

## 1. ACRONYMNS

CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CEDAW	Convention on All Forms of Domestic Violence against Women
CPAP	Country Planning Action Plan
DV	Domestic Violence
GTUC	Guyana Trade Union Congress
GPF	Guyana Police Force
HFLE	Health and Family Life Education
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HPV	Human Papilloma Virus
IWD	International Women's Day
IPC	Indigenous People's Commission
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MoLHSSS	Ministry of Labour, Human Services & Social Security
NDS	National Development Strategy
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NIS	National Insurance Scheme
PAHO	Pan American Health Organisation
PSC	Private Sector Commission
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
HRC	Human Rights Commission
RCC	Right's of the Child Commission
SASOD	Society against Sexual and Other Discrimination
UNAIDS	United Nations AIDS
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nation Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
W&GEC	Women & Gender Equality Commission

**2. DECLARATION**

This is the Third 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, 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2009.

**3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION**

Members of the Commission consist of fifteen (15) persons who were sworn in on 27<sup>th</sup> August, 2009 by H.E. President Bharrat Jagdeo.

The Chief Executive Officer and Administrative Assistant assumed duty on 15<sup>th</sup> October and 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2010 respectively.

**Women’s Progressive Organisation**



Indranie Chandarpal  
Chairperson

**National Congress on Women**



Cheryl Sampson  
Deputy Chairperson

**Women in Voluntary work**



Magda Pollard



Vanda Radzik



Shalimar Ali-Hack

**TUC- Women Advisory Council**



Karen Vansluytman-Corbin

**Professional**



Debra Henry

**Private Sector**



Rentata Chuck-A-Sang

**Regional Women's Affairs' Committee**



Ernestine Barker Logan  
Regions 10, 3 & 4



Nandranie Coonjah  
Region 2, 5 & 6



Bebbi Haleima Khan  
Region 7, 8, 9 & 1

**Culture/Ethnic**



Nicole Cole

**Culture/Ethnic**



Peter Persaud

**Women's Affairs Bureau  
Administrator**



Haymawattie Lagan

**Representatives from other Commissions**



Sandra Hooper  
Right os the Child Commission



Doreen Jacobis  
Indigenous Peoples Commssion

**Administrative Staff**



Diana Swan-Lawrence  
Chief Executive Officer



Maria Raghubir  
Administrative Assistant

**4. STATUTORY MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION FOR THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW**

The Commission agreed to convene statutory meetings on the last Wednesday of every month. During the period of reporting, the Commission convened twelve (12) statutory meetings. The table below details the dates of the meetings for the period under review.

<b>NO.</b>	<b>Date</b>
26 <sup>th</sup>	25 <sup>th</sup> July 2012
27 <sup>th</sup>	29 <sup>th</sup> August 2012
28 <sup>th</sup>	26 <sup>th</sup> September 2012
29 <sup>th</sup>	31 <sup>st</sup> October 2012
30 <sup>th</sup>	28 <sup>th</sup> November 2012
31 <sup>st</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup> December 2012
32 <sup>nd</sup>	22 <sup>nd</sup> January 2013
33 <sup>rd</sup>	27 <sup>th</sup> February 2013
34 <sup>th</sup>	26 <sup>th</sup> March 2013
35 <sup>th</sup>	24 <sup>th</sup> April 2013
36 <sup>th</sup>	29 <sup>th</sup> May 2013
37 <sup>th</sup>	26 <sup>th</sup> June 2013

**5. ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

In keeping with the objectives and functions, the W&GEC accomplished more than 80% of the goals targeted. Some of these activities are listed below.

- Continuation of the ‘Access to Justice’ workshops in Regions # 5, 6, 9 2, 7, 1and Region 8 which is scheduled for mid August, 2013
- The Commission visited the Cyril Potter of Education, Bishops’ High, Annadale and Diamond Secondary School and partnered with key stakeholders at Moray House to successfully host major

events in observance of International Women’s Day and the “International Day of Violence Against Women”

- Partnered with Stakeholders to host a Public Forum on ‘Unwaged Labour’ at Main Street Plaza.
- Institutionalisation of a yearly exhibition to celebrate Women’s History Month at the Parliament Building.
- Hosted 2 Round Table discussions on the National Development Strategy and the effects of Culture and Traditions on Society
- Developed the Five Year Strategic Plan 2013-2018 with sponsorship from the UNDP.

## **6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Financial and Administrative Departments of the Office of the President and the Ministry of Finance have been supportive in the management of the Commission’s finances and administration. We are particularly grateful to the Permanent Secretary Office, the Finance Team from Office of the President and Mr. Rekha and his team from the Ministry of Finance, Ms. Khadija Musa and the Governance Team from UNDP for their support.

We are also grateful to the many government and non-governmental organisations, faith based organisations, women and youth organisations as well as the other sister Commissions for their support during the period under review.

## **7. CONSTRAINTS**

Constraints were financial, logistical and administrative. However, with some shared services of the two other Rights Commissions’ coming under the umbrella of the Administrative Department of the Human Rights Commission, some of the challenges have been resolved.

The Commission continues to utilise necessary finances for transportation as there are no vehicles assigned to the Commissions. The Commission has to utilize taxi services and well wishers to undertake its mandate. We look forward to the purchase of a vehicle to assist in the work of the three Commissions.

The W&GEC needs the support staff as identified through the HRC in the areas of investigation of complaints, logistics and research in order to be more effective.

The Commission looks forward to all possible assistance from Government as well as donor agencies in the execution of its mandates



Courtesy Call to H.E. President Donald Ramotar

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARLIAMENT**

As a result of the varied programmes implemented by the Commission, the following recommendations are submitted to Parliament for action.

1. Review the selection process of jurors with a view to widening the pool of eligible person
2. More sensitization programmes to be implemented for TIP and Sexual Offences
3. The creation of a policy on Sexual Harassment at the Place of Work
4. Increase in the fines for Protection Orders.
5. The building code to be reviewed to include provision of access to persons with disabilities.
6. Gender mainstreaming should be incorporated into the school curriculum.
7. Domestic violence should be included in HFLE curriculum
8. Advocate for all persons getting married to have marriage counseling.
9. Guidance and Counseling should be available in schools.
10. All cases of TIP should be dealt with by relevantly /specially trained Magistrates.
11. All cases of Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences be dealt with by relevantly/specially trained Magistrate.
12. Need provision for written protocols for TIP
13. Noise nuisance offence should be determined by decibel level instead of affected private citizens.
14. Domestic Violence victims who do not wish to pursue prosecution against the perpetrator, should be both placed on a one year bond and undergo mandatory counseling from a certified provider.

## **Public event held on “Unwaged Labour” July 29, 2012, at Kings’ Plaza**

### **Recommendations**

- Public awareness and intervention at the Community Level
- More community involvement in all consultations which lead to the development of policies at a national level.
- Education on cultural and social development in relation to good leadership and role models as a pre-requisite to building a well functioning society
- Formation of women’s groups in communities, where they can network and share experiences and best practices, using innovative strategies.
- More involvement of young people in gender programmes.
- Advocate for a change of traditional socialization among men and women
- Health and Family Life Education in schools to be expanded.
- Promote Parenting Skills in Health Centres
- Encourage more Male Friendly Health Centres such as the Project in Region 5.
- Advocate for men to be involved in PTA meetings at schools.
- Advocate for a paradigm shift from “Housewife” to CEO of the home
- Advocate for Premarital counselling for all couples seeking to get together or getting married.
- Gender mainstreaming should be incorporated in Social Studies in the School curriculum.
- More public awareness interventions in the form of conferences, workshop, flyers, brochures, TV/Radio programmes, Internet – social networking/websites, local newspaper,
- Establish Community Counselling Centres in communities using established public spaces and civic minded persons in the relevant areas.
- Educate men on the Changing Role of Women in society.
- Workplace education to recognize women’s unwaged work in the home, similar to HIV/AIDs education in the workplace.

### **International Day of Violence Against Women – November 20 to 25, 2012.**

2. **Diamond Secondary School**
3. **Annadale Secondary School**
4. **Bishops’ High School**

**5. Cyril Potter College of Education**

**6. Moray House**

**Recommendations**

- More counsellors in school across Guyana
- Establishment of Community Counselling services in pilot areas
- Special counselling for males either in schools or in the community
- Guidance and Counselling should be a subject in the school curriculum
- Advocate for a special Forum on “Youths Against Domestic Violence”
- Domestic Violence to be included in the Health and Family Life Education Curriculum
- Teachers need to be trained to recognise the signs of violence against children.
- Closer collaboration with schools and NGOs working on domestic violence.

**Round Table at NCN to observe International Women’s Day- March 3, 2013**

**Recommendations**

- The Domestic Violence (DV) Act 2010 needs to be implemented and enforced.
- Review the fine for the breach of protection order, which is currently \$10,000.00.
- Review current DV Act to include provisions for accountability by Officials who inappropriately deal with situations related to complaints based on the DV Act.
- Review the current DV Act for possible amendments.
- Review the education section of the NDS as it relates to career guidance, channelling students into non-traditional vocations, i.e. a female engineer, a male care giver.
- Evaluate the NDS to assess what has been achieved thus far.
- In reviewing the NDS, Gender Issues should be mainstreamed in all sectors.
- Recommendations to be forwarded to policy makers after evaluation of NDS.

**Meeting with Mr. Colin Chichester – Head of the Mediation Center on November 28, 2013**

- Mr. Chichester reported that 25 lawyers were the first batch of persons trained to be mediators. He said there was no cost for the use of the Mediation Centre because the Centre pays the Mediator. He added that Mediation is only for civil matters. He informed the Commissioners that the scope of mediation was broaden in 2007 with 50 more persons including doctors and teachers who were trained as mediators.



- He informed the Commission that mediation centres were already established in New Amsterdam and Essequibo and that mediation is always court connected, since the Courts refer the cases to the mediation centre.
- A Mediation Centre should be set up in Region 7 and other interior locations.
- Mediation should ‘fill a gap’ for women who need Access to Justice.
- Expand mediation to benefit more rural communities.
- Mediation should be the ‘first port of call’ before the matter goes to court to avoid the backlog of court cases.
- Train more women as mediators in Regions 1, 7, 8 & 9.
- Mediation must not replicate the court.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COMMISSION**

- More involvement of rural communities in all levels of consultations which lead to the development of policies at a national level.
- Civic education to be included in all planned programmes
- Health and Family Life Education in schools to be expanded.
- Promote Parenting Skills in Health Centres
- Create more Male Friendly Health Centres such as the Project in Region 5.
- Advocate for premarital counselling for all couples seeking to get married.
- Gender mainstreaming should be incorporated in Social Studies in the School curriculum.
- Establish Community Counselling Centres
- Workplace education to recognize women’s unwaged work in the home, similar to HIV/AIDS education in the workplace.
- More counsellors in schools across Guyana
- Guidance and Counselling should be a subject in the school curriculum.
- Reproduction and wide distribution of the Law & You.
- Domestic Violence to be included in the Health and Family Life Education Curriculum.
- Review the fine for the breach of protection order, which is currently \$10,000.
- Review the education section of the NDS as it relates to career guidance, channelling students into no-traditional vocations, i.e. female engineer, a male care giver.

- Evaluate the National Development Strategy to assess implementation
- In reviewing the NDS, Gender Issues should be mainstreamed in all sectors.
- Mediation Centres should be set up in interior locations as well as other rural communities.
- Train more women as mediators.
- Begin the dialogue on a National Dress in view of Guyana’s participation at some International Events.
- Need to encourage singers and song writers to explore the option of new patriotic songs.
- Women & Gender Equality Commission to sit on the Mashramani Planning Committee.
- Certificate courses on gender studies to be offered by the University of Guyana.
- Explore the option to resuscitate the Gender Studies Unit at University of Guyana.
- All cases of Trafficking in Persons should be dealt with by one magistrate.
- Need for written protocols for Trafficking in Persons.
- Persons going to the interior should show their Identification Cards at checkpoints.
- Zero Tolerance Billboard on Domestic Violence and Sexual Harassment at Police Stations.
- Establish Sexual Offences Unit in every Division.
- Noise Nuisance laws to be looked at urgently with a view to having it being declared as a public health issue.

