandwidth costs, more rapid growth in the Internet market, as well as an increase in the rate of network rollout to rural areas.

3. A coherent and comprehensive government strategy for ICTs for development is still not in place. However, there has been significant analysis and progress since 1997.<sup>17</sup>

In February 2001, a government team prepared a *Draft Guyana ICT Policy Paper*, and implementation of certain elements has begun. Most significantly, the Government has negotiated the above mentioned ICT project to be funded under IDB (currently stalled due to a legal challenge in the USA by GT&T), which will devote US\$22.5 towards implementing core elements of a broader ICT Strategy. It includes the creation of a well resourced Information and Communication Technology Unit (ICTU) in the Office of the Presidency (already established), which is likely to encourage a coherent approach to ICTD. Significant components of this project will be explicitly devoted to ICTs for development.

4. The cultural attitude towards information sharing in government has some way to go before a virtuous cycle of self-generating interaction takes off. In the early days of SDNP, there was some disappointment and even surprise at the failure of ministries to begin communicating internally amongst each other, and externally, once they had been provided with connectivity, Websites and basic training. On reflection, however, several interviewees agreed that the introduction of new modes of communication require more than mere facilitation through technology.

Again there is evidence of a shift in attitudes, and a couple of respondents felt significant change was already underway or imminent. A UNICEF Project was quoted as an instance of where the need to cooperate and share information between Ministries became evident

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16 The government commissioned a *Consultation paper on the Issues and Options for Reform of the Telecommunication Sector*, published in August 2001, and has declared its intention to develop a national telecommunication policy.

17 The *National Development Strategy: 2001 – 2010 A Policy Framework*, which was produced with external funding by a broad coalition of civil society in consultation with the government, points strongly to the role of IT. The *Guyana Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* of November 2001 also points to several areas of relevance.

to all. SDNP's own experience with some Ministries and agencies testifies to a willingness and ability to change.<sup>18</sup>

5. Civil society and NGOs remain under-utilised, under-resourced and insufficiently recognised as a critical stakeholder for development.

Yet here too there is some progress. At the official level, NGOs and civil society have been brought into the process of consultation and policy development more than in the past, and is itself becoming more organised and capable in policy areas. Examples include the extensive consultation in the National Development Strategy review, produced through the cooperation of and consultation with a huge range of civil society actors. UNDP continues to support the emergence of civil society as an actor.

The political crisis and uncertain economic situation remain as an ominous backdrop to all progress in Guyana. Yet in themselves, and notwithstanding a greatly worsened situation, these need not greatly hinder future development for SDNP or its successor.

In short, limited concrete progress in overcoming specific and general barriers have constrained up to now the further development of SDNP into more extensive and intensive services, as has happened in some other countries. SDNP has shown itself capable of achieving its objectives, and of pursuing new opportunities as they arise. It is not unreasonable to assume that within the foreseeable future the climate for more advanced SDNP-type activities will become significantly more favourable. SDNP has many of the key skills and capacities needed to develop further in this climate. The issue now is how best to bridge the period between now and then; and to put in place the requirements for SDNP to move into a new era in its development.

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18 The *National Development Strategy*, the *Poverty Reduction Strategy* and the *Draft Guyana ICT Policy Paper* all contain sections on the need for greater efficiency and transparency on the public sector.

## 8. LESSONS LEARNED AND RELEVANT INSIGHTS

*The following is the first consideration of lessons in the context of this National report . More will emerge in the context of other national evaluations and the final global evaluation.*

### 1. Key Role of Local Circumstances

The local circumstances, both specific and general, acted as critical constraints and enablers to the SDNP project. The specificities of the local environment determined which types of services should be offered, for what duration – it reaffirms yet again that technology can open up new possibilities, but on its own, will not turn possibilities into realities. Local conditions deeply affect their impact and take-up, and a flexible approach is needed that can tailor mechanisms and strategies to maximise advantage and minimise constraints. Such factors included:

- The general degree of openness, transparency and political will of government in terms of sharing and disseminating information;
- The forms of regulation of the Internet and ICT environment;
- The extent and affordability of access to telecommunication;
- The availability of parallel or flanking investment, to enable ICTD deployment;
- The level of organisation and coherence of the various groups of stakeholders, including civil society.

The lesson here is that the project must be carefully designed with these in mind, including an understanding of the broader issues (regulatory, human resources, cultural, infrastructural etc.) that will influence the shape of activities. It also calls for a management and steering structure that can relate to this environment, that is both flexible enough to enable ongoing refinement of approach, but is also in a position to intervene externally on behalf of the project where this become critical.

