



**Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana**

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL PROGRESS REPORT

ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF

**THE MONTEVIDEO CONSENSUS ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

**2018-2023**



## Table of Contents

<b>List of Acronyms and Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Part 1: National Coordination and Report Preparation</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Part II: Background and National Context</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>The Cooperative Republic of Guyana</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>PART III: Summary of Implementation of Chapters of the Montevideo Consensus</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>A. Full Integration of Population Dynamics into Sustainable Development with Equality and Respect for Human Rights</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>B. Rights, Needs, Responsibilities and Requirements of Girls, Boys, Adolescents and Youth</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>C. Ageing, Social Protection and Socioeconomic Challenges for Older Persons</b> .....	<b>38</b>
<b>D. Universal Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>E. Gender Equality</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>F. International migration and protection of the human rights of all migrants</b> .....	<b>60</b>
<b>Territorial Inequality, Spatial Mobility and Vulnerability</b> .....	<b>66</b>
<b>H. Indigenous Peoples: Inter-Culturalism and Rights</b> .....	<b>74</b>
<b>I. Afro-descendants: Rights and Combating Racial Discrimination</b> .....	<b>84</b>
<b>Part IV: Conclusion</b> .....	<b>88</b>

## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIEP	Agriculture Innovation and Entrepreneurial Programme
BIT	Board of Industrial Training
BOS	Bureau of Statistics
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CDC	Caribbean Development Bank
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CCPA	Child Care & Protection Agency
CHPA	Central Housing and Planning Authority
CRC	Convention on the Rights of Child
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualification
EnGenDER	Enabling Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery, Climate and Environmental Resilience
FPIC	Free Prior and Informed Consent
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GEF- CRew+	Global Environment Facility Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater Management
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER/WEF	Gender Equality Forum/ World Economic Forum.
GSEIP	Guyana Secondary Education Improvement Project
GOAL	Guyana Online Academy of Learning
GROW	Get Ready for Opportunities to Work
GPHC	Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation
GRPA	Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association
GWI	Guyana Water Incorporated
HFLE	Health and Family Life Education
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESR	International Covenant on Social, Economic & Cultural Rights
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IEC	Information, Education, Communication
JMP	Joint Monitoring Programme
LCDS	Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Intersex
MOE	Ministry of Education
MHSSS	Ministry of Human Services and Social Security
MOH	Ministry of Health
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NGO(s)	Non-governmental Organization(s)
NTC	National Toshias Council
NYEAP	National Youth Empowerment Action Plan
OAS	Organization of American States
OB/GYN	Obstetrics and Gynecology
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
PYARG	President Youth Award Republic of Guyana
SCCP	Secondary Competency Certificate Programme
SEN	Special Education Needs
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNFCC	United Nations Framework on climate change
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund  
VAWG Violence Against Women and Girls  
VNR Voluntary National Review  
WASH Water Sanitation and Hygiene  
WIIN Women’s Innovation and Investment Network  
WHO World Health Organization  
YEST Youth Entrepreneurial Skills Training  
YIPoG Youth Innovation Project of Guyana

## Introduction

The Co-operative Republic of Guyana is pleased to submit its second national progress report on the implementation of the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development. This report provides a comprehensive review of the most significant developments of Guyana's implementation of the Consensus since its first report in 2018.

As Guyana continues to make significant strides in implementing the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, it is noteworthy that our development priorities continue to be aligned with the Consensus, along with the regional and international aspirations and obligations to which we have subscribed. Guyana remains committed to the Sustainable Development Goals, the core United Nations human rights conventions it ratified, the CARICOM regional agenda including the Twenty-Five by 2025 Initiative on food security to which Guyana is providing regional strong leadership, its position on climate change among others initiatives continue to guide our development.

It should be noted that Guyana submitted its Voluntary National Report on the SDGs to the United Nations on July 17, 2023.<sup>1</sup>

The report is submitted in accordance with the UN ECLAC doc LC/L.4252- "Format for National Progress Reports on the Implementation of the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development. It provides a review of the period 2018-2023 of Guyana's progress and challenges in implementing critical chapters of the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development- the regional agenda for population, ten years on from its adoption on:

- Integration of population dynamics into sustainable development with gender equality and respect for human rights;
- Rights, needs, responsibilities of girls, boys, adolescents and youth;
- Ageing, social protection and socioeconomic challenges;
- Sexual and reproductive health services;
- Gender equality;
- International migration and protection of the human rights of all migrants;
- Territorial inequality, spatial mobility and vulnerability;
- Indigenous peoples: interculturalism and rights;
- Afro-descendants: rights and combating racial discrimination.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://finance.gov.gy/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Guyana\\_VNR-2023.pdf](https://finance.gov.gy/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Guyana_VNR-2023.pdf)

## Part 1: National Coordination and Report Preparation

A national coordination mechanism established by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, in collaboration with the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, with the support of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), facilitated the review of Guyana’s progress in implementing the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development. In fostering inclusiveness during the review process, civil society, non-governmental organizations, and other key stakeholders were engaged to facilitate the compilation of the report. Civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations as well as key Government Ministries participated in the consultative- process and provided reports on the steps taken to implement the Consensus, consistent with their individual mandates and responsibilities. The reports included key legislative reforms, new initiatives, programmes and policies formulated, existing challenges and gaps and noted recommendations for further attention and strengthening.

The Report developed provides an objective review and evaluation of the implementation of the priority measures outlined by the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development<sup>2</sup> by Guyana, over the last five years (2018-2023). As expressed by the Honorable Gail Teixeira M.P., Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance in Guyana, this report, and the previous voluntary reports *“measures progress and sees where our difficulties exist and more importantly gives us the chance to correct them at all levels.”*

## Part II: Background and National Context

### The Cooperative Republic of Guyana

Guyana, covering approximately 215,000 square kilometers, is a small developing nation located on the northern shoulder of South America, historically and culturally linked to the Caribbean Sub-Region of the Latin America and Caribbean Region. Guyana shares open continuous borders with its neighbours; Venezuela (to the west), Suriname (to the east); and Brazil (south-west).