## 9. COMPLAINTS

<b>Complaints</b>	<b>Complainant</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Status</b>
Lack of safety for persons using the speed boat services en route to Bartica.	Ms. Bebbi Khan RWAC representative on W&GEC.	23 <sup>rd</sup> March, 2013	Letter sent to Director General. Maritime Department on 7 <sup>th</sup> May, 2013.
Issues affecting women and Children in Region 7	Bebbi Khan RWAC representative on W&GEC.	23 <sup>rd</sup> March, 2013	Letters sent to PS, Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, copied to the PS Ministry of Education and the Chairperson of the Rights of the Child Commission.
Guyana Chronicle published article “Bombshells Most ‘Provocative Diva- – natural sexiness.’”	Justice Institute Guyana Inc.	20 <sup>th</sup> February, 2013	Letter sent to Chronicle on the 23 <sup>rd</sup> March, 2013.

## MAJOR ACTIVITIES FOR THE REPORTED PERIOD

<b>DATES</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES FOR 2012</b>
27 <sup>th</sup> Jun, 2012	Statutory Meeting for Commissioners
30 <sup>th</sup> Jun, 2012	Presentation of W&GEC's 2 <sup>nd</sup> Annual Report to Parliament
20 <sup>th</sup> Jul, 2012	Conference – Unwaged Labour
25 <sup>th</sup> Jul, 2012	Statutory Meeting for Commissioners
5 <sup>th</sup> Aug, 2012	Regional Public Awareness Session in Region 5 – Access to Justice for Women
12 <sup>th</sup> Oct, 2012	Regional Public Awareness Session in Region 6 – Access to Justice for Women
29 <sup>th</sup> Aug, 2012	Statutory Meeting for Commissioners
26 <sup>th</sup> Sept, 2012	Statutory Meeting for Commissioners
17 <sup>th</sup> Oct, 2012	Regional Public Awareness Session in Region 9 -Access to Justice for Women
31 <sup>st</sup> Oct, 2012	Statutory Meeting for Commissioners
25 <sup>th</sup> Nov, 2012	International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women Film Show and Public Awareness sessions at selected schools
28 <sup>th</sup> Nov, 2012	Statutory Meeting for Commissioners
19 <sup>th</sup> Dec, 2012	Luncheon for Commissioners, staff and stakeholders
29 <sup>th</sup> Dec, 2012	Initial meeting with Consultant re Strategic Plan
<b>DATES</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES FOR 2013</b>
9 <sup>th</sup> Jan, 2013	Meeting with CEOs , RCC & IPC and consultant on Strategic Plan
9 <sup>th</sup> Jan, 2013	Commissioners met with Consultant re Strategic Plan
10 <sup>th</sup> Jan, 2013	Meeting with Consultant re inception report
16 <sup>th</sup> Jan, 2013	Commissioners met with Consultant re W&GEC's Strategic Plan
17 <sup>th</sup> Jan, 2013	Meeting with Finance Secretary , Ministry of Finance, CEOs RCC& IPC Administrative Assistants IPC and W&GEC, Administrative Officer Rights' Commission
22 <sup>nd</sup> Jan, 2013	Meeting of the Work Plan Committee
29 <sup>th</sup> Jan, 2013	Workshop on Finalising of Strategic Plan
30 <sup>th</sup> Jan, 2013	Statutory Meeting for Commissioners
2 <sup>nd</sup> Feb, 2013	Meeting of Key stakeholders with Consultant re Strategic Plan
6 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 2013	Meeting with UNDP , Governance Analyst and Consultant re Strategic Plan
13 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 2013	Media Monitoring Committee Meeting
13 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2013	Consultant met with key stakeholders
21 <sup>st</sup> Feb, 2013	Meeting with UNDP re Stakeholders' workshop
26 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 2013	Stakeholders' Forum re Strategic Plan
27 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 2013	Statutory Meeting for Commissioners and meeting with Administrator Men's Affairs Bureau
3 <sup>rd</sup> March, 2013	Round Table discussion on International Women's Day
6 <sup>th</sup> March, 2013	Meeting with UNDP country Team re W&GEC's Strategic Plan
7 <sup>th</sup> March, 2013	Meeting with UNDP re Rights' Commission Strategic Plan and Support for the W&GEC. Attendance by Commissioners on the occasion of IWD organised by the Speaker of

	the National Assembly.
7 <sup>th</sup> March, 2013	International Women's Day Meeting with CEOs, RCC & IPC re draft TORS for Complaints mechanics, Draft Strategic Plan on Rights Commission
26 <sup>th</sup> March, 2013	Statutory Meeting and meeting with members of SASOD
17 <sup>th</sup> April, 2013	Presentation of Final Strategic Plan to donor communities and relevant stakeholders
24 <sup>th</sup> April, 2013	Statutory Meeting and meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Youth Sports and Culture
11 <sup>th</sup> May, 2013	Round table Discussion at NCN
29 <sup>th</sup> May, 2013	Statutory Meeting and meeting with Member of Parliament & Former Minister of Human Services & Women Miners Association
10 <sup>th</sup> June 2013	Meeting with Vice Chancellor of the University of Guyana
13 <sup>th</sup> June 2013	Meeting with Commissioner of Police
20 <sup>th</sup> June, 2013	Regional Outreach on Access to Justice in Region 7
21 <sup>st</sup> June, 2013	Regional Outreach on Access to Justice in Region 2
25 <sup>th</sup> June, 2013	Statutory Meeting, Sub Committee meetings & Press Conference
5 <sup>th</sup> Jul, 2013	Regional Outreach on Access to Justice in Region 1

### **W&GEC participation in UNFPA sponsored Workshop on Access to Justice for Victims of Sexual Violence in Mesoamerica.**

The Chairperson of the Women & Gender Equality Commission participated in a UNFPA sponsored Workshop on Access to Justice for Victims of Sexual Violence in Mesoamerica in Guatemala in May 2012 along with a representative from Red Thread Ms Karen De Souza.

The workshop brought together 80 participants from 18 countries who worked together in Groups based on language and geography. The two representatives of Guyana worked in the Caribbean Region which included Suriname, Guyana, Barbados, Belize and Jamaica.

The Group looked at the situation of sexual violence in the afore-mentioned countries and referred to the various DV acts and civil laws in place.

Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana and Belize have similar legislation – British, while Surinam has the Dutch Civil Law.

Rape is often gender-neutral except in Belize where it must be between a man and woman

The challenges for all were inadequate implementation, limited resources, no mediation for sexual offences, lack of adequate reporting, data collection, monitoring and low prosecution success rate.

### **Some of the obstacles to filing a complaint were**

- Cultural view of definition of rape or sexual advances, e.g. Jamaica just a little sex, husband's right

- Re-victimization, no victims support, accusation vs investigation
- No central reporting body with all necessary services
- Time with which case gets to court
- Financial-settlement out of court
- Mistrust of judicial system
- Family pressure, stigma, attitudes, fear
- No reparations
- Lack of training for judicial officers.

### **Advances in the attention to sexual violence**

- Actually having legislation and having it passed
- Creation of public awareness of laws and rights
- Training of judiciary, law enforcement personnel, social services workers, health professionals
- Guyana was identified as a model for the region – legislation in place for paper committals, training, central reporting, children’s law very forward thinking from Human Rights perspective
- Belize – laws specifically addressing violence against women and children
- Jamaica - upgrade of Forensic Lab and Services Institutionalized collaboration, centralized services, legal, health, psychosocial support in one place e.g. CISOCA
- Consideration of Human Trafficking, some provisions in place
- Having shelters for victims of sexual violence in some territories, Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad
- Some government and NGO partnerships,

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Investigation, judgement and sanction of acts of violence against women

Institutional Strengthening

Capacity building e.g. Barbados-NGO training of government stakeholders e.g. BWP, Barbados Club

Mandatory extensive and ongoing training of stakeholders

Bureau of Gender Affairs-public gender workshops

Improved availability and allocation of resources from State, constant data collection, monitoring and evaluation to ensure effectiveness and efficiency

## **Measures to be taken by Authorities**

Create protocols to institutionalize the collaboration between investigation, prosecution and police from the beginning

Strengthen, monitor and evaluate related processes, protocols and policies where existing

Create Victim Support Units

Partnerships with and support of NGO's

Increase availability of financial resources

Creation of safe houses, transitional housing, economic empowerment solutions reducing dependency

## **Multi-disciplinary Investigation**

Create a multidisciplinary approach from the start

Use Jamaica CISOCA model as an example of centralized services

Roving units for large territories with scarce resources and lower skilled social service personnel e.g. Guyana

Improve collaboration and remove defensiveness or sensitivities within multiple disciplines within the same territory

Have a more victim-centered approach vs perpetrator approach

An evaluation was done to look at the five countries and where the strengths and weaknesses were in terms of the DV

## **REPORT**

### **NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON VALUING WOMEN'S UNWAGED WORK HELD ON FRIDAY JULY 20, 2012 AT THE KINGS PLAZA MAIN STREET, GEORGETOWN**



## **The objectives of the forum were:**

1. Raise the awareness of ‘Unwaged Labour’ in the public domain
2. Include in the national statistics the information on the value of women’s work at home
3. Raise the self esteem and confidence of women in society
4. Encourage legislators to consider the contributions of women in deciding the entitlements of women for the work they carry out at home.

The Forum was chaired by Commissioner Karen Vansluytman-Corbin. She noted that women in the home spend several hours each day carrying out the many chores necessary for the comfort of their family members who reside there and do so without any financial reward or without any measure of the value of their service. She added that women contribute to the development of society by services that are both remunerated and unremunerated. A woman who is a wage earner still has to perform all the other work she is required to do; the only difference is that she is paid to do work outside of the home. She said “According to Phoebe Jones Schellenberg, Chair of Philadelphia Women Count Working Group at the UN Fourth World Congress, succeeded in getting governments to agree to measure and value unwaged work.”

Ms. Indranie Chandarpal, Chairperson of the Women and Gender Equality Commission said that the Women & Gender Equality Commission based on its mandates is desirous of opening up the discourse nationally to educate women regarding their self worth and their contribution to society. She said that there are far too many women who have low self esteem especially those who feel that their work at home have no value. She added that while around 40 per cent of women are in the work force there is still a sizable amount that are at home without any source of income. She concluded by saying that this has implications for them especially when they become older, when they have no bread winner and are unable to access social security because they were never employed in the formally recognized work force.

The Chief Labour Officer, Mr. Charles Ogle said that when we talk of unpaid work, we are referring to mental and physical efforts expended, for which persons are not being paid or remunerated. The unpaid work includes the many things that women do at home and in the community. Women are also involved in countless hours of informal work for friends, neighbours and even the community. He added that despite enormous changes in family dynamics and growing participation by women in the labour market, men’s participation in domestic and care tasks still remains minimal.

He reiterated that women were working in and out of the homes, in some cases to supplement their husbands' incomes and in other cases, they are the primary source of income for the households. As a result, women are doing a double shift one typified by heavy burden of domestic work combined with a waged work. In some cases women's participation in the labour force is hampered by socio-economic and psycho-social factors influenced by age, education and even the number of children and dependants in the household, yet in many instances, they are seen some as the weaker sex.

He further said that, the overburden of unpaid work affects the time women have available to carry out income generating activities, thus making them stressful. Hence, there is the domination of cultural patterns that shapes their values, identity and self-esteem. He added that the unpaid domestic work performed by women for their households, and families include preparation of meals, cleaning, clothing, care, gardening, home maintenance and management, care for children, the sick and adults, and in some cases the provision of unpaid help to other households and managing the family business. It includes shopping, working in family operated business, at a farm, shop or restaurant, fetching wood and water and the care of livestock. In addition, women have been engaged in sewing of clothes/needlework for the immediate family members thus saving monies for the home.

