



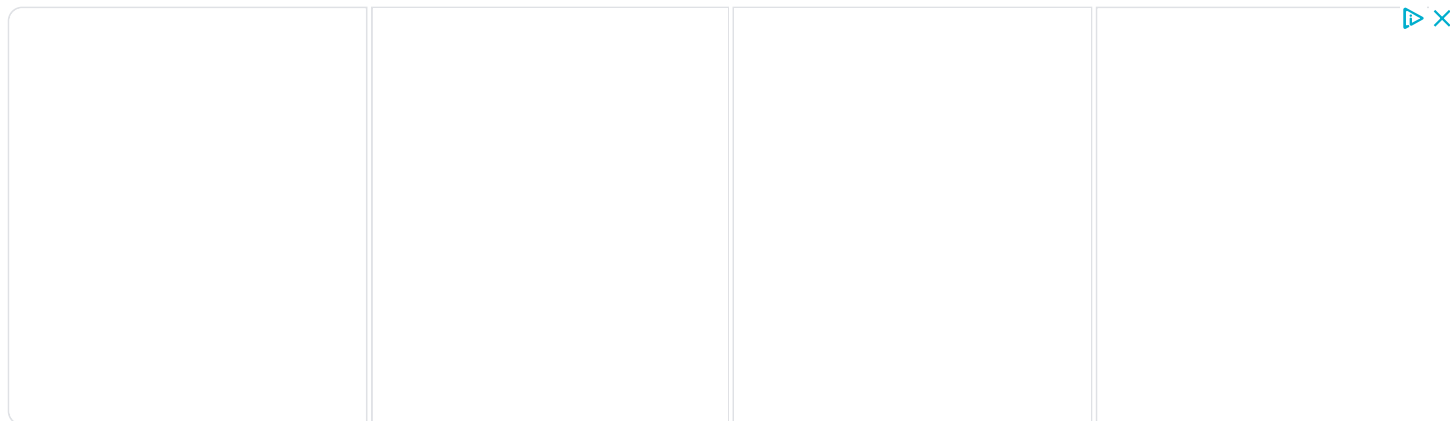
GUYANA NEWS

Guyana abandons US democracy project -Luncheon cites 'zero contribution'

By [Stabroek News](#) December 15, 2013



Four months after its launching here, government has pulled out of a USAID-funded \$300 million project aimed at boosting citizens' engagement with local parliamentarians and improving overall governance.



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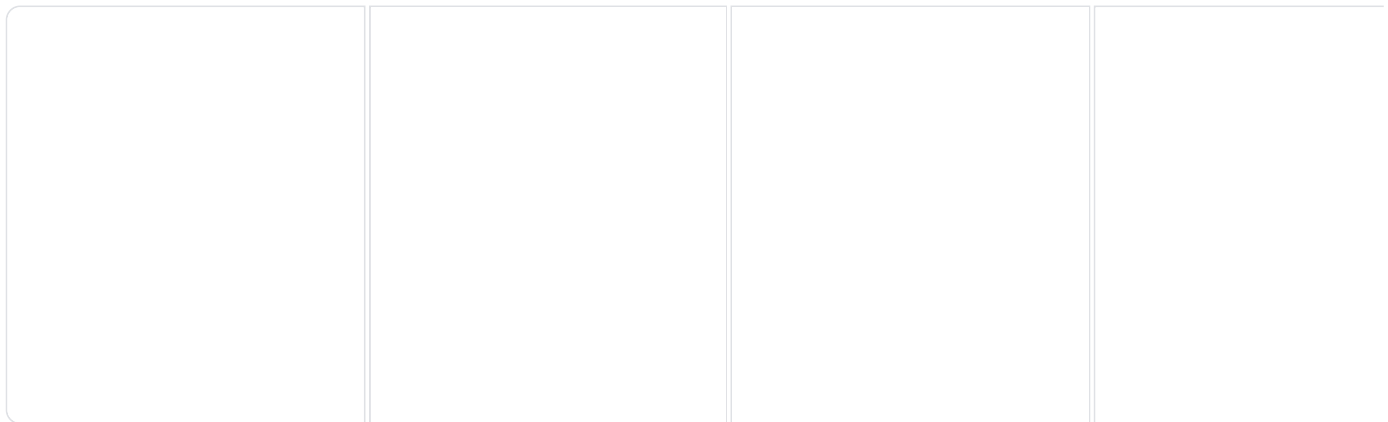
But while government has rejected the Leadership and Democracy (LEAD) project, the US Embassy still hopes that it will be implemented.



ensure the success of the programme in achieving these important goals,"

Chief of Party for the USAID Leadership and Democracy (LEAD) project Glenn Bradbury (right) with Members of Parliament and US Ambassador to Guyana Brent Hardt (left) at the launching of the project in July. (SN file photo)

US Ambassador Brent Hardt told Stabroek News in a statement.



