

SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF WOMEN & GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION



**PRESENTED TO THE SPEAKER
OF
THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
OCTOBER 2018**

2017 - 2018

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ACRONYMS

CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CISOCA	Centre for Investigation of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPAP	Country Planning Action Plan
DV	Domestic Violence
GO	Governmental Organisations
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
MoPH	Ministry of Public 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 United Nations Children's Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
W&GEC	Women & Gender Equality Commission

DECLARATION

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

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION

Members of the Commission consist of sixteen (16) persons who were sworn in on 27th August, 2009 by H.E. President Bharrat Jagdeo.

BACKGROUND, MANDATE, AND STRUCTURE OF THE WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION

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

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

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

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

The Administrator of the Women's Affairs Bureau, by whatever name that office is designated; and a member who shall be a nominee, without the right to vote from the Human Rights Commission, Ethnic Relations Commission, Indigenous Peoples' Commission and Rights of the Child Commission.

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

FULL TIME STAFF



Diana Swan-Lawrence
Chief Executive Officer



Maria Raghubir
Administrative Assistant

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION



Chairperson
Indranie Chandarpal
Women's Progressive Organisation



Deputy Chairperson
Cheryl Sampson
National Congress of Women

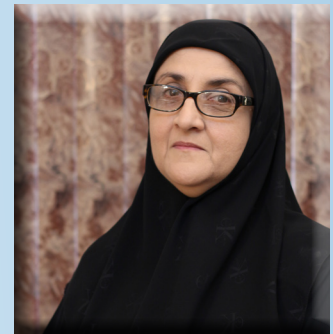
WOMEN IN VOLUNTARY WORK



Magda Pollard



Vanda Radzik



Shalimar Ali-Hack

WOMEN IN TRADE UNIONISM



Karen Vanslytman Corbin
TUC - Women Advisory Council



Gillian Burton
Labour Union



Gaietrie Baron
Labour Union

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

REGIONAL WOMEN'S AFFAIRS COMMITTEES



Ernestine Barker Logan
Regions 3, 4 & 10



Nandranie Coonjah
Regions 2, 5 & 6



Bebbi Haliema Khan
Regions 1, 7, 8 & 9



Nicole Cole
Culture/Ethnic



Peter Persaud
Culture/Ethnic



Debra Ann Henry
Professional



Hymawattie Lagan
Women's Affairs Bureau



Renata Chuck-A-Sang
Private Sector

REPRESENTATIVES FROM OTHER RIGHTS COMMISSIONS



Sandra Hooper
Rights of the Child Commission



Patricia Singh
Indigenous Peoples Commission

VISION

An environment where the rights of women are recognized as human rights and gender equality is upheld.

MISSION

1. Promote gender mainstreaming in all policies and programs.
2. Educate women and men on the benefits of gender equality and ending gender-based violence.
3. Recommend, with the use of evidence-based data, timely policy, and legislative initiatives to uphold women's rights and gender equality.
4. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming within the society.

MANDATES

Constitutionally, the Women and Gender Equality Commission has the following functions:

1. Promote the issues related to the enhancement of the status of women, girls and gender issues.
2. Promote the integration of women's needs and interests and mainstreaming of gender issues;
3. Promote the empowerment of women;
4. Promote women's rights as human rights;
5. Raise the awareness of the contribution of women and problems faced by women including the recognition and value of unwaged work;
6. Promote women's needs, interests, and concerns in the wider spectrum of economic and social development and address both the practical and strategic needs of women.
7. Educate and monitor employees and the public on desirable employment
8. Monitor compliance and make recommendations for the compliance with international instruments to which the Government
9. Evaluate any system of personal family law, customs and practices or any law likely to affect gender equality or the status of women and make recommendations to the National Assembly;
10. Recommend and promote the implementation of legislation and the formulation of policies and measures so as to enhance and protect the status of women;
11. Promote, initiate or cause to be carried out research and the creation of databases on women and gender related issues including those health, especially reproductive health, violence against women and the family, and their socio-economic and political status, as the Commission may deem relevant or as may be referred to it by the National Assembly;
12. Promote consultation and cooperation with women's organisations in relation to decision making that affects the lives of women;
13. Recommend training and technical assistance to support initiatives by and for women and girls; and
14. Promote the participation of women in national decision-making.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Diana Swan Lawrence

