

**EDUCATION FOR ALL IN THE CARIBBEAN: ASSESSMENT 2000
CASE STUDIES**

Editor: Lynda Quamina-Aiyejina

**LITERACY AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN THE
CARIBBEAN**

GUYANA

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and
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The production of the EFA Case Studies was in part facilitated by a financial contribution from the UNFPA Caribbean Regional Office.

UNESCO
2000

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Published in 2000 by the Office of the
UNESCO Representative in the Caribbean
The Towers
3rd Floor, 25 Dominica Drive
Kingston 5, Jamaica

Printed in Trinidad by F.A.S.T.E.R. Publishing Services
Victory Street, Arima

Cover design by: Carole Maison-Bishop

ISBN: 976-95037-9-7

FOREWORD

Education for All in the Caribbean: Assessment 2000 is a remarkable output, which is the culmination of intensive collaborative efforts between the countries of the Caribbean sub-region, the Regional Advisory Technical Group and the EFA Forum Secretariat, and relevant agencies and institutions.

The Country Reports, Monograph Series, and Case Studies highlight and pinpoint, in an extremely effective manner, some of the issues and concerns that drive education policy and action in the Caribbean. At the same time, the documentation presents a balanced and informed overview of the rich and varied educational and cultural experience of the sub-region; a knowledge which is critical to the understanding of the unfolding social and economic developments.

UNESCO is pleased to have been associated with this endeavour, particularly through our regional office in Kingston, Jamaica which, as co-ordinator of the Regional Advisory Group for the Caribbean Sub-region, was integrally involved in every aspect of the exercise. We look forward to continued collaboration with the Caribbean on activities of a mutually rewarding nature as the consequences and implications of the EFA Assessment become manifest.

Colin Power
Deputy Director-General for Education
UNESCO

SERIES INTRODUCTION

At Jomtien in 1990, member states of the United Nations adopted the *Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs* and created the International Consultative Forum on Education for All (EFA Forum). One decade later, the EFA Forum embarked on an assessment of this initiative, intended to assist member states in examining their education provisions to inform the formulation of policy. Once the Caribbean EFA Regional Advisory Group had embarked seriously on the assessment, it was quickly realised that it would be difficult to capture, in any one place, an assessment of all that had transpired in education in the Caribbean during the period 1990-1999. Moreover, the technical guidelines constrained assessors to specifics within quantitative and qualitative frames. However, because it was felt that education in the Caribbean is too dynamic to be circumscribed, the idea of a more wide-ranging monograph series was conceived.

Researchers, education practitioners, and other stakeholders in education were invited to contribute to the series. Our expectations were that the response would be quite moderate, given the short time-frame within which we had to work. Instead, we were overwhelmed by the response, both in terms of the number of enthusiastic contributors and the range of topics represented.

Caribbean governments and peoples have invested in the *hardware* for education--buildings, furniture, equipment; in the *software*, in terms of parent support and counselling services; and they have attended to *inputs* like books and other teaching/learning resources. They have wrestled with ways to evaluate, having gone through rounds of different national examinations, and modifications of ways to assess both primary and secondary education.

But, as the efforts to complete the country reports show, it has been more difficult to assess the impacts, if we take the eventual aim of education as improving the quality of life--we have had mixed successes. That the sub-region has maintained relative peace despite its violent past and contemporary upheavals may be cited as a measure of success; that the environment is threatened in several ways may be one of the indicators of how chequered the success has been.

Writers in the monograph/case study series have been able to document, in descriptive and analytic modes, some of the attempts, and to capture several of the impacts. That this series of monographs on Education for All in the Caribbean has been written, edited, and published in nine months (from first call for papers to issue of the published titles) is itself an indication of the impact of education, in terms of human capability and capacity.

It reflects, too, the interest in education of a number of stakeholders without whom the series would not have been possible. Firstly, the work of the writers is acknowledged. All worked willingly, hard, well, and, in most cases, without material reward. The sterling contribution of the editor, who identified writers and stayed with them to the end of the process, is also recognised, as is the work of the printer, who came through on time despite the severe time constraints. The financial contribution of the following agencies also made the EFA assessment process and the publication of the monograph/case study series possible: Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Department for International Development (DFID), International Labour Organization (ILO), Sub-Regional Headquarters for the Caribbean of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill; the World Bank, and the UN country teams based in Barbados, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.

We invite you to peruse individual titles or the entire series as, together, we assess Caribbean progress in education to date, and determine strategies to correct imbalances and sustain positive impacts, as we move towards and through the first decade of the new millennium

Claudia Harvey
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EFA in the Caribbean: Assessment 2000

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Gratitude is extended to the officials of the Ministry of Education, VARQA Foundation, the Bahai's, the Adult Education Association, and the Cyril Potter College of Education for the information and assistance provided.

The cooperation received from the various non-governmental organizations also went a long way in effecting the realization of this study.

Finally, the guidance and encouragement received from the Director and our colleagues from the Institute of Distance and Continuing Education, together with the invaluable efforts of Ms Jaitoon Mohamed (the typist) contributed immeasurably to the completion of this case study.

Sincere thanks to all the aforementioned.

September 1999.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACCC	Association of Canadian Community Colleges
AEA	Adult Education Association
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BPS	British Partnership Scheme
CCPP	Canadian College Partnership Programme
CFNI	Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute
CODE	Canadian Organization for Development Through Education
CPCE	Cyril Potter College of Education
CYP	Commonwealth Youth Programme
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
EFA	Education for All
GBF	Guyana Book Foundation
GNS	Guyana National Service
GOs	Government Organizations
GRPA	Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association
GUIDE	Guyana In-Service Distance Education Project
IACE	Institute of Adult and Continuing Education
IDCE.	Institute of Distance and Continuing Education
JAMAL	Jamaican Movement for the Advancement of Literacy
NCERD	National Centre for Education Resource Development
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NOC	New Opportunity Corps
OWOW	On the Wings of Words
PATH	Parents As Teachers At Home
PSM	Public Service Ministry
PTAs	Parent Teachers' Associations
SIMAP	Social Impact Amelioration Programme
SSEE	Secondary Schools Entrance Examination
UG	University of Guyana
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
YWCA	Young Women Christian's Association

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GUYANA - BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The Co-operative Republic of Guyana is located on the north-eastern section of the South American continent. It is bordered by Venezuela on the West, Suriname on the East, and Brazil on the South and South-West. The size of Guyana is approximately 83,000 square miles/215 km, and it is divided into 10 Administrative Regions.

