

COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

SECOND ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION



PERIOD

JUNE 2011 TO MAY 2012

PRESENTED TO

THE SPEAKER

OF

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

JUNE, 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DECLARATION	
BACKGROUND	
MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION	
ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON & DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON	
MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION	
MAIN OBJECTIVE	
FUNCTIONS	
CALENDAR OF EVENTS	
FUTURE PLANS	
RECOMMENDATIONS	
APPENDIX 1	
• Resolution No. 86	
APPENDIX 2	
• Work Plan of Activities	
APPENDIX 3	
1. USAID – Strategic Planning & Message Articulation Training (Module 4)	
2. Launch of the Magazine on 52 Outstanding women of African Descent who have contributed to Guyana in the areas of Agriculture, Arts and Culture, Communication, Education, Health, Business, Politics, Religion and Spirituality, Judiciary, among others	
3. Capacity building for Commissioners with Mr. Daam Barker, University of Guyana	
4. Panel Discussion on International Day for Violence Against Women	
5. Commission’s Courtesy Call on H.E. Donald Romatar	

6. Commission's Participation in Stakeholders Forum with Government
7. Panel Discussion for International Women Day
8. Exhibition for International History Month
9. Meeting with Female Parliamentarian
10. Commission's Outreach Programme in Region # 3
11. Commission's Outreach Programme in Region #10

APPENDIX4

- List of attendance of Statutory Meetings

1. DECLARATION

This is the First Periodic Report to the National Assembly on the status of the work of the Women and Gender Equality Commission, pursuant to the requirements of Resolution No. 86 which was passed in the National Assembly on Thursday, 21st May, 2009.

2. BACKGROUND

The Women and Gender Equality Commission

The Women and Gender Equality Commission is one of the Four Commissions for the Promotion and Enhancement of Fundamental Rights and the Rule of Law that was established under section 212G of the Constitution. Members were appointed under Resolution No. 86 which was passed in the National Assembly on Thursday, 21st May, 2009.

The Women and Gender Equality Commission shall promote national recognition and acceptance that women's rights are human rights, respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality.

The Women and Gender Equality Commission shall consist of persons from each of the categories referred to in subparagraph (a), (b) and (c), appointed by the President as follows –

not less than five nor more than fifteen members, with expertise in women and gender equality issues, nominated by entities, by a consensual mechanism determined by the National Assembly, after the entities which shall include the Women's Advisory Committee of the Trade Union Congress, are determined by the votes of not less than two-thirds of all the elected Members of the National Assembly;

the Administrator of the Women's Affairs Bureau, by whatever name that office is designated; and

a member who shall be a nominee, without the right to vote from the Human Rights Commission, Ethnic Relations Commission, Indigenous Peoples' Commission, and Rights of the Child Commission.

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION

(15) Commissioners were sworn in on 27th August, 2009 by H.E. President Bharrat Jagdeo

Women

Ms. Vanda Radzik

Ms. Shalimar Ali-Hack

Ms. Magda Pollard

Professionals

Ms. Debra Ann Henry

Ms. Bebbi Haliema Khan

Regional Women's Affairs' Committee

Ms. Nandrine Coonjah

Ms. Ernestine Barker Logan

TUC- Women Advisory Council

Ms. Karen VanSluytman-Corbin

Private Sector

Ms. Renata Chuck-A-Sang

Labour Movement

Ms. Gaitri Baron

Ms. Gillian Burton

Culture/ Ethnic

Ms. Nicole Cole

Mr. Peter Persaud

Women's Progressive Organisation

Ms. Indranie Chandarpal

National Congress on Women

Ms. Cheryl Sampson

Women's Affairs Bureau

Ms. Hymawattie Lagan

Representatives from other Commissions

Bishop Juan Edghill – Ethnic Relations Committee

Ms. Sandra Hooper – Rights of the Child Commission

W & G E C Representatives on other Commissions

Mr. Peter Persaud – Ethnic Relations Committee

Ms. Nicole Cole – Rights of the Child Committee

4 ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON AND DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON

At the elections held on 21st April, 2010, Ms. Indranie Chandarpal and Ms. Cheryl Sampson were elected Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, respectively.

5 MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission agreed to convene statutory meetings on the last Wednesday of every month. During the period of reporting, the Commission convened fourteen (11) statutory meetings. The numbers and dates of the meetings are as follows.

No.	Date
14 th	29 th June 2011
15 th	27 th July 2011

16 th	31 st August 2011
17 th	28 th September 2011
18 th	1 st November 2011
19 th	21 st December 2011
20 th	25 th January 2012
21 st	29 th February 2012
22 nd	27 th March 2012
23 rd	25 th April 2012
24 th	30 th May 2012

6 **MAIN OBJECTIVE**

The Women and Gender Equality Commission hereafter referred to as (W&GEC), shall promote national recognition and acceptance that women's rights are human rights, respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality.