Another way of putting this is that SDNP would ideally be embedded within a broader strategy that tackles these issues in a concerted manner. (However, this does not exclude the possibility of SDNP playing a catalytic role in relation to a part of such a strategy.)

### 2. The Needs to Institutional Gains at Several Levels and Points

Much of the time, the willingness of an agency to take up an innovation may depend in the early stages on a key committed individual, not always at senior management level. The value of ‘champions’ within institutions has often been documented.

However, if there is a failure to institutionalise gains – to embed the practices begun and knowledge gained within the norms and everyday life of the institution - progress already made can subsequently be lost. Thus efforts must be made to deepen the interest and extend the capabilities of individuals at *several* points, while simultaneously ensuring that the senior management can clearly recognise the benefits accruing.

### 3. Beyond Technologies and Skills: The Need to Motivate

Related to this, cultural resistance to sharing of information and networking proved to be significant (a feature by no means peculiar to Guyana). The technology capability and the existence of an appropriate user skill base may not, in themselves, enhance sharing beyond an already committed minority. A number of actions could be taken to address this (and point 2 above), helping to galvanise political will and management commitment essential to seeing the process through. Beyond training, these could include:

- Designing and putting in place a system to monitor incremental benefits from the use of such technology;
- Running workshops on the benefits and means of sharing of information, focussed initially on senior management;
- Developing small dispersed teams through the organisations, focused on sharing around specific topics and themes,

#### 4. Anticipating and Removing Blockages to Information Circulation

It is important that agreements regarding the development of content and population of Websites anticipate and act upon institutional blockages to information circulation. Often the introduction of ICTs raises possibilities for dissemination that, not have been present before,

For instance, within a given government ministry or agency, there is usually no clear responsibility for collection, processing and dissemination of information. At most, an Information or Press Office might have responded to individual queries. Thus, alongside staff and skill limitations, the structures are not in place to delegate such activities to the level that would be most effective and timely. Website content development and even minor updates can be held up pending approval of one or more managers, who themselves may not appreciate the issues. At

the initial introduction of the Website development, such issues must be raised and solutions proposed – small steps might include an agreement that already published or available material can be put online without further approval, and updated. .

#### 5. Partnerships require Resources and Comparable Capacities

Although partnerships are increasingly lauded as a more effective means to gain additional value than conventional service and contractual relationships, on indeed than pursuing solitary activity, they usually require additional resources as well as a reasonable parity of capacities.

Thus the partnerships attempted by SDNP in general stalled because the additional resources were unavailable to implement the joint activities. Similarly, partnerships with civil society and development-oriented NGOs, in particular, were not in general feasible because of the low level of capacity of such NGOs to implement projects and the historically limited level of development of their networks. The deployment of NGOs as a partner to act as an implementing partner at community level is dependent on these NGOs having sufficient capacity and resources, and a recognised role as key stakeholders in development.

#### 6. From Project to Institution: Seeking out Sustainability

The long-term sustainability of a project such as SDNP, with overt development aims overlapping with areas of conventional economic activity (e.g. ISP services), is not a foregone conclusion and usually will not be achieved as a smooth transition in a short period of time. Both the institutional evolution required (from Project to organisation) and arriving at an appropriate combination of activities and sources of income (from grant-funding to multiple revenues) is a process that takes time, often involving hit-and-miss. The stages of set-up, implementation, and project maturity; followed by seeking out new revenue streams, institutional evolution, partnership building, and so forth, take time. Furthermore, it is difficult to map out in advance the directions this might take. Two years is unrealistically short in terms of this cycle. SDNP Guyana was given appropriate

extensions, and the issue was dealt with sensibly. However, successive, ad hoc, short terms extensions are not conducive to steady medium-term development and planning.

## **Annex 1: Methodology and Interviews**

Primary data gathering and interviews for this evaluation were undertaken during a visit to Guyana from August 18<sup>th</sup> to August 24<sup>th</sup> 2002.