The total population of the country is approximately 742,000. East Indians, Africans, Chinese, and Amerindians represent the main ethnic groups that comprise the country's population. English is the main and official language but Creolese is also spoken throughout the country.

The formal education system comprises nursery, primary, and secondary schools. The country's sole university, the University of Guyana (UG), offers both formal and non-formal education programmes. Non-formal education programmes are also delivered and conducted by a wide variety of government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that cater for skill enhancement of adults throughout Guyana.

SECTION 1

Introduction

This study forms part of the *Education For All: Assessment 2000 - Case Studies* sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The main purpose of the study is to provide an analysis of literacy and non-formal education programmes initiated by government organizations (GOs) and NGOs in Guyana during the Education For All (EFA) decade (1990-1999). It is hoped that this study will provide useful and practical information which can be used by planners and decision makers involved in the delivery of literacy and non-formal education, particularly in developing countries.

Sasaoka (1990) opines that “if drop-outs have no access to non-formal education they may relapse into illiteracy” (p. 481). This underscores the important role non-formal education plays in the improvement and maintenance of accepted levels of literacy in societies. Governments, particularly in developing countries such as Guyana, should initiate and develop viable policies in relation to non-formal education. Such policies will not only support initiatives adopted at the formal level but will also impact positively on human resource and economic development in the countries concerned.

In Guyana, literacy and non-formal education programmes are sponsored by both GOs and NGOs. These organizations offer programmes collaboratively as well as individually. The Guyana National Service (GNS), the Public Service Ministry (PSM), and the extension or training departments of the other government ministries (Health and Agriculture, in particular) represent some of the government agencies that promote non-formal education. The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), the Red Cross Association of Guyana, the agencies of the United Nations, namely, UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNDP, religious groups (Christians, Hindus, and Muslims), the Baha’i Spiritual Assembly, and service organizations (Lions, Jaycees, and Rotary) exemplify some of the inter-government organizations and NGOs involved in the planning and delivery of literacy and non-formal education.

The Institute of Distance and Continuing Education (IDCE) of UG and the Adult Education Association (AEA) are subsidized by the government. It should be noted that the IDCE also provides formal education programmes and offers a variety of academic, vocational, and professional programmes at the pre-university level. The dual-mode system of delivery (face-to-face and distance) is utilized by the IDCE in the conduct of its programmes which are offered in all the administrative regions of the country. IDCE and AEA acquire funds from non-government sources as well as from tuition fees to mount literacy programmes and other forms of non-formal education.

This case study focuses, in a major way, on the IDCE’s initiatives in literacy and non-formal education, devised and implemented in conjunction with other agencies. An in-depth description will be provided of: (a) On The Wings of Words (OWOW) as a best practice, and (b) Parents As Teachers At Home (PATH)--a success story.

Limitations

The scope and budget of this study prevented widespread consultation with a wide cross-section of the stakeholders involved in the planning and delivery of literacy and non-formal education throughout the country. The researchers, nevertheless, were able to hold discussions with some of the major providers.

Another limitation of the study was the difficulty experienced in acquiring relevant data from some of the providers who have recently started the process of accumulating and storing pertinent data on their programmes.

Organization of Report

This report is divided into five sections: (a) the introduction, (b) an overview and analysis of developments and implementation strategies with respect to literacy and non-formal education, (c) an analysis of these developments and implementation strategies, (d) an in-depth description of a best practice and success story, and (e) new and emerging trends.

Definition of Terms

Literacy is the ability to read and write a short and simple statement on everyday life (UNESCO, 1978).

Functional Literacy is the power to invest words with meaning, to recognize the ideas which someone else wishes to convey and to use them to express thoughts and ideas (Jennings, Kellman, Clarke, & Joseph, 1995).

Non-Formal Education refers to any organized systematic form of education carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular sub-groups of the population, adults as well as children (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974).

SECTION 2

Overview Of Developments and Strategies

This section provides an overview and analysis of developments and implementation strategies effected by GOs and NGOs during the EFA decade.

Apart from a description of government's policy on literacy and non-formal education as indicated in the policy documents of 1990 (Guyana. Ministry of Education) and 1995 (Guyana. Ministry of Education and Cultural Development), no cohesive and comprehensive policy, which sets out to integrate the work and initiatives of the providers of non-formal education in the country, has been formulated. As such, there are no identifiable targets and objectives at the central level on non-formal education. However, some of the stakeholders involved in non-formal education have included such projections in their programme plans.

Government Initiatives

In the policy paper of 1990, the Government of Guyana reiterated that the policy of adult and continuing education is based on the principles of equality of access to both formal and non-formal education of a comparable quality to all persons. Reference was also made to the Government's initiatives to provide continued support to all agencies (including NGOs) involved in the delivery of non-formal education. The IDCE, Critchlow Labour College, Kuru Kuru Cooperative College, the AEA, the Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association (GRPA), and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) were some of the agencies mentioned.

It was also adumbrated by government that the formal school system would encourage and provide assistance to Parent Teachers' Association (PTAs) in the promotion of parent education programmes. Further, the commitment was given to make available community centres, schools, and other education and training institutions and their equipment for non-formal education and training.

Concomitantly, the Government of Guyana indicated its intention to promote and develop the distance mode of delivery, particularly in the non-formal sector, utilizing print, radio, and audio-conferencing at the initial stage. Teacher training, basic literacy education, and pre-university programmes were identified and targeted for delivery via distance education. This modality was assessed by the Government as an effective mechanism for promoting human resource development in the hinterland and in other areas far removed from the coastal area of Guyana, where most of the training institutions are located. This position was more or less reiterated in the policy document of 1995 (Guyana. Ministry of Education and Cultural Development).