7. **FUNCTIONS**

In addition to the MAIN OBJECTIVE, the functions of the Women and Gender Equality Commission are to –

- (a) promote the issues related to the enhancement of the status of women, girls and gender issues;
- (b) promote the integration of women's needs and interests and mainstreaming of gender issues;
- (c) promote the empowerment of women;
- (d) promote women's rights as human rights;
- (e) raise the awareness of the contributions of women and problems faced by women including the recognition and value of unwaged work;
- (f) promote women's needs, interests, and concerns in the wider spectrum of economic and social development and address both the practical and strategic needs of women as being different from those of men;

- (g) educate and monitor employees and the public on desirable employment practices in relation to women and men;
- (h) monitor compliance and make recommendations for the compliance with international instruments to which the Government accedes from time to time, including those already acceded to and which relate to the purpose of the Commission;
- (i) evaluate any system of personal and family law, customs and practices or any law likely to affect gender equality or the status of women and make recommendations to the National Assembly with regard thereto;
- (j) recommend and promote the implementation of legislation and the formulation of policies and measures to enhance and protect the status of women;
- (k) promote, initiate or cause to be carried out research and the creation of databases on women and gender related issues including health, especially reproductive health, violence against women and the family, and their socio-economic and political status, as the Commission may deem relevant or as may be referred to it by the National Assembly;
- (l) promote consultation and cooperation with women's organisations in relation to decision making that affects the lives of women;
- (m) recommend training and technical assistance to support initiatives by and for women and girls; and promote the participation of women in national decision-making

8. CALENDAR OF EVENTS

29th June, 2011

14th Statutory Meeting

21st- 23rd – July 2011

Strategic Planning and Message Articulation (Module #4) with USAID – attended by Commissioners and other women Leaders.

27th July, 2011

15th Statutory Meeting

27th August, 2011

Honouring Ceremony and Launch of Magazine “Weaving a Tapestry of Colors”.

31st August, 2011

16th Statutory Meeting

28th September, 2011

17th Statutory Meeting and Capacity Building with Mr Daam Barker of the University of Guyana.

1st November, 2011

18th Statutory Meeting

17th November, 2011

A Panel Discussion on International Day for Violence Against Women in collaboration with USAID.

21st December, 2011

19th Statutory Meeting

25th January, 2012

20th Statutory Meeting

29th February, 2012

21st Statutory Meeting and Courtesy call on H.E. The President Donald Ramotar

1st March 2012

Commission participation in the Government Stakeholders Forum at the Office of the President.

5th March 2012

A Panel Discussion in observance of International Women Day 2012 under the theme “Access to Justice for Women”.

12th March 2012

Launch of exhibition in the lower left lobby of Parliament Building in observance of International History Month 2012 and Commissioners met and had discussions with the Speaker and Clerk of the National Assembly.

15th March, 2012

Commissioners and staff met with female members of Parliament in observance of International Women Day.

27th March 2012

22nd Statutory Meeting

17th April 2012

A Regional Outreach was held in Region #3 at Parika and Vreed-en-Hoop under the theme “Access to Justice for Women”.

25th April 2012
23rd Statutory Meeting

16th May 2012
Regional Outreach – Region #10

30th May, 2012
24th Statutory Meeting

27th June 2012
25th Statutory Meeting

10. RECOMMENDATIONS for 2011

The Commissioners of the Women and Gender Equality Commission recommend the following to the National Assembly for consideration:

1. The need to expand the modality of the National Insurance Scheme's (NIS) Benefits for
 - a. Maternity
 - b. Dentures
 - c. Spectacles
2. Improved facilities/services for Women who use speed boats as a mode of transportation.
3. CARICOM Model Legislation on Sexual Harassment in the Work Place.
4. The establishing of a few pilots of the Community Counselling Centres to combat the high incidences of family or domestic violence.
5. More support to the Women's Leadership Institute
6. Ensure persons who are working in private entities are paid incomes in keeping with their contractual agreement.
7. Women & Gender Equality Commission to be a part of government's delegation to meetings of CEDAW

APPENDIX 1

Resolution # 86 (Photocopy)

APENDIX 2

Work Plan of Activities for 2012

DATES	ACTIVITIES
25-Jan-12	Women & Gender Equality Commission Statutory meeting
DATES	ACTIVITIES
29-Feb -12	Statutory Meeting for Commissioners
	Meeting with President Donald Ramoutar at 12.00 p.m.
	Meeting with Ministry of Health at 2.00 p.m.
7th Feb	Sub-Committee to discuss IWD and History Month
22nd Feb	Sub-Committee to discuss IWD and History Month
	Preparatory Activities
	Brochure
	Newsletter
	IWD Cards
	Preparation of Exhibition
	Administrative Issue
	Budget and Finances
	Web Page
	Field and Office materials
	Travel and stipends for Commissioners
	Preparation of reports & ID cards
	Research relevant information
DATES	ACTIVITIES
March	Women's History Month focus on women leaders
01/03/2012	Exhibition on the Corridors of Parliament
05-Mar-12	Panel Discussion for International Women's Day on Access to Justice for Women
28th Mar-12	Statutory Meeting
15-Mar-12	Meeting with Speaker of National Assembly & Female Parliamentarians
	(Women's History Month)
DATES	ACTIVITIES
11-Apr-12	Region 3 - Public Awareness
22-Apr-12	Earth Day - Planting of Trees – at the National Aquatic Centre
25-Apr-12	Statutory Meeting
9- May, 12	Public Awareness in Region 10

DATES	ACTIVITIES
30- May - 12	Meeting with the Opposition Leader Statutory Meeting and Capacity with Barbara Thomas – Head of Social Work Unit – University of Guyana, The plight of the Female Security Guard
DATES	ACTIVITIES
27th Jun- 12	Statutory Meeting
	Regional Meeting in Region 4 & 2
30th Jun- 12	Presentation of W&GEC's Annual Report to Parliament
DATES	ACTIVITIES
20-Jul	Conference - Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value
	Exploring the Economic Status of Women
	Regional Meeting in Region 5 & 6
25-Jul-12	Statutory Meeting
29th Aug- 12	Statutory Meeting
DATES	ACTIVITIES
	Regional Public Awareness session in Region 1 & 2
26th Sept -12	Statutory Meeting
DATES	ACTIVITIES
17th October	Public Awareness session in Regions 1 & 7
31st Oct- 12	Evaluation of NIS system & Taxes
	Statutory Meeting
DATES	ACTIVITIES
	Public Awareness session in Region 8 & 9
Nov	International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
	Film Festival (a week)
28th Nov- 12	Statutory Meeting
DATES	ACTIVITIES
15-Dec	Women in Development - Fair and Tea Party
19th Dec 12	Statutory Meeting



