I. Introduction and Context

Country Context

Guyana is located in the northern part of South America, bordering the Atlantic Ocean, with Suriname, Venezuela and Brazil as neighbors. It is the third smallest country in South America after Suriname and Uruguay, with a population of about 800,000 people. It is also the third poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, after Haiti and Nicaragua, with a per capita GNP of approximately US$3,410 (2012). For the five-year period 2008-2012, GDP growth averaged 4 percent, recovering steadily since 2007 (when it fell by 3.6 percent). The economy grew by 3.9 percent during the first half of 2013, driven by rapid growth in mining, and is projected to grow by 5.8 percent overall in 2013. Inflation is stable at less than 2 percent. Guyana is well endowed with natural resources, with fertile agricultural lands, extensive tropical forests (covering 80 percent of the country), bauxite and gold. However, the incidence of poverty is among the highest in the Western Hemisphere, at 43 percent (2011) of the population (with much higher rates in rural and Amerindian areas). In 2012 it ranked 118 out of 187 countries on UNDP’s Human Development Index, having declined from 107 in
2008. 90 percent of the population lives on the coastal plain, in and near the capital of Georgetown. Guyana’s democracy remains stable but fragile, with political parties largely split along ethnic lines.

**Sectoral and Institutional Context**

Guyana’s education system is still recovering from years of underinvestment but has recently made remarkable progress. The sector’s problems began in the 1970s with political instability and lasted through economic decline and fiscal adjustment until the early 1990s. Since then the education budget has risen from 2.1 percent in 1991 to an average of 5 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over the last four years, demonstrating the Government’s firm commitment to education as a national priority. In the same period, education as a percentage of the national budget has risen from a low of 4.4 percent to an average of 15 percent (2012). This investment, along with the support of external partners, has enabled Guyana to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE). Building on this success, attainment of Universal Secondary Education (USE)—including by providing secondary education in appropriate conditions and that can attenuate inequity in primary level learning—is a major priority in the current Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2008-2013, and is expected to remain so in the new ESP 2014-2018 (still under preparation).

In terms of organization, the primary level is composed of grades 1-6, and the secondary level is comprised of grades 7-11. Private schooling is almost exclusively restricted to Georgetown and accounts for less than 8 percent of the student population in grades 1-11. Annual per student public recurrent spending at the primary level is US$304 (2012), compared to US$395 (2012) for secondary education. There are two very different types of general secondary schools: General Secondary Schools (GSS) and Secondary Departments (SD) of Primary Schools, enrolling about 84,000 students together. The 110 GSS enroll 89 percent of all secondary students and are larger (300-1000 students), urban-based, staffed with trained teachers, offer the full secondary curriculum, and achieve relative success on the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) exam. Meanwhile, the 175 SDs are located in coastal urban and rural areas, with an average of less than 50 students, very few trained or specialized teachers, and offering in most cases only grades 7 and 8. At the secondary level, the vast majority of students (95 percent) are enrolled in general secondary education, with just 5 percent attending one of eight technical/vocational schools. The capacity of the Ministry of Education (MOE) to provide education services nationwide has improved considerably over the last five years although significant weaknesses remain, particularly outside the capital.

**Key Challenges**

There are critical and inter-related issues of access, quality and equity at the secondary level. Despite major progress in expanding access to primary education, the quality of primary education is variable and generally low; for children with poor mastery of literacy and numeracy at the primary level, these problems persist into secondary education. The numbers of students taking the Secondary School Entrance Exam (SSEE) has increased by approximately 25 percent over the past 5 years. However, average SSEE scores (covering math, English, science and social studies) have declined. In particular, pass rate for mathematics is at only 21 percent. Although the secondary Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) is estimated at about 80 percent, only 45 percent of those who begin Grade 7 reach Grade 11. means there is a high rate of dropouts (15 percent in grade 7) The main factors are, inter alia, incomplete secondary schools (SDs) and overcrowding in complete schools (GSSs), poorly trained teachers (only 64 percent are qualified), insufficient learning materials, low student attendance (about 70 percent), inadequate learning levels among students entering
secondary education. In addition, the capacity of the National Centre for Educational Resource Development (NCERD) to provide necessary in-service teacher professional development at the secondary level is weak and requires increased collaboration with education specialists at the University of Guyana (UG) and Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE).

The challenges of incomplete secondary schools and overcrowding of complete schools are particularly acute in poor coastal urban Regions 3 and 4 (including Georgetown), as indicated by the fact that Regions 3 and 4 (including Georgetown) cater 51 percent of the country’s secondary school population. Almost all of the 31 GSS in Georgetown are extremely overcrowded and some are in rented facilities lacking laboratories. With regards to the coastal rural and hinterland areas (Regions 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10), the Government has allocated national funds for: (i) construction of additional secondary classrooms to convert SDs of primary schools into GSS, (ii) creation of dormitories for students coming from long distances; and (iii) provision of both bus and boat transportation. Work is ongoing and expected to be completed by early 2015. National funds are insufficient to address the needs in Regions 3 and 4, and in Georgetown.

With respect to student learning achievement, among the low proportion of secondary students who reach Grade 11 and take the CXC, just 50 percent pass in Mathematics and 70 percent pass in English. Equally worrisome, only 28 percent (2013) pass CXC scores in Mathematics sufficient for entry into the University of Guyana (UG) or the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE), and just 46 percent (2013) of students achieve University-entry scores in English.