The UNDP's *Human Development Report, 1993* ascribed a 96.4% literacy rate to Guyana. The veracity of this statistic was, however, contradicted by the realities in Guyana. Poor performances at the Secondary School Entrance Examination (SSEE) and at the Secondary School Leaving Examinations set by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) in mathematics, English language, and the natural sciences, together with an increase in the school dropout rate, especially at the primary and community high school levels, were cases in point.

Jennings et al. (1995) suggest that these concerns may have been responsible for the Ministry of Education commissioning a survey team to investigate the problem of functional literacy among young people (between the ages of 14-25) domiciled in the 10 administrative regions of the country. This study revealed that 89% of young people (14-25) functioned at the low to moderate level of functional literacy. This, according to the researchers, was below what was required to function in an effective manner in the Guyanese society at that

time.

Some of the main recommendations emanating from this study are:

- ❑ the establishment of a national committee to formulate a policy on literacy/functional literacy and initiate strategies for its implementation throughout the country;
- ❑ the provision of government support for the initiatives of NGOs in literacy;
- ❑ the encouragement of functional literacy programmes at work places;
- ❑ the encouragement of community-based functional literacy programmes, especially in those areas where literacy rates are low.

Based on these recommendations, the Ministry of Education established a National Literacy Committee, in 1995, comprising representatives from the main political parties in Guyana, the departments of the Ministry of Education, the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE), the IDCE, and the AEA. The Committee met and discussed a number of issues pertaining to its modus operandi. Unfortunately, however, the Committee has been dormant since 1997.

Some of the objectives of this Committee are:

- ❑ to equip all teachers with requisite skills for training a literate and numerate population;
- ❑ to make available training in literacy skills to out-of-school youths throughout Guyana;
- ❑ to develop, adopt, and disseminate literacy training materials for use throughout Guyana;
- ❑ to enlist the media in a campaign to encourage positive attitudes towards literacy.

These objectives have guided the initiatives of organizations such as the National Centre for Education Resource Development (NCERD) and IDCE in the delivery and conduct of their literacy programmes.

Non Government Initiatives

In recognition of the fact that the formal system of education was incapable of satisfying the educational needs of the masses, the NGOs became involved in mounting literacy and other non-formal education programmes prior to the EFA decade. These initiatives sought to provide education and training to enhance various skills, which include literacy, numeracy, employment, family life, parenting, academic, and vocational/professional. These NGOs which sponsor various programmes throughout the country, receive assistance from the Government of Guyana, the private business sector, and international agencies, among others. Tables 1 and 2 illustrate some of these providers and the type of programmes they offer.

Table 1. Providers – Non-Governmental Organizations

Non-Governmental Organizations	Programmes Offered
Institute of Distance & Continuing Education (IDCE.)	Literacy, academic, vocational, employment, family life, parenting, community development, and education skills
Adult Education Association (AEA)	Literacy, academic, technical/vocational
Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP)	Entrepreneurial youth work
Guyana Red Cross	Basic health--First aid, parenting, community health
Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association (GRPA)	Parenting, sexual health, AIDS promotion
VARQA Foundation	Literacy, community rehabilitation/health
Hindu Dharmic Sabha	Vocational, literacy, self-employable
Central Islamic Organization of Guyana	Family life, health, vocational, religion.
Women Affairs Bureau	Life skills, literacy, entrepreneurial/leadership.
YWCA	Literacy, life skills
Roadside Baptist Centre	Literacy, vocational programmes
St Francis Xavier Group	Literacy, youth leadership

Table 2. Providers - Governmental Organizations

Government Organizations That Provide Literacy & Other Non-Formal Education Programmes	Programmes Offered
Guyana National Service (GNS)	Literacy, Technical/vocational
Guyana Prison Service	Literacy, Academic, vocational, para military
Social Impact Amelioration Programme (SIMAP)	Community development skills, Technical/Vocational
Public Service Ministry (PSM)	Management Skills, Literacy.
Ministry of Agriculture	Technical/vocational
Ministry of Health & Labour	Technical/vocational
Ministry of Trade & Tourism	Technical & professional
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Professional
Ministry of Youth & Sports	Vocational

SECTION 3

Analysis Of Developments And Implementation Strategies

During the decade in focus, various strategies and practices have been implemented by the various stakeholders involved in the provision of literacy and non-formal education. In effecting these practices, the stakeholders were guided, in some instances, by cultural determinants, community alliances, and relevant modes of programme delivery, among other factors. Some of these practices were relatively successful while others failed to achieve the stated objectives of the programmes concerned.

The negative connotations that are associated with illiteracy (ignorance, stupidity), as well as the fact that illiterates are ridiculed and ostracized by society at times, have contributed to the failure of the “pure or straight” literacy courses. Adults dislike disclosing, in a public way, their inability to read or write, or to complete simple forms, be it at the bank or at the immigration office. Consequently, they tend not to register for such programmes. However, the integrated approach, where literacy is combined with other programme components or life skills, has been more successful. The On the Wings of Words (OWOW) programme (a collaborative effort between the Baha’i religious group and the IDCE) and the Community-Based Rehabilitation Programme (a collaborative programme between the VARQA Foundation and the IDCE) are cases in point, where literacy is combined with other life skills.

Coupled with the aforementioned, the group approach in programme delivery, which provides students with the opportunity to discuss issues and topics, acquire pertinent information, and present tutorial papers to the class as a group, has been utilized successfully by the providers of literacy and non-formal education. In addition, the use of projects, prepared either individually or in groups, represents another strategy that has contributed to the success of these programmes during the EFA decade.