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Produce a Harmonised Code of Law on Women's Rights: this should be one book that contains all laws protecting women but set out as a code, not separate laws. The code should be harmonised with international law obligations and with other national laws to ensure that there are no gaps in the protection afforded to women. The code should be written in simple accessible language as far as is possible.
2. Guyana should submit its report to the Committee established to monitor compliance under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The report was due on 1 July 2016.
3. Guyana should ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women allowing individual petitions.
4. Repeal Article 149(6) which allows discrimination against women (and others) in the exercise of their fundamental rights and freedoms.
5. Repeal Article 152 (Savings clause) which protects colonial legislation from challenge under the fundamental rights provisions of the Constitution.
6. Repeal Article 154(6) which allows Guyana to divest itself or limit its obligations under the international covenants incorporated into the Constitution.
7. A Sexual Harassment Policy should be instituted at all places of work and educational institutions as recommended by the WGEC in 2017. An immediate action would be to write to all employers asking them to publish the following statement, "Sexual harassment at the work place is forbidden. Employees who engage in sexual harassment are liable to disciplinary action, including dismissal."
8. Guyana should introduce and enforce legislation to identify and punish those who engage in sexual harassment.
9. Guyana should improve access to justice for rural women by having mobile courts as suggested by Madame Justice Roxane George in 2015.
10. Guyana should provide on-going specialised training on the Sexual Offences Act and the Domestic Violence Act for judges, magistrates, police officers, and others involved in the criminal justice system.
11. Guyana should investigate and report on conditions for women prisoners and evaluate conditions against the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules).
12. Review the penalties for criminal offences – raise the level of fines; add a wider range of penalties including compensation to victims, apologies/ admission of wrongdoing and other possibilities for non-coercive restorative justice
13. Carry out an analysis of the employment sector to identify what jobs are women in and how does their pay compare to men.
14. Introduce paternity leave in law; include paternity leave in contracts of employment and in collective bargaining agreements. Provide facilities for child care at places of employment.
15. Provide legal aid services throughout Guyana with priority being given to matters that affect women such as Gender Based Violence and other forms of discrimination.
16. Conduct training workshops and provide women with information on their legal remedies including redress for criminal offences and remedies against discrimination.
17. There should be a compulsory training course on women's rights for all MPs before they take up their seats.
18. Increase the 'Child Support' cost so that single parents can effectively support their children.

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THE W&GEC CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



From Left: Chairperson, Indranie Chandarpal, Women's Progressive Organisation; First Lady Sandra Granger; Human Rights Attorney, Melinda Janki and Deputy Chairperson, Cheryl Sampson National Congress of Women.

The First Lady of Guyana, Mrs. Sandra Granger joined the Women and Gender Equality Commission to observe International Women's Day 2018. In attendance were Human Rights Attorney Melinda Janki,

and former Attorney General Anil Nandall, among others.

In her remarks H.E Mrs. Granger noted that women must command respect, establish control, and take responsibility. She noted that the

patriarchal norms to which Guyanese society has become accustomed may "perpetuate discrimination against women."

The First Lady referenced the preliminary findings which indicated that "Reported incidents of domestic violence by an intimate partner in



From left: Professor Michael Scott, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Engagement, The University of Guyana and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ivelaw Griffith, The University of Guyana.



Guyana rose from 74.8 percent in 2011 to 89 percent in 2017, with females accounting for upward of 80 percent of the victims. The highest number of these crimes occurs in Region Three – Essequibo Coast and Islands, Region Four- Demerara/Mahaica and Region Six- East Berbice/Corentyne, which account for roughly three-quarters of the reported incidents of gender-based violence." She urged the audiences to not ignore these statistics and to follow the recommendations made

Ms. Janki which will help us to move closer to gender equality and level of our families, communities, regions and country



THE W&GEC'S MEDIA MONITORING COMMITTEE REPORT

Globally, women constitute 50% of all persons living with HIV. Gender inequalities are a key driver of women's vulnerabilities to HIV.

This report looks at how these structural factors shape specific behaviours and outcomes related to the sexual and reproductive health of women living with HIV.

Discussion:

There are several pathways by which gender inequalities shape the sexual and re-productive health and well being of women living with HIV.

First, gender norms that privilege men's control over women and violence against women inhibit women's ability to practice safer sex, make reproductive decisions based on their own fertility preferences and disclose their HIV status.

Second, women's lack of property and inheritance rights and limited access to formal employment makes them disproportionately vulnerable to food insecurity and its consequences. This includes compromising their adherence

to antiretroviral therapy and increasing their vulnerability to transactional sex.