Guyana is a member of the regional integration movement, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), as well as a member of the Organization of American States, the Commonwealth and the United Nations.

Guyana is a hybrid Republican-Westminster parliamentary system. The Constitution of Guyana is the supreme law of the nation in which the rule of law, the separation of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary, and human rights are protected.

Guyana is a diverse multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-language nation; this is a nation of minorities as no ethnic group represents 50 per cent of the population.

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<sup>2</sup> eclac. (2018). *Implementation of the montevideo consensus on*. UN-ECLAC.

Guyana is also a natural resource rich country with oil, gold, diamond, bauxite and manganese with rich fertile land that produces cash crops such as rice and sugar, vegetables, and meat, as well as fish from its rivers and the Atlantic Ocean.

**Table 1: Mid-Year Population ('000)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Mid-Year Population</b>	<b>Population Growth Rate</b>
2018	763.9	3.0
2019	767.0	0.4
2020	777.0	0.4
2021	773.0	0.3
2022	775.8	0.4

It should be noted that the figures in **Table 1** are based on projections by the Bureau of Statistics. The National Household Census began in September 2022 and the results are being awaited. Guyana believes that its present population is above 800,000 due to the influx of migrants from Venezuela, which is estimated to be over 20,000, along with other migrants from Cuba, Brazil, China, Haiti and India, are among the highest migrant population in Guyana.

## **Economy**

Guyana is a small developing nation with a small population. The national development agenda is based on a pro-poor pro-growth philosophy. The Low Carbon Development Strategy 2010 has been revised and expanded to consider the new realities of Guyana entering the realm of oil producing nations. Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030<sup>3</sup> approved by the National Assembly on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2022 promotes the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of people by setting out a vision for inclusive, sustainable development while simultaneously maintaining the country's forests (about 85 percent of the country's territory) to help meet some of the most urgent challenges currently facing Guyana and the world. Driven by this strategy, Guyana has embarked on a path to creating a new growth-trajectory by harnessing the value of the country's eco-systems services.

Furthermore, as the newest and one of the potentially largest oil producing countries in LAC, Guyana has been recognized as one of the fastest growing economies in the world in the IMF art IV 2023 assessment.

**The 2022 Mid-Year Report stated that “Guyana’s real economy is estimated to have grown by 36.4 percent in the first half of this year, driven by the petroleum, other crops, and services sectors. Additionally, despite the lingering effects of the 2021 floods limiting performance in some industries during the first half of this year,**

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<sup>3</sup> <https://lcds.gov.gy/>

*the non-oil economy grew by an estimated 8.3 percent. With supportive measures in place to continue increasing economic activity, overall GDP growth for 2022 projected at 56 percent, and non-oil growth at 9.6 percent*<sup>4</sup>

During the period January to June 2022, Guyana had five lifts of profit oil from the two producing FPSOs, Liza Destiny (3) and Liza Unity (2). In the first half of the year, Guyana's Natural Resource Fund received US\$307 million as revenue from its share of profit oil and US\$37.1 million in royalties. The cumulative balance, inclusive of interest income, at the end of June was US\$753.3 million, after a withdrawal of US\$200 million in the month of May.<sup>5</sup> Oil production is expected to increase significantly with the coming on stream of two large oilfields in the Stabroek Block during 2022-26.

Although Guyana's economy was negatively impacted by the pandemic it has recovered well, supported by the oil boom, while medium-term prospects are more favorable than ever before. Non-oil economic growth recovered in 2021 but was dampened by the floods in that year, which affected all ten (10) Administrative Regions and had the greatest impact on the agricultural sector and economic activity in the hinterland. Inflation increased in 2021 owing to higher global food and fuel prices as well as supply-side disruptions which have been exacerbated by the war in Ukraine.

Guyana's commercially recoverable petroleum reserves is estimated to be well over 11 billion barrels, the third largest in Latin America and Caribbean, and one of the highest levels of oil reserves per capita in the world. This could help Guyana build up substantial fiscal and external buffers to absorb shocks while addressing infrastructure gaps and human development needs. The increased fiscal space offers the Government an unprecedented opportunity to invest in the transformation of the physical infrastructure and an expansion of modern technological advances in the agriculture and social sectors. Robust plans are on stream to improve access to and quality of social services, improve infrastructure to support growth and diversification of the non-oil economy, and advance more broadly towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Guyana's economy has experienced substantial transformation since the last reporting period. The exploration and subsequent production of oil has significantly altered Guyana's growth trajectory and realigned the sectoral composition of GDP. The gains from this newly developing sector will serve as a springboard for catapulting socio-economic development and building the capacity and resilience of the non-oil economy. The World Bank projected in its November 2020 Systematic Country Diagnostic<sup>6</sup> that the magnitude of Guyana's projected oil production could fuel the non-oil GDP to reach US\$10.4B, by 2030, and the overall nominal GDP to reach US\$14B by 2030.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://finance.gov.gy/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Mid-Year-Report-2022-FINAL-compressed.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid pg 19

<sup>6</sup> <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/691761607528494981/pdf/A-Pivotal-Moment-for-Guyana-Realizing-the-Opportunities-Systematic-Country-Diagnostic.pdf>