Additionally, data on networking show successful instances of collaboration among the various providers (NGOs and GOs) of literacy and other forms of non-formal education. This should not be interpreted as a reflection of a comprehensive policy in non-formal education at the government level. It is more of a recognition of a need, on the part of some of the providers, to form alliances so that more effective use could be made of existing resources (human and physical) in communities, especially when such resources are limited. Some examples of collaboration are:

- ◆ NCERD and IDCE in teacher training via distance education
- ◆ IDCE and the Baha’i on the OWOW Programme
- ◆ SIMAP and IDCE in technical/vocational programme for out-of-school youths
- ◆ UNICEF and regional education departments on AIDS education
- ◆ AEA and IDCE - Consultation on Adult Education Conference
- ◆ CYP and IDCE - Diploma in Youth Work Programme
- ◆ GRPA and the Guyana Professional Social Workers Association - Family Life Education
- ◆ Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute (CFNI), IDCE, and the Food Policy Department of the Ministry of Health - Basic Nutrition Programme.

Another strategy which has impacted positively on non-formal education in Guyana has been the introduction of the distance mode of programme delivery during the EFA decade. In particular, this development has made it possible for adults domiciled far away from education and training centres to participate in non-formal programmes. Apart from facilitating accessibility, distance education relies

significantly on self/independent study being demonstrated by the students. This skill, when transferred to the traditional face-to-face programmes, has resulted in improvements in students' performances. This is illustrated by the 1995 Guyana In-Service Distance Education Project's (GUIDE) 2-year Distance Education Programme for unqualified teachers who resided in the hinterland. In the first batch, 73 persons (3 males, 70 females) successfully completed the programme. Unfortunately, no tracer study has been done. However, the 1999 CPCE list of graduates revealed that 11 students who pursued the GUIDE programme successfully completed their first year at the College.

Table 3 provides data on the IDCE's Distance Education Pre-University English Course for the period 1992-1997. No tracer study was done on the graduates of this programme. However, it is known that some persons who successfully completed the Distance Education programme are now pursuing diploma and degree programmes at the Turkeyen Campus, UG, and are coping well with the demands of their programme of study.

The inability to procure adequate funds has curtailed the expansion of distance education, both in spatial terms and from being largely print based at present to the level where computer technology is utilized. The IDCE, CPCE, and NCERD have been in the forefront of distance education in the non-formal sector. Teacher training programmes, designed to improve the basic qualifications of untrained teachers, thus making them eligible for entry into the teachers' training college (CPCE), and pre-university courses in Mathematics, English Language, and Supervisory Management represent some of the programmes which have been offered, so far, by way of the distance mode.

Table 3. Distance Education Course Completion Record - Pre University English

Centre	Year of Entry	Enrolment	Year of Graduation	Graduation		Total	Grades Obtained										Total	Completion Rate
				M	F		A		B		C		D		F			
Linden	1992	180	1996	02	30	32	-	05	02	21	-	04	-	-	-	-	32	17.7
Anna Regina	1993	118	1996	01	24	25	01	11	-	12	-	01	-	-	-	-	25	21.2
New Amsterdam	1993	269	1996	06	37	43	02	11	03	12	01	14	-	-	-	-	43	15.9
Leonora	1994	34	1996	01	11	12	-	-	01	04	-	07	-	-	-	-	12	35.2
Fort Wellington	1997/98	17	1999	01	05	06	-	-	-	03	01	02	-	-	-	-	06	35.2
Georgetown (Special Group)	1997	09	1999	09	-	09	-	-	04	-	04	-	-	-	01	-	09	100
Lethem	1995	09	1997	03	06	09	-	02	-	01	03	03	-	-	-	-	09	100

Information on the gender composition of students who have completed literacy and non-formal programmes reveals an overwhelming bias in favour of females. Traditionally, the major issue in gender studies had to do with encouraging more women to participate in formal and non-formal education, which would enhance their marketability and allow them to take up careers in fields that were once the exclusive domain of men. Apparently, there has been success in this regard, as evidenced by the increasing number of females completing non-formal education programmes and obtaining employment. Now, however, concern and worry are being expressed over the poor participation and, generally, the lack of motivation of men in education. At the IDCE, for example, over 75% of the adults who have successfully completed programmes are females (IDCE Annual Reports, 1994-1998).

Table 4. Gender Disparity - Graduates Of IDCE Programmes, 1994-1999

Year	Male	Female	Total
1994-1995	300	2,242	2,542
1995-1996	310	2,320	2,630
1997-1998	510	2,272	2,782
1998-1999	640	2,272	2,912

One possible explanation for this could be that the type of programmes which are offered by the providers are not very attractive to males. According to Bellamy (UNICEF, 1999), male under-achievement in the Caribbean is not paralleled in other developing countries. Some contributory factors to this phenomenon include:

- families paying more attention to girls and their attendance at school
- study being seen as “sissy” and effeminate by males
- the low proportion of male teachers in the classroom, hence the absence of male role models for young boys
- boys having better access to the labour market at an earlier age than girls.

Harvey, Whelan, Jailall, and Singh (1999) recommend that more action-based training serves to attract males (e.g., training in practical agriculture).

In sum, the factors that have contributed to success and failure of literacy and non-formal education programmes conducted by NGOs and GOs in Guyana can be grouped into the following:

- cultural differences
 - mode of implementation
 - government and non-government initiatives
- (see Table 5 for details)

Table 5. Summary of Factors Contributing to Success and Failure in Literacy and Non-Formal

Education

	Success	Failure
Cultural Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programmes attracting large number of females 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stigma attached to illiteracy - Programmes attracting a small number of males
Mode of Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group Work - Projects - Integrated approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited resources (human & physical) - traditional method of assessment - lack of awareness of adult education strategies
Government & Non Government Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Networking - Distance education mode 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absence of comprehensive policy on literacy and non-formal education - Inability to access adequate funds

Section 4

In-Depth Description of a Best Practice and a Success Story

On the Wings of Words (OWOW): A Best Practice

The current situation

Education in Guyana, from nursery to secondary school, is free. Recent research has indicated a rising illiteracy rate. Large numbers of the school population have completed their education with little reading or writing skills.