On the 27th August, 2011 in Tribute to the International Year of Peoples of African Descent, the Women and Gender Equality Commission honoured fifty two of African Heritage in Guyana today for contributions to Community and Country in the areas of Agriculture, Arts and Culture, Business, Community Activists/ Women's Rights Advocate, Education, Engineering, Geology, Health, Human Resources Management , International Relations, Politics, Religion, Science and Technology , Sports and Trade Union.

The W&GEC is grateful for Sheik Hassan Printers for printing the magazine, Black Jewel Enterprise for the awards, Margaret Lawrence for being the Mistress of Ceremonies for the program and for financial and other support from Ms. Merlene Ellis, Ms. Elizabeth Deane-Hughes, Mr. Clinton Urling, DD Signs and Connections Travel Agency, John Lewis Styles, Museum of African Heritage, Ministry of Youth Sports & Culture, Ansa McAl, Carnegie School of Home Economics and Pamela Fox of Sewing World.



The Four remaining honourees namely Mrs. Marva Williams, Mrs. Maureen Mc Gowan, Ms. Emily Dodson and Ms. Nicole Johnson were honoured and lunched with the Commissioners at the 17th Statutory Meeting of the Women and Gender Equality Commission held on 31st August, 2011

The “Weaving a Tapestry of Colours” Magazine was sent to many organisations and individuals

Office of the President:
H.E. Dr Bharrat Jagdeo
Dr. Roger Luncheon
Organisations:
Adult Education Association
British High Commission
Caricom Secretariat
Carnegie School of Home Economics
Guyana Agricultural Workers Union
Guyana Institute of Historical Research

Guyana Women Leadership Institute
Help and Shelter
Institute of Distant and Continuing Education
Ministry of Labour, Human Services & Social Security
National Library
NCERD
Red Thread Women's Development Project
United Nations Women
UNFPA
University of Guyana Library
USAID
Women Across Differences
Rights of the Child Commission
Indigenous Peoples Commission
Rights Commission of Guyana
Ethnic Relations Commission
Individuals:
Dr Gwendoline Williams
Dr Linden Dodson
Justice Roxanne George-Wiltshire
Mrs Evelyn Hamilton
Mr. Dann Barker
Ms. Hazel Woolford
Mrs Elizabeth Deane Hughes

APPENDIX 3



At the 17th Statutory Meeting of the Women and Gender Equality Commission held on 31st August, Mr. Daam Barker, Guidance Counsellor from the University of Guyana made a presentation on the advantages and disadvantages of having community counselling centres. He emphasised the advantages and disadvantages of implementing Community Counselling Centres must be taken into account. He outlined some advantages of implementing Community Counselling Centres .

1. Provide information safety and recovery
2. Empathy and emotional support
3. To stress community and interagency collaboration
4. Offer services to individuals whether or not they press charges
5. Employing people resident in these Communities to execute the work
6. Commitment by the Government to follow through on their own promises (sexual Offences Act)
7. Support services that are necessary for women and children
8. Local vantage point of being in the loop
9. Providing Shelters,
10. Providing Programmes for men,
11. Crisis intervention;
12. Safety planning
13. The ability to do Prevention and Education to help address the scourge of domestic violence;

14. The necessity for the coordination of services (Interagency collaboration);

He then outlined the disadvantages of implementing Community Counselling Centres as:

1. Cost is a major factor
2. Accessing services of Trained Professionals (police and medical personnel etc)
3. Security is an imperative in effectively addressing, Domestic Violence-restraining orders, Arrest of perpetrators; 'code of silence' must be broken as a 'preventative measure'
4. Staff 'burn-out' is crucial and should be addressed in order to have sustained services.

Commissioner Lagan suggested that the Community Counselling Centres should be a Holistic approach to arresting the scourge of domestic violence, she added that "Stamp It Out" led to the Legislation on Sexual Offences Act however she emphasized that we now have to lobby for implementation.

Commissioner Pollard agreed that that there is a problem as it related to implementation; she also noted that there are difficulties with 'practical interpretation of the way forward'.

Commissioner Khan suggested that there is need for a Cultural Change in Guyana to help arrest the scourge of Domestic Violence. She said that in order to arrest the problem we need to 'change persons thinking'. She added that there are buildings that are called Community Centres yet no one looks after the emotional and psychological aspects of the person's health. She further stated that the police presence in most of the communities are scarce and in some cases the police may be accomplices to rape and even be perpetrators of crimes. She lamented that there were several instances of rape that were not reported. She elaborated that that there is need for a coordinated approach with the various stakeholders such as the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Human Services and Social Security and the Toshoas Counsel to seriously address this issue of domestic violence in the hinterland areas.

Commissioner Chuck-a-Sang agreed that there is need for a coordinated approach and said that the University of Guyana Social Work Department needed to be more involved in promoting Guidance Counsellors.

Commissioner Henry emphasized that there should be services available to the victims seeking help. She mentioned the Child Friendly Health Centers which she

opined are very successful and offer an array of services, where confidentiality is not breached. She added however that when there are arrangements where families live at the health centers this can breach confidentiality especially in smaller hinterland communities.