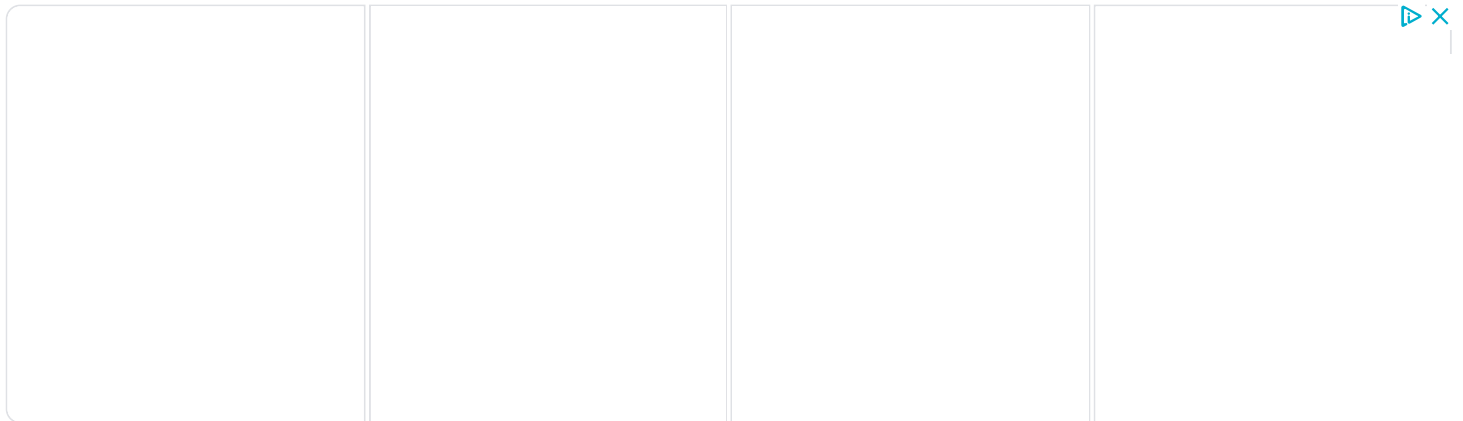
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The International Republican Institute (IRI) programme was launched in July of this year and Hardt had said that it was expected to bolster the functioning of the National Assembly through encouraging consensus building; and working with civil society and the public to boost citizens' engagement with the National Assembly and all parties to support the legislature's role as an effective deliberative body.



recreated a unity government and opposition conference legislature, his country realized that it would pose many challenges, if not handled with compromise and national interest as its focus. Consequently, the State Department and USAID were asked to support a specifically tailored, democracy and governance programme to enhance the National Assembly's functioning and encourage consensus building.

In the months leading up to the launch, meetings were held with stakeholders across the political spectrum as they planned for the successful implementation of project programmes.



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One such meeting took place between a US Embassy delegation and main opposition APNU in May, where there was an extensive discussion of critical governance issues, including strengthening of the National Assembly to ensure that it is equipped to effectively ensure that the Executive is accountable to the People through their representatives in the National Assembly; the need to guarantee the independence and autonomy of Constitutional Offices and institutions; the implications of the proliferation of "acting" appointments; and the need for "civic" education for encouraging young people to become actively involved in the political system; the challenge of independent "funding" for the Local Government system.



could make a valuable contribution to enhancing the creation of a truly democratic culture in Guyana.”

However, on November 26, Head of the Presidential Secretariat Dr Roger Luncheon announced that his government had rejected the project. Asked why the project was pulled, Luncheon would not go into details but stressed that the actions of USAID were not in keeping with conventions of past projects. “This one in 2012 departed from that convention... we were presented with an agreement to sign over which we had zero contribution... Why the abandonment? Nobody can explain but so grievous has been the consequence of this abandonment, Cabinet had no option but to pull the plug,” he said.

Luncheon explained that he did not want to release details of the project until approval was granted by the US Ambassador.

On Friday, the Ambassador said he had no objections to details of the project being released. “The United States Embassy has no objection to the release of information regarding the USAID Leadership and Democracy (LEAD) project,” he said.



project he stated that it was developed to support the interests of the Guyanese people in effective and responsive democratic institutions by strengthening the National Assembly, encouraging political consensus building, boosting citizen engagement with the National Assembly, expanding civic participation among women and young people, and supporting civic education in preparation for local government elections.”

While Hardt met Luncheon on Thursday, it is unclear whether they had discussions on the project and what its fate is now.

The exiting of the government from the project will further chill frosty relations with the US and call into question the government’s interest in having the grass roots educated about local government.

Government’s backtracking on a security programme with the UK resulted in London pulling the plug on what was widely seen as important reforms.





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