In response to that challenge, VARQA Foundation, an independent non-profit NGO, named after an outstanding personality in the Baha'i Community in Iran, introduced the On the Wings of Words (OWOW) literacy programme. VARQA's work in literacy commenced in 1994 when over 30,000 books were donated by communities in Canada. This resulted in libraries being established in 60 coastal and 40 interior villages in Guyana. The libraries were housed in people's homes and manned by volunteers, and were open to whole villages. Increased access to books, however, heightened the realization that most children had reading abilities well below their age level. In response, VARQA organized regional workshops to train librarians to teach children to read. The establishment of these libraries brought a request and funding from the Canadian Organization for Development Through Education (CODE) to publish a monthly newspaper for children, to be distributed freely throughout the country. Each month, 15,000 copies were produced. VARQA Foundation developed a reading series for 5-6 year olds that was adopted by the Ministry of Education and piloted in over 200 schools. This led to the development of the OWOW literacy programme which was launched in February 1996.

Target population

OWOW targeted all youths within the general population aged 10-16 years old. The programme exists in urban and rural areas, including remote interior settlements.

Implementation

In May 1996, an introductory public meeting was held to launch the programme. Over 200 persons attended due to the extensive media coverage. Keynote addresses were given by the senior Minister of Education and the Director of the IDCE, UG. A task force was established and, in June 1996, prospective facilitators were invited to study and discuss the programme content which included a set of materials.

Materials

Materials for the programme were developed by persons trained in literacy. The materials use two approaches: look-and-say and phonics. The look-and-say approach starts with the following words:

I can go

To we will
Help you not

These have been carefully chosen as, with them, the student can make and read over 150 sentences which give immediate feelings of success. A small number of new words are introduced in each lesson and added to those already known. Large numbers of new sentences can be read (i.e., low vocabulary, high frequency). The phonics approach starts with 5 letter sound:

a m s f n

These have been carefully chosen as letter sounds can be sustained (i.e., the sound of the letter can be held for a period of time, unlike letter sounds like p, g, etc.). These sounds are learned and then students are taught to blend them together--first two (m...a, s...a, a...f, s...m), and then to add the final sound (fa...n, sa...n, ma...n). Real and imaginary words and syllables are sounded out (nas, faf, maf). Game boards are made to reinforce the skills learned.

The materials include:

Modules 1 and 2 Facilitator's Manual

Outlines of lessons, step by step, covering all aspects of each 2½ hour class.

Reading Book Level 1

Stories for students to practice the skills learned.

Student Workbook Level 1 & 2

Exercises and puzzles to practice the skills learned, particular emphasis is on phonics rules.

Reading Book Level 2

Stories for more advanced readers to practice the skills taught.

Inspirational Words

A compilation of Holy Writings for facilitators, including quotations on the qualities of the teacher, youth, the power of the Holy Word, and virtues.

Student Progress Record

An attendance record of each student with his/her level of participation and passages memorized.

Training of facilitators

In 1996, the Task Force conducted a 5-day training programme for the first 180 volunteers. The morning sessions were devoted to learning about the spiritual component of the programme, since it was felt that to merely assist those with limited literacy skills would have little effect on the problems of child abuse, prejudice, poverty, war, and injustice. The three major themes introduced were that "Man is a noble being," "Our actions affect others," and "We are in control of our actions." Generative themes included, "How do we know what is right or wrong?" "How can we do what is right?" and "Man's nature is both spiritual and animal." The importance of memorizing and internalizing the verses from the Holy Writings proved to be a point of consensus amongst the facilitators. The importance of the teacher and the proper attitude towards the learner were discussed in a lively way in workshop groups.

Afternoon sessions were devoted to the other "wing" of the programme--the mechanics of reading, using

both the familiar look-and-say method (recognizing the whole word and not its component parts) and the more familiar technique--phonics (blending letter sounds to work out the pronunciation of syllables and words). Interactive and participatory teaching methods were introduced, stressed, and modeled during those sessions. The importance of comprehension and the use of a variety of questioning techniques were also covered. In addition, games for classes were made and played, songs were learned, skits were created and performed, and micro-teaching activities and an approach to collecting baseline data were introduced. The concept of service to the community was stressed and facilitators were discouraged from soliciting payment from their students.

The volunteer facilitators pledged one year to the programme, but many worked beyond that. Successful facilitators received certificates from IDCE. Table 6 indicates the number of facilitators trained.

Table 6. Number Of Facilitators Trained

1996	1997	1998	1999	Total
180	296	220	207	903

Frequency of training

“Look Back Step Ahead” meetings were held every three months. Feedback was shared by the facilitators and the task force coordinator who had monitored the programmes during the period under review. Further training was provided in specific areas such as Communication, How to write and tell a story, Discipline, and Puppetry. Plans for the Regional and National Festivals of Words were also made. A newsletter highlighting innovations and giving information on classes was produced quarterly, and distributed to the various facilitators. A second bi-monthly newsletter was produced for youths.

Attitudinal changes

Most facilitators made comments about the positive attitudinal changes in their students. This was demonstrated in new-found courtesy, especially during the “Generative Themes,” with feelings of anger being replaced by calm, especially after the use of songs and memorization passages, and an increased sense of self-worth. In some cases, this attitude carried over into the student’s schoolwork where renewed interest and care were demonstrated. This was extremely evident in most of the youths between the ages of 10-17 years who are in a correctional centre at the New Opportunity Corps (NOC) on the Essequibo Coast (see Table 7).

Table 7. Number of Inmates who Participated in the Programme

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1996/1997	29	17	46
1997/1998	21	14	35
1998/1999	28	12	40
Total:	78	43	121

Some of the younger students were provided with the opportunity to attend the Suddie Primary School which is in close proximity to the centre, while the 11+ students attended either the Johanna Cecilia Community High or Abram Zuil Secondary School, based on their attainment levels. A success story emerged in 1999, when the best graduating student from Johanna Cecilia Community High School was one of the senior inmates from the NOC. He had successfully written the CXC examination and gained five subjects with Grades II & III. He is now a member of the Guyana Defence Force Army Corps.

Service to the community

An integral part of the programme was a component involving service to the community, where students were encouraged to offer acts of service such as sharing skills learned with younger children. This component needs to be developed further. However, a small number of classes carried out service projects including painting of a nursery school and making toys for the local school.

Motivation - Facilitators

Facilitators were motivated to attend the training by the interest generated by the media. In addition, a sincere desire to arrest the falling literacy standards countrywide and a strong attachment to being of service to others were also contributing factors.