He further stated that research showed that there were two (2) occasions where attempts were made to address the topic:

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, to which all Caribbean Governments are signatories recognises the domestic work performed by women as a key contributor to the economy and to combating poverty through both the remunerated and unremunerated work at home, in the community and in the workplace; and

A Caribbean Sub-regional Preparatory Meeting for the Tenth Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda 22-23 May, 2007.

He concluded by saying that women continue to spend more time on unpaid work than men and today unpaid work needs to be recognized especially for understanding the contribution of women to the national economy and for assuring women better living standards.





*Participants during the group sessions*

The Honourable Minister of Labour Dr. Nanda Gopaul noted that with reference to “unwaged labour”, Guyana has come a long way in terms of legislations passed or enacted to protect our women folks. He said that some organisations had a fixed retirement age for men and another for women, with the passing of two (2) legislations, the retirement age is sixty (60) years for both males and females. He further mentioned several Acts - Discrimination Act states clearly “there should not be any discrimination in the retirement age”. He added that the Equal Rights Act applies to both men and women receiving equal pay for work of equal value and the Household Services Act which deals or offer protection for Domestic workers.

He emphasised that since 1995, all categories of workers are benefitting from paid annual leave through the Holidays with Pay Act now known as the Leave with Pay Act and prior to this Act only fourteen (14) categories of workers enjoyed annual leave. He said that in 2008, when the Minimum Wages were being prepared, the International Labour Organization suggested that the categories of workers be described as Gender Neutral e.g. Barman – Bartender, Sales Girl – Sales Clerks, Washman – Wash Bay Attendant, Watchman – Security Guard, Delivery man – Delivery Clerk.

He added that the only Caribbean country to recognize women’s unwaged work is the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in 1996, with the passing of the “Unremunerated Work Bill”, and noted that maybe Guyana can be the second country to count women’s unwaged work.

In Guyana, there are cases where career women leave waged work to migrate and join their children to help take care of their grandchildren, thus joining the category of unwaged work, for the benefit of

nurturing and grooming the younger generation. He further stated that many women because of the double workload they carry actually work close to 14-18 hours daily they indeed work overtime. He concluded that as a consequence, the time may be opportune for this forum to address the issue, that women should not continue to carry the burden of unwaged work not being recognized and counted



*A section of the audience at the forum*

## **REPORT**

### **Access to Justice Forum in Region 6 held on October 12, 2012, at Tain Campus Berbice**

The Access to Justice Forum was held on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2012 at Tain Campus, Berbice. Participants included 66 persons in attendance 11 males and 55 females.

The welcome remark was done by RDC Councillor & Chairperson of Regional Women's Affairs Committee, Region 6, and Ms. Bijulee Moti.

In attendance was Mr. Paul Armogan, Regional Chairman Region 6 who made the welcome remarks.

#### **Highlights of Mr. Armogan's speech:**

- Both men and women have misconception about women's rights and roles.
- In the year 1911 there were only two countries in the world where women were allowed to vote.
- Over the past century most countries now allow women to vote and have active roles in all aspect of society inclusive of major leadership position even in politics.

- 186 countries signed onto the United Nations Convention On All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- Even though there are legislation there are still serious injustices against women.
- He cited instances where the justice system failed women

**Highlights of Presentation by:**

**Mr. Derek Josiah, Assistant Commissioner “B” Division**

Mr Josiah referred to the Role of the Police who have a responsibility to:

- Protect and Serve
- To receive reports
- Provide private space for victims
- Police is just a part of the Justice System

He spoke about the collaboration with Social Partners in the fight to reduce Domestic Violence nationally and said that the following actions were taken. These were:

- Build capacity within the force by sensitizing all members
- Network with the Government of Guyana
- Investigate all Domestic Violence reports.

He provided statistics regarding the progress made in combating domestic violence.

**448 report of abuse cases were received**

- 407 were taken before the Court out of which there were 79 convictions
- 6 pending investigation
- 35 referrals for counselling

He said that the actions taken to deal with the problems are:

- Train Officers and Ranks in all Divisions
- Training of trainers programmes
- All recruits are trained in Domestic Violence

He reminded the audience that the public expects a response from the Police since they are seen as the guardian of justice. In this regard the police are required to:

- Arrest the perpetrator/charge/warn
- Ensure safety of victim/s
- Maintain confidentiality

The Commander said that even though there were successes; the Challenges are still great because many persons are unwilling to report matters promptly, some are reluctant to press charges and often ranks do not always confirm to the professionalism that is required.

He responded to a number of questions that were posed to him from the audience. His responses were accepted with satisfaction.

Ms. Sasha Roberts, resident Attorney-at-law and Head of the Legal Aid in Region 6 was unable to attend but sent a written report explaining the role of the Legal Aid in Region 6.

Unfortunately the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security Representative did not attend although a letter of invitation was sent to the Ministry.

## **Summary of Speech by Ms. Indranie Chandarpal Chairperson, W & G E C:**

### **Highlights:**

- Commission was formed to protect the rights of citizens. It is a constitutional body that reports to the National Assembly.
- All recommendations from the Public Forum will be sent to the National Assembly.
- Public Officials have a responsibility to provide services to citizens and the citizens need to be satisfied with the services offered.
- Until 1996 Domestic Violence was considered a family thing. However with the passing of the Domestic Violence Legislation in 1996 it could no longer be treated as a private matter but a criminal one.
- We need to educate more people on their rights and advise them where they can go to seek representation on these issues.
- Citizens have a right to propose ideas and make recommendations to deal with Domestic Violence
- Need to engage men to deal with Domestic Violence

- She thanked the male participants for their attendance.

### **General Questions/Suggestions from the Participants:**

- A Centre at No. 68 Village, Corentyne was set up as White Zone for abused children
- Absence of the Officers from the forum should be raised with the relevant Ministry. They should have made prior arrangements in order to be present at the forum.

Commissioner Hooper in her closing remarks expressed gratitude to the University of Guyana Tain Campus and the Regional Women's Affairs Committee, Region 6 for their collaboration as well as all those who were present for their participation and support.

### **Public Awareness Forum on Access to Justice – Region 9 -October 17, 2012**

Commissioner Vanda Radzik chaired the session and proceeded to introduce the members of the head table; and at the same time took the opportunity to thank the participants for their attendance to the forum.

She outlined the objectives of the forum in keeping with the mandates of the Commission. She encouraged the participants to be fully engaged and informed them that this was a forum to make them aware of the services that are available in relation to 'access to justice' and other issues affecting women.

Welcome and brief remarks were given by Mr. Wilson Lorentio, Chairman of Region #9. He encouraged the participants to make good use of the opportunity to voice all the concerns that affected them and not to bear the issues in silence. He said that in most instances women sought the services of the justice system but later asked the system to forgive the offender by just giving him a warning, he said "because he is the ploughman and he throws net and catches fish for food". He spoke in Makushi and appealed to the participants to seek the justice system that is available to them in Region 9.

Ms Claire Singh- Regional Executive Officer, Region 9 highlighted that because of "LOVE",

women are hiding the incidents of Domestic Violence. She appealed to men to have great respect for women who shared their lives. She further requested that the women be their “sisters’ keepers” by speaking out for them when there are incidences of abuse.

Mr. Clarindo Lucas- Legal Aid Representative spoke about the Para Legal System. He made reference to the document “The Law and You” as it relate to issues of Rape and Sexual Assault. He stressed the need for Community Participation. He said all cases of Domestic Violence should be reported to the system and it is their responsibility to ensure that the report is accurate and signed. He appealed to them to seek the support of the Paralegal at all times.

Ms. Sherelene Joseph (Probation and Social Services) said that there is a Zero Tolerance for Domestic Violence and appealed to the participants to seek the counseling services available through the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security. She added that referral is made depending on the nature of the issue/s. She mentioned that abuse can be a learned behavior and the need for good interpersonal relationship at home and at work with co-workers.

After the presentations Commissioner Radzik facilitated an interactive session with the participants. They raised a number of concerns listed below:

### **Concerns and Recommendations**

- The justice system was contributing to the ongoing problems in most communities.
- The consumption of alcohol contributed to Domestic Violence and parental neglect
- Women should not allow their girl child/ren to go to the farm or other deserted places in the company of males, because in most cases this resulted in sexual assaults and incest.
- The need for confidentiality in all sectors of social services
- Trafficking in children is escalating; there are adults who collude with offenders and very often claimed to be related to the children when taking them through the check points from the hinterland to the city.
- Teenage Pregnancy is on the rise
- Some children were not attending schools and are indulging in sexual acts
- Victims of abuse and perpetrators are arrested and released on bail and some disappear to Brazil or other remote areas.

- Lack of access to justice for persons in remote areas
- Need to empower women in relation to violence against women.
- Need for more skills training and literacy programmes.
- Illicit drugs are on the increase.
- More Women should be appointed as Rural Constables.

The Chairperson of the Women and Gender Equality Commission, Ms Indranie Chandarpal in response to questions posed to the Commission affirmed that Domestic Violence, Sexual Abuse and Incest are criminal offences. She said that it was time for women to form delegations and discuss matters affecting the communities with their respective Toshaos. She mentioned the need for education to change the culture.

She appealed for the booklets, “The Law and You and The Constitution” to be made available to community leaders. She stated that it is time for the Legal System to establish links with the remote communities/villages, through outreach sessions at least quarterly, so that people can benefit from the legal system. She emphasized the need for professional behavior among the police officers. She made mention of the need for safe spaces at police stations and the presence of female police when reports about domestic violence are being made by women at the station. She said that the necessary forms for retaining a victim should be available and promised to verify who can ‘fill out’ these forms.

She further appealed for justice for the victims and enquired about “citizen rights” as it related to victims living in Brazil and suggested that victims need to make formal reports to the police in Guyana. She stressed the need for clarity of the Laws when dealing with offences committed by Guyanese living or working in Brazil. She also made mention of “The Battered Women Syndrome” and the need for support for such victims through services such as counseling. She supported the appeal for women to be Rural Constables, stating that there are 50 villages in Region 9 with only four female leaders.

Mr. D. Rooplall, the Police Inspector in his response said that he was aware of the cases of Domestic Violence involving the Guyanese living in Brazil and will follow up. He stated that the office for Rural Constables is functioning. He added that the police system ‘biggest’ challenge is

retaining an individual beyond 72hrs without charges.

He emphasized the non-cooperation of victims who refuse to have medicals done and give statements to tender as evidence for prosecution. He said that many times the perpetrators would cross the border to Brazil before an arrest was made. He concluded by saying that there is a 'Domestic Violence Book' at the station and once the perpetrator is arrested and the relevant statement given, he or she is charged and placed before the Court. He said that the public needs to be more educated on the procedure involved in reporting cases of Domestic Violence and the need for trained Counselors to deal with Domestic Violence in the Police Force.

Mr. Clementio Lucas, the Legal Aid Representative stressed the need for Community participation. He said that incidence of sexual assault must be reported promptly to the police and he appealed for the women to support each other.

Ms Claire Singh, the Regional Executive Officer stated that all Toshaos are sworn Rural Constables/ Peace Officer; and she begged women to stand up for Justice in their Communities.

Ms. Bercina Humphrey a WPO Representative appealed to participants to form organized groups and advocate for the young girl/child's safety and education. She said that participants must be knowledgeable of the Amerindian Act and Human Rights. She also stressed the need for community involvement in advocating for parenting skills and training in the community.

A Special presentation on "Cervical Cancer" was done by Commissioner Debra Henry. She shared with participants the Ministry of Health's Program for prevention of Cervical Cancer with the "Early Screening" using the visual inspection with "Acetic Acid and Pap Smear" testing. She informed participants of the Ministry's plans to introduce the Human Papilloma virus Vaccine (HPV) to young girls aged 10-12 years before they became sexually active.

The Chairperson of W&GEC discussed the functions of the Women and Gender Equality Commission and assured participants that the Commission will take their matters to the highest forum. She mentioned the role of the Commission to access; collaborate and make recommendation to the relevant authorities. She stressed the need for a united approach to address the issues.



