

**Remarks by Ambassador D. Brent Hardt
USAID Skills and Knowledge
for Youth Employment (SKYE) Project
Labor Market Assessment Stakeholder Validation Seminar
Regency Suites, Georgetown,
September 13, 2012**

Good morning,
Minister of Labor, Dr. Nanda Gopaul,
other government of Guyana invitees,
members of the private sector,
members of the academic community,
special invitees

It is a pleasure once again to join with you --- our partners and beneficiaries --- to advance our partnership under the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative to enhance the safety and security of the citizens of the Caribbean region. The USAID/Guyana Skills and Knowledge for Youth Employment (SKYE) Project, a core component of the CBSI, seeks to reduce the vulnerability of Guyanese youth to crime and violence and create new opportunities for employment and positive contributions to Guyana. SKYE, through the dedicated work of over 20 mentors, is hard at work strengthening an environment to facilitate youth development, support the reintegration of high-risk populations, and importantly, enable youth to find employment or start their own businesses, and encourage greater engagement among young people as Guyanese citizens.

Today we have come together to review and validate USAID's initial assessment of labor market conditions in Guyana. This assessment, which supplements previous assessments of the Guyana Government and the private sector, is a crucial tool for the SKYE project, as we seek to identify the most promising avenues for employment for the young people of Guyana. SKYE coaches will use the information generated through this assessment to guide youth to appropriate employment opportunities in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy. Also, given that we intend to share the labor market assessment widely, we hope that it will be equally useful to other organizations and institutions -- including those gathered here -- that provide support to young people in Guyana.

This assessment is focused on regions 4, 6, 9 and 10, where the project is active and engaged. It will be a particularly useful tool as we ensure that the preparation of youth for entry into the labor market is responsive to existing demands. Understanding the labor market, its opportunities and requirements, is indispensable for understanding how workers can best refine their skills to meet market driven realities. To this end, the assessment has also identified the projected demand for labor within the next three years and targeted those sectors where new enterprise development may be most viable. All of this information will, we hope, be useful to guide planning activities to prepare youth for gainful employment.

Today, as you review the findings, we look forward to hearing your thoughts and observations on the strengths and weaknesses of the assessment, and, especially, your

suggestions on how any shortcomings or gaps may be addressed to ensure that we are working with a reliable tool that supports the achievement of our development assistance goal of preparing young people for lives of productive employment.

I would like to convey my thanks, and that of our outstanding USAID team, to all our partners in the government and private sector who have readily partnered with us to support the improvement of the lives of the young people of Guyana. We appreciate your time and your engagement today and your ongoing commitment to work with us to advance the SKYE project. Working together we will be much more effective than working independently. Thank you again. I look forward to our future collaboration.