Third, with respect to stigma and discrimination, women are more likely to be blamed for bringing HIV into the family, as they are often tested before men. In several settings, healthcare providers violate the reproductive rights of women living with HIV in relation to family planning and in denying them care.

Lastly, a number of countries have laws that criminalize HIV transmission, which specifically impact women living with HIV who may be reluctant to disclose because of fears of violence and other negative consequences.

Conclusions:

Addressing gender inequalities is central to improving the sexual and reproductive health outcomes and more broadly the wellbeing of women living with HIV. Programmes that go beyond a narrow biomedical/clinical approach and address the social and structural context of women's lives can also maximize the benefits of HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.



W&GEC'S REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

REGIONS 1, 5 & 6



WGEC's Meeting with Representative from Bonaire



Chairperson

Indranie Chandarpal

Women's Progressive Organisation

The Chairperson of the Women and Gender Equality Commission (WGEC), Indranie Chanderpaul, held a meeting to discuss some pressing issues in Bonaire. The meeting saw the presence of representatives from three (3) different foundations for the discussion. James Finies represented the Nos Kier Bonfieu Beh (We want Bonire back)

Foundation; Drs. Koert kerkhoof and Yacintha Brice on behalf of the Brighter Path Foundation and Ms. Davika Bissessar for Foundation "We dare to Care". At the meeting the guests raised several points on issues in Bonaire.

They related that there was a policy whereby the sick from Bonaire were sent to Curacao, where it is closer and cheaper in order to receive medical treatment. Since the law was changed in October 2010 giving Holland increased control over policy decisions, a new policy was implemented. This policy sent them on a three-hour trip to Colombia which is costlier for them. The planes and hospitals are owned by the Dutch and this led them to the belief that the policy was created to provide business to Dutch Companies. It is also assumed that the policy is a strategy used to make the sick see death as

their only alternative. It is alleged that people with minor injuries return as dead people with most of them dying in the ambulances. It is also further alleged that they (the Dutch) want to eliminate Bonaireans and replace them with European Dutch.

When the new government took over immigration was at 40%. After a 90-day period immigrants from Holland can now vote in elections. This increased their argument that there is indeed an attempt to reduce the Bonaireans population and then replace them by European Dutch.

Euthanasia Law was imposed on the people without any consultation being held by the Dutch Government. Considering that most of the population is Catholic they informed that the imposition

THE W&GEC's OUTREACH TO MAHDIA, REGION 8

27-29 APRIL 2018



In a recent visit to Mahdia, Commissioner Khan met with Regional Educational Officer, Mr. Carl Parker, teachers and school children.

The Mahdia community shared some of their concerns:

- * Most men are the “bosses” in the community. What they say goes, whether right or wrong, it matters not.
- * They need more information and assistance to get out from their present status.
- * There were many unreported rapes.
- * Many students lack parental support – emotionally and financially.
- * There is a dire need for recreational/sporting facilities.

W&GEC's RECOMMENDATIONS:

The W&GEC writes to the subject Ministries to get Officials in the Community:

- Probation &

Welfare Officer

- Social Worker
- School Welfare Officer
- Sports Officer

The W&GEC advocates for the HFLE program to be done in all the classes throughout the county with trained teachers facilitating these sessions.

There needs to be an intervention from Indigenous Organizations to avoid the crisis of women being raped when intoxicated.

There is a need for emotional/mental health intervention.

Commissioner Khan also distributed posters to Mahdia's Police Station, Secondary School, Regional Democratic Council and businesses in the community.



THE W&GEC'S OUTREACH TO MORUKA, REGION 1 09-12 APRIL 2018

by Commissioners Haliema Khan and Peter Persaud

Commissioners Khan and Persaud met with Regional Officials, teachers, school children, Police Officers and residents of Quebana, Region 1 in a W&GEC Domestic Violence outreach.

The residents shared some of their concerns:

- * There is a high rate of alcohol consumption and use of illegal drugs by the youths.
- * There is a high rate of teenage pregnancy. Teenage girls are openly in cohabitating relationships with adult men.
- * Children are using their knowledge of their rights to be indiscipline. Teachers are having a great challenge to discipline the students.
- * Little to no job opportunities in the community.
- * There is a need for a female police presence and quarters in the community.

W&GEC's RECOMMENDATIONS:

The W&GEC advocates for the HFLE program to be done in all schools countrywide with trained teachers.

W&GEC also recommends an emotional/mental health intervention.



