



## Report for Activities in Observance of International Biodiversity Day 2008

- GUYANA

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as National Focal Point to the Convention on Biological Diversity, coordinated several activities in observance of International Biodiversity Day.

The focus of this year was stakeholder involvement and collaboration with Government, Non-Government and Private Sector Agencies. It was a useful approach that resulted in the success of all planned activities, since these Agencies shared their financial and technical resources. The largest contributor to Guyana's GDP is the agriculture which provided the opportunity to involve a wide section of Guyanese, including schools, and the general public.

The activities organized to commemorate International Biodiversity Day were: (1) Two Primary School Talks and One Secondary School Talk; (2) Agricultural Biodiversity Exhibition; (3) Presentation to the Cyril Potter College of Education (Teacher Training Centre) (CPCE) students; (4) Tour of the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) Plant Nursery – Soesdyke for Secondary School students; (5) Essay Competition for the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA) students; (6) Appearance on the Guyana Today Television Morning Show; (7) A televised Panel Discussion on Agricultural Biodiversity; and (8) Preparation of a Brochure and Press Release.

### Primary and Secondary School Talks

Two primary school talks were held on May 19 & 20, 2008 which targeted fifteen Grades Two and Three students from five schools (Grahams Hall Primary, Cummings Lodge Primary, F.E. Burnham Primary, Rama Krishna Primary, and J.E. Burnham Primary). Mr. Oumardatt Ramcharran, Ms. Juliana Persaud and Ms. Candacie Brower, Environmental Officers of the EPA, presented the concept of agricultural biodiversity by modifying and utilizing the games and activities from the Convention's website.

Eight Secondary Schools were present at the Secondary School talk (Queen's College, Plaisance Secondary, Cummings Lodge Secondary, Tutorial High, Marian Academy, North Georgetown Secondary, St. Joseph Secondary, and Richard Ishmael Secondary). Mr. Arnold De Mendonca (Head of Department of Faculty of Agriculture, University of Guyana) and Environmental Officers of the EPA conducted presentations and games with the students on "Biodiversity and Agriculture".



Ms. Persaud of EPA explains theme to primary school students.

### **Presentation at the Cyril Potter College of Education (Teacher Training Centre)**

The EPA organized a presentation at the Cyril Potter College of Education, since it is recognized that educating children about various environmental issues could only be effective if the teachers are first equipped with the knowledge. Mr. Philip DaSilva, former Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, University of Guyana, delivered a presentation on May 16, 2008 to the students at the Teacher Training Center.



Mr. DaSilva of the University of Guyana gives a lecture to students of the Cyril Potter College of Education.

### **Essay Competition for Guyana School of Agriculture**



The EPA, in collaboration with the University of Guyana, organized an essay competition for the students of the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA) based on the topic, “Biodiversity and Agriculture”. Prior to the launch of the competition, a presentation was delivered to the students by Dr. Patrick Chesney, Project Manager of the Guiana Shield Initiative.

The University of Guyana donated monetary book vouchers for the three best essays. The prizes for the winning essays will be given to the students at a special award ceremony in June, 2008.

### **Agricultural Biodiversity Exhibition**



In order to improve the awareness of Guyanese about what Biodiversity is, and to educate the public about other dimensions of biodiversity apart from the rainforests, an agricultural exhibition was organized. This was a collaborative effort between the EPA, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Crops and Livestock, the Inter-American Institute for Co-operation on Agriculture (IICA), and the Guyana Marketing Corporation (GMC). This was held on May 22, 2008 on the lawns of the Ministry of Agriculture and the public was invited to view the exhibits.



Ms. McClure of the EPA explains what Agricultural Biodiversity entails.



School children observing exhibits of the Guyana Marketing Corporation.



Members of the public enquiring about the exhibits of the IICA.

Mrs. Gargi Roy, Senior Environmental Officer of the EPA, and Mr. Brian Greenidge (in the absence of the Minister of Agriculture) gave closing remarks on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture.

### **Appearance on the Guyana Today Morning Television Show and televised Panel Discussion**

Ms. Alana Lancaster – Director of the Environmental Management Division, Mrs. Gargi Roy - Senior Environmental Officer, and Ms. Clydecia McClure - Environmental Officer II, of the Natural Resources Management Division of the EPA, appeared on the television show. This was aimed at informing the public about Biodiversity and its relationship with agriculture, the Convention, the activities for International Biodiversity Day 2008, EPA’s role in relation to management of agricultural entities, and the importance of public involvement in environmental issues.

Dr. Patrick Chesney, Project Manager of the UNDP - Guiana Shield Initiative Project, and Mr. Arnold De Mendonca, Head of Department of Agriculture, University of Guyana, were involved in a televised panel discussion on the theme for this year’s commemoration of International Biodiversity Day.

### **Tour of the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) Plant Nursery**

Two students from fifteen Secondary schools were selected to participate on a tour of the NARI Plant Nursery in Soesdyke. This was aimed at practically demonstrating the concept of Agricultural Biodiversity to the students.



Student involved in an activity on the bus while on the way to the NARI Site



School children while on tour of the NARI Plant Nursery - Soesdyke

### **Preparation of a Brochure and Press Release**

A special brochure and press release were prepared for distribution on International Biodiversity Day. This was done since it was recognized that many individuals would not be able to attend the activities, but require information about Agriculture and Biodiversity and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

### **Conclusion**

All activities were successful, targeting a much broader section of the Guyanese society than in previous years. The collaborative effort of several Governmental, Non-Governmental and Private Sector Organizations contributed to his success.