**Table 2: Analysis of Guyana’s Real GDP growth (Annual percent change) in comparison to other economies**

Real GDP growth (Annual percent change)	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023 Projected
Guyana	3.7	1.7	0.7	3.8	3.7	4.4	5.4	43.5	20.1	62.3	37.2
Advanced economies	1.4	2	2.3	1.8	2.5	2.3	1.7	-4.2	5.4	2.7	1.3
Emerging market and developing economies	5	4.7	4.4	4.4	4.7	4.7	3.6	-1.8	6.9	4	3.9
World	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.8	3.6	2.8	-2.8	6.3	3.4	2.8

*Source: IMF (2023)*

Between 1990 and 2021, Guyana’s Human Development Index value increased by 40.3 percent from 0.509 to 0.714<sup>7</sup>. This was achieved through targeted government intervention, which included increased public spending on health, education, and social services aimed at reducing multi-dimensional poverty among the most vulnerable populations. For the same period, Guyana’s life expectancy at birth rose by 3.3 years, mean years of schooling climbed by 3.3 years and expected years of schooling increased by 2.8 years. Guyana’s Gross National Income (GNI) per capita escalated by about 996.3 percent between 1990 and 2021, a reflection of the oil revenues being received in 2020. Presently, Guyana currently ranks within the high human development category on the Human Development Index, being positioned at 108 out of 191 countries.

Similarly, the 2021 Multidimensional Poverty Index for Guyana estimated that 1.7<sup>8</sup> percent of population was multi-dimensionally poor, while an additional 6.5<sup>9</sup> percent was classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty. The 2021 ranking represents an improvement from that obtained in 2017, at which time 3.2<sup>10</sup> percent of the population were estimated to be multidimensionally poor, while the percentage of the population considered to be vulnerable to multidimensional poverty has remained somewhat stable (6.1 percent in 2017). Guyana received an overall MPI score of 0.007 in 2021, representing a 46% increase over the 2017 MPI score of 0.013.

In its most recent reclassification for 2023-2024, the World Bank upgraded Guyana from an upper middle-income to a high-income economy because of an increase in the per capita GNI from \$9,410 in 2021 to an estimated \$15,010 in 2022. The increase in per capita GNI propelled Guyana above the high-income threshold of \$13,846. Guyana’s per capita GNI value has been affected, in no small measure, by income earned through the oil and gas

<sup>7</sup> UN Human Development Report 2022 < <https://guyana.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/HDR%202021-22.pdf>>

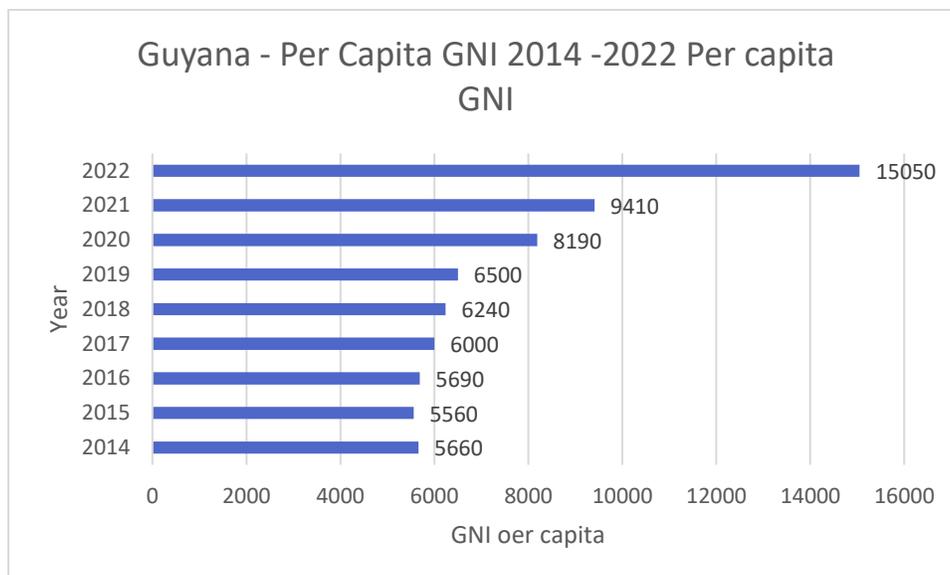
<sup>8</sup> UNDP (2021) Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021: Briefing Notes for Countries (Guyana): <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/MPI/GUY.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> [https://ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/GUY\\_2017.pdf](https://ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/GUY_2017.pdf)

sector in addition to the tremendous increases in foreign direct investment to support the sector, international development financing, and the rise in micro and small enterprises in the manufacturing and services sector. **Table 3** below shows the trend in Guyana’s GNI per capita from 2014 to 2022.

**Table 3**



*Source: World Bank Data*

Cognizant of Guyana’s vulnerability to the devastating effects of climate change, as well as the risk of the natural resource curse, the Government of Guyana remains steadfast in its commitment to a low carbon development agenda. To this end, the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030, first developed in 2010, continues to be the overarching framework guiding the national development agenda.

The major risks to the economy are expected from both the external and the domestic fronts. Guyana’s vulnerabilities are many and require proactive policy interventions to effectively manage the risks and mitigate against downside effects.

Foremost amongst the risks is our historical vulnerability to climate change given the low-lying coastal zone. The devastating effects of the floods of 2021, combined with higher-than-normal rainfall levels through 2022, present formidable challenges to both flood management and food security. Government continues to invest substantially in disaster preparedness, sea defenses, expanded drainage and irrigation, expanded early warning systems in hydrometeorology and production in both crops and livestock to boost food security. Further, efforts to secure climate financing remain high on the agenda.

A major milestone was achieved in 2022, through the sale of a significant percentage of Guyana’s ART-TREES credits that will contribute to the socio-economic development prospects. Government and the Hess Corporation finalised an agreement whereby Hess Corporation became the first buyer of Guyana’s credits (postproduction of oil), totaling approximately a third of Guyana’s issuances under ART-TREES, from 2016 to 2030. The agreement

sets out that Hess will purchase 2.5 million credits per year from 2016 to 2030 to a total of 37.5 million credits for a minimum payment of US\$750 million to be paid to Guyana between 2022 and 2032. These innovative developmental measures will provide the fiscal space for Guyana to advance the development priorities that are aligned to the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development.