THE W&GEC CELEBRATES THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN - 2017



W&GEC's Meeting with Director of Institute for Gender and Development Studies, University of Guyana



W&GEC's Chairperson, Indranie Chandarpal Meets with Director of Institute for Gender and Development Studies, University of Guyana, Dr. Pauline E Bullen and Ms Raulene Kendall



THE W&GEC CELEBRATES THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD NOVEMBER 2017



W&GEC's meeting with Dr. Oneka Scott, Ministry of Health

Dr. Oneka Scott stated that Guyana was rated the 2nd highest in the Latin American countries for a high prevalence of teenage pregnancy. She added it was therefore critical that organisations such as the Ministry of Health and the Women and Gender Equality Commission collaborate to ensure that young people get information on reproductive health and rights from knowledgeable persons in leadership such as the W&GEC.

She added that offering services to adolescents who needed most was the priority for the Ministry of Health. She stated that the rights based policies that Guyana embraces were instrumental in ensuring that adolescents were getting the necessary services. She informed the Commission that the age group most affected by HIV was the 15 to 19 years group.

She stated that there were thirty two (32) sites across Guyana where adolescents could access sexual and reproductive health services. She detailed the diverse range

of services offered in Georgetown and Regions 9, Region 8 and Region 1.

She stated that Women's sexual and reproductive health is related to multiple human rights, including the right to life, the right



to be free from torture, the right to health, the right to privacy, the right to education, and the prohibition of discrimination. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) have both clearly indicated that women's right to health includes their sexual and reproductive health. This means that Guyana has

an obligation to respect, protect and fulfill rights related to women's sexual and reproductive health.

She told the Commission that the Ministry of Health was insistent that the Sexual and Reproductive

Health Bill be debated in Parliament since only Jamaica and Guyana have produced such Bills,

Dr. Scott stated that data showed that there were many teenage pregnancies in low income areas such as Grove and Sophia; which made it necessary to make the services available so that the teenagers in the low socio economic groups were not discriminated against.

She stated that there were several consultations with other NGOs before the Ministry of Health was able to effectively address the issues affecting adolescents. She added that earlier in the consultations there was opposition by the Health Care Workers who did not want to see teens by themselves. However this has changed since data suggest that in many communities teens were now responsible for their own health since parents were not leading their teens and neglect was one of the biggest concerns. She expressed concern that this phenomenon existed across the every strata of society.

She expressed concern that there needed to be better community relations since health care workers could not ignore the many daily occurrence of parents asking for Cytotec for their school age children. She stated that the Ministry of Health in collaboration with other relevant organisations must be supported to effectively address these

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also a high prevalence of drug use and abuse in Region 7.

and the girls were also suffering.

Dr. Scott stated that sadly Guyanese have deviated from the community spirit. She was appalled with the cycle of violence with the older men recruiting the boys as sexual partners

Dr. Scott concluded that the Bill would protect the rights of the adolescents by giving them contraceptives in circumstances such as abuse by parents and step parents.



issues. She added that the objective of the MoH is to prevent recurring pregnancies and support the females' reintegration into the schools. She added that there were

further problems for the MoH since they have since found that there were some STIs that were not responding to health treatment in some remote regions, and there was

Celebrating
MAGDA'S
Birthday



Meeting with Ms. Roberta Clarke, Caribbean Development Bank

The Chief Executive Officer Ms. Diana Swan-Lawrence met with Ms. Roberta Clarke, consultant with the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) on 10th July, 2018. Ms. Clarke conducted an evaluation of meaningful, timely and actionable information so that organizational leaders and members can continually manage for improved results. Ms. Clarke stated that Technical Assistance and training is delivered



Chief Executive Officer, Diana Swan-Lawrence meeting with Ms. Roberta Clarke, President of the Coalition against Domestic Violence, 2012-2016 Regional Director UN Women's Regional Office for Asia and Pacific.



Meeting with Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), Deputy Chairperson, Commissioner Corbin and Chief Executive Officer.

of the CDB Gender Equality Policy and Operational Strategy. to support project design, work planning, the development of performance indicators and measurement strategies for internal monitoring and reporting.

Ms. Clarke was interested in how the Commission conducted its Performance Measurement; the practice area that develops, implements, and ensures the relevance



Meeting with Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)

W&GEC Holds 16 Days of Activism to Present National Assembly Recommendations to Stakeholders

The Commissioners of the Women and Gender Equality Commission (W&GEC) in 2017 held Conferences for 16 Days of Activism of the Women & Gender Equality Commission across Guyana. The conferences which started in November 2017 and finished in December 2017 was held in Region 1: Mabaruma, Region 2: Anna Regina, Region 4: Sophia, Region 5, Region 6: New Amsterdam and Albion, Corentyne and Region 8: Madhia.

