



WWF

FACTSHEET

2015



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FOREST AND CLIMATE PROGRAMME

GUYANA

Maintaining Guyana's forests for people and the planet

GUYANA, A UNIQUE LANDSCAPE

Located on the north coast of South America and neighbored by Suriname, Venezuela, and Brazil, Guyana contains a vast richness of natural resources. Rainforests fully cloak 85¹ percent of the nation, which spans nearly 215,000 square kilometers² and contains some of the most biodiverse and intact ecosystems in the world.

With a population of 800,000³, Guyana enjoys one of the lowest population densities of any tropical country. Indigenous peoples make up more than 10 percent of the population, and many reside in the nation's forested interior and rely on the land as they farm, fish and hunt to sustain themselves. Roughly 15 percent of Guyanese territory is owned by and titled to indigenous Amerindian communities.

Yet despite its low population density and great natural wealth, Guyana's per capita gross domestic product (GDP) is one of the lowest in the region—and the desire for economic development has begun to put increasing pressure on the nation's long-undisturbed forests.



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¹. <http://bit.ly/1gdDrnw>

². CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gy.html>

³. <http://bit.ly/1HtdKoQ>

FORESTS UNDER PRESSURE

Historically, Guyana has exhibited one of the lowest rates of deforestation in the world and has committed to maintaining that legacy of forest conservation as the first country with a national-scale payment-for-performance REDD+ system. Through an agreement with Norway signed in 2009, Guyana receives annual payments contingent on keeping deforestation rates low.

But the rise in gold prices over the past decade has pushed the rapid expansion of small-scale artisanal gold mining, generating unprecedented environmental impacts. Mining of widespread alluvial gold deposits has had a major negative impact on the region's freshwater resources and, according to Guyana's Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System (MRVS), accounted for 90 percent⁴ of Guyana's deforestation in 2013. Growing demand for Guyana's rosewood⁵ is also a major driver of forest loss and degradation. As the five-year term of the Guyana-Norway agreement draws to a close and as markets for Guyana's natural resources grow, it has become critical to find ways to balance economic development and forest conservation in the region in order for deforestation rates to remain low.

REDD+ - A PROMISING SOLUTION

If we can find a way to halt forest loss in the region, not only will a vital part of Guyana's rainforests be conserved, but the carbon held in the plants and soil of these forests will remain sequestered – which is key to fighting climate change. Efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and to conserve, sustainably manage and enhance forest carbon stocks (together referred to as REDD+) are underway in Guyana. REDD+ is a scheme to compensate developing countries for maintaining and sustainably managing their forests, and Guyana presents the first nation-wide test of this mechanism.

WWF is working in Guyana to build community participation in REDD+ through the development of community-based natural, cultural and human resource monitoring (including forest and carbon monitoring). By equipping Guyana's indigenous communities with the capacities and skills they need to monitor the resources they value, WWF aims to foster an indigenous civil society that is empowered to take an active role in REDD+ and other natural resource conservation issues.

OUR WORK IN GUYANA

Guyana's indigenous communities hold title to millions of forested acres, yet they remain limited in their access to education, economic opportunity and the power to make decisions about their own natural resources. WWF's

efforts in Guyana have focused on shifting this dynamic by building the skills and capacities indigenous communities need to take an active role in REDD+.

WWF partnered with the indigenous community-based North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB), the Guyana Forestry Commission, the Global Canopy Programme, and the indigenous Wai Wai community of Kanashen—whose titled territory covers 1.5 million acres, (fully 2.9 percent of Guyana's land area)—to develop a Community Measurement, Reporting and Verification (CMRV) system integrated with the national MRVS. Community members learned to measure trees in forest plots, calculate carbon stocks, record and monitor water quality, and even interview their fellow community members to gauge community well-being—skills that enable them to better monitor and manage their resources and to take action when those resources are threatened. This process represents the first community-to-community training on CMRV in Guyana. Through its work with the Wai Wai over more than 18 months, WWF and the NRDDB developed a capacity-building curriculum that NRDDB can deliver to other indigenous communities. In 2014, lessons learned from this work were shared with participants from 15 countries through a week-long south-south CMRV exchange workshop.

Since its inception, the Guyana-Norway agreement called for the development of a mechanism by which indigenous communities could choose to participate in REDD+ benefits. To date, little progress has been made in developing this 'Opt-In Mechanism' (OIM). But with the election of a new government and the possibility of a renewed Guyana-Norway agreement, piloting the opt-in mechanism has become a priority. Based on the success of its CMRV initiative, WWF has been asked to lead the process to pilot the OIM and expand the CMRV capacity-building that will be essential for the mechanism's success.

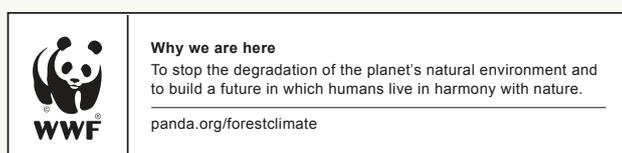
MAKING REDD+ WORK FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE

If we get it right, REDD+ could reduce greenhouse gas emissions while protecting biodiversity, supporting sustainable development, and strengthening rights and livelihoods that benefit forest-dwelling communities. WWF is initiating REDD+ activities in the world's key forest landscapes, including the Amazon, Borneo and the Congo Basin, by working at scale with communities and governments to test approaches for getting REDD+ right.

We are working to ensure that REDD+ delivers on its promise of maintaining forests for the benefit of people and nature.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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⁴ <http://bit.ly/1KhKCTM>

⁵ <http://news.mongabay.com/2014/1126-gfrn-cannon-loggers-raid-guyana-forests.html>