This innovation will open a new revenue stream for Guyana, and the long-term significance of this should be recognized. Not only is it an example of Guyana providing leadership for the world on addressing climate change, but it is also laying the long-term foundations for the day when the global economy values nature's contributions to that economy. Guyana's mechanism for forest climate services has changed the financial reality where the world's forests were worth more dead than alive.

In 2015, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network published the first SDG Index ranking countries on their initial status on the 17 SDGs. In 2023, Guyana recorded an improved score of 67.4 compared with 61.9 in 2018. This improvement in the score facilitated upward movement in the ranking to 96 out of 166 countries in 2023, up from 104 out of 156 countries in 2018. Guyana's overall index score of 67.4 suggests that Guyana is on average 67 percent of the way to the best possible outcomes across the 17 SDGs. This is according to a recent report published by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), titled Regional Overview: Global and regional economies at a crossroads. The report credits the booming oil and gas sector as one of the main drivers of economic development, as well as the decline in unemployment.

*“The unemployment rate declined from 15.6 per cent in 2021 Q1 to 14.5 per cent in 2021 Q3, driven mostly by declines in the unemployment rate of men, which dropped to 12 per cent in 2021 Q3 compared to 18.4 per cent for women. The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates further declines in the unemployment rate in 2022, falling to 12.4 per cent, (11 per cent for men and 14.4 per cent for women),”*

The government has been on an aggressive drive to target the unemployment rate in Guyana, with rapid implementation of initiatives, such as the part-time jobs initiative, new skills training programmes, small business assistance, special programme for women such the Women's Innovation and Investment Network (WIIN) to assist persons in generating income.

During the reporting period Guyana continued to implement socio-economic policies aligned with the priority measures of the Montevideo Consensus to ensure equitable access to resources; pro-poor policies and targeted interventions for the vulnerable with the aim of reducing disparities between urban, rural and hinterland communities with the objective of ensuring “no one is left behind, all are involved, and everyone benefits”. The following measures outlined below provide a synopsis of government's interventions:

- Combated the COVID-19 pandemic, providing protection to citizens by administering 958,365 doses of vaccines in total free of charge and achieving a fully vaccinated rate of 68 percent of the adult population while simultaneously, providing relief to households by distributing over G\$7 billion in cash grants;
- Improved social safety nets, by increasing old age pension by over 60 percent to G\$33,000 monthly resulting in placing an additional G\$4.4 billion of disposable income in the hands of 73,000 of our senior citizens; and increasing public assistance by 75 percent to G\$16,000 monthly, to benefit over 29,000

persons, placing an additional G\$700 million of disposable income to individuals most vulnerable in our society;

- Reintroduced and increased the “Because We Care” cash grant of G\$25,000 per child registered in school in 2022 which, along with the G\$5,000 uniform grant, resulted in total transfers of \$5.6 billion to parents of over 196,000 school age children in 2022; While in 2023 the “Because We Care Cash Grant” increased from G\$25,000 to G\$35,000 benefitting over 214,000 school children in public and private schools placing an additional \$2.1 billion in the hands of their parents;
- Awarded nearly 14,000 online scholarships under the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) programme, since its launch in 2021, giving the awardees an opportunity to pursue higher education or specialised training and certification in the comfort of their own home;
- Distributed over 20,000 house lots, about three times the total distributed in the previous five years, giving all those recipients – Guyanese families and young professionals – the opportunity to become homeowners for the very first time;
- Increase in the low-income mortgage ceiling from G\$15 million to G\$20 million, reducing the cost of borrowing within this range from the Commercial Banks, and further incentivize homeownership;
- Removal of the 14 percent Value Added Tax (VAT) with respect to the sale of residential properties, which will also further reduce the cost of home ownership;
- Increased hinterland access to water from 46 percent in 2020 to 75% in 2023;
- Proportion of population with access to reliable supply of potable water 96.80%;
- Proportion of hinterland population with access to reliable supply of potable water 75%;
- Salary adjustments have been made benefiting 5,000 healthcare workers and 9,000 members of the disciplined services, effective from January 2023 amounting to an additional G\$3 billion in disposable income; and
- Increased the monthly income tax threshold from G\$75,000 to G\$85,00, releasing a total of G\$3.3 billion into the hands of taxpayers and removing 12,000 taxpayers from the tax net.

## **Democratic Institutionalality**

Key and critical constitutional bodies that are part of the architecture of constitutional governance are appointed and functioning, such as the Audit Office of Guyana, the Supreme Court, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Public Service Appellate Tribunal, the Ombudsman, and the Guyana Elections Commission. In 2022, Constitutional agencies inclusive of the Public Procurement Commission, Police Service Commission, and most recently in 2023, the Teaching Service Commission, the Ethic Relations Commission, the Judicial Service Commission and the Public Service Commission have been reconstituted and members have been appointed. Notably, the consultative process with civil society organisations for nominations to the Women and Gender

Equality Commission, the Rights of the Child Commission and the Indigenous People’s Commission are in progress at the parliamentary level.