In addition to having conversations about violence and sexual harassment the main purpose of the conference was to present stakeholders with the forty-two recommendations the W&GEC prepared for May 2010-April 2010 National Assembly for consideration. The Commission also purposed to inquire whether the stakeholders had any other recommendations to add.

Among the list of recommendations of the W&GEC were:

the establishment of a W&GEC to be a part of government's delegation to meetings of The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the establishment of



a National Gender Advisory Committee; the ensuring of Gender Focal Points in each Ministry and government organization; the signing of Government to the Optional Protocol on Women; full enactment of the Domestic Violence Act and enforcement of the Breach of Protection order and the increase of penalties for the Breach

of Protection Orders.

Moreover, the W&GEC is also recommending that the Government makes Gender Sensivity Training mandatory for all judicial, protective services, health and social

services and public service personnel a part of their training. W&GEC also seeks for the resuscitation of the Gender Desk at CARICOM to ensure that all member states access the technical assistance needed to fully implement CEDAW and that the creation of a Sexual Harassment Policy at the Work Place is created using the CARICOM

Model Legislation. In addition to women's rights the W&GEC is also petitioning for persons with disabilities. The Commission believes that all public buildings should be accessible to persons with disabilities and all documents should be clearly comprehensible to persons with disabilities e.g. braille.

Given the opportunity to present their thoughts, the attendees at the different sessions had a number of additional recommendations. As it concerns youths, they related the need for the speedy enactment of the Juvenile Justice Bill. They also stated that the Child Care and Protection Agency (CCPA) should address complaints of abuse to the New Opportunity Corps (NOC) and that youths should receive Psychosocial Care for youths rather than to be placed at the NOC. Also noted, was that educational programmes should be held regularly for adults at the community level and should be made as

simple as possible to ensure the comprehension of all persons.

It was pointed out there should be more workshops on women empowerment and leadership and domestic violence by the Commission. Region 1 attendees called for more workshops to be done on Incest and Sexual Harassment in their communities in Region 1. In addition, Region 2 attendees expressed their wish for a Trafficking in Persons (TIPs) office, as a number of Venezuelans are reportedly being trafficked there.

Nandranie Coonjah, W@GEC

Commissioner at the end of the 16 Days of Activism reflected that the conferences in Regions 2, 4, and 6 were successful despite some challenges.

In total the Conferences for 16 Days of Activism of the Women & Gender Equality Commission had over one hundred persons attending from various women's groups including the Regional Women's Affairs Committee (RWAC), political organizations (People's Progressive Party, Alliance For Change etc.), the Guyana Police Force, Regional Democratic Councils (RDC),

National Agricultural Research & Extension Institute (NAREI), New Amsterdam Technical Institute (NATI) and religious institutions among a wealth of others. The Commissioners included: Diana Swan-Lawrence (Chief Executive Officer, W&GEC), Indranie Chanderpaul (Chairperson, (W&GEC); and RWAC representatives: Nandranie Coonjah Renata Chuck-A-Sang, Peter Persaud, Nicole Cole, Debra Henry, Sandra Hooper and Gaietri Baron.

Meeting with Mr. Seepaul Narine, General Secretary, GAWU

Mr. Seepaul Narine, General Secretary of Guyana Agricultural and General Workers' Union (GAWU) in a meeting with the Women and Gender Equality Commission (WGEC) reported that with the B.E.V. Processors Inc. closure, more than 390 persons lost their job, mainly female workers. There are no opportunities for persons to be absorbed in other jobs thus creating more persons out of work. He said that 7,500 persons lost their jobs at Skeldon, Wales and Enmore sugar estates.

He said that a Special Purpose Unit was set up by National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL), which was supposed to look at the estates and prepare them for sale. He added that Enmore is up for sale and Demerara Distillers Limited (DDL) was interested in purchasing that estate. He added that in most of the cases the severance monies have been exhausted and there are workers who are still awaiting their severance.

In conclusion Mr. Narine encouraged the Unions



Meeting with General Secretary of GAWU, Mr. Narine.

to invest in Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) and asked the Commission to consider the future of the persons, who depend on the sugar industry for their livelihood.