Commissioner Pollard asked how can the University of Guyana and other institutions be supported to train and widen the scope in Social Welfare to address incidences of Domestic Violence?

Mr. Daam Barker said that the bottom line is cash, as money is critical to the clinical component which is missing in the social work curricula. Mr. Daam Barker added that unless there is a link between the incentive and the purpose of investing in the programme then the programme “won’t fly”. He further stated that hospitals, health centres and police needed to collaborate on the one issue-integrated dependency. He added that the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Human Services should work together to address Domestic Violence. He emphasized that there is a need for advocacy and confidentiality in Counselling.

**Report on Forum recognizing the
International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
Women and Gender Equality Commission/USAID-GEP
November 17th, 2011**





Background/Introduction:

The Women & Gender Equality Commission (W&GEC) has as its mandate to promote national recognition and acceptance that women's rights are human rights, respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality.

In support of this mandate the W&GEC collaborated with USAID/GEP to put together a forum recognizing the **International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women** held on November 17th. The purpose of this event was to recognize and raise awareness about the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, tackle the issue of violence against women in Guyana through presentations and discussion groups, produce a working document to be adopted by the forum participants to be presented to the W&GEC, continue to raise awareness of the W&GEC, provide an opportunity for W&GEC representatives to engage with civil society, and foster a better working relationship between organizations addressing women and gender issues in Guyana.

A total of one hundred and two (102) persons attended this event which included representatives from USAID, the diplomatic corps, Government Ministries, Religious Organizations, Civil Society, etc. and served as an opportunity to target women and men in decision making positions in Guyana to engage in a conference that culminated in participants providing recommendations to the W&GEC on how they can address the issue of violence against women and confirming their commitment to the W&GEC mandate "to promote national recognition and acceptance that women's rights are human rights, respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality."

Approach

The US Ambassador in his address said that gender-based violence is an intolerable violation of human dignity, as no one can quantify the personal pain and anguish of any form of abuse. He added that medical bills and legal costs, lost wages and lower productivity, health costs, judicial action and security services also increased the risk of HIV – these are things on which we can put a price, and when we do we see how much violence cost everyone in a society. The consequences of widespread violence extend beyond the immediate injury or economic loss.

There are often severe and lasting health outcomes. The social and psychological damage of gender based violence affects survivors, their families and entire communities.

After the brief remarks by Ms. Indra Chandarpal the Chairperson of the Women and Gender Equality Commission, Mr. Brent Hardt United States Ambassador and Mr. Kevin Mc Laughlin, Deputy Chief of Party United States Agency for Development, Governance Enhancement Programme.

Former Chief Probation Officer, Ms. Sylvia Conway presented on the topic: Are women responsible for male aggressiveness? And Mr. Andrew Hicks – Head of the Department of Sociology, University of Guyana presented on the topic: Are men threatened by empowered women, each presenter presented for 30 minutes.

The participants were selected from various religious organizations and non-governmental and governmental organizations (see attached list of participants).

The moderators, Commissioners Cole and Logan initiated the discussions from the participants, asked questions and synthesized and summarized the key points.

The participants then broke into two groups with each presenter and moderator leading one group for group discussions which culminated in the presentation by each group of a set of recommendations and **Recommendations**

Recommendations for the Group who discussed the question ‘ARE MEN THREATENED WHEN WOMEN ARE EMPOWERED?’

1. Social and Welfare Programmes that will allow vulnerable groups to access basic education and socio- economic opportunities by Government and NGOs.
2. Elimination of discriminatory practices in the Labour Force to allow for equal participation of men and women.
3. Greater Communication Awareness through the media to promote or highlight positive behaviours of men.
4. Men and women should be given equal opportunity for further basic education.
5. Empowered women should use this resource to better the lives of their families, communities and society and not to be in competition with men.
6. Acknowledge men who are role models.
7. Establish support systems including training in Anger Management and mentorship programs for abused men through the Men’s Affairs Bureau and other men’s organisations.
8. Social Services should be more people friendly.

9. Collaboration with Amerindian Affairs and Indigenous People’s Commission to support Amerindian Communities for special training on gender awareness.
10. Need for more male teachers in school to mentor boys.
11. Programmes to strengthen the family as the most important social institution.
12. Improved prison education.
13. Introduction of Community Justice System.
14. Social Corporate Responsibility re employees Assistant Program
15. Improved Mental Health Programs in Education and the Social Services.
16. Church and Faith Based and Community Based Organisations should play a greater role in teaching Human Rights, Justice and Moral Education through Health and Family Life Education in Schools.

Recommendations for the Group who discussed the question ‘ARE WOMEN RESPONSIBLE FOR the MALE ‘S AGGRESSIVENESS’

1. The need for more training of relevant personnel on children’s behavioural issues.
2. Legislation and censorship of vulgar music and videos depicting violence.
3. Faith Based Organisations should have more programmes to ensure women’s equality.
4. Programmes to strengthen the family.
5. Education at all levels for the family and life skills training.
6. Establishment of Community Counselling Centres with youth and peer educators, mentors, counsellors and mediators.
7. Educational programmes in the work place to enhance gender equality.
8. Pre-marriage counselling on gender equality, shared roles and family empowerment.
9. Public awareness through the media to promote gender equality.
10. Economic empowerment of both men and women through micro-enterprises, vocational training, life-skills and gender equality.
11. Training to re-socialise men and women on gender equality.
12. Religious leaders to play a greater role in positive family empowerment.
13. Legislation on the sale of alcohol to minors.
14. Rehabilitation and counselling for victims and perpetrators of Domestic Violence.
15. Raise awareness of Domestic Violence and its impact.
16. Mentorship for families with “absentee fathers”.
17. Improved community sports programme.
18. Establish multi-purposed outreach centres in the communities.