## Legal Framework

In our efforts to fulfil the Government’s commitment to the continuous review and enhancement of the country’s Supreme Laws, the Constitution Reform Commission Bill No. 18/2022 was tabled in the National Assembly in August 2022 to establish an independent Constitution Reform Commission with equal representation of the political parties and civil society bodies to review the Constitution of Guyana. The process is expected to commence in late 2023, early 2024. Through an open consultative national and regional process, the public will have the opportunity to review and propose amendments to the Constitution. Since the last reporting period there have been major legislative reforms that cover a broad range of areas such as the justice sector, juveniles, inheritance, adoption of children in accordance with the Hague Convention, birth registration, trafficking in persons as well as new legislation addressing new areas such as organ and tissue transplant, radiation, suicide and mental health. Guyana remains steadfast in constructing a modern democratic legal system that is aligned to the Montevideo Consensus and the SDGs.

- **The Juvenile Justice Act (No. 8 of 2018)** is now enacted and consolidates the law with respect to criminal justice for juveniles. It is at the centre of Guyana’s juvenile justice reform process and makes provisions for proceedings against juvenile offenders as well as the establishment of facilities for the custody, educational training and rehabilitation for juvenile offenders in order to reintegrate them into society. The best interests of the child and the well-being of juveniles are paramount when the courts make a decision on punishment. It also encourages diversion as the most appropriate and effective way to address juvenile crime (Part II).
- **Deceased Persons Estate’s Administration (Amendment) Act No. 3 of 2021** - This Act makes provision to increase the value of estates for which the registrar may appoint an administrator in the absence of a legal will from the deceased. Clause 2 of the Act amends Section 19 of the Principal Act to increase the value of estates for which the registrar may summarily appoint an administrator, those being intestate estates or testate estates where no executor has been appointed or an executor is unable to or unwilling to act, from G\$1,000 to G\$750,000.” Section 20 of the Act makes provision that in the absence of letters of administration, a bank manager may pay to a claimant, from a deceased persons’ savings bank account a sum not exceeding G\$750,000. Clause 4 of the Act amends section 25(1) (b) of the Principal Act to increase the value of estates that are administered by the Public Trustee without the grant of letters of administration.
- **The Adoption of Children (Amendment) Act 8 of 2021<sup>11</sup>** - The purpose of this bill was to amend the Adoption of Children Act Cap 46:04 to give the Hague Convention of 29<sup>th</sup> May 1993 on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (to which 99 countries have already signed onto) the force of law in Guyana. The Hague convention gives effect to Article 21 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child by adding substantive safeguards and procedures to the broad principles and norms laid down in the Convention of the Rights of the Child. The Convention

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.parliament.gov.gy/publications/acts-of-parliament/adoption-of-children-amendment-act-2021>

(Hague), inter alia, recognizes that intercountry adoption may take place and these may offer the advantage of a permanent family to a child for whom a suitable family cannot be found in the child's country of origin and that during the process of adoption, the sale and trafficking under the guise of adoption could occur; under humanitarian acts or acts which may be justified by the view that the child is better off in a materially rich country. As such puts in place measures (safeguards and procedures) to not only protect the child but the birth parents of the children from exploitation; and prevents improper financial gains and corruption.

- The **Registration of Birth and Deaths (Amendment) Act No. 9 of 2021** amended the **Registration of Births and Deaths Act, Cap. 44:01 (hereinafter the Principal Act)**.

**Section 2 of the Registration of Birth and Deaths (Amendment) Act 2021** makes provides for a parent to choose **any** surname for the child. **Section 3** enables the name of a child to be entered on the registration form at any time after the birth has been registered and for the child who attains the age of 18 and over to also apply for insertion of a name. It also removes the time limit of 12 months from the date of registration of birth in respect of late entry of a child's name in the registration form. The amendment also removed the requirement that a Magistrate must by order direct this insertion of name. Further, errors discovered in a sealed certificate of birth or death, to be corrected in the same manner as a registration form is corrected under that section. This is a necessary amendment as most of the time errors are discovered in the particulars entered in the certificates of births or deaths rather than the registration form.

**Section 5 of Act 2021** further simplifies the process by which an adult who has no original documents may acquire a certificate of birth on the basis of the presentation of certain documents containing particulars related to the birth. This can be achieved through a statutory declaration by a person of high standing in the community, including a community leader or Toshao, or any other document with information indicating particulars of the birth notarised by a notary public. Notably, this process is especially beneficial to Amerindian communities since the amendment empowers Toshaos at the village level, to sign as a witness to register births. Likewise, this section provides how a certificate of death for an adult who has no original documents may be obtained.

**Further, Section 6** provides that the Registrar General shall issue a certificate of birth or death within 45 days from the filing of the original registration form or birth or death. No time cap was previously prescribed. Additionally, the Act has removed the discriminatory practice of issuing a differently coloured certificate of birth for an adopted child from any other certificate issued for non-adopted children.

- **Summary Jurisdiction (Amendment) Act No. 11 of 2021** - Notably as well, in accordance with recommendation 25 of the Concluding Observations on the combined second, third and fourth reports to the CEDAW Committee, the **Summary Jurisdiction Offences Amendment Act No. 11 of 2021** which repeals the criminalization of cross dressing was successfully tabled and passed in the Twelfth Parliament. The amendment brings Guyana into compliance with the ruling of the Caribbean Court of Justice in the case **McEwan et al v AG [2018] CCJ 30 [AJ]**.
- **Civil Law of Guyana (Amendment) Act No. 12 of 2021** makes provision that when a person dies intestate and leaves a widow or widower and there are no descendants, the widow or widower of the

intestate shall be entitled to the entire estate after all debts, after all debts, funeral expenses, and just expenses have been deducted from the estate.