WOMEN & GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION

GENDER BASED **VIOLENCE** WORKSHOP



Commissioner Ernestine Logan organised a workshop on Gender Based Violence which included the showing of a film 'The Unbelieving Mom' and a roundtable Question & Answer segment.

Facilitators included by Producers Bonny Alves & Charmaine Blackman, Probation Officer Ruebena Marshall and Police Officer Keaisha Erskine. The film showing and workshop was conducted in Wismar, Linden, Region 10 at Miracle Times Worship Center.

Before the films were shown the director and producer, Mr. Alves and Ms. Blackman talked about the making of the film. They spoke about their challenges and the joy they experienced working with some of the most talented Guyanese actors and actresses to create such beautiful and realistic pieces of artistry that sought to highlight issues that so prevalent

yet ignored in our society.

After the films were shown, the facilitator Ms. Marshall explained to the participants that women who might be financially dependent on male partners may be reluctant to accept the fact that he is a child molester. Additionally, some women fear the possibility of physical abuse or being without a male partner, because their level of dependence is high.

The facilitator further sought to find out how does the law deal with



such issues. Officer Erskine was asked and she responded saying "An officer takes a statement, contacts an NGO (probation officer/ social worker) to accompany victim to the hospital to prove rape/ sexual abuse, he or she then collects a certificate from doctor and a full statement is taken after the full statement an investigation is carried out. In order to apprehend the suspect by revisit the scene to prepare a file of

all movements and do a report to send to the DPP for advice. If the subject is guilty and is charged, a file will be prepared for court presentation and he/she will go to court and will either be put on bail or will be remanded

Officer Erskine assured participants that counseling was provided by cops and faith (faith based cops and other trained personals.) If the victim is under aged then a NGO would be involved. They can be enrolled into the policing scout group/ youth group. She would also personally check up on victims to give them support either financially or emotionally.

At the end on the event the participants were advised to take abuse in the family seriously for it has far reaching consequences such as violent behavior patterns, death, failed relationships/marriages.



MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF THE WOMEN'S PROGRESSIVE ORGANISATION (WPO)

WPO celebrated 65 years of encouraging more training programmes for women in leadership. Ms. Sheila Veersammy, General Secretary of the Women's Progressive Organisation (WPO) has informed the Women and Gender Equality Commission (WGEC) that the WPO, which is the oldest women political organisation celebrated sixty-five years as an organisation by having several conferences with its membership. The objective was to raise the awareness of women locally and for them to understand how the socio-economic situation impacts the lives of women and their families. She also informed the Commission of the work WPO is involved in internationally as a member of Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) grouping at the United Nations (UN).

She reminded the Commission of the plight of women and their families due to the closure of the Sugar Industry in which more than 7,500 workers and their families are affected. Veersammy asked the Commission to conduct a research to gauge the impact of the closure of the estates on women and families.

She encouraged the Commission to implement training programmes through the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute (GWLI) to train women in alternative skills. Moreover, she recommended that

the Commission advocate for women to be trained in leadership for the local government elections, while reminding the Commission that the GWLI was geared to train the women councilors in local government leadership. Also recommended was that the Commission should start advocating for women to have a 50% seat at the table of leadership.



It was suggested that conversations can start with the media as well as in other forums. Veersammy commended the Commission on the "Access to Justice" programmes where the feedback was very good and recommended follow up programmes.

She reminded the Commission that she in her capacity as a leader of the WPO along with other members of the National Commission were involved in the discussions with regards to the setting up of the Women and Gender Equality Commission. The National Commission on Women of which WPO was a part was very vocal for the Constitution to include the Optional Protocol which is essential for Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to be effective. She asked the Commission to continue advocating for this important clause to be signed by the government. Also in attendance were Gloria Behaary and Thelma Lew-King, members of the Secretariat.

UN holds Meeting to Discuss Issues Surrounding Elections

The United Nations (UN) and some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) held a meeting to discuss a number of issues as it relates to elections at USA, Hassan Se Se NY, Femada Lopes Panama. The participants had an opportunity to raise their concerns about a number of issues and some recommendations were made at the end as well as UN support for GECOM in certain areas.

Some of the issues raised at the meeting included the need for a Media Code of Conduct to be signed as well as a Code to be established for Politicians. Attendees also stated that they had no confidence in GECOM Chair and GECOM and expressed concerns about the GECOM list as well as the staffing of GECOM and election day staff. The need for a civic group of individuals who are prepared to observe the elections as well as to be observers at GECOM meetings also proved to be an issue among some of the participants.