## Commissioners at

### GUYEXPO AT THE SOPHIA EXHIBITION CENTER ON 27-30 SEPTEMBER, 2012



*(Left to Right) Deputy Chairperson, Cheryl Sampson and Commissioners Corbin, Chuck-A-Sang and Cole*

The Women and Gender Equality Commission showcased a booth at the Sophia Exhibition Centre with the photographs and slide shows of the Commission's activities, newsletters, brochures, public awareness forums and books. The Commissioners and CEO were available to give interviews and information to the general public on the function and activities of the Women and Gender Equality Commission. The Commission is committed to making this an annual event.

### COLLABORATION OF THE RIGHTS' COMMISSIONS ON JULY 13, 2012

The United Nations Development Programme and sister agencies in Guyana have included in its United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) institutional strengthening opportunities for the Rights Commissions. Recognizing that there are cross-cutting issues among the Commissions, it was agreed that UN-System support be strategically targeted to the areas of the Commissions for greater impact and reduced costs. UNICEF agreed to support a one day exercise for the three Commissions to engage in ascertaining areas and a common strategy for effective collaboration. The intended outputs and outcomes agreed to were in the areas of collaboration so that the Commissioners and Staff of the respective Commissions have a better understanding of areas of commonality of the Commissions. The agreed areas of collaboration were:

- Lobby for adequate resources
- Advocacy through media
- Lobby for more independent operation
- Lobby for required changes in constitution as one body
- Monitor together current programmes / policies
- Develop stronger relationship with common stakeholders
- Undertake more research together especially those that are gender sensitive issues
- Establish formal structures of communication between Commissions.

**The Agreed Strategies for effective collaboration were:**

- Develop a common strategic plan
- Seek more involvement of men within each commission but more so the WGEC
- Heighten awareness of the work of the Commissions
- Capacity building of the Commissions,
- Solid legal framework needed
- Develop a strategy for effective collaboration
- Develop protocols for collaboration



*Commissioners participating at the Session*

**Meeting with selected schools and CPCE for International Day of Violence Against Women during 20 to 23 November, 2012**



*Students from Diamond Secondary School with Commissioner Corbin*

During the 15 Days of Activism for International Day of Violence against Women, the Commission visited a number of schools.

- The Annadale Secondary School on Tuesday 20 November, 2012 at 12.30 p.m
  - Diamond Secondary School on Wednesday 21 November, 2012 at 1.00 p.m
  - Bishops High School on Thursday, 22 November, 2012 at 11.00 a.m.
- Cyril Potter College of Education on Friday, 23 November, 2012 at 9.30 a.m.

The Commission was unable to visit Queens College because of the flea infestation.

**On 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2013 the W&GEC hosted a 'Film Show by showcasing the film 'Provoked' at the Moray House. The talking points by Commissioners at the various events are hereby listed:**

1. The WGEC is a Constitutional Commission and is responsible for addressing issues pertaining to Women and Gender Equality.
2. The Commission consists of persons from different groups in Guyana such as political parties, trade unions, professional bodies, cultural organizations, representatives of the various Regional Women's Affairs Committee and some members representing the interest of women.

3. The present Commission came into being in August 2009 and the commissioners were sworn in on 27 August 2009 before the President of Guyana.
4. The Commission began its work in 2010.
5. On December 17, 1999, the United Nations General Assembly designated 25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (Resolution 54/134).
6. The UN invited Governments, International Organizations and NGOs to organize activities designated to raise public awareness of the problem on this day in recognition of the women around the world who are subjected to rape, domestic and other forms of violence.
7. This date symbolizes the brutal assassination in 1960 of the three Mirabal sisters who were political activists in the Dominican Republic, and whose assassination was carried out on orders of the dictator Rafael Trujillo.
8. Since 1981 Women's activists have marked November 25 as a day to highlight the atrocities of women who are victims of violence.
9. Reference was made to the various forms of violence and their manifestations. Special emphasis was made on sexual violence especially as it relates to young persons.
10. Commissioners encouraged the children to be on the alert for the perpetrators who are often close to the victims; these can be relatives, neighbours or caregivers. Relatives in some instances include parents, a father or step father.

The children were told of the different types of violence such as mental, physical and sexual abuse. Physical and sexual abuse will be the same as physical and sexual violence. Mental abuse when committed could give rise to offences such as threatening, abusive, insulting or obscene language, gesture or behaviour. These are all criminal offences for which the persons committing them can be charged under the Domestic Violence Act.

Commissioners reminded Students that they must know that all forms of violence are unlawful and must not be tolerated. Once a person is abused or is a victim of violence a report must be made to the police.

Police receiving reports must take statements from victim and witnesses. In cases of injury the victim must be taken to a doctor to be examined and issued with a Medical Report. Once these investigations are done by the police then the person must be charged. Once the police institute charges the victims must go to court and testify.

Apart from the charge if the victim is afraid of the perpetrator he or she can apply for an Interim Order-Protection Order, Tenancy Order under the Domestic Violence Act 1996. This can be done at the same time as the criminal charge.

Children and all persons in our society must know the law and what is unlawful and the redress available so that a person can report any cases that he/ she is aware of whether or not they are a victim.

Teachers were reminded that they have a duty to report any case which is brought to their attention to the head-teacher and/or parent depending on the circumstances. These cases are to be reported to the police



*A section of the participants at Moray House on 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2012 to observe International Day of Violence Against Women*

### **Meeting with UNDP appointed consultant for Institutional Strengthening for the Rights Commission - Mr. Thipanyane-November 28, 2013**

Mr. Thipanyane was designated by the UNDP to develop a Strategic Plan for the Rights Commission. He met with the Commission to get their views on the following:

- Institutional Strengthening
- Training and Awareness Needs
- Mechanisms for Complaints/Information Processing

- Research and Monitoring
- Reporting mechanism
- Reporting to the International Human Rights Body
- Road map to full compliance with the Parisian Principles
- Adequate funding by Government as is mandated by the Constitution
- The role of the UNDP to assist countries to be compliant with Paris principles

**Meeting with Commissions and CEOs of the Rights Commissions at Dutch Bottle Cafe on January 29, 2013**



*Commissioner Radzik chairing the forum at the Head table with (L-R) Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson Ms. Chandarpal and Ms. Sampson*

The Women and Gender Equality Commissioners in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program hosted a public forum for the development of the Strategic Plan on 29<sup>th</sup> January, at the Dutch Bottle Cafe. The audience included staff of the UNDP and CEOs of the Rights of the Child Commission and Indigenous People’s Commission together with Ms. Paulette Henry, Consultant tasked with the preparation of the 5 Year Strategic Plan.

The main objective was to agree on the thematic priorities of the Commission. The participants agreed to the following 8 priority areas for the five years Strategic Plan, “Institutional Strengthening for W&GEC,

Women, Leadership and Governance, Economic Improvement of Women, Gender Based Violence, Culture Traditions and Religious Practices, Gender and Health, Access to Justice and Partnerships and Collaboration.



*A section of the participants interacting at the forum*

### **Meeting with Mr. Alphonso, Administrator of the Men's Affairs Bureau on February 27, 2013**

Mr. Alphonso of the Men's Affairs Bureau was invited to a meeting with the Commission so that both entities would be appraised of the work in which the other was engaged.

Mr. Alphonso shared the calendar of activities for the Men's Affairs Bureau from January to December, 2013, which included:

1. Suicide Intervention Prevention Workshops in Regions 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6
2. Father's Day event -16<sup>th</sup>, June, 2013 Men's Health Fair.
3. Establishment of Men Support Groups
4. Prison Outreach Programme
5. Walk-Men Against Domestic Violence
6. Mentorship Programme for Boys in Children's Homes

7. No More Black and Blue Campaign
8. New Opportunity Corps Outreach
9. Magnificent Man 3
10. Follow up on the Skeldon Declaration
11. Continued School Outreaches.
12. Continued Male Education and awareness on Gender Based Violence, Sexual Offences, Men's Health and Masculinity.



**It was agreed that the W&GEC and the MAB will collaborate on the following:**

- Promote sessions for School Drop Outs
- Advocate for Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) programme in school curriculum
- Promote 'Celebrity Male Role Models' to be used in Campaign against Domestic Violence in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, Youth & Sport at Sports arenas and in Public Service announcements.
- Advocate for more males to be teachers, nurses, counsellors, etc.
- Support Males advocating for the rights of women.

Advocate for gender mainstreaming in all ministries.



**Stakeholders validation meeting to finalise the Commission’s 5 year Strategic Plan on February 26, 2013 at Cara Lodge**



*(L-R) Commissioner Radzik, Chairperson Chandarpal, Commissioner Corbin, Justice Roxane George and CEO Indigenous People’s Commission, Ms. Autry Haynes*

The W&GEC invited stakeholders to garner feedback and additional inputs to the strategic direction for the Commission’s Strategic Plan for 2013-2018. The Chairperson of the proceeding Commissioner Vanda Radzik introduced the Deputy Chairperson, Ms. Cheryl Sampson to give the opening remarks.

The CEO reviewed the workshop objectives and explained that the main purpose of the workshop.

Commissioner Radzik facilitated the session on ‘Gap Analysis and Roles and Functions of the Commission’. The Commissioners led the group discussions on the ‘Thematic Priorities and Identification and Validation of stakeholders’ roles and responsibilities’. The Commission was able to obtain valuable input for the Strategic Plan from relevant stakeholders.



*Commissioners Persaud and Pollard with other participants*

## **Round Table discussion at NCN on March 3, 2013 to observe International Women's Day**

The Women and Gender Equality hosted a Round Table discussion on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2013 at NCN. The members of the Panel were Justice Roxanne George, Ms. Karen De Souza from Red Thread, Mr. Vidyaratha Kissoon and Ms. Indranie Chandarpal, Chairperson of the Women and Gender Equality Commission.

The discussion should have focused on the National Development Strategy (NDS) Recommendations Chapter 25, but participants seized the opportunity to speak on other issues which their respective organizations were focusing on. Some of the issues raised were those of Domestic Violence and the need for a coordinated approach

Eventually, the presenters reinforced the need for an evaluation of the NDS, Chapter on Women since it was felt that there is not enough attention paid to the NDS. The Chairperson in her presentation sought to evaluate the progress that was made in the different areas since the adoption of the Strategy. Reference was made to the fact that there are programs such as the Poverty Reduction Program (PRSSP) and the Low Carbon Development Strategy which encompasses aspects of the NDS.

## **Exhibition at the Parliament Building to honour Outstanding Women-March 15-31 2013.**



In observance of Women's History Month 2013, the Women and Gender Equality Commission hosted an exhibition at the Parliament Building. Ten outstanding women were honoured among them were four

Guyanese namely, Eileen Cox, Andaiye, Kowsilla and Deserey Fox. The other women honoured were Portia Simpson-Miller of Jamaica, Vilma Espin Guillois of Cuba, Dilma Rousseff of Brazil, Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan, Selma James of U.S.A and Leymah Roberta Gbowee of Liberia.

The Commission is committed to making this an annual feature and also proposed to expand this to the National Library and other places of interest.



*A section of the participants at the exhibition*

### **Meeting with SASOD –March 26, 2013**

Members of Society against Sexual and other Discrimination (SASOD) Ms. Zenita Nicholson, Renuka Anandjit and Coleen Mc Kwen of GuyBow Office met with the Commissioners at the Statutory Meeting held on March 26, 2013. Ms Nicholson said that the Lesbian Bisexual, Gay and Transgender (LBGT) Network of Guyana is a gathering of lesbian, bisexual, and trans gender women and allies living in Guyana

The group was launched on June 16, 2012 at GuyBow office, Guyana. With the main goal being to support lesbian, bisexual, and trans women, to provide stress relief and a listening ear to each other, and to build a more positive and nurturing environment.



Representatives of SASOD

She added that LBT Women Network also aimed to combat discrimination and reduce stigma in the public sphere by sensitizing heterosexuals, engaging with religious communities and other key decision makers.