- **Human Organ and Tissue Transplant Act No.1 of 2022** is one of the most advanced pieces of legislation that makes provision for the donation and removal of human organs, tissues, cells, bio fluids for transplantation and blood for transfusion, for their use for regenerative medicine including cell therapy, gene therapy and stem cell therapy, and other therapeutic purposes, for medical education and for scientific research purposes including stem cell research, cell explant research and cell line research, and for connected matters. The Act provides for life changing measures for persons in need of organ transplants and sets out key protection measures.
- **Mental Health Protection and Promotion Act<sup>12</sup>** - A landmark legislative development during the reporting period was the enactment of the Mental Health Protection and Promotion Act (Act 14 of 2022), which was passed in national assembly on August 8, 2022 and signed into law on September 13, 2022 by His Excellency President Irfaan Ali. The new Act repeals and replaces the Mental Health Ordinance Cap 140, Laws of Guyana. The express purpose of the Act is to promote mental health care and treatment for persons with mental illnesses and promote and fulfil the human rights of such persons during the delivery of mental healthcare.
- **Suicide Prevention Act<sup>13</sup>** - Guyana's Human Rights architecture was further boosted with the enactment of the Suicide Prevention Act No. 19 of 2022, which was introduced on June 27, 2022, passed by the National Assembly on November 7, 2022 and assented to on November 15, 2022. Of significance is the fact that the Act repeals sections 95 and 96 of the Criminal Law (Offences) Act and section 202 of the Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act under which attempts to commit suicide was a criminal offence punishable by up to two years imprisonment. The Act, therefore, represents a paradigm shift in the approach to suicide prevention from a punitive to a more rights-based approach that focuses on screening, safety planning with means-reduction, and direct treatment of suicidality. There is a strong focus on achieving clinical competence in suicide prevention care by building the capacity of healthcare workers in key areas including various forms of cognitive behaviour theory.
- **Restorative Justice Act (Act 20 of 2022)<sup>14</sup>** - The Restorative Justice Act was passed in the National Assembly on November 7, 2022, and assented to on November 15, 2022. The Act paves the way for the introduction of Restorative Justice into Guyana's criminal justice system, which contributes to the larger objective of reducing the prison population by increasing the use of alternative sentencing. The Act is aimed at setting up a system of restorative justice that brings together community residents, victims, offenders, and their personal representatives, in a permissive, safe, and carefully managed environment. Its enactment also contributes to promoting a range of sentences and other means of dealing with offenders outside of the traditional sentencing processes.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.parliament.gov.gy/publications/acts-of-parliament/mentalhealthprotectionandpromotionact2022>

<sup>13</sup> <https://officialgazette.gov.gy/index.php/publications/1968-extraordinary-gazettes-15th-november-2022-act-no-19-of-2022-the-suicide-prevention-act-2022>

<sup>14</sup> [https://officialgazette.gov.gy/images/gazette2022/nov/Extra\\_15NOVEMBER2022Act20of2022.pdf](https://officialgazette.gov.gy/images/gazette2022/nov/Extra_15NOVEMBER2022Act20of2022.pdf)

- **Bail Act (Act 21 of 2022)**<sup>15</sup> - The Criminal Justice System has been further strengthened with the passage of the Bail Act. This Act was passed in the National Assembly on November 7, 2022, and assented on November 15, 2022. The Act was promulgated to provide for bail reform in Guyana, as this is central to reducing prison overcrowding by reducing the lengthy pre-trial detentions. The Bail Act gives recognition to the constitutional guarantee that an accused person will be presumed innocent until proven guilty, and the fundamental right to personal liberty. Consequently, it gives effect to these rights by establishing a right to bail and setting out, in detail, the circumstances in which bail can be refused. The Act further requires that bail, and any conditions attached thereto, shall be reasonable.
- **The Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act No. 7 of 2023** assented to on June 7, 2023 repeals and replaces the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act 2005 to provide more comprehensive measures to combat trafficking in persons synonymous with international best practices and changing socio-political needs. PART II of the Act sets out criminal offences, and those offences have extraterritorial effect. It further provides for restitution for victims. Further, it sets out stringent penalties for anyone who commits this offence is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for five years. However, conviction on indictment carries a penalty of life imprisonment. Part 111 of the Act sets out that the Childcare and Protection Agency shall be responsible for and collaborate with the Counter-TIP Unit on matters related to child victims of trafficking, this section makes further provision for witness protection. Part IV of the Act makes provision for paper committals to be permitted for indictable matters and it prohibits confrontation between the accused and the victim. While PART V of the Act makes it mandatory for the government to educate citizens about sex tourism, sexual exploitation and forced labour and coordinate educational activities with the airline, hotel and taxi industries and others.

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<sup>15</sup> [https://officialgazette.gov.gy/images/gazette2022/nov/Extra\\_15NOVEMBER2022Act21of2022.pdf](https://officialgazette.gov.gy/images/gazette2022/nov/Extra_15NOVEMBER2022Act21of2022.pdf)

## **PART III: Summary of Implementation of Chapters of the Montevideo Consensus**

### **A. Full Integration of Population Dynamics into Sustainable Development with Equality and Respect for Human Rights**

*Priority measures taken to: Strengthen the capacity of statistical systems and of the various entities responsible for official measurements and administrative records with a view to incorporating gender and human rights into the preparation, publication and dissemination of their indicators.*

The Government of Guyana is cognizant of the critical role that data has in the decision-making process when planning for the development of a society and its people. The Government has invested heavily in the conduct of a National Household Census exercise that commenced in 2022 and is expected to be finalized in 2023. The challenges of data availability, quality and timeliness remain a major challenge in programme targeting and policy formulation. Key among the data gaps are labour market skills needs, a large informal sector which makes employment statistics and skills needs collection crucial to the formulation of policy, design and evaluation of programme effectiveness difficult. Given the need to generate a large and diverse skills set to meet job opportunities, as a result of the expanded oil and non-oil economy, this information is critical. The Bureau of Statistics, with support from the IDB, has been conducting quarterly Labour Force Surveys since 2017, but this has been put on hold since 2022 to allow for the Household and Population Census to be completed.