During the training, the spirit of warmth and camaraderie was evident. Friendships were formed through group work and dramatic presentations, and a team spirit was generated by facilitators who would be working together. The importance of teaching youths to read, and the anticipated impact improved literacy skills would make on their lives, were highly motivating to facilitators. The Literacy Task Force worked to ensure that facilitators felt confident and ready for the task at hand. Regular visits were scheduled by the Task Force and on-going support assured.

When classes started, the large number of students who turned up for the classes, although daunting, acted as an increased impetus to the facilitators. As students began to have success in reading, memorizing the quotes, and began to voice opinions about the “Generative Themes,” the facilitators felt truly rewarded. The dynamic format of the lesson, coupled with the balance between fun, games, activities, learning, studying, and writing created an unfamiliar learning situation to which the youths responded favourably.

Motivation – Students

Participation in Regional and National Festivals of Words was a novel way for students to express their new-found literacy skills. Prizes donated by local businesses, refreshments provided by industries, sacrifices by the facilitators, both financially and in terms of time, and the additional activities included by the facilitators (health talks, craft making) motivated the youths to encourage the facilitators to have additional classes each week.

Time frame

Total number of class hours: 16 lessons of 2½ hours each were planned for the summer campaign each year. In reality, most classes increased that number as the content of some lessons was difficult to complete in the time suggested. On average, most facilitators held classes 3 times per week. Attendance of students dropped markedly when school commenced in September and “lessons” (classes after school where the real instruction takes place for a fee) started. As a few classes continued throughout the year, it was decided to have a 2-tiered approach comprising the 6-week campaign and the weekly classes throughout the year, if needed. Extra classes were held to prepare for the Festival of Words. Each campaign commenced in May with the Public Meetings and concluded the following May with the graduations and Festival of Words.

Baseline data study

A baseline data study was initiated in the summer of 1998 in order to monitor the effectiveness of the programme. Funding for this was provided by a grant from the British Partnership Scheme of the British High Commission. The OWOW programme is being researched by Pat Cameron at the University of Pennsylvania. Thus far, over 150 youths across the country have been interviewed for the purpose of collecting data. Post-testing commenced in December 1998 and final results from the data have not yet been received, although initial findings are very positive.

Financial support

Many of the persons who attend the literacy classes come from marginalized and impoverished backgrounds. Whilst the classes are given freely, the costs of training materials have to be met. The project relies on funding from different organizations to cover the cost of training manuals and children’s reading books, so that the facilitators are well-equipped and adequately prepared for the task of promoting the literacy skills of the youths. Facilitator Manuals and samples of all texts are provided to facilitators free of charge, however, there is a charge for the children’s reading and workbooks (G \$400 per set).

Funding, in excess of US \$35,000, has been received for this programme from the British Partnership Scheme (BPS), the Baha’i International Office of Social and Economic Development situated in Haifa, Israel, Health for Humanity, and the Guyana Book Foundation (GBF)/CODE.

Recommendations

- The content to be learned by the students needs to be broken down into amounts that can be covered in 4-6 weeks, allowing built-in success and feelings of accomplishment.
- Achievement of each level should be accompanied by celebrations and congratulations.
- Full-time workers are needed for this programme; about 3 or 4 would be ideal.
- Requests have been made for part-time training for literacy facilitators as many people cannot attend the 5-day training.
- Baseline data need to be collected and post-intervention data compiled and compared to gauge effectiveness of the programme. The need is urgent to try to break the cycle of illiteracy and stop the

- influx of large numbers of youths into the target group.
- Prospective literacy projects need to be aware of existing materials as writing materials takes approximately two years and then still needs to be perfected. There is also the need for post-literacy materials so that the target group maintains new-found skills. Life skills training should be included, for example, entrepreneurship.

Parents as Teachers at Home (PATH): A Success Story

During the 1988-1989 academic year, the Linden Centre of the then Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (IACE), now known as the IDCE, mounted a 1-year programme in the Teaching of Reading. This programme targeted teachers, community workers, social workers, and parents. Exposing adults to the basic principles and strategies peculiar to the teaching of reading was the main aim of the programme. It arose out of a need to combat the declining levels of literacy, particularly among children of school age residing in the town of Linden.

In 1991, after an evaluation of the programme revealed that insignificant levels of improvement in reading occurred among children who were taught by the graduates of the programme, some changes were made in the programme's objectives and content. It was felt that attention should be paid to social and family relationships, and socialization in an effort to foster a better understanding of some of the factors that influence the learning process of children. The programme was therefore renamed, "Teaching Your Child to Read and More."

The following academic year saw the programme assuming its present name--Parents As Teachers At Home (PATH), after the Institute recognized the need for parents to become more involved in the education of their children. The programme was offered to residents of some of the areas where the IDCE operates. The focus of the programme includes principles of child and social psychology, aspects of parenting, family life education, and the rudiments of teaching reading.

Conduct of the programme

Participants for the programme are normally drawn from PTAs of primary and secondary schools. Other interested parents are also given the opportunity of joining the programme. Formal sessions are held at least once per week.

Format

Lecture-discussions, role plays, and simulation techniques are used. Resource persons include social workers, welfare workers, sociologists, and educators.

Number of graduates

Approximately 300 adults have completed the programme in those areas where it was offered, namely, Georgetown, Linden, Plaisance, Kitty, West Coast Berbice, and Kuru Kuru located on the Linden-Soesdyke Highway and Essequibo Coast. Males accounted for about 2% of the participants.

In 1999, graduates of the programme in Linden, together with the tutors, decided to form a PATH Association. This decision arose out of a desire on the part of the graduates to utilize their newly acquired expertise in a collective way, in order to assist in alleviating social as well as literacy problems prevailing in the area. The objectives of the Association include:

1. Using relevant knowledge, skills, and desirable attitudes gained from the programme to assist their children.
2. Realizing the goal or motto of the PATH programme of being “Better Parents as Better Teachers in Better Homes.”
3. Enabling parents to become more effective in their parenting role as the child’s first teacher.
4. Understanding the child and responding to his/her needs as an individual, thereby enabling him/her to develop a rounded personality.
5. Responding and becoming meaningfully engaged in the development of facilities and services to meet educational, social, and spiritual needs within the local and wider community and, consequently, the Guyanese nation.