The intention of the LBT Women’s Network of Guyana is not to separate from the larger LGBT community. She said that they acknowledged the fact that gay and “transmen”, because they are sometimes more visible in society, bear a somewhat greater brunt of homophobia and discrimination. However, they do not believe that lesbian and bisexual women “get a pass” or are unaffected by homophobia and stigma. In fact, many women who do not conform to traditional societal roles and expectations of femininity- such as by way of outward physical appearance, attire, family structure, reproductive choices, and non-traditional work are discriminated against.

**The Commission’s Booth at the Women Exposition at the Hotel Tower-November 26, 2012**



The Georgetown Chamber of Commerce & Industry, The Women Entrepreneurship Network (WENET) and event Volunteer Task Force, hosted a Women's Enterprise Exposition (WEnEx).

The objectives of the exhibition were as follows:

- To show case women's organisations and services available to women
- Stimulate female independence, safety and success in Guyana
- Provide support and networking opportunities to women

This exhibit for women empowerment and equality aimed to stimulate female independence, safety and success in Guyana. The organization offered systems of support to women and/or by women to showcase organizations outreach and services. The participation of the Commission provided an opportunity to promote awareness of the Commission's activities, network, and to help strengthen the identification of resources for women and youth. The opportunity afforded other organisations to join in the fight to promote advocacy for women's support groups, gender equality and women's empowerment in Guyana.

Members of the panel to discuss Gender Equality in Guyana: Challenges and Successes were: Ms. Jennifer Webster, Minister of Human Services and Social Security, Simona Broomes - President of Women's Miner Association, Dr. Paloma Mohamed – UG Dean of Faculty, Social Sciences, Valerie Lowe – Member of Parliament, Alliance for Change, Vanda Radzik – Chairwoman of Board of Directors of Moray House Trust, founder member of Red Thread and Commissioner on the Women and Gender Equality Commission. There were a number of relevant recommendations at this forum.

### **Presentation of the Commission's Final Strategic Plan at the Umana Yana-April 17, 2013**

On the April 17, 2013 the Consultant Ms. Paulette Henry presented the Final Strategic Plan to the Chairperson of the W&EC Ms. Indranie Chandarpal who in turn presented a copy to Hon. Minister Jennifer Webster and Resident Representative of UNDP Ms. Kadija Meusa.

Both persons were high in praise for the initiative and activities conducted by the W&GEC with very limited funding before the development of the 5 year Plan. The Chairperson expressed appreciation on behalf of the Commission and reiterated the Commission 'commitment to work with stake holders and the donor community to see the implementation of the Plan.



*(L-R) Consultant Ms. Paulette Henry, Ms. Kadija Meusa - United Nations Development Program Resident Representative, and Hon Minister of Social Services and Social Security Ms. Jennifer Webster, Chairperson of the W&GEC Ms. Indranie Chandarpal at the Podium.*



*(L-R) Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr. Raphael Trotman, Director of Prisons Mr. Dale Erskine, Justice Prem Persaud and other Participants*



*(Front Row L-R) Hon. Minister of Social Services Ms. Jennifer Webster, Chairperson of the W&GEC Ms. Indranie Chandarpal, Resident Representative of the UNDP Office in Guyana Ms. Khadija Musa and the Deputy Representative Chisa Mikami and Consultant Ms. Paulette Henry*

*Back Row L-R (Commissioners Logan, Hooper, Corbin, Persaud, Baron Chairperson Ms. Cheryl Sampson, Mr. Trevor Benn and Mr. George Washira, UNDP, Commissioners Coonjah, Lagan, Burton AA, M. Raghbir, Commissioner Burton, CEO, D. Swan-Lawrence and N. Cole.*

**Meeting with Dr. James Rose and Mr. Lennox Canterbury, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports on April 24, 2013 at 13.00 hours**

The Chairperson facilitated the necessary introductions and said that the Commission was concerned about the nature of the festivities during the Mashramani Celebration. She added that the revellers needed to ‘tone down’ on the dressing and ‘whine up’.

Commissioners made the following observations:

- The mode of dress among school children needs to be addressed.
- There must be standards to which the Ministry of Culture holds participants to by rewarding them when they “do it right.”
- The type of music selected for children to perform must be carefully chosen.
- Commissioners agreed that the Theme on celebration after hard work should be promoted but it seems as if celebration is misinterpreted by the population at large.

- Persons were not respecting the role of the judges who are required to hear the music to judge the road March for the king or queen because of the loud ‘boom boom’ boxes displayed along the road.
- The negative social behaviour has caused an increase in sexual violence against women and girls.
- The Ministry of Culture should begin the process to create a standard national dress and look at some new patriotic songs for Guyana

Dr. Rose said that he is working on the concerns and is looking forward to the W&GEC support.

Mr. Canterbury referred to the behaviours which are a reflection of the homes and schools. He said that the Ministry of Youth Sports and Culture had several meetings to discuss the behaviours and changes in the route for the parade. However, City Hall sees the occasion as a great revenue earner so most persons turn a ‘blind eye’ to what is going on.

The Commissioners agreed that the Commission should work with the Ministry of Culture and proposed that the Commission should be represented as a part of the Central Planning Committee.

### **Meeting with Ms. Alyssa Trotz on May 3, 2013**

The Women & Gender Equality Commission met with Ms Trotz a Gender Specialist to discuss areas of collaboration between the W&GEC, the University of Guyana and the University in Toronto to which she is attached.

The following suggestions were discussed:

1. Institutional Strengthening for the Commission
2. An MOU between University of Guyana and University of Toronto
  - a. To open research opportunities for the Commission
  - b. Assess long, medium and short termed goals of the Commission
  - c. The need for a researcher to help guide the revision and reform of relevant legislation and policy
3. Consider the need for a certificate courses such as those offered at UWI
4. To prepare a directory of women’s organizations
5. Use radio plays such as Merundoi to highlight issues of access to justice and to domestic violence.
6. Collaborate with the University of Guyana to set up a Gender Studies Unit
7. Conference on the Status of Women in Guyana for 2014



## **Meeting with Ms Bibi S Shadick former Minister of Human Services and Social Security and Member of Parliament on May 29, 2013**

Ms. Shadick explained that “Trafficking in Persons’ or human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery. Traffickers often prey on individuals who are poor, frequently unemployed or underemployed and who may lack access to social safety nets, predominantly women and children in certain countries. Victims are often lured with false promises of good jobs and better lives and then forced to work under brutal and inhuman conditions. She added that it involves recruitment, transportation, harbouring and receipt of persons, through threat, force, abduction and the abuse of a power of authority by overcoming someone less powerful. She cited several cases in the USA.

She said that three hundred persons were trained from all across the country in trafficking in persons and ninety two persons volunteered to be trained as social workers. She added that new persons were still being trained for suicide prevention and lamented that we continue to reinvent the wheel.

She said that most of what is termed trafficking in persons is exploitation of man by man. We therefore need adults to take charge to better nurture our children and to inform others of their responsibility towards their children.

She made the following suggestions:

- All cases of trafficking in persons should be dealt with by one magistrate so that they develop an systematic way of handling the cases.
- Government and non government organisations need to effectively network to arrest exploitation of persons
- There is need for written protocols.
- Need for a sustainable approach for initiatives of prior policy makers
- Trafficking matters should be handled expeditiously
- Need to write Chancellor urging that this be done
- She asked Commissioners to circulate all the necessary information in relation to Trafficking in Persons to the Commission.

## **Meeting with Representatives of the Women Miners Association on May 29, 2013**

The Women Miners Association was represented by Marina Charles, Eureka Primus and Dana Jones. Ms. Eureka Primus the Vice Chairperson of the Association said that the objectives of their organisation were:

- To Train women in special skills for mining
- Combat Trafficking in persons
- Combat Child Labour
- Support persons who are being exploited.

She said that the membership was \$20,000 yearly and the Head Quarters was situated at 106 Brickdam in the Guyana Girl Guides Association.

She said that many parents were ‘deeply’ involved in the Trafficking of their own children. She added that children as young as seven and eight years old were trafficked but the majority of girls ‘trafficked’ ranged in ages from 12 years to 15 years.

When asked what type of representation they offer to their membership she said that the Association intervened in the non-payment of miners by meetings with the Ministry of Labour, and GGMC.

When asked by a Commissioner about persons going in with cruisers. She said that once the child is under 16 they will be turned back. She said that at first the boat service would not allow person to travel without ID but that is no longer upheld. In response to a question from the Commissioners about the collaboration with the communities she said that there was no real collaboration but the Association always have meetings in all the communities they visit. The Commissioners suggested that they should collaborate with the religious groups and communities.

In response to a question on how many persons had been charged for Trafficking in persons with their intervention she said one perpetrator was charged to date.

She concluded by saying that the Association hold parents responsible for the high incidences of trafficking in persons. She also said that not many women were into mining because they faced many challenges and many of them were exploited by the land owners who wanted sexual favours and generally took advantage of the women, as a result most worked as cooks and shop keepers.

The Commissioners recommended that persons going into the interior must have and ID card and that there should be collaboration with the Women’s Affairs Bureau.

**Meeting between the W&GEC and the Vice Chancellor - Mr. Jacob Opadeyi, University of Guyana on Monday June 10, 2013 at 14:30 hours**

**Present were:**

1. Mrs. Chandarpal – Chairperson, WGEC
2. Commissioner Radzik
3. Commissioner Pollard
4. Commissioner Chuck-A-Sang

**Issues raised by Commissioners:**

- Establishment of a Gender Studies Center
- Online Courses on Gender and Development
- Support a Diploma or Certificate Program
- Support one student (1 year tuition fee) on research on Gender studies
- Violence and sexual harassment free zone at the University
- Memorandum of Understanding between University of Guyana and the University of Toronto

**Responses by Vice Chancellor**

Propose to do the following:

- a) Organize workshop every semester on gender studies using local persons.
- b) Every department to have a course in gender studies at least 1 hour per week
- c) To consider working with the Creative Art Centre to take gender issues to the streets.
- d) Need Sexual Harassment Policy and Regulations to guide policy.
- e) Billboards – Placement of No Violence and No Sexual Harassment Zone.
- f) Promote the “Right to Speak Campaign” as is being done currently in Trinidad & Tobago.
- g) Proposed a Staff/Student Committee to address issues of interest to the University.

**Meeting with representatives of the Commissioner of the Police on June 13, at the Commissioners Board Room**

In attendance were:

1. Indranie Chandarpal (Chairperson of the W&GEC) and Commissioner Renata Chuck-A-Sang

2. Police Representatives - Balram Persuad Deputy Commissioner (Administration), George Vyphius (Assistant Commissioner of Operation), Mr Paul Williams (Training Officer of the GPF), Mr. Ian Amsterdam, Ms Halley (Juvenile Officer) and Ms Beresford (Legal Officer).

The meeting commenced with introductory remarks by the Chairperson who provided an overview of the Commission and its mandate.

Based on the mandates of the Work Plan Committee the following matters were raised:

- Status of the Gender Based Violence Unit and other facilities for women
- Implementation of Training of Police in relation to Gender Based Violence
- Procedures in place for Reports of Rape, Sexual Assault and confidentiality governing reports on Sexual Assault.

**The following responses were made by the representatives of the Commissioner of Police:**

- Twenty (20) police stations were remodelled
- Senior Officer Maxine Graham would intervene on behalf of the Commission
- Every single officer is exposed to the Domestic Violence Modules and Manuals
- Every station has two or three officers who work with NGO's, Human Service Ministry and Probation officers
- 95% of domestic violence cases are withdrawn by victims – a proposal was made by the Police for 1 year bond and parties to be sentenced to mandatory counselling at Mediation Centres
- Rate of Rape Conviction is 1 out of 97
- Based on the new Sexual Offences Bill offenders now get bail at police station within 72 hours. The Police alleged they were not consulted on this Amendment.
- There is need for a special judges trained to be assigned to matters relating to Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence.
- Cases are heard and once the Magistrate changes the matter starts all over again
- A concern was expressed regarding the practice whereby matters are restarted once the Magistrate changes

## **W&GEC recommendations:**

- A Zero tolerance Billboard on Violence and Sexual Harassment at Police Stations
- Suggestion boxes at police stations for members of the public
- Establish in Every Division a Sexual Offences Unit.
- W&GEC is prepared to partner with the Police in the fight against Sexual Violence
- Noise nuisance is a public health matter and should be determined by decibel level rather than affected citizens.