Relationship to CAS
Improving the quality of education and social safety nets is one of two pillars in the World Bank’s 2009-2012 Country Assistance Strategy (CAS). This stems from the fact that low education level is the factor with the strongest correlation with poverty status. In 2010 the Bank approved the Improving Teacher Education Project (US$4.2 million), which aims to improve the quality of education at all levels by upgrading pre-service teacher preparation. In 2011, the Bank approved the University of Guyana Science and Technology Support Project (US$10 million), which aims at strengthening the four (4) science and technology faculties at the University of Guyana. In addition, the Bank has played a lead role in mobilizing significant resources through the Education For All Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI, now the Global Partnership for Education), totaling US$32.92 million between 2004 and 2012 aiming at achieving Universal Primary Education. The proposed project aligns perfectly with the CAS and complements the other ongoing investments in primary, higher and teacher education.

II. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Proposed Development Objective(s) (From PCN)
The objective of the Project is to increase the 11th grade survival rate and the number of students that complete secondary education in Guyana’s Regions 3 and 4 (including Georgetown), by constructing and equipping schools, training teachers, and distributing learning materials.

Key Results (From PCN)
1. The survival rate to Grade 11 in Regions 3 and 4 (including Georgetown) would increase from XX percent in 2013 to XX percent in 2018 (tbd);
2. The number of youth completing their secondary education and passing the CXC exam in Regions 3 and 4 (including Georgetown) would increase from XXXX in 2013 to XXXX in 2018 in Mathematics (tbd).
III. Preliminary Description

Concept Description

Improving learning conditions entails alleviating severe overcrowding in the selected regions and properly equipping secondary schools, combined with interventions to strengthen secondary teaching. The project would therefore establish larger, complete schools (GSS) offering grades 7-11, and that are fully equipped, staffed by qualified and upgraded teachers and supplied with quality learning materials. These interventions should promote higher student attendance, improve teaching and learning conditions, and increase Grade 11 survival rate and the number of youth passing the CXC exam. Targeting interventions where poor undeserved student populations are most numerous would reduce geographic inequity. The project would be financed by an Investment Credit. It incorporates lessons learned from the Implementation Completion Report for the EFA-FTI project, which emphasized the need for project design to be simple and focused.

Project Description
Component 1: Constructing and equipping secondary schools (majority of the funs) – Two sub-components would be supported:
(i) Expansion of the GSS modality: Up to 6 new GSS would be established, 4 GSS in Region 4, 1 GSS in Region 3 and 1 GSS in Georgetown (with the final number depending on feasibility studies, analysis of recent government-financed secondary schools, and other investment priorities). This would consolidate 10 SDs into complete secondary schools, reduce severe overcrowding at 4 existing GSS, and prepare for increasing student populations coming from the primary level to all GSS in these areas;
(ii) Furniture and Equipment of 6 GSS: This would include those GSS to be constructed under the project, and would include necessary provisions for laboratories and specialist rooms required under the secondary education curriculum.

Component 2: Improving teaching and learning – Two sub-components would be supported:
(i) In-Service Teacher training and upgrading in mathematics: this would include: (a) improved processes and capacity for teacher appraisal and diagnostic of training needs; (b) the upgrading of unqualified mathematics teachers and the administration of qualification exams in mathematics; (c) enhanced capacity of trainers at NCERD, CPCE and UG to provide this training; and (d) Reinforce the existing MOE teacher policy, including by strengthening teacher support and supervision system. It would target secondary teachers in Regions 3 and 4 (including Georgetown) and would focus on math and pedagogy, complementing other activities supported through the IDA-financed Improving Teacher Education Project.
(ii) Provision of learning materials, including ICTs: this would focus on: (a) mathematics, including a pilot computer-assisted learning program that would promote innovation and provide lessons for scaling up improved mastery of mathematics; and (b) expanded distribution of science kits (already piloted by UNESCO). This sub-component would initially be restricted to Regions 3 and 4 in the first two years of implementation, and could be expanded to cover student-teachers in their last year of training, or other regions in subsequent years.

Component 3: Management, Monitoring and Evaluation– Three sub-components would be supported:
(i) Education Information Management System (EMIS) for Secondary Education, through which school principals would be able to upload their administrative data directly. This would benefit the entire secondary education sub-sector nationwide;
(ii) Monitoring and Evaluation of Quality: this would include (a) an impact evaluation of the use of ICTs for improving student learning outcomes in mathematics to assess effectiveness of technology-assisted learning, and (b) support for application of UNESCO’s Learning Metrics to secondary education (covering communication, numeracy, interaction, problem-solving, workplace skills); and
(iii) Project management and monitoring.

IV. Safeguard Policies that might apply

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V. Financing (in USD Million)

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VI. Contact point

World Bank
Contact: Hongyu Yang
Title: Operations Officer
Tel: 473-9224
Email: hyang@worldbank.org

Borrower/Client/Recipient
Name: Cooperative Republic of Guyana
Contact: 
Title: 
Tel: 

Page 5 of 6
Email:

Implementing Agencies
Name: Ministry of Education
Contact: Priya Manickchand
Title: Minister
Tel: (592) 226-3094
Email: moe.manickchand@gmail.com

VII. For more information contact:
The InfoShop
The World Bank
1818 H Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20433
Telephone: (202) 458-4500
Fax: (202) 522-1500
Web: http://www.worldbank.org/infoshop