

GUYANA

A case study prepared by the

Social Cohesion Programme (UNDP Guyana)

for the UNDESA expert meeting on dialogue

Population

- 751,000 people in 182,615 households
- East Indians 43.5 percent
- Persons of African heritage 30.2 percent
- Mixed heritage 16.7 percent
- Amerindians 9.2 percent
- Whites, Portuguese, Chinese make up the rest (0.46 percent).

Geography and Economy

- Only English speaking country in South America
- Part of the Caribbean
- Surrounded by Venezuela, Brazil and Suriname
- Dependent on sugar, rice, bauxite, timber, fish, gold and diamonds
- Second poorest in Western Hemisphere after Haiti

History of conflict

- Read the paper!

Current situation

- Next election in 2006: Will there be violence again?
- Emergence of a “Third Force” promising an end to race-based politics
- Guyana losing 86% of tertiary educated labour force
- Struggling economy, worrying crime rate and slow progress towards achievement of the MDGs
- Lots of improvements in infrastructure and genuine efforts to improve quality of governance
- General population despondent: “Only God can help us!”

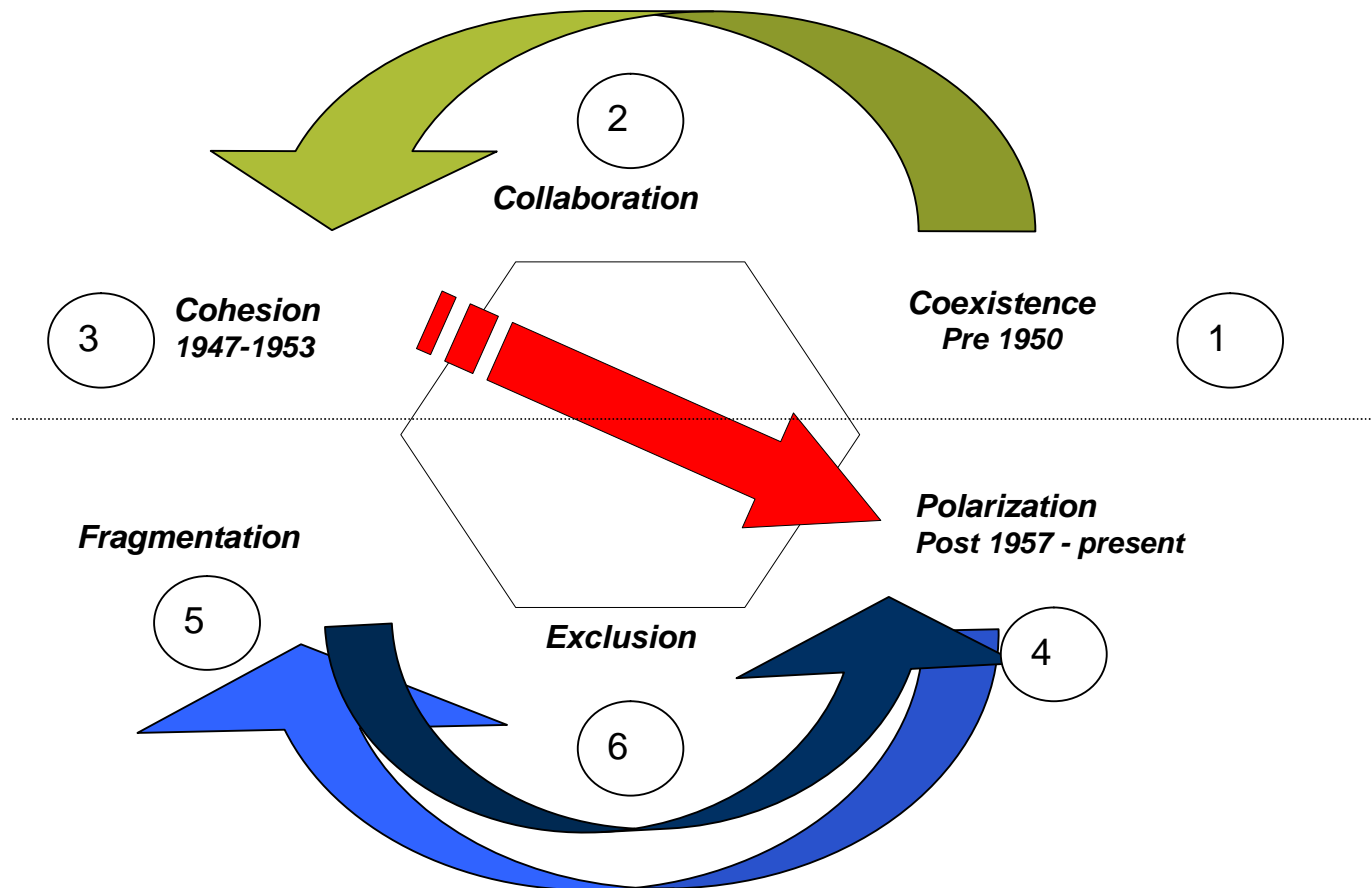
Dialogue efforts

- **Dialogue** associated with failed negotiations
 - Herdmanston Accord and St Lucia agreements
 - **Constructive Engagement** in 2003
 - Joint Communiqué between President and Leader of the Opposition
 - Calls for a **national conversation** in 2005 after successful Parliamentary Political Party workshop in April 2005
 - General improvement in the tone and willingness to engage
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Summary of Conflict