## **SUB COMMITTEES OF THE W&GEC**

### **MEDIA MONITORING COMMITTEE**

The Media Monitoring Committee is made up of the following Commissioners:

- Karen Van Sluytman-Corbin
- Ernestine Baker-Logan
- Nandranie Coonjah
- Gillian Burton
- Peter Persaud
- Nicole Cole
- Bibi Haleima Khan

The Committee is made up of commissioners from the different geographical locations and they are required to monitor the newspapers, televisions and radio to know whether anything that seeks to promote violence or negative stereotypes of male and female in society is brought to the attention of the Commission for any action that is needed .

### **THE WORK PLAN COMMITTEE**

The Work plan Committee is made up of the following Commissioners:

- Chairperson Indranie Chandarpal
- Deputy Chairperson Cheryl Sampson
- Commissioners:
- Magda Pollard,
- Renata Chuck a Sang,
- Sandra Hooper,
- Vanda Radzik

The Work plan Committee works in between the statutory meetings to look at the annual work programme and to plan and guide the work of the Commission. The Committee meets often to ensure implementation.

## **Report**

### **Access to Justice held in Region 2 on June 21 2013 at the Anna Regina Town Hall.**

The Women & Gender Equality Commission was represented by Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal Chairperson, Commissioners Nicole Cole and Hymwantie Lagan. The event was co-ordinated by Commissioner Juliet Coonjah representing the Regional Women's Affairs Committee of Region 2. Inspector Persaud from the Guyana Police Force and Mr. Mahendra Thakurdatt Chief Probation Officer for Region No. 2

The Chairperson for the event was Commissioner Kay Lagan. The welcoming remarks were made by the Vice Chairman of the Region Mr. V Samaroo who made the following remarks:

- He welcomed the Chairperson and Team to the very important Forum
- With the advent of the PPP/C Government from 1992 there were active works at the Community and Parliamentary level to uphold women's Rights via Legislation to empower them
- The Government recognised women were being trampled on hence the need for laws to protect them. While laws are in place, people do not have knowledge of these laws and where to seek advice; hence the need to promote education for women in Guyana so that they can be in a better position to make choices.
- He concluded by saying that he hoped and trust that the time will be well spent and that collectively all can work to promote equality for women.

The Objectives and Overview of the Commission was done by Commissioner Lagan who provided the timeline of W&GEC's establishment since August, 2009. She referred to the composition of the Commission which consisted of 16 Commissioners and 2 additional Commissioners from the Indigenous Peoples Commission and the Rights of the Child Commission.

She welcomed all at the Forum and said that:

- MHSSS boldly embraces Access to Justice for Women
- More women graduate from the University of Guyana and other institutions of learning.
- Legal Aid Service is available to women to assist in Domestic Issues, Occupancy, Restraining Order, Maintenance Order, Matters of Divorce and all different forms of Abuse,
- Help and Shelter provides a wide range of services from women in Violent Situation- to the care of Women and Children.
- WAB implement programmes to empower women about their Rights and is equipped to give them an opportunity to improve their circumstances.
- Public Assistance, Women of Worth (WOW) and Difficult Circumstances also provide Financial Services to women who are in need.
- There is a need to have increased male involvement even as Women's Rights are being promoted; hence the establishment of the Men's Affairs Bureau in November 2011.

The Chairperson intervened and referred to Gender Equality and what it meant and said that

“Government recognised the need for safe places when they passed the 1996 Domestic Violence Act. They assisted in the establishment of Help and Shelter by providing the building, resources and assistance periodically to help manage the services”.

**A member from the floor raised the issue of a child who had been bedridden for 7 years and who was denied assistance.**

The Chairperson explained why beneficiaries are denied continuous assistance and proceeded to explain the process. Single Parent Families get – P.A. (Public Assistance) for 5 years.

**A woman complained of being cut off after P.A. for 1 year after her husband died.**

The Probation officer explained again that with the removal of the Means Test in 1993 all persons were able to have old age pension benefit. Public Assistance was intended for really severe cases- Elderly falling through the cracks, people who were sick and unable to take care of their kids, bedridden-PWD.

However, people started to abuse the public assistance system without trying to work to help themselves hence the establishment of a periodic review

Difficult Circumstance Unit was created to help those people who were severely affected by financial difficulties. Spectacles were given via the DCU until the Ministry of Health came on board

**One participant said that many women are enduring hardships in relationships- is there a Help and Shelter in Region 2**

The Chairperson in response stated there is none but there is Legal Aid service available to members of the public.

The example was given of Genesis Home where temporary shelter was provided to a victim who took all her children and refused to leave the shelter after 1 year.

There are numerous examples where the abused women will go to the court and beg for the men who had beaten and abused them.

The W& GEC is proposing the idea of the Community Counselling Centres to mediate between Couples who are in conflict. We should not wait until they are murdered. Murder is the end result of a relationship that was in jeopardy for years hence the need for Counselling as an intervention before the situation deteriorates

Police Inspector Persaud said that only 2% cases of Domestic Violence is reported to the police. He asked the question why women stay in relationship of Abuse. Is it because they are - Unaware of what “Abuse really” is? He cited the culture of Violence addressed via Domestic Violence 1996 and Trafficking In Persons Act 2010.

GPF is totally against Domestic Violence and practices a Zero tolerance approach.

Modernisation and remodelling of the Police Force will see the creation of safe places (white zones) within the Police Force to assist victims of Domestic Violence and encourage victims of violence to come forward and make complains if they are enduring Domestic Violence.

No longer must the Public FEAR the Police. Action must be taken if Report/Complaint of Domestic Violence is made.

It was reported that most of the new Stations have a Special room

Each Police officer is expected to be specially trained to intervene in Domestic Violence.

**Commissioner Lagan addressed the deficiencies in addressing matters of Domestic Violence as it relates to the Police. She cited instances when the victims were advised to return home to their “Abusive Homes”.**

It was stated that some Men are experiencing Abuse too and the Law also protect Men.

One participant reported that a Lawyer took \$40,000 to do a Protection Order for a Victim but the Man still attempted to kill the spouse and damaged her Vehicle. The same Lawyer was retained by the abusive Husband who took the \$40,000 from the abused Wife. It is alleged that the Lawyer who took the \$40,000 also wanted to sleep with the Victim when she went to him for his Professional Services. The Woman alleged that the Man threatened to “poison” her and her family.

She was told to report the matter to the Police-Inspector who would raise the matter with the Commander of Police in Essequibo.

One participant raised the problem of speeding Mini Buses and overcrowding where 30 children are packed in a 15 seater bus. Inspector asked that # of bus be recorded that are carrying overload and said that more needs to be done to curb speeding,

The issue of Incest and teenage pregnancies in the Riverian Communities was raised – How to deal with the abusive situation? Children and Parents live in denial. Example was given where 3 cases of students imbibing alcohol at the lake resort but whose parents were not very supportive of the police efforts to curb lawlessness.

The Inspector spoke on the positives of Single parents who have raised their children successfully without the assistance of the male; especially those who are financially independent.

An elderly woman asked the question on “Maintenance” according to law.

A Question was raised on Police collecting Bribes from overcrowded Minibuses;

The Inspector said Units are available to deal with corruption.

The problem of in school fighting was raised when it was alleged that a Teacher slapped and hit a child.



Question on the use of illegal drugs by drivers on mini-buses was raised. Intensified efforts are made to have Drug Mules off the streets; whilst there are breathalyser tests for alcohol; none exist for illicit drugs and this will have to be addressed in the Future;

### **Summary of Access to Justice Forum.**

Chairperson referred to the mandate of the Commission in making representation to the National Assembly and responded to some of the issues that were raised by referring:

- Legal Aid Centres are required to provide assistance along with Police in ensuring that victims get justice.
- The issue of Noise Nuisance and Loud Music was again reiterated at the forum as a matter of concern.
- Some fathers who are required by law to pay child support will often prefer to go and sit in jail ignoring the impact that it would have on his family.
- Many parents do not want their children to be corrected by the teachers and some tend to behave very aggressive thus forcing teachers to take a hands off attitude.
- The children are the product of the society in which they are raised. The challenges for the young people today are tremendous. Technology which is supposed to help society is abused. There was the recent case where a young girl who photographed herself in the washroom and send it around on the social network.
- Children are raped, some contract HIV, parents must accept their responsibilities and become more involved in their children lives. In the quest for material things people very often have skewed priorities.
- With Rights comes responsibilities and Parents must accept their responsibilities and accept their roles.
- As a parent you have to be alert. It is very important for parents to understand that both boys and girls are being RAPED. Drugs are destroying Families- Mothers are allowing their male Lovers to abuse their Children.
- She cited the example of the Coast Guards who had dumped a young man alive into the sea for money. She said that some people who should be serving and protecting the Public allow themselves to become greedy and corrupt.
- She concluded by saying that “Access to opportunities is what we must aspire to achieve. We in the Commission stand ready to assist women in their quest for Justice and equal opportunities”.

### **Feedback- Recommendations:**

Dorms of Secondary schools- Charity- needs a Dorm father. All dorms should be looked at in the country.

More sessions like these are needed in Regions with more Organisations involved;

Values need to be taught to Parents/ Children via the school curriculum – HFLE; because as women seek opportunities children are being left alone;

Knowledge gained will be taught to other persons in the Communities;

School children who were present will take knowledge garnered at this Forum and implement it within their schools;

Very timely Forum and the Commission should keep up the excellent work that they are doing.

## **REPORT**

### **Access to Justice in Region 7 held on Jun 20, 2013 at Bartica Secondary School Auditorium**

There were 30 persons – 24 Females and 6 males

The Facilitators were:

Mr. Gordon Bradford – Regional Chairman, Region 7

Mr. Linden Isles - Deputy Superintendent, Officer In Charge, Bartica Police station

Ms. Joycelyn Gomes – Probation & Social Services Officer – Region 7

The Welcoming Remarks were made by Mr. Gordon Bradford – Regional Chairman, Region 7

- He welcomed the Commissioners and
- Expressed support from Councilors from Upper Mazaruni
- He said that the outreach is a timely intervention especially in area of Domestic Violence which is on the increase. Every day the newspapers and newscasts carry stories of Domestic and other forms of Violence.
- He referred to the role of the police and said that police play an important role in assisting persons/victims in getting justice.
- Justice can be denied due to lack of knowledge
- He encouraged men to recognize that women are special. Reference was made to the Bible where God noticed Adam's loneliness and give Adam companionship in the form of Eve. Treat women with love and respect.
- He concluded by saying that "there must be Zero tolerance on Domestic Violence at all times. Persons do not like to seek knowledge of the justice system until something drastic happens".

**The Objectives of the Commission was presented by Commissioner Ernestine Logan who referred to the mandate of the Commission which are:**

- To promote the Women & Gender Equality Commission's mandates through activities
- To consult with stakeholders on women's issues pertaining to their social and economic needs
- To have some of these issues adequately addressed by Regional representatives
- To consolidate the results of these consultations into a document that can be used to lobby for a better way of life for women.

**Mr. Linden Isles - Deputy Superintendent, Officer In Charge, Bartica Police Station spoke on the role of the Police in relation to justice. He made the following points:**

- What is Justice? Defined as “fairness”, persons believe that lack of knowledge cause them not to be treated fairly
- What is access? Defined as “a way to” – Access To Justice can be termed as “a way to fairness”
- An adult woman seeking a way to fairness, be it for:
  1. Domestic Violence
  2. Rape
  3. Trafficking In Person
  4. Threats
- Process and Challenges in Accessing Justice:
  1. Women when reporting Domestic Violence issues looks for guidance. The police Force have a Zero Tolerance on Domestic Violence
  2. Hesitance by women to go through with a prosecution prefer the police to warn the perpetrator and not prosecute
  3. When the police receive a report – a female police escorts the victim to the hospital. Many occasions the victim refuses to give a statement thus stymieing the process.