Interviews were undertaken with the following:

Vidyaratha Kissoon – Manager, SDNP

Chloe Noble - Finance & Administration Officer, SDNP

Andrew Mancey- Network/Information specialist, SDNP

Thomas Gas - Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP

Denise deSouza - Assistant Resident Representative- Programme, UNDP

Rovin Deodat- Former Coordinator, SDNP & present member of Steering Committee

Rayman Khan- Manger, Computer Centre, University of Guyana

Rachel Sankar - Ministry of Finance, Office of the President; Chairperson, Steering Committee

Rudolph Collins- Ministry of Foreign Affairs Government representative on the Steering Committee

Michael George- Marketing Manager, GT&T Co. Ltd

Gordon Forte- Civil Society & member of Steering Committee

Karen deSouza - Coordinator, Red Thread & member of Steering Committee (SDNP client)

Godfrey Proctor-General Manager, National Data Management Authority (SDNP client)

Kim Craig – Training Coordinator, , National Data Management Authority (SDNP client)

Shauna Harris- Guyana Office for Investment (SDNP client)

Jagdish Singh- Guyana Forestry Commission (SDNP client)

Abraham Poole- former member of Steering Committee through UNDP

Lance Hinds- Private Sector IT manager & member of Steering Committee

The Matrices were completed in consultation with the Project after completion of the interviews

A number of *Partner and Beneficiary* questionnaires were also completed during the visit and several after. These were not numerous enough to constitute quantitative evidence of impact, but several of the comments made were included in this report for illustrative purposes.

## Annex 2: Websites Hosted and Created

Websites hosted on SDNP server since the launch of the project.

(\*indicates sites which were done by website owners with no training from SDNP)

### Government Agencies

Ministry of Agriculture\*  
Guyana Elections Commission  
Guyana Geology and Mines Commission\*  
Guyana Office for Investment\*  
Ministry of Health\*  
Environmental Protection Agency\*  
Ministry of Trade, Tourism & Industry  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Institute of Applied Sciences & Technology\*  
Guyana Forestry Commission \*  
Relaunch of Ministry of Information \*  
Guyana Zoo\*  
Ministry of Human Services & Social Security \*  
Guyana Elections Commission \*  
Office of the Auditor General  
Agrinet Guyana \*  
Poverty Reduction Strategy  
Mayor and Town Council of Linden  
Parliamentary Website (*never launched*)

### Educational Institutions

University of Guyana  
Centre for the Study of Biological Diversity\*

### NGOs

Help & Shelter\*  
Community Based Rehabilitation  
Guyana Red Cross\*  
National Spiritual Assembly of Bahais of Guyana \*  
Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association \*  
Amerindian Peoples' Association  
CIOG, Youth Can Move the World \*  
Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology  
The Guyana Heritage Museum,  
National Development Strategy,  
St Josephs Mercy Hospital \*  
Guyana Environment  
Guyana Is First  
Janus Young Writers Guild  
Volunteer Youth Corps  
Ecovision  
Dharmic Naujawan Youth Group (trained a member)  
Information Technology Providers' Association of Guyana \*  
Guyana Marine Turtles Conservation Society \*  
Cyril Potter College of Education \*  
Habitat for Humanity \*

**International Agencies**

United Nations Development Programme  
PAHO/WHO - Guyana, \*

**Other Institutions**

Iwokrama International Centre\*  
Guyana Prison Service\*  
The IYV 2001 Guyana  
Guyana Linux Users Group

### Annex 3: Crude SDNP Website Traffic Statistics

The following is a summary of crude level of 'hits' on the Website for the week from Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> of August to 04:02 to Sunday the 18<sup>th</sup> of August (7.00 days).

#### **Overall statistics.**

<b>Successful requests:</b>	66,843
<b>Average successful requests per day:</b>	9,554
<b>Successful requests for pages:</b>	25,871
<b>Average successful requests for pages per day:</b>	3,697
<b>Failed requests:</b>	8,920
<b>Redirected requests:</b>	1,845
<b>Distinct files requested:</b>	6,593
<b>Distinct hosts served:</b>	4,869
<b>Unwanted logfile entries:</b>	17,977
<b>Data transferred:</b>	648.711 megabytes
<b>Average data transferred per day:</b>	92.728 megabytes

**Annex 4: SDNP Trainees**

<i>Period</i>	<i>Trainees, including Volunteers</i>
Feb, 2000 to May, 2000	Anand Baljit, Cloyette Sumner
June, 2000 to Sept, 2000	Rashleigh Sam
Oct 2000 to Dec, 2000	Munirih Mancey
Jan 2001 to July 2001	Mark Blair Volunteers: Munirih Mancey Rawle Hedrington Rasheed Griffith Sherwyn Seepaul Colleen Noble Shaheeda Aziz
August 2001 to Nov 2002	Volunteers and Staff from institutions - including two final year UG students
April 2002 to July 2002	Ms Guoyan Rampersaud