Access to information on such areas as unemployment rates and the level of youth unemployment, that is region specific will aid Government to be more targeted in its programmes and projects and enable greater success in achieving intended results. In addition, data and systems to support strong monitoring and evaluation frameworks continue to be a priority as programmes are implemented across the public sector. The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance have been conducting capacity building workshops with public sector employees to support the integration of the SDGs and a human rights-based approach to programme planning, monitoring, as well as in assessing programme impact.

Guyana did not have an established unit within Government tasked with the measurement and analysis of the changing levels of poverty prior to the establishment of a Poverty Unit at the Bureau of Statistics (BoS) in 2017. More recently, in February 2023, staff of the Bureau's Poverty Unit was trained by the UNDP to compute the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). This training will allow Guyana, for the first time, to be able to compute the poverty levels using this method.

Previously, measurement of poverty levels in Guyana by the Bureau was primarily done using the Consumption Expenditure method, utilising data on household expenditure. However, incomes are often understated and therefore not the most reliable metric for poverty measurement. The MPI is a complementary method which examines other dimensions to poverty which are not covered by monetary measures, including school attendance, educational achievement, barriers of access to health services, unemployment, food insecurity and overcrowding in homes, among others. Building the capacity of the BoS in this area will allow for country-specific dimensions

to be included in Guyana's calculations.

***Priority measures taken to: Strengthen the institutions with responsibility for population and development comprehensively.***

The National Statistical System comprises the Bureau of Statistics and a preponderance of government agencies and departments. Statistics are therefore often obtained from a variety of sources. There are several agencies with direct and indirect responsibility for the sectors that oversee and manage various matters related to population and development, among these being: - the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security; the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture; the Ministry of Labour; the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs; the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development; the Ministry of Home Affairs; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the Office of the Prime Minister. These Ministries/entities continue to directly benefit from capacity building support offered by the Government that is intended to enhance the national statistical system by generating sector-specific administrative data that will improve the management of these specific sectors, particularly population development and related issues.

There are monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems in place within ministries and agencies for monitoring purposes but the strengths vary from agency to agency. Training for the personnel has been an ongoing process and continues to expand. The Ministry of Finance has been conducting a series of workshops to strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems within the public sector to enhance institutional capacity. These workshops are based on defining results-based monitoring and evaluation framework, mastering sectoral programme structure, proposing and selecting indicators for programme measurement, validating indicators, setting and validating targets, establishing reference documents for data collection and elaborating reports for feedback and decision making.

The Ministry of Finance through the Bureau of Statistics and the National Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) unit established a national framework to enhance data management systems and incorporate validated information into the national mechanisms to ensure data driven planning and decision-making process. The premise as defined by the monitoring framework is "*A healthy adulthood, well-educated, socially integrated, and culturally sensitive to the broad issues of equality and sustainability*" will encourage people to develop their capacities, to exercise their rights, and to contribute to sustainable development." The Ministry of Finance continues to support the continued development of data management systems with other Government Ministries, particularly: the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security; the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture; the Ministry of Labour; the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs; the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development; the Ministry of Home Affairs; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the Office of the Prime Minister. These efforts are undertaken to facilitate data systems that can support policy and programme development to address population and development matters.

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) constitutes a source of data where certain data may not always be collected, available or disaggregated. The initiative monitors the situation of children and women, covering areas such as immunization, education, child and maternal health, family planning and knowledge of HIV/AIDS. It had assisted in providing data for tracking progress toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly those relating to health, education and mortality. The most recent published (MICS) covered the years 2019-2020.

In 2020, the Government created a data collection mechanism in collaboration with the National COVID-19 Task Force Executive Secretariat, the MHSSS, the Civil Defence Commission and the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs to identify and provide tangible support for vulnerable persons and households affected by COVID-19 and those in emergency situations (fires, floods).

In preparation for the census, the Bureau of Statistics received extensive training at all stages of the exercise to ensure that the highest quality of data is collected to inform policy decisions. The Bureau has received support from the CARICOM Secretariat in this regard, as Guyana's census activity is conducted as part of the CARICOM wide census cycle. Several regional meetings of the statistics institutions were held in the lead up to census 2022 aimed at improving the readiness of Member States for the Census using a well-structured roadmap. The meetings covered a range of issues including mapping, GIS, census data collections focusing on Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing, and Census Project Management issues<sup>16</sup>.

*Priority measures taken to: **Integrate population dynamics into sustainable development planning, sectoral policies and public policies and programmes in general, at the national and subnational levels.***

All budget agencies-Ministries, Departments and Administrative Regions are mandated to internalize the SDGs into their medium-term budget proposals and prioritise timelines for the implementation of actions to achieve the SDGs. Over the period under review, the Government has placed emphasis on ensuring that the SDGs are aligned to the national development strategy- the Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030.

The integration of population dynamics into sustainable development planning, including sectoral policies by the Government and people of Guyana is being addressed through the Government's flagship Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030 (LCDS-2030). This Strategy has taken on board the major population issues such as rapid development driven by the expanding oil and gas industry and the diversification of the local economic base away from primary producing agriculture and natural resources mining.

The revised LCDS 2030<sup>17</sup> was endorsed by Parliamentary Resolution No. 45 in August 2022 and is the manifestation of the Government's commitment to sustainable renewable development. The LCDS is the outcome of extensive consultations and stakeholder inputs, builds on previous achievements of creating a true model of development that avoids deforestation, while advancing economic growth. It guarantees continued investments in urban, rural and Amerindian/indigenous development and protecting the coast and hinterlands from climate change. The Strategy further envisions employment generation, the creation of more small and medium scale businesses, and expansion of the agriculture sector as major poverty reduction measures. Equal access to health and education, housing and water with low carbon development are an integral part of this pro poor pro-growth approach.