The refusal for taking legal action in many instances is due to fear because the perpetrator is the breadwinner and the victim is dependent on him for the family livelihood.
- Rape: whenever a female accuses a male of rape, it is for the male to prove his innocence.
- Police actions:
  1. Report received
  2. Interview/ statement
  3. Visit to Doctor accompanied by female police
  4. Police visits crime scene
  5. Arrest suspect, interview and placed in custody – after 72 hours can be placed on bail
- The police have 3 months to do further investigations and send file to the D.P.P. for advice.
- Traffic in Persons:

Whenever a person finds himself/herself in an unusual situation, the person needs to leave the location. If held despite objection, then this is TIP. If, the person remains without any objection and has access to interact with the public and does not leave the location then this is not TIP. Perpetrators visit the places and then target their victims
- Threats:

Very often persons do not report threats until it becomes physical. However, the need for a witness when reporting a threat is difficult to obtain. The Police can still arrest the perpetrator. If there is enough evidence the police should move towards prosecution.

Conclusion:

There is need for more women involvement, especially at these forums. There are women in some circles who look the other way. They need to speak out.

There is inadequate reporting in some instances due to geographic location. The need to deal with cases of Domestic Violence must at all times be taken seriously for the result is often murder.

Everyone must make a concerted effort to reduce Domestic Violence so that we can live without it.

**Ms. Joycelyn Gomes – Probation & Social Services Officer of Region 7 spoke on the role of the Probation Office.**

Probation Purpose and Objective:

The ideal situation is to create a family unit, productive, safe and healthy environment; however, due to acts of Domestic Violence women usually develop health issues.

Domestic Violence against women and children need national attention.

Men too are victims of Domestic Violence

Types of Abuse:

Emotional – Learned behavior see parents do it and the children continue the process.

Advise parents to desist from abusing each other in front of the children.

Physical – abuse can cause serious health issues

Steps to be Taken:

- Report and ensure that action is taken by police.
- Seek advice from the Legal Aid Center
- Participants were reminded that a man can be taken to court for maintenance and still live in the same house if he does not give money for maintenance.

Victims can seek assistance by:

Protection Order  
Occupational Order  
Maintenance Order  
Tenancy Order

Entitlement to Property:

Married for 5 years and over and not working

Married for 5 years and over and working

Conclusion:

Gain your rightful benefits by seeking knowledge and using the procedures

Forms at court

Seek assistance from court orderly

At times the victim is traumatized by constant abuse

The Magistrate may order the couple to make up if both parties are agreeable.

### **Summary: Commissioner Cheryl Sampson, Deputy Chairperson**

- Welcomed everyone especially presenters.
- Generally the Police (not the Officers here) learn what is in the curriculum and then forget about it after being inducted.
- Cited an instance where the Police informed the perpetrator who had made the report at the station
- Both women and men are victims of Domestic Violence
- We need to understand that “the men who ill-treat our women are also our sons”, at times it is a learned behavior and at other times other influences take precedence.
- Suggested that the senior students of the secondary schools be present at forum like these since Domestic Violence starts from an early age.
- Domestic Violence is escalating in Guyana but the laws are in our favour. Don't accept Domestic Violence when things go out of hand; get out and get jobs, it may not be the ideal job but take whatever you can get until the right job comes along.
- Advocate for Health & Family Life Education to continue in all schools. Teachers and students also have problems. Communicate with anyone at church, women's organization, Head Teachers and others.
- Topic on rape is timely – gang rape is now becoming prevalent in our society.
- The process in charging a perpetrator in rape cases is long and drawn out. At times the police do not do their work and Justice is not meted out in a timely manner.
- TIP exploitation is not always due to poverty, families need to talk to each other more and avoid the quick rich syndrome as a way to make their lives better.

**There was no representative from Child Care & Protection Agency.**

### **Participants' Response:**

#### **Questions/Comments/Observations:**

- Typical situation in Upper Mazaruni by Upper Mazaruni Councilor:
  - There are occasions when the Police Officer advises persons not to make report on cases of Domestic Violence. It is not right for any person to live in fear when Domestic Violence and Child Abuse exist.
  - Both men and women are aggressive.
  - Encourage mothers, aunts, grandmothers to talk to boys not to involve in Domestic Violence.
  - In many situation the attitude and behavior is coming from the home:

- The Loud music in ears, the movies, impresses and controls the lives of the children and youths. It is not wise to leave the children and youths unattended with a lot of modern technologies in their possession.
- Spend more time with children and their teachers.
- In the Interior court is held every 3 months. The Protection Order will not work in these instances. The man will getaway and no Police Officer can find him.
- The Court system is very slow and when you look at the geographical layout and the cost to travel 60 – 90 miles, only to hear that the case is dismissed because police or some other witness is not present. Even if someone wants to take action in the hinterland it is sometimes futile.
- Policy makers must not formulate policies in Georgetown which are not applicable to a rural or hinterland communities.
- Woman in common law or married relationship for 20 years, the husband dies and everything was in the man's name. What right to property does the wife have?
- Once in a common law relationship for 7 years the wife has the right to apply not later than 1 year after the death of the man to make a claim, seek the service of Legal Aid for further advice.
- The current law allows for a child who is 16 years old to be sexually active while living with their parents. If a parent who does not like their young daughter to behave in this manner and slaps the girl child when she returns home at “whatever” hour, should the parent be arrested, fined or jailed?
- This law needs to be revised very early because it is allowing our children to behave promiscuously.
- In schools, corporal punishment is no longer allowed. It is sad to say that the students feel that they can show attitude and be very disrespectful towards teachers, fellow students and prominent persons in the community. Even the Police come in for their rudeness. This law needs to be revised very early.
- Men who beat up their wives and show attitude to the Police, Probation Officer and others get serious and comes down to their senses when they see the prisoners in handcuffs and have to face the magistrate.
- Perpetrators have bribed police officer for witnesses not to go to court.
- The Police are trained to implement the Domestic Violence Act at training school. Yet at times they behave unprofessionally.
- The victim who was assaulted by her Husband or boyfriend and does not want to pursue prosecution will now be charged for wasting the Courts time.
- In a situation of both boy and girl who are below 16 years of age and are sexually active. The girl when caught often cries rape. Will the boy be charged for statutory rape?

**Issues and Concerns raised:**

- Officer in Charge should be informed well in advance on issues of potential TIP. However, junior ranks do not allow members of the public to see the Officer In Charge. Junior ranks will often assist more than the Senior Ranks/Officers
- Call for a special room at the station to deal with Domestic Violence cases.

It is on the Modernization Plan for Bartica to have a special room at the station to deal with Domestic Violence cases. They do not yet have this facility.

- The call for all Domestic Violence cases not to be tried in open court but in camera.
- In instances where women are the perpetrator and the victim is a male; the police offer little or no assistance to the victim. Instead they laugh and mock the victim.
- There is a case of someone charged with murder and the witness lives high in the Pakaraima Mountains about 300 feet up and cannot go to court. It takes about 9 hours of walking in the dry season. The case was dismissed for lack of evidence. There are instances when the Magistrate was informed by word of mouth that the witness is dead and closed the case. The police and magistrate need to understand the culture, climate and environment in which they live and work.
- A sore point in the system is that cases are often dismissed for the want of evidence
- Years ago financial assistance from the court system was given to persons who had to travel long distances, but due to financial constraint this is no longer happening.
- Persons with their I.D Cards or any other picture identity must present themselves to the Mines Officer when going to purchase permits to lessen the amount of under age persons
- Collaboration with police is a must.
- There is no Legal Aid representative in this region.
- The Labor Officer comes and goes – allegedly. There is no notice board or sign for the public to know when the Labour Officer will be coming to this region. The situation is the same for the Child Care and Protection Agency Officer.
- In instances of rape and/or domestic violence cases, there is no private place for statements at the police station
- Persons have to leave Bartica, Port Kaituma etc. and go to Suddie to register their business. Taking the geography of the region into consideration there should be a mobile service.

### **Closing Remarks: Commissioner B. Haliema Khan**

In this region access to justice is not what it should be. There is the urgent need for a number of services to be accessed by the public. This is an impediment to justice.

It is costly for persons to be travelling to and from Georgetown and/or Suddie to get their matters resolved. They have to lose a day's work, pay transportation cost and confidentiality is compromised – because they have to tell all sundry their story before they can reach the right person.

She thanked everyone who assisted in making the outreach a success on behalf of the W&GEC

### **REPORT**

#### **Access to Justice in Region 1 held on Jul 5, 2013 at Mabaruma/Coomaka Agriculture Extension Centre.**

#### **Commissioners were:**

Ms. Shalimar Ali Hack  
 Ms. Hymawattie Lagan  
 Ms. Ernestine Barker-Logan

**Representatives from the Region were:**

**Chairman** Mr Paul Pierre

**Officer in Charge 2nd Lieutenant** David Rooplall

**Regional Education Officer** Mr Darriel Krammer

Three were 84 Participants – 41 Males and 43 Female

The Forum was chaired by Commissioner Lagan who spoke on the mandate of the commission; the activities that were done so far; the objectives of the programme and the role of the Police in relation to the forum. Commissioner Lagan apologised for the absence of the Probation Officer and she encouraged the full participation of the audience to the process.

Welcoming remarks were done by Regional Chairman Mr. Paul Pierre who was very instrumental in arranging the Mabaruma end of the Forum and for the successful attendance from the various stakeholders present.

Mr. David Rooplall, Lieutenant Officer -in-Charge of the Region spoke on Domestic Violence and the process needed for accessing justice for women.

- a. Attitude towards Domestic Violence -Zero Tolerance
- b. Actions to be taken and he outlined 18 steps
  - 1 Report
  - 2 Interview ( seek privacy)
  - 3 Look for visible signs of injury; visit the hospital, if necessary
  - 4 Take statement from Virtual Complainant and children
  - 5 Visit scene , secure exhibits
  - 6 Inform Virtual Complainant about Domestic Violence Act
  - 7 Arrest perpetrator
  - 8 Inform perpetrator of allegation
  - 9 Hold confrontation
  - 10 Keep perpetrator in custody if appropriate
  - 11 Escort perpetrator for medical, if necessary
  - 12 Advice both parties to seek counselling
  - 13 Keep perpetrator in custody
  - 14 Send report through the system
  - 15 Follow status of case
  - 16 Police can file for protection order on behalf of victims
  - 17 Inform V.C. of the outcome of case
  - 18 Charge perpetrator
- c. Challenges.
  - 1 Victims are often unwilling to give statement or seek medical assistance



- 2 Court sits every three months which given rise to the saying “Justice delayed is Justice denied”
- 3 Witness and perpetrators often do not present themselves to Court

Mr. Darriel Krammer, Regional Education Officer of Region 1 spoke on Education and Attitude. He made the following points:

1. People should be able to express themselves and not depend on Tashaos and Leaders to speak for them.
2. He applauded the initiative to invite the students. He emphasised that he was happy that students were invited to the forum to hear about abuse because it is a learnt behaviour and can start among siblings.
3. The Education System has guidelines to channel such behaviour and alluded to the HFLE programme where respect, tolerance and interaction are taught, and he implored parents to educate their children, not just on Math and English but also on good principles.
4. Mr Krammer concluded by saying” women are equal to men, men were made to do all the work, women were made to assist them”. He went on to encourage the residents to practice the right things all the time, to respect themselves and others and strive to make Region 1 violence free.

**The Summery** was done by the DPP Commissioner Shalimar Ali Hack

Commissioner Hack commended the communities for their position on respect stating that such atmosphere is sadly missing in Georgetown and the Coastland.