Projects

The following have been identified by the Association:

- Develop a community outreach programme of visits, lecture-discussions, and workshops aimed at disseminating information about PATH, its activities, and possible benefits to the community.
- Develop a “Parents into Schools” volunteer project, with parents doing voluntary work to support teachers on a regular basis, for example, one-to-one reading, teaching art and craft, and organizing games and other recreation/activities and tours/visits.
- Initiate research projects on “The Linden Parent” and the “Linden Child.”
- Establish alliances with various groups (social, religious, educational) so as to improve the levels of basic and functional literacy of members and other persons in need of such training.

Successes

- Since completing the PATH programme, a number of adults have completed other continuing education programmes (approximately 25% of the total graduates of the programme). One person completed the bachelor’s degree in Social Work from UG.
- Over 30% of the graduates have reported improvements in the performances of their children attending school (specifically at the SSEE and CXC examinations).
- Five persons in Linden gained employment with service organizations, primarily because of training received from PATH.
- Teachers in the formal school system who attended the PATH programme have successfully transferred some of the techniques and strategies learnt while attending PATH to their classrooms.

Projections

Over the next five years (i.e., 2000-2005), the PATH Association will undertake to: (a) establish community centres in Linden so that various educational, recreational, and social activities for children could be undertaken; (b) assist in the improvement of existing libraries to better satisfy the reading needs of children, and (c) assist in the production of children’s shows for both radio and television.

Table 8. Average Number of Beneficiaries

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Regions	Number
Pomeroon – Supenaam	100
Georgetown – Mahaica	575
Mahaica – Berbice	150
Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice	400

Discussion

It is evident that adults are becoming increasingly cognizant of the importance of education and the crucial role it plays in making them employable, occupationally mobile and, generally, preparing them for life and lifelong learning. Some, too, have recognized the need to improve their levels of literacy and were motivated to attend both the OWOW and PATH programmes.

Another motivating factor that contributed to the success of the PATH programme was the “Lesson syndrome” in Guyana. Parents wanted to be able to assist their children to cope with, and complete, their school assignments. The opportunity was provided for the participating parents to formulate learning objectives and programme designs. Hence, group work coupled with the completion of projects assisted in maintaining regular attendance and interest.

For this 1999-2000 academic year, 96 females and 4 males enrolled for the programme at one of the Centres in the Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice Region. This provides evidence to show that the pool comprising persons functioning at low levels of literacy is being reduced.

Several factors emerged from the OWOW programme which can be regarded as successes. In the first instance, the Minister of Education is on record as saying that the programme is the best organized so far in the country. It is unfortunate, though, that data retrieval is one of the most difficult tasks to accomplish due to the fact that correct systems are not in place. Nevertheless, the successes can be summarized as follows:

- The Cyril Potter College of Education had asked for a member of the Task Force to teach the programme at the College, and this is being done twice weekly.
- Some innovative Heads of schools have introduced the materials to certain levels within their school population. One contributing factor to this scenario is that many of the facilitators are teachers in the system, and they are familiar with the materials and teaching strategies, and are therefore capable enough to implement the programme.
- Over 8,000 youths have been exposed to the programme in different parts of the country, and there is marked improvement in their ability to read and comprehend. As was mentioned earlier, the results of the post-test are not available, but a good example would be the incarcerated youths at the NOC, who entered the institution between the ages of 10-17 years and were functioning at either Levels I or II where reading was concerned. The Schonell Graded Word Reading Test was administered for the placement of students. Those students whose reading age was between 6.0-7.0 were placed in Level I. The others who read at 15 words or more were placed in Level II. At the end of the year’s programme, the Level I students moved up to Level II (and acquired a reading age of 8-8.9). The Level II group graduated to the point where they were able to read short, selected articles in the daily newspapers, and began to borrow books from the institution’s library. Their reading age rose to 12.6. The 78 males and 53 females are now able to read, write, and answer questions from comprehension passages. Those who have not attained the discharge age of 18 years are making full use of the library facilities

available, and can be seen reading the newspapers, journals, and periodicals. There is evidence of a thirst for knowledge.

- The moral and spiritual wing of the programme focussed on the national call for a moral revival of standards in the society. Therefore, parents and other stakeholders willingly contributed to the sustenance of the programme, from its genesis in 1995 to the present time, since, in Guyana's diverse cultural milieu, it appealed to varying religious persuasions.

The foregoing indicates that the pool of illiterates has been reduced, and once teachers continue to serve as the reservoir of resources the numbers will continue to diminish. Dialogue, too, is taking place between VARQA officials and Ministry of Education personnel, to have the materials placed in all the schools. Once that is accomplished, fewer illiterates will leave the school system and literacy classes for out-of-school youths will be minimized.

Graduates of the programme are encouraged to form book clubs, join libraries, and participate in poetry and essay competitions. In some instances, many of them return to their respective facilitators to receive further instructions. This is an ongoing complementary exercise.

Section 5

New and Emerging Trends

The IDCE at UG, in collaboration with the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), has embarked on an ambitious strategic 4-year initiative, which will have medium- and long-term benefits for the nation as a whole. This initiative is referred to as “Literacy for a New Economy” and had its genesis in 1996, arising out of a 1995 study (Jennings et al.) undertaken by UG, which was funded by UNICEF and the Ministry of Education. The study was the first to be conducted on the functional literacy levels of young people in Guyana between the ages of 14-25, an age group which makes up about 24% of the population.

Since pertinent aspects of this study were alluded to in earlier sections, suffice it to state that the identification of the 89% low to moderate level of functional literacy group made quite a startling impact. Policy makers, education officials, and civil society called for formative and summative action. That fact, too, was further compounded when one gleaned from the statistics that about 44%, which is a significant portion of these youths, was unemployed. This level of literacy is definitely far below what is needed for one to function efficiently and effectively in the Guyanese society.