Noteworthy, population data is often used to compute key indicators related to participation and access, at a given level, out of school youth etc. For example:

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<sup>16</sup> <https://caricom.org/regional-statisticians-meeting-in-georgetown-to-prepare-for-2020-census/>

<sup>17</sup> Government of Guyana, Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030 - July 2022; [www.lcds.gov.gy](http://www.lcds.gov.gy)

- Guyana has achieved universal primary school enrolment with a Gross Primary Enrolment ratio of 103%<sup>18</sup> completion (rate of 90%<sup>19</sup> and is on the way to achieving universal secondary education. In this context Determination of enrollment – gross and net across education levels is done with population data.
- Enrollment data is then used to inform the preparation of the budget for the different levels e.g. number of students across the nursery, primary and secondary determine allocation for procurement of text and exercise books, science kits, tablets, cash grants, school feeding programme etc.
- Student population also determines the location for the construction of new or expanded schools
- Student population also generates student: teacher ratio data and thus provides information on the number of teachers required by the sector and the numbers of teachers to be trained.

## **B. Rights, Needs, Responsibilities and Requirements of Girls, Boys, Adolescents and Youth**

*Priority Measures taken to: Take advantage of the demographic dividend to provide social investment in adolescents and youth.*

### ***Employment***

The Government is committed to working towards establishing a nation in which young people are united, educated, trained, safe, healthy, happy and integrally involved in the decision-making processes through enjoying equality of opportunity, equal access to the resources of the country and are politically, economically, and socially empowered.

Youth represents more than half of the population, with (58%) being below the age of 35 years. In Guyana, children under the age of 15 years account for 29.1% (226,055) of the estimated 2022 population with 109,952(49.6%) boys and 113,941 (50.4%) girls. Additionally, an estimated 129,568 persons are 15-24 representing 45.8% of Guyana's population and as such the country remains a relatively young independent developing nation<sup>20</sup>. Youth in the national development process is critical to the long-term survival of Guyana. The main challenges affecting youth remain lack of preparedness for the world of work, unemployment, teenage pregnancy (majority 17 years and above), and large percentage of female headed households.

According to Guyana's labour force survey for the third quarter 2021, the youth unemployment rate (aged 15 to 24) stood at 31.9 percent, with women rates at 39.3 and men at 25.8; while urban rates of 32.5% were higher than rural 31.7%. This reflects an increase when compared to the situation in 2017, partially attributable to the residual impact of COVID-19. Since then, the youth unemployment rate of Guyana decreased by more than 5 points or 25.46% in 2022 with reduced unemployment in rural youths (25.2%) and women (23.2%) of the share of the total workforce aged 15 to 24.

<sup>18</sup> The GER can exceed 100% because of early or late entry and/or grade repetition.

<sup>19</sup> Budget Estimates Volume 2-2023

<sup>20</sup> BOS (2023) Guyana Estimated Population-2019-2022

**Table 4 - Youth Unemployment Rate (Guyana) 2012 Baseline to 2022**

Youth unemployment rate %	2012 <sup>21</sup>	2017	2018 <sup>22</sup>	2019 <sup>13</sup>	2020 <sup>13</sup>	2021 <sup>13</sup>	2022 <sup>13</sup>
Men	22.4	17.3	19.8	23.1	24.7	23.8	21.6
Women	31.4	28.0	29.7	29.1	30.3	26.1	23.2
Urban	25.5	20.5	22.7	24.1	25.6	25.3	24.9
Rural	25.2	24.5	29.6	30.3	33.8	32.1	25.2
Total	25.3	21.6	26.16	27.0	30.91	29.46	25.46

Contributing to this decline in 2022 are the new opportunities provided by the part time employment programme, new skills training programmes (elaborated further on in this report) and the expanding extractive, agricultural and the construction sectors.

Government's part-time job programme, which was launched in 2022, has seen the mass employment of persons, including youths (approximately 31%) across all regions of Guyana. A total of 13,000 persons are already employed for periods of 10 days every month at a rate of \$40,000 (200USD) for monthly periods which has provided a significant help to many low-income households.

In 2023, it is estimated that 50,000 people have been employed removing the 30,000 jobs lost in the private sector as well as over 3000 lost in the public sector and 7000 in the sugar industry from 2015-2019 (pre-covid).<sup>23</sup>

Ironically, there is simultaneously a labour shortage of skills in the private sector, for example the construction sector which is rapidly expanding, and certain skills in the public sector such as nurses and engineers.

Considering the challenges of the previous period, the new Government of Guyana from August 2020, continues to aggressively pursue policies and programmes to create avenues for income generation and sustainable livelihoods with special emphasis on the poor and vulnerable (women, youth, indigenous peoples, elderly and the disabled). The Government continued to promote and invest in labour and employment policies and special training programmes for youth by significantly increased annual budgetary allocations.

The interventions by the Government of Guyana include:

- (i) the establishment of the President's Youth Advisory Council involving a broad-cross section of youth from across all ten (10) Administrative Regions;
- (ii) the Youth Entrepreneurial Skills Training (YEST) programme under the Ministry of Culture Youth and Sport;
- (iii) the Youth Innovation Project of Guyana (YIPoG) also under the MCYS;

<sup>21</sup> BOS (2012/2017) Labour Force Survey

<sup>22</sup> O'Neill (2018-2023) Youth unemployment rate in Guyana - <https://www.statista.com/statistics/812073/youth-unemployment-rate-in-guyana>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.stabroeknews.com/2023/10/12/news/guyana/govt-has-fulfilled-promise-by-creating-50000-jobs-jagdeo/>

- (iv) the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) platform offered for certified training in commercial food preparation, furniture making, fabric decoration and crop production;
- (v) the Creative grants scheme offered through the Ministry of Culture, Youth & Sport;
- (vