



“Already some States are facing imminent extinction...As a low lying State, Guyana is mindful of the dangers posed by climate change.”

Donald Ramotar, President of Guyana¹



Guyana is a poor, low-lying state on the South American coast predominantly covered by tropical rain forest. Climate change is likely to cause seasonal weather patterns to alter.² Rising sea levels have necessitated increased expenditure to address the consequences of flooding and the overtopping of river and sea defenses.³

With higher temperatures and more rainfall, Guyana is also seeing a spread of malaria beyond previous levels. This threatens to push the disease back into densely populated coastal regions as water levels rise and introduce new breeding grounds for mosquitoes.⁴

Summary

Country: Guyana

Region: South America

ASP Assessment:

Vulnerability: High

Perception of Climate Change: Security Threat

Capacity: Low
Preparedness: Medium

Overall Assessment: Good

The Climate Threats

Regional Disaster Vulnerability

- Sea level rise threatens coastal communities
- Deforestation and changing precipitation could lead to fires and drought.
- Urban areas are unprepared for threats of climate change⁵

The Need to Adapt

- Urban flooding and sea level rise are the greatest threats.
- As a poor country, Guyana needs continued support from the donor community⁸

Links Between Climate and Conflict

- Indigenous and rural livelihoods threatened by changes in agriculture.⁶
- Increased tensions over resource development⁷

Direct Threats to Homeland Security

- Relocation of individuals and villages has placed additional stress on infrastructure
- Dwindling water supply and effect on local population⁹



How is the Country Preparing for Climate Threats

Preparing for Disaster Response

“Climate change is an increasingly visible reality in our country. More recently, we have witnessed the devastation on production and lives associated with adverse weather patterns and flooding. It is estimated by the United Nations that 60% of our GDP was lost in the 2005 floods.”

- President Bharrat Jagdeo’s Independence Day Speech 10

Adapting Installations

“gravely concerned that... under severe threat from the devastating effects of climate change and sea level rise, which have led to increasingly frequent and intense extreme weather events, damage to bio-diversity, coral bleaching, coastal erosion and changing precipitation patterns.”

- CARICOM Heads, at their 30th Conference in Liliendaal, Guyana, from July 2 to 9, 2009 12

Breaking the Link between Climate and Conflict

““If solving these problems requires great will, then other transnational problems such as the climate crisis require urgent, immediate and decisive action...As a low lying State, Guyana is mindful of the dangers posed by Climate Change.”

- Presidential Advisor on Climate Change, Mr. Shyam Nokta 11

Planning for Homeland Security Threats

“The scientific evidence is showing that for our region, which is one of the most vulnerable, these weather events will become more frequent as the impacts of global climate change intensify.”

- President Donald Ramotar 13

Analysis

Guyana is a small poor country that faces climate threats from both its position as a coastal state in the Caribbean and as a state with a large portion of tropical rain forest. Both of these features present vulnerabilities. When combined with a weak state that lacks strong institutions beyond the capital city of Georgetown, it is difficult to prepare for climate change. However, senior military leaders and senior government officials, including the president, are aware of the threat to their security. Therefore, Guyana ranks as “highly vulnerable, but aware of climate threats.”

The American Security Project’s Global Security Defense Index on Climate Change is an examination of how international governments and militaries plan for and anticipate the strategic threats of climate change.

For more information and references see:

globalsecuritydefenseindex.org