A total of ninety eight organisations participated in the conversations.

1. Young Women’s Christian Association of Guyana
2. Church Women United – Guyana

3. Methodist Women League
4. Anglican Mother's Union
5. Lutheran Church
6. Congregational Women's Union
7. Assemblies of God
8. Full Gospel Fellowship
9. Nazarene
10. Jehovah's Witnesses
11. Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
12. Seventh Days Adventist
13. Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana
14. Guyana Islamic Trust
15. Muslim Youth Organisation
16. Muslim Youth League
17. Anna Catherina Masjid
18. Guyana Ahmadhiya Movement
19. Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sabha
20. Gandhi Youth Organisation
21. Guyana Central Arya Samaj
22. Guyana Pandits Councils
23. Guyana Maha Kali
24. Hare Krishna Temple
25. Guyana Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha
26. Guyana Arya Pratinidhi Sabha
27. Office of External Affairs of the Bahai's
28. Shia Community

29. Representatives of : Representatives of :
30. Ministry of Labour, Human Services & Social Security
31. Ministry of Health
32. Ministry of Education
33. Ministry of Amerindian Affairs
34. Red Thread Women's Development Project
35. Women Across Differences
36. Police Wives Association
37. Mothers in Black
38. Help & Shelter
39. Open Doors Centre
40. Rural Women's Network
41. Women Reaching Out
42. Women's Army Corp
43. United Women for Special Children
44. National Congress of Women
45. Women Progressive Organisation
46. National Community Development Council
47. Guyana Women in Development
48. Women's Federation for World Peace
49. Guyana Federation of Women's Institute
50. Federation of AME
51. Demerara Lioness Club
52. Jaycees
53. Rotary Club of Demerara
54. Indigenous People's Commission
55. Amerindian Councils
56. Rights of the Child Commission

57. Guyana Human Rights Association
58. Guyana Association of Women Lawyers
59. Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association
60. Amerindian People's Association
61. Rice Producers Association
62. Guyana Women's Artists Association
63. Guyana Consumers Association
64. Guyana Nurses Association
65. Guyana Association of Professional Social Workers
66. International Association of Lions Club
67. Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action
68. Guyana Teachers Union (GTU)
69. UG Women's Studies Unit
70. Inner Wheel Club of Georgetown
71. African Cultural Development Association (ACDA)
72. H.E Manorma Soeknandan, Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Suriname
73. H.E. Nikolay Smirnov, Ambassador, Embassy of the Russian Federation
74. H.E. Subit Kumar Mandal, High Commissioner, Indian High Commission
75. H.E. Andrew Ayre, High Commissioner, British High Commission
76. Mr. Loius Martino, Charged Affaires, Embassy of Argentina
77. H.E. Luiz Gilberto Seixas de Andrade, Ambassador, Embassy of the Federative Republic of Brazil
78. H.E. Yu Wenzhe, Ambassador of the Peoples Republic of China
79. H. E. David Devine, High Commissioner, High Commission of Canada
80. H.E. Geert Heikens, Ambassador, Head of Delegation, Delegation of European Union
81. H.E. Dario Morandy, Ambassador, Embassy of the Bolvarian Republic of

Venezuela
82. H.E. Fernando Sandoval-Flores, Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Mexico
83. H.E. Dr. Brent Hardt, Ambassador, embassy of the United States of America
84. Ambassador Irwin La Rocque, Secretary General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)
85. Mr. Carlos Del Castillo, Officer in Charge, United National Development Program
86. Dr. Diana Beverley Barnett, PAHO/WHO Representative, Pan American Health Organisation
87. Representative, Inter-American Development Bank
88. Dr. Suleiman Braimah, Resident Representative, UNICEF
89. Mr. Georgio Valentini, Country Representative, office of the World Bank
90. Mr. Ignatius Jean, Representative (ag), Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
91. Ms. Glenyss James, Regional Director, Commonwealth youth Programme, Caribbean Center
92. Ms. Vivienne Paula Nathoo, Secretary General, UNESCO National Commission
93. Dr. Lystra Fletcher-Paul, Representative, Food and Agriculture Organisation
94. Mr. Dennis Moses, Director, Organization of American States
95. Dr. Ruben Del Prado, UNAIDS Country Coordinator, UNAIDS Secretariat
96. Mr. William Gelman, General Development Officer, USAID
97. Mr. Thomas Pierce, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of the United States of America
98. Mr. Eric Kite, Mission Director (ag) USAID

Participants at International Day of Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women



Commission's Courtesy Call on H.E. President Donald Ramotar at the Office of the President

The Women and Gender Equality Commission met with President Donald Ramotar informally at 12.30 p.m. on 29th February, 2012 at the Office of the President. The Chairperson outlined the W&GEC's Work Programme for 2012 and highlighted some of the major issues that the Women and Gender would be involved in for 2012. She pointed out that violence against women have been plaguing the society for too long and suggested that there should be interventions at the Community Level and proposed Community Counselling Centers.

Deputy Chairperson pointed out that there needed to be improvement in the security of the national borders. She opined that the borders were too "porous" and the armed forces should be strengthened to provide better security. She suggested that in light of the fact that there were so many instances of corrupt police, they should not be allowed to remain in one location for very long periods so that they become too familiar with residents, they should be "moved around" for effectiveness.