She encouraged the Churches and Tashaos to work together against alcohol consumption since it aggravates abusive behaviour in people. The following points were raised by the DPP:-

- a. Alcohol has far reaching effects it is often used as an excuse for drunkenness, fights, rape, murder and manslaughter
- b. She referred to the new sexual legislation and stated that no one under the age of 16 should be involved in sex
- c. Adults must keep their eyes open for children and do not take advantage on them sexually
- d. Children must stay in school and enjoy their childhood rather than imbinging in alcohol and narcotics
- e. Protection Order covers women, men, parents, children and siblings if case is severe persons will have to go to Georgetown to access a Protection Order
- f. Accessibility: For simple assault, these are dealt with at the Magistrate Court; rape, murder and manslaughter are sent to the High Court. Residents need to insist that their case be tried right in the region, if case is not brought up, they must tell the Magistrate about it. Make representation for court to be kept more often

- g. If an offence is committed, do not try to stop it. Let the case go to court, if one feels sorry they can ask for a bond or a suspended sentence, and witnesses need to come forward. Let the law take its course

## **Participants Response**

Responses came from Toshaos, CDC Chairmen, CDC councillors, residents and student. Following are some of the questions asked and responses given:

- a. Q: Is it right for women and children to buy alcohol at the market place?  
A: Children should not be sold alcohol.
- b. Q: Can persons sell alcohol in their homes and don't have licences?  
A: No, police should have an active campaign against it; residents must be watch dogs.
- c. Q: Can alcohol be sold to drunken person?  
A: No, recommended that a law be instituted to check the level of alcohol consumption.
- d. Q: What about person employing children less than 16yrs to work?  
A: That will be child labour.
- e. Q. Why are there no more visits from the police to the villages?  
A: Even the police need permission from the Toshaos to visit.
- f. Q: Is Mabaruma entitled to a Probation Officer?  
A: Recommendation will have to be made, encourage residents to take advantage of the Amerindian Affairs Ministry and train persons for that position. Sponsor two persons to obtain a Social Work diploma/ degree
- g. Q: Can children be charged for assaulting parents?  
A: Yes
- h. Q: What to do when persons are being abused and the police are doing nothing about it?  
A: Go to the Amerindian Affairs Ministry.

## **Conclusion:**

Region 1 Mabaruma's Access to Justice for Women Forum was well attended and widely represented from 11 eleven villages. Toshaos, Regional Vice Chairman, Village Chairmen and Councillors. They have agreed to work together and to take back the information given and use it to better the way of life of their people. The ministry of Health and Education representatives have also agreed to work along to make this a reality. An American based community group was also pleased to be there and to receive much needed information to help with their welfare aid to the community.

## **Report by Chairperson of the Women & Gender Equality Commission on her participation in the World Justice Forum in The Hague.**

The Chairperson of the Women & Gender Equality was invited to participate in the Fourth World Justice Forum in The Hague Netherlands from July 8 – 11<sup>th</sup> 2013.

The Forum is a global gathering designed to improve the state of the world by engaging leaders from civil society, government, business, academia, and elsewhere to develop practical, on –the-ground programs to strengthen the rule of law.

During the three days 550 participants from 150 countries engaged in the plenary and participated in breakout sessions, learn about innovative rule of law programmes, and discuss issues of interest with researchers and scholars during “workshop hours and network with other activists from around the world different.

The opening panel dealt with:

- Multidisciplinary Perspectives on the importance of the Rule of Law to Various Sectors
- The Rule of Law around the World and why it Matters

Four universal principles of Rule of Law were identified and these are:

- Government and its officers and agents as well as private actors must be held accountable under the law.
- The laws are clear
- The process by which the laws are enacted, administered and enforced is accessible, fair and efficient.
- Justice is delivered in a timely way

Rule of Law Matters because it deals with Economic, Political and Human Development

- Rule of Law countries enjoy higher per capita development
- Political development
- Human Development – Infant mortality
- Multi disciplinary collaboration is the most effective way to advance the rule of law
- Increased understanding of the laws
- Government reform direct or indirect

The topics for discussions were:-

- Women Leadership Rule of Law
- Role of Rule of Law in Peace & Security, Development, & Human Rights
- Strengthening the Rule of Law through impactful Programmes

There were 17 topics in which each group had to come up with a number of projects in the various areas which were discussed.

The Chairperson of the Women & Gender Equality Commission facilitated the Justice Incubator Session on “Combating Human Trafficking: Collaborative Solutions.

She was also very active in most of the sessions where questions were asked and suggestions were made.

She participated in the viewing of a film on the situation in Zimbabwe where she spoke extensively on the strategies which can be used to expose the undemocratic practices of the regime.

She made a number of important contacts for the Commission and there was one practical example where the representative of the Zambian government requested assistance from the Chairperson to help in the preparation of the questions that were intended for the political parties that were interested in contesting the up-coming general elections.

The Chairperson recommends that Conferences such as those should be attended by the Commission since it provides valuable insights, contacts and good practices that can be used for the benefit of the Commission.

Highpoints of the Forum were many; however one that was very eventful was the Keynote Conversation between she powerful women who in their own rights were influential in their respective countries as well as in the world areas.

Shirin Ebadaei, Founder and President, of Defenders of Human Rights Center in Iran. Shirin tells the story how she was a Medical Doctor and after the Taliban came to power, she and other women were not allowed to continue working. She was offered a secretarial job to which she refused and

Decided to go home and started to write about what was taking place in Iran. She faced endless persecution. She was considered as one of the most influential woman of all times and won the 2003 Nobel Prize.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Associate Justice, Supreme Court of the United States who shared her testimony regarding the obstacles she encountered in the early period of the 1930’s when she chose to attend law school.

Ellen Gracie Northfleet, Former Chief Justice Federal Supreme Court of Brazil

Together these three powerful women were able to share their testimonies on the challenges they had to overcome in order to arrive at the place where they were.



## STAKEHOLDERS' MEETING AT UMANA YANA ON APRIL 17, 2013

No	Name of Participant	Organisation
1	Nicole Cole	W&GEC/Guyana Rastafarian Council (Culture, Ethnic)
2	Gaiettri Baron	W&GEC/Labour
3	Natasha David	Ministry of Amerindian Affairs
4	Mohinie Narine	Guyanese Women in Development (GUYWID)– Georgetown
5	Coretta McDonald	Guyana Teachers Union (GTU)
9	Bibi Baldeo	Parliament Office
7	Major Lorraine Foster	Guyana Defence Force (GDF)
8	Leotha Matterson	Human Rights Commission (HRC)
9	Audrey Benn	University of Guyana (UG)
10	Carlos Castanede	Embassy of Mexico
11	Aleetha Culley	HRC
12	M. Seng Gupta	Indian High Commission
13	Patricia Sheerattan Bisnauth	Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association (GRPA)
14	Praxedes Fomit	Cuban Embassy
15	Sattie Kadane	Guyana Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU)
16	Autry Haynes	Indigenous Peoples Commission (IPC)
17	Patricia Gittens	UNICEF
18	Justice Prem Persaud	Public Utilities Commission (PUC)
19	Stacie Benjamin	Guyana Trade Union Congress (GTUC)/ Women Advisory Council
20	Kerry Ann Karim	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
21	Gillian Burton	W&GEC/Labour
22	Arian Browne	Stabroek News
23	Sandra Hooper	Rights of the Child Commission (RCC)/W&GEC
24	Genevieve Allen	National Congress of Women (NCW)
25	Nandranie Singh	Women's progressive Organisation (WPO)
26	Dale Erskine	Guyana Prisons Service
27	Hydar Ally	Public Service Commission (PSC)
28	Karen Vanslytman Corbin	W&GEC/GTUC Women Advisory Council
29	Andre Gonsalves	Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC)
30	Chandrawattie Sarran	WPO
31	Chisa Mikami	UNDP
32	Diego Alphonso	Men's Affairs Bureau(MAB)

33	Steve Singh	MAB
34	Patricia Chase Green	Mayor & City Council
35	Ann E Greene	Women Across Differences (WAD)
36	Sulimmon Braimoh	UNICEF
37	Tiffany Ram	WPO
38	Claudette Foo	WPO
39	Yvonne Stephenson	Min of LHSSS
40	Hymawattie Lagan	W&GEC/Women Affairs Bureau (WAB)
41	Dr. Rosalinda Hernandez	PAHO/WHO
42	Dr. Maxine Parris-Aaron	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)
43	Kean Chase	Child Link
44	Indira Anandjit	Min of Legal Affairs
45	Aleema Nasir	Chairperson RCC/ (CIOG)
46	Jennifer Webster	Minister of Human Services
47	C. Mentore	ERC
48	George Wachira	UNDP
49	Leana Bradshaw	Television Guyana (TVG 28)
50	Peter Persaud	W&GEC/Culture, Ethnic
51	Raphael Trotman	Speaker of the National Assembly
52	Petr Sizou	Russian Embassy
53	Ernestine Logan	W&GEC/Regional Women's Affairs Committee (RWAC) Region 10
54	Sherry Dass	WPO
55	Shaneeza Mohamed	WPO
56	Nickeisha Josphe	WPO
57	Trevor L Benn	UNDP
58	Olivia Rose	National Communications Network (NCN)
59	Shana Adonis	Guyana Women Leadership Institute (GWLI)
60	R. Burnett	Min of Home Affairs
61	Agnes Persaud	WPO
62	W.June Ann Crawford	St. Winifred Secondary
63	Dr. Hilary Brown	CARICOM
64	Hazel Halley Burnette	Former Head of WAB
65	Babsie Giddings	UNFPA
66	Nandranie Coonjah	W&GEC/RWAC Region 2

## Attendance to Statutory Meetings of the Women and Gender Equality Commission

### (25<sup>th</sup> -37<sup>th</sup> Statutory Meeting of the W&GEC)

#### Period after the Commission's Report to Parliament 2013

No	Names	Jun 2012	Jul 2012	Aug 2012	Sep 2012	Oct 2012	Nov 2012	Dec 2012	Jan 2013	Feb 2013	Mar 2013	Apr 2013	May 2013	Jun 2013	Total Present	Total Absent
1	Indranie Chandarpal -Chairperson	P	P	None	P	P	AE	None	P	P	P	P	P	P	10	1
2	Cheryl Sampson -Deputy Chairperson	AE	AE	None	L	L	A	None	AE	AE	P	P	AE	P	5	6
3	Ali-Hack Shalimar	AE	P	None	A	P	P	None	P	P	AE	AE	AE	P	5	5
4	Baron Gaietri	AE	P	None	AE	P	P	None	P	P	P	P	P	P	9	2
5	Burton Gillian	AE	P	None	P	A	P	None	P	P	L	P	AE	P	8	3
6	Chuck-A-Sang Renata	P	P	None	L	L	P	None	P	P	P	P	P	P	11	0
7	Cole Nicole	P	P	None	P	P	P	None	P	P	P	P	P	P	11	0
8	Coonjah Nandranie	P	P	None	P	A	A	None	P	AE	P	P	P	P	8	3
9	Corbin Karen Vansluytman	AE	P	None	P	AE	A	None	AE	AE	AE	P	AE	P	4	7
10	Henry Debra Ann	P	P	None	P	P	A	None	AE	P	AE	L	P	P	8	3
11	Hooper Sandra	P	AE	None	P	P	P	None	P	P	P	P	P	P	10	1
12	Jacobis Doreen	AE	P	None	A	A	A	None	P	P	AE	AE	AE	AE	4	7
13	Khan Bebbie Haliema	P	AE	None	P	AE	P	None	P	P	P	P	P	P	9	2
14	Lagan Haymawattie	L	P	None	P	P	P	None	P	P	P	P	P	P	11	0
15	Logan Ernestine Barker	P	P	None	P	AE	A	None	AE	P	AE	P	P	P	7	4
16	Persaud Peter	L	P	None	P	P	P	None	P	P	P	AE	AE	P	9	2
17	Pollard Magda	AE	L	None	P	P	P	None	L	P	P	P	P	P	10	1
18	Radzik Vanda	P	P	None	A	A	P	None	AE	L	AE	AE	AE	p	5	6

P – Present

AE- Absent with Excuse

A – Absent L- Late

Total Number of Meetings for the Reporting Period

13