The conceptualization of this initiative was to address this major developmental problem through the acquisition of positive support from three Canadian Institutions--Fanshawe College, Bow Valley College, and Mount Royal College--in developing a literacy, numeracy, and entrepreneurial skills training strategy. The overall goal of the project is to strengthen the “essential skills” required for Guyanese youths to become empowered, through employment and through effective functioning in their workplaces, communities, and families. This will be achieved by strengthening the IDCE’s capability to improve the target group’s essential skills (more specifically, literacy, numeracy, and entrepreneurial/business skills) by working with, and providing the training for, community outreach networking links in the 10 administrative regions of the country.

Each of the Canadian partner colleges provides unique and essential components of expertise:

- **Bow Valley College** not only has a highly effective approach to literacy and essential skills development amongst the educationally disadvantaged in Canada, as well as outreach centres across Calgary and Alberta, but also has effectively adapted this expertise to the particular needs of South Africa and Zimbabwe.
- **Fanshawe College** spearheaded a project to strengthen both literacy and numeracy skills in Jamaica in 1997. One of the main objectives of the Jamaican Movement for the Advancement of Literacy (JAMAL) was to provide literacy and basic occupational skill training, with emphasis on students between the ages of 15-35. Professor Zimmer, who was attached to Fanshawe College, produced three modules entitled “Numeracy for Adults” for JAMAL. Module 4 was scheduled to be completed and launched during May 2000. It can be posited that the experiences of Professor Zimmer, acquired through his work in Jamaica, coupled with his expertise, will augur well for the Guyanese cultural environment.
- **Mount Royal College** brings first-hand knowledge of Guyana and the IDCE to this project as well as its expertise in developing entrepreneurial skills. In 1996/97, it completed a 4-year Level II Canadian College Partnership Programme (CCPP) Project entitled “Services and Communities: Creating

Opportunities for People with Disabilities Through Equality,” which was developed in conjunction with the IDCE.

This initiative directly addresses the Government’s mandate to raise the levels of literacy and numeracy in the population, and the National Functional Literacy Committee’s core objective of equipping teachers with the necessary skills for training a literate and numerate population. The projected outcome of this initiative is that, through the development their basic literacy, numeracy, and business skills, Guyanese youths will have greater access to educational opportunities which will ultimately equip them to fill some of the lower-level vacancies created by an exodus of trained personnel. It will also specifically help with private sector development through increased employability, self-employment, and heightened job performance. It addresses the need for gender equity through targeting both male and female trainers and male and female youths. Literacy materials will reflect and include environmental issues, thereby directly promoting greater environmental consciousness.

Finally, and most importantly, it should contribute to the sustainability of educational growth amongst Guyanese youths during the four years of the programme. By that time, it is anticipated that the goal of independent management of the programme will be realized through support from the university, government, local business, and community groups. The challenge will indeed be tremendous.

There are particular sectors which have a critical shortage of trained personnel, most notably the Industry (includes mining, bauxite, gold, diamonds, manufacturing, engineering, construction, and power) and Services sectors. Moreover, the country’s largest sector--Agriculture (sugar, forestry, fishing, and rice) is producing far less than capacity, also owing to shortages of trained labour, particularly managerial and technical expertise.

This essential skills training, which last for two years, will impact greatly upon helping to achieve the goal of developing the highly skilled personnel necessary for competing at the international level. Evaluation will be ongoing and relevant changes will be made, where necessary. Results at the institutional level, the sectoral level, and at the level of the clients themselves will also be addressed. Programme activities will also involve:

- baseline surveys, which will focus on the youths entering the programme;
- the training of 100 teachers to use puppetry, music, and art to promote the literacy programmes;
- the production of manuals for facilitators and students.

Conclusion

Some of the major problems which were addressed were: (a) the difficulty in attracting significant numbers of males, (b) shortage of funds to effect some aspects of the programmes, (c) the stigma attached to illiteracy, and (d) the depleting reservoir of skilled personnel. On the other hand, some of the successes experienced were: (a) being able to attract a large number of females, (b) the use of forms of assessment which encouraged student participation, and (c) forging new, and strengthening existing, networking links among other providers of literacy and non-formal education.

However, there is need for a national comprehensive policy on literacy and non-formal education. This should be one of the components of the nation’s development strategy. Additionally, provision should be made for the conduct of ongoing research in the non-formal sector of the education system. Appropriate data collection and retrieval systems should be implemented to support these efforts. The results of these analyses should inform policy formulation and practices.

Finally, the strategies used in the conduct of the programmes analyzed in the study, coupled with those used by other stakeholders, should result in a reduction in the need to run literacy programmes outside of the formal school system. Investment in adult education must be given top priority so that true development, with a human face, over the next decade can become a reality.

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APPENDIX

Section 1: Reading Text/Use of Documents - Community Leaders

We'd like to better understand the level of reading that is required by the people in your community.

We categorize reading skills into 5 levels, with level 1 being the lowest and level 5 being the highest. Examples of the first 3 levels are as follows:

Level 1: Shoppers read items in catalogues or flyers or on labels.

Level 2: Homemakers read safety precautions relating to fire hazards in the kitchen.

Level 3: Shoppers compare and analyze prices and product information in several flyers, and make a decision as to the most economical place to shop.

In thinking about the youths in your community, aged 14 to 25, in general, at what level are their reading skills?

The lowest level:	Level 1	-----
	Level 2	-----
	Level 3	-----
Highest level:	Level 4/5	-----

Could you please tell us more specifically the kinds of information or documents that you think it is important for the youth in your community to read and understand?

Sections 2-4 focused on writing numeracy, and oral communication. A similar questionnaire was used to interview the employees.

LIST OF COUNTRIES

Anguilla	Guyana
Antigua-Barbuda	Haiti
Aruba	Jamaica
The Bahamas	Montserrat
Barbados	The Netherlands Antilles
Belize	St. Kitts-Nevis
Bermuda	St. Lucia
The British Virgin Islands	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
The Cayman Islands	Suriname
Dominica	Trinidad and Tobago
Grenada	Turks and Caicos Islands