Commissioner Pollard expressed her disquiet for the "break -down" of moral values within the society. She said that the police needed to be trained to better deal with social issues in the society.

Commissioner Khan highlighted the spate of murders in the interior especially the mining communities. She suggested that persons who wished to go into the interior communities should be properly identified.

Commissioner Chuck-A- Sang voiced her concern for the lack of security especially as it related to the security for business owners.

Commissioner Henry articulated her apprehension for the quality of training that the current set of nurses was receiving.

Commissioner Cole commended the President on the Operation Fuse response which was scheduled to have begun on the 1st March to the 9th March, 2012. She opined that this operation would 'beef up' the skills of the local security forces.

The President told the gathering that he was very concerned by all the matters raised and he committed to ensure that all the matters were addressed in an effective and efficient manner by his government.

Meeting with Ministry of Health - Presented by Commissioner Debra Henry

Commissioner Henry commenced her presentation at 2.00 pm. by saying that the HPV vaccine was used as a preventative measure against cervical cancer. She said that research showed that Guyana had the highest incidence of Cancer of the Cervix with 80% of cancers being Cancer of the Cervix. She added that Ministry of Health (MoH) chose to immunize girls above 11 years because statistics have shown that girls as young as 11 years were sexually active. She said that the HPV vaccine was not mandatory; one can choose not to take it. She emphasised however that the MoH hoped that many girls would take the vaccine as a means of reducing the incidences of cervical cancers.

Commissioner Khan said that she was concerned because there was not enough research done on the vaccine which in her opinion was relatively new.

Commissioner Cole enquired if parents were well informed of the risks of the vaccine prior to giving consent for their daughters to be vaccinated.

Commissioner Chuck-A-Sang expressed concern about MoH's lack of communication. She added that there should have been a research done and the findings released before the immunization campaign began. She made mention of the Remote Access Medical (RAM) outreach organisation which had released the findings of a research done in the hinterland area which showed that there were several cases of cervical cancer among Amerindian Women.

In response to Commissioner's Burton's question on whether a Public Awareness session was done in collaboration with the Ministry of Education's Parent Teachers' Association (PTAs) and the Ministry of Health. Commissioner Henry said that they started the Public Awareness session in regions three (3), four (4), five (5) and six (6) in thirty one (31) different schools. She added that she personally visited twenty (20) schools and was pleased with the interest shown. Commissioner Logan advised that the Church would be a good place to filter the necessary information.

Commissioner Chuck-A-Sang said that the MoH through a PR program should increase the discussion on women health issues. The Chairperson said it would be good for them to partner with the youth movements and groups to do Public Service Education for the youths

APPENDIX 3 D

Commission's Participation in the Stakeholders Forum with Government

APPENDIX 3 E

Panel Discussion on International Women Day- “Access to Justice for Women” Women & Gender Equality Commission 5th March, 2012



Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal, Chairperson of the Women and Gender Equality Commission addressed the W&GEC’s forum on “Access to Justice for Women”. She stated that the Commission had been collaborating with a number of organizations to amplify the various issues in the society. She said that this is being done even against a background of active policies and adequate legislations, as well as support systems which are in place to help persons deal with the various arising issues. She revealed that the Commission had a mandate set out by the Constitution to do a number of things, primary among them to educate the relevant organizations of their role. The Commission is one of four for the promotion and enhancement of fundamental rights and rule of law that was established under section 212G of the Constitution. Efforts to raise awareness about the Commission came even as International Women’s Day was celebrated, a day which is globally recognized as a very important annual event which represented the gender inequalities of the past and served to bring focus on gender issues of today.

According to Deputy Chairperson of the W&GEC, Ms Cheryl Sampson, the day was aimed at setting the gender agenda and momentum for the future and provided the designated opportunities to lobby, raise awareness, educate and celebrate issues including feminism,

politics, peace, women's working rights, health, business, religion, science and technology, or even the arts. The day, she noted, was an all encompassing one that was opened to all groups to address such issues fully as they choose, even as efforts were made to ensure that gender equality did not become an issue about which persons became complacent.

A section of the participants at the 'Access to Justice' Conference which commemorated International Women's Day.



The Minister of Human Services and Social Security, Jennifer Webster said that the time was opportune for consideration to be given to mandatory hospital reporting of domestic violence precedence by health care professionals. She also revealed the need for the creation of a dedicated unit within the Guyana Police Force comprising persons specifically trained to conduct detailed investigation into such complaints. She opined that this will certainly reduce the time of completion of the investigative process so that the time for justice, that is, the access to justice by the victims and the perpetrators being brought to justice, could be realized in a timely way. She reiterated the need to establish family counseling centres throughout the length and breadth of the country, and increased support for programmes to provide support to those women and children affected through the provision of more safe homes, especially for the victims of domestic violence.

The Minister also spoke of the possibility of the creation of a body where victims can report problems encountered regarding the police, the magistracy and the justice system as a whole. She made reference to the creation of a standardised form or notice that could be served on the respondent which explains the responsibilities to that individual who has to attend a court hearing, or for that person to follow an order, and also identifies the repercussion for failing to comply with those responsibilities.

Also the possible creation of a system that allows magistrates' access to an applicant and respondent's respective criminal record or any similar applications made prior, as it relates to the Domestic Violence Act, was disclosed by the Minister.