Attendees also saw the need for measures to be put in place to deal with elections violence and delays in the counting process. Election Petition was also suggested to be 3 years and the usage of Kenya as a blueprint.

Among the concerns were the need to reform and consolidate electoral laws and Clause 18 of the Cyber Crime on Sedition which is currently being debated. Clause 18 of Cyber Crime on Sedition states: "A person commits an offence of sedition if the person, whether in or out of Guyana, intentionally publishes, transmits or circulates by use of a computer system, a statement or words, either spoken or written, a text, video, image, sign, visible representation, or other thing, that (a) brings or attempts to bring into

hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the Government established by law in Guyana."

Some recommendations made to increase voter confidence were that the Government clarify the laws pertaining to recount, the consolidation of the Electoral Laws, and an audit be done of the entire GECOM database or registrants to ensure confidence in Voter's List.

On the part of GECOM it was recommended that meetings are opened to observers, professionalism and independence of the Commission be strengthened as well as the strengthening of the process of tabulating results and finally the clearly mark vehicles for transportation.

UN promises to support GECOM by making an assessment of GECOM, speaking to Political Parties and look at opportunities and challenges, hear from civil society and continue to provide UN Support.

Attendees included: Correta Mc Donald, Guyana Trades Union Congress (TUC); Indranie Chandarpal, Women and Gender Equality Commission (WGEC); Mr. Jerry Gouveia, Mr. John Smith and Mr. Norman Mc Lean, Representatives from Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC); University of Guyana Student Society; Alliance for Change (AFC) Youth Section; Representatives of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Guyana; Representative from PSC; Representatives of RISE Guyana; Representative from Progressive Youth Organisation (PYO); Representative from Indian Action Committee (IAC); Representative from Guyana Youth and Student Movement (GYSM); and Representatives from the Press Association.

Social Activist and Musician

Faith Nolan is a musician who empowers others to sing for justice, healing and fun. Ms Nolan's visit to Guyana was at the invitation of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS), University of Guyana (UG). This visit was made possible with the funding from the Women and Gender Equality Commission (W&GEC) following the MOU between the W&GEC and IGDS-UG for Extra-Mural Community Outreach programme that will support design and delivery of relevant courses and workshops to increase the scope and reach of the IGDS/UG as an important link with the rural communities.

Faith Nolan is known world-wide for her musical workshops with women in prison, in schools with both teachers and students and in indigenous communities. Through her music and work, Nolan the blues activist, challenged us to reflect on and critically analyse these issues in relation to Guyana's diverse realities. Nolan visited the prisons as well as the juvenile centres to interact with inmates

The self-taught musician interfaced with students and



other invitees at the University of Guyana and Women and Gender Equality Commission on 24th and 26th September respectively in a rather deep discussion, telling of how indigenous people were ill-treated by the authority after their loved ones, young girls go missing and their search for them in Canada.

WOMEN IN HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The Chief Executive Officer, Ms. Diana Swan-Lawrence facilitated a training for women in health and development.

At the training the CEO discussed the importance of Strengthening the Mental Health Capacity of Community Health Leaders that will be Supporting victims of Gender Based Violence and also strengthening their health response to Gender Based Violence which includes; disparities in women's health care and understanding traditional and community structures and their implications for Care and Health decisions.

The facilitator explained that using SALT (S: To Stimulate conversations between community members, A- Appeal to imperfect, inherent Human values, L: Learn from each other and T: Transfer our Learning) as a transformational leadership tool will

cultivate 'A different Way of Thinking and Influencing a different 'Way of Working' to impact Societal Health.



Chief Executive Officer training with Public health Nurses

W&GEC's MEETING WITH PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANISATION (PAHO)

The Chairperson, Ms. Indranie Chandarpal, Chief Executive Officer, Ms. Diana Swan-Lawrence and Commissioner Debra Henry of the Women and Gender Equality Commission met with Dr. Ana Cristina Gonzalez Velez, Consultant on 26th September, 2018.

The discussion centered on interventions currently being implemented in the area of Gender and

Gender Equality in Health. The Consultant's objective was to gather in-country data for a case study – Advancing toward Gender Equality in Health.