- Governance: the right, practice and capacity
- Leadership: (in)ability to unite people
- Political culture: reactive, race based
- Mistrust: only trust your own group
- Overcoming hurts of the past: deep scars on Guyana's collective psyche
- Inequality, socio-economic justice and poverty: poverty hits everyone, yet "the others are to blame"

Social Integration Model



Dialogue before 2003

- **Negotiation**— *"Talk to each other because you have to!"*—in order to avoid chaos and implosion. This was done through
 - direct dialogue attempts
 - third party facilitation
 - using the high offices of the Commonwealth and President Carter
 - citizens' initiatives
 - citizens' advocacy attempts to develop codes of conduct for political parties and the media during election times.

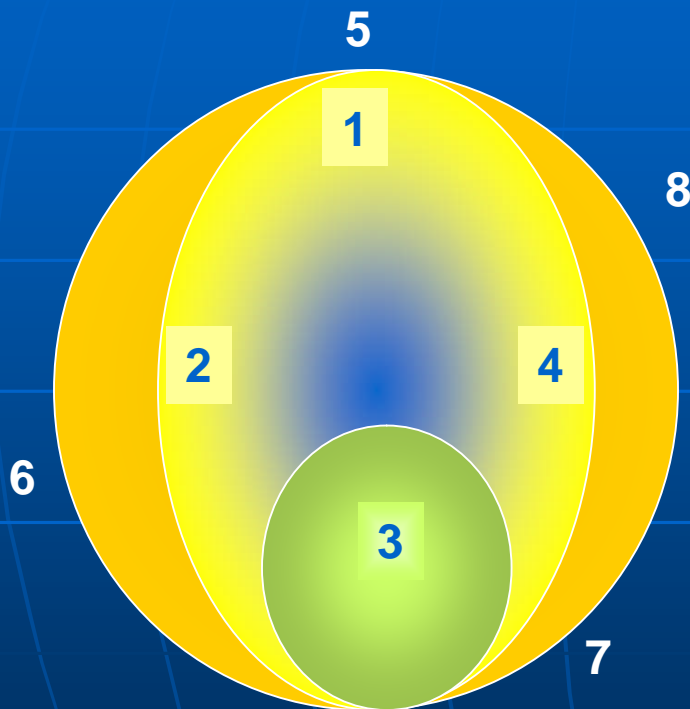
Social Integration Model

■ In Guyana

- From *political perspective* -- fragmentation, exclusion and polarization
- From *social perspective* -- coexistence, collaboration and inclusion
- In transition between polarization and coexistence

Dialogue after May 2003

[when the Social Cohesion Programme was established]



1. **Building relationships of trust**
 2. Gaining understanding of the situation and accepting responsibility for the change
 3. **Facilitating transformation**
 4. Grounding and support to ensure institutional strength
 5. Review contents and process
 6. **Learning lessons toward improved future strategy and practice**
 7. Appropriate systems and support
 8. **Building capacity for and enhancement of active or servant leadership**
1. Building relationships of trust; etc.

Practical Application

- The creation of **safe spaces** to explore ways forward (e.g. media round tables, workshop for political parties, ongoing discussions with key role-players);
- **Strengthening ownership** of and commitment of stakeholders to sustain efforts to develop a national conversation;
- **Joint missions**: Sending opposing senior and party youth leaders on training courses together;
- **Psycho-social support** for victims of trauma;
- Support for **community based cohesion building** initiatives;
- Support for **UN Special Rapporteur** on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and all Forms of Discrimination in Guyana;
- **Technical support** to government departments and the Ethnic Relations Commission;
- Support for cohesion building initiatives in the **Regional Development Councils (RDCs)**;
- Support for the **Caribbean Millennium Development Goals Business Initiative**;
- **Strategic planning workshops** for the private sector and trade unions; and
- Facilitative assessments by a **UN core group**.

Capacity building

- More than **250 people** attended conflict transformation and human rights workshops for
 - Political youth arms
 - Parliamentary political parties
 - Ethnic Relations Commissioners
 - Religious and cultural leaders
 - Trade unions
 - Youths from Region 4
 - The Private Sector Commission
 - Magistrates and judges
 - Police
 - NGOs
 - RDC councillors.

The Spirit of GUYANA

- A group of 22 participants have completed the first set of training of trainers courses in facilitation and process design.
 - **Spirit of Guyana Movement** – currently pursuing several ideas including peace campaigns and training at community level.
- Some of these participants have already **trained 92 people** from Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) and head teachers of schools in Region 3.



Positive changes

- Prevention of election violence strategy
 - Ensure national ownership
 - Support key nationals
 - Facilitate coordinated approaches for the national and international Development Partners
- Support for a national conversation process
- Youth arms of the two dominant political parties committed to a joint calendar of activities and to dialogue as the first response
- Change in language: Everybody talks about the need for cohesion
- Better collaboration between international donor community and government institutions
- High level of inter-racial marriages and social interaction