The Minister said that the protection of women from abuse will continue to be a key priority of the Government, she added that domestic and gender-based violence and abuse against women was unacceptable and should not be condoned in any form in the society, the Minister categorically asserted, even as she alluded to the 'Beijing Platform for Action' which reaffirms that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. She alluded to the key pieces of legislation which have already been enacted, including the Domestic Violence Act and the new Sexual Offences Act. She indicated there are some weaknesses in the system which severely affected implementation. She emphasized that, the Government, through the Ministry of Labour Human Services and Social Security, was committed to working with all stakeholders including Non-Governmental Organisations, Women Groups, Churches and other Religious bodies to realise solutions to the current problems faced in the society.

In response to reports emanating from the Chambers of the Director of Public Prosecutions regarding a number of flaws with the new Sexual Offences Act, the Minister noted that there very well might be consideration for a review of the Act. She noted that in the interim, the Human Services Ministry is currently considering the creation and establishment of a Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences Unit to further support the Ministry in its quest to work in the national interest of the nation. This move, she said, is aimed at providing support mechanisms which relate to these social issues that exist. The Minister expressed her belief that, among the entities working to address the situation of violence, there is need for the National Commission on the Family to play a more vibrant role in the society to help address the issue of violence. She said that it was essential because a number of the social issues are related to the family.

She said that she recognized from the presentations that the majority of victims of domestic violence were not accessing the justice system, and those who did ,had to experience unbearable levels of abuse before taking any action.”

The panel discussion saw a number of violence related case studies being presented by a number of presenters, among them Ms. Rosemary Benjamin-Noble of the Rights of the Child Commission, Nurse Patricia Singh of the Indigenous Peoples Commission, Attorney-at-law Konyo Sandiford of the Chambers of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Social Worker of the Women Progressive Organisation, Ms. Sheila Veersammy and Representative of the National Congress of Women, Ms. Evelyn Estwick.

Having presented their case studies, which ranged from domestic violence and neglect on the part of health and police officials, representatives of the Judiciary in the person of Justice Roxanne George, the Guyana Police Force, Superintendent Maxine Graham, the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic's Simone Morris-Ramlall and Karen Gomes of Help and Shelter were tasked with outlining measures to help address the existing violent situations. Their recommendations included the revamping of the jury system and extended to the importance of victims of violence being accompanied by a counselor or social worker when giving statements.

Superintendent Graham revealed that despite concerted efforts to undertake the matters of Domestic Violence in an efficient way, from time to time there were ranks who chose to deviate from the norm and this placed the organisation in a negative light. She disclosed that if certain procedures are not followed then disciplinary actions were meted out to the ranks. Graham stressed that dealing with such matters was not suddenly entrusted to ranks, but rather the Force has, as part of its curriculum for new ranks, courses on Domestic Violence, Human Rights and Sexual Offences. This measure, she said, was complemented by the efforts of the Government to help improve the ability of ranks, a move which has been aided by the Citizens' Security Programme. She added that currently at least 16 police stations in Regions Four, Five and Six were undergoing modernisation measures which included the inclusion of special rooms to deal with domestic violence and sexual offence matters. She emphasized that when persons approached the police to make reports of these sorts, instead of dealing with them in the open office there were special rooms where reports could be made privately, and whatever was told to the ranks would be dealt with in a strictly confidential manner. Graham asserted that female officers are strategically attached to these rooms and they were trained to work in the designated units dealing with victims of sexual offences and/or domestic violence. According to the officer, once a victim turned up at a station to make a report of that sensitive nature that person was re directed to a particular unit (Sexual Offences or Domestic Violence). She stressed that even if a female victim went to the enquiries office and the report was initially made there, that victim was immediately referred to the Domestic Violence Unit or to the Sexual Offences Unit where a female rank will take the reports thereby making the victims comfortable.

According to State Counsel who operated out of the Chambers of the Director of Public Prosecutions Konyo Sandiford prejudice on the part of jurors has been listed as one of the many reasons highlighted to indicate that there is a dire need for the revamping of the local jury system. She added that the Justice system was working from a very small pool and there was a possibility that there were a lot of people available for jury work, who wanted to do jury work, but were not being selected because at the slow pace of revising the jury list.

Speaking in response to the revelations presented by Attorney-at-law Sandiford, High Court Judge, Justice Roxanne George acknowledged the notion that they definitely have to look at reforming the jury service and revamping it. Noting the comments made about the issue of bias by jurors, Justice George pointed out that they had no means of picking that up. She said that Guyana does not follow the American Justice System but rather the British system which is a Commonwealth style system more or less. She added that they don't question the jurors but just hope that 12 good persons will try the case fairly. Additionally, Justice George pointed out that Guyana did not have a system of alternates, she felt that this was needed because a case cannot proceed without the full quota of jurors. She outlined a case in point where as a prosecutor and judge she waited for a juror who had gotten into trouble with the police and nobody was aware of the matter ,so they were sitting in court waiting and the trial could not go on and then very belatedly they found out that the juror was in custody.

Another issue that has been encountered, according to Justice George was that the private sector employers have exhibited a bit of ignorance, perhaps due to their lack of understanding on the

importance of jury service she said that many of them did not like their staff to be jurors and would often send letters to them for their staff to be excused. In the cases where staffers were allowed to undertake jury work, Justice George said that some employers required that they return to work each day, but according to her being a juror is a very serious task and Guyana did not have a system whereby notes were taken, so the person had to be there concentrating for several hours and everything was to be retained in the head. Jurors had to remember what the witnesses said, how they said it and the context in which it was said among other things. She added that after jury work, which can last from 9 in the morning until around two in the afternoons, that person is not fit to go to work , because that person had been concentrating all day. Unwillingness on the part of some employers to give up a staff for an entire day had in some instances resulted in jurors receiving threats of termination from their job, Justice George said, thus the need for greater awareness on the importance of jury work.