The objectives of the case study are: To analyse the mechanisms, strategies and organizational structure of the health sector that made it possible to advance towards



gender equality within a framework of rights and intersectionality; To deepen the knowledge of the experiences and lessons learned from three countries in the Regions of the Americas; To identify key factors that made it possible to advance in this matter, as well as the barriers and challenges that impeded acceleration towards gender equality in health and finally to examine whether the gender mainstreaming methodology is the most appropriate one, if there are other options to accompany mainstreaming (i.e. specific programs) or if it is otherwise the only way to advance towards gender equality

RECOMMENDATIONS

Women and Gender Equality Commission recommends the following to the National Assembly:

1st Annual Report – May 2010 to May 2011

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

- 1) The need to expand the modality of the NIS Benefits for
 - (a) Maternity
 - (b) Dentures
 - (c) Spectacles
- 2) Proper Services for Women who use Speed Boats as a means of Transportation.
- 3) Caricom Legislation on Sexual Harassment in the Work Place must be adapted to be used in nationally.
- 4) To consider the setting up of a few pilots of the Community Counselling Centers.

2nd Annual Report- June 2011 to May 2012

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

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

3rd Annual Report – June 2012 to May 2013

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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Women and Gender Equality Commission recommends the following to the National Assembly:

4th Annual Report – June 2013 to July 2014

1) Resuscitate the Gender Desk at Caricom to ensure that all member states access the technical assistance needed to fully implement CEDAW and the other treaties our Governments have sign on to.

2) Gender Sensitivity Training should be mandatory for all judicial, protective services, health and social services personnel especially those who interact with the public as part of their job.

3) Ensure there are active Gender Focal Points in each Government Ministry and organization.

Their purpose is to ensure that gender is mainstreamed into Government programmes and policies and that a gender lens is used when any programmes or policy is initiated and carried out. A structured reporting mechanism should be in place to monitor progress and this should involve the Women and Gender Equality Commission.

4) The Ministry of Public Service to ensure that Gender Sensitivity Training and Gender Mainstreaming techniques are made available to Public Service Employees.

5) For all contracted employees of the Government of Guyana, Maternity leave should not be a factor in determining eligibility for gratuity for contracted employees of the Government of Guyana.

6) Gender Training to be included in the Health and Family Life Education Curriculum.

7) Government to consider the Establishment of a national Gender Advisory Committee

8) Increase penalties for breaches of Protection Orders.

Government to consider the provision for Paternity leave to assist women where there has been an addition to the family by birth or adoption.

9) The State and National Institutions need to

ensure that the Prevention of Discrimination Act and the Constitutional provisions on non-discrimination and equality are enforced. There is an urgent need for a Sexual Harassment Act.

10) Resuscitation of the Gender and Development Centre at the University of Guyana.

11) There is a need for a Work Place Policy on Flexible Working Hours for women who are the caregivers.

5th & 6th Annual Report – June 2015 to April 2017

Women and Gender Equality Commission recommends the following to the National Assembly

1) Enactment of Legislation and Policy on Sexual Harassment in the Work Place.

2) Initiate pilots of the Community Counselling Centers and Friendship Benches in communities.

3) The delivery of Comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive age appropriate Health and Rights Education in schools.

4) Promote Parenting Skills Training in Pre and Post Natal Clinics in all Health Centres.

5) Encourage more Male Friendly Health Centres such as the Pilot Project in Region 5.

6) Gender mainstreaming should be incorporated in the Schools' curriculum.

7) Lobby to Resuscitate the Gender Desk at the Caricom Secretariat.

8) Gender Sensitivity Training should be mandatory for all judicial, protective services, health and social services personnel especially those who interact with the public as part of their job.

9) Strengthen Gender Focal Points in the Public Service.

10) All programmes and policies should reflect Gender Mainstreaming for all Government Employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Women and Gender Equality Commission recommends the following to the National Assembly:

- 11) Establishment of a National Gender Advisory Committee.
- 12) Full Enactment of the Domestic Violence Act and enforcement of the Breach of Protection Order.
- 13) The provision for Paternity Leave by National Insurance Scheme.
- 14) Work Place Policy on Flexible Working Hours for all caregivers.
- 15) Gender Parity in Parliament and Local Government bodies in keeping with Guyana's commitment to Sustainability Development Goal 5.
- 16) All Public Buildings should be accessible to persons with disabilities.
- 17) All documents should be clearly comprehensible to persons with disabilities, e.g. braille.
- 18) Equal NIS provisions for widowers and widows.
- 19) Provision of adequate public sanitary facilities accompanied by public awareness campaigns for proper use and maintenance.
- 20) Implementation of Gender Responsive Budgeting.
- 21) Encourage Government to sign-on to the Optional Protocol of Women.
- 22) Speedy Enactment of the Juvenile Justice Bill.



2017 - 2018