Regional Public Awareness Sessions to Justice in Parika and Vreed-en Hoop



There were a total 100 participants at both the Parika and Vreed-en-Hoop locations.

There were representative from the Guyana Police Force, Legal Aid, National Congress on Women, Women's Progressive Organisation, Belle West Community Development Association, Help and shelter, Belle West Community Development Association, Help and Shelter, National Democratic Council, Region No. 3, Winsor Forest Arya Samraj, No. 2 Canal Group, Sisters' Women's Group, Ministry of Human Services and Social Security and the Women and Gender Equality Commission.

There were a number of issues raised and recommendations made. These recommendations were sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions to raise with the Chancellor of the Judiciary and the Chief Justice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Need for more judges and magistrates
2. Gender sensitivity training for magistrates and police
3. Integrate counselling in the court system.
4. Regular sittings for Interior courts (they sit once a quarter)
5. The need for a reformed and revamped jury service or system with a larger pool of jurors to choose from
6. Need to address the back-logged cases speedily.
7. Persons need to be educated in court cases.
8. Need to educate persons on the New Sexual Offences Act

ISSUES RAISED

1. Lack of faith in the Justice system and even some NGOs
2. Usually there are no witnesses when rape happens within the family.
3. Family court will not deal with Domestic Violence
4. Private sector does not allow staff to be jurors
5. Matters now surfacing after 5 years and victims are required to remember details.
6. Slow justice system. Cause witness to be disinterested and some even die.
7. Persons need to be educated on the New Sexual Offences Act.
8. Flawed ID Parades
9. Shoddy police investigations

Report on Access to Justice for Women in Linden, Region 10

Mr. Sharma Solomon, Regional Chairman of Region No. 10 said that Domestic Violence affected the society as a whole. He said that he was therefore an advocate for victims of Domestic Violence. He informed the gathering that his group had partnered with the Ministry of Human Services and introduced the MANUP initiative. Men were focused and geared to treat the women with dignity even though the perception is that society said it was OK to mistreat women. He added that the MANUP project findings will be released soon, this he hoped will reduce perception that it is OK to ill treat women in a scientific manner. He emphasised that young men changed perceptions by understanding their roles in society. He said that the focus of

MANUP was not only on women but on men also in an effort to re-educate men on how to treat women.

Ms. Chandarpal, Chairperson of the Women and Gender Equality Commission said that the men who abuse our daughters are our sons. She added that the Beijing platform focused on the girl child and the boy child was left behind, now our focus should be on both the men and women if we are to effectively address the issue of violence against women and girls, she emphasised that men needed to be educated so that they do not batter the women.

Mr. Horace James , Director of the Linden Legal Aid Centre said that persons from all over the regions were coming to seek access for services for the poor and vulnerable persons. He commended the Women and Gender Equality Commission for initiating such a program. He called on the Minister of Home Affairs to expand the section of the Police Force that dealt with violence against women and children. He added that many vulnerable women complained that when reports of domestic violence were made to the police station no effort was made to arrest the perpetrators. He added that police should be empowered to make mandatory arrests. He added that there should be an increase in remuneration and more resources for the Police. He said further that there is a need for more female officers to address matters of domestic violence as women must be able to seek justice in one place. He lamented that when cases were postponed persons had to repeat the horrific system again. He opined that victims must be financially equipped and have an economic safety net to seek justice. He said emphatically that 'check book' justice should be outlawed, perpetrators must not escape trial because they pay off the relatives of the victims.

Assistant Superintendent of Police Mr. Said that statistics showed that 1 in every 3 women abused by her partner were within the household. He said that there were also cases of elderly women who were also beaten by their children. He said that though men were also victims of abuse they were more reluctant to report the abuse. He made mention of a case where the police themselves laughed at a man who reported domestic violence by his partner. He told the participants that the Guyana Police Force had trained police both locally and overseas with the requisite skills and knowledge to deal with Domestic Violence, he added that the training started at the Police Training School. He said that victims were now referred to a private room which was confidential in most police stations. According to him this facility was not yet available at the Linden Police Station. He said that it was mandatory for victims to be escorted by the police to seek medical attention and the medical report tendered as evidence for prosecution. He emphasised that the police cannot prosecute without a statement and it was difficult to get statements from victims of violence. He said that many persons blamed the police for delays in access to justice but he said that the police were faced with a number of challenges such as delays in matters because the perpetrators left the jurisdiction, witnesses did not want to testify in court. He added that there were several systems in place where reports were accepted in private, a written statement is taken, the victim is sent for a medical and a written statement is also taken from the perpetrators.

The participants recommended that a number of measures be put in place to protect women and children.

Recommendations

1. Persons in Prison should work to support children out here.
2. There should be follow up to all the programs that address violence against women and children.
3. More homes and care centres should be implemented for victims of abuse.
4. Mentoring programs for perpetrators and victims of Domestic Violence
5. IDCE should be a training ground for Social Workers.
6. More training for the Police
7. Education programs for men and women on strengthening the families.
8. Establishment of Community Counselling Centres

Mr. Kevin Mc Laughlin of the Governance Enhancement Program, United States Agency for International Development interacting with the Women and Gender Equality Commission Commissioners and CEO at the Statutory Meeting on.



For further information visit the Women and Gender Equality Commission Website on <http://www.womenandgenderequalitycommission.gy/>

APPENDIX 4
Attendance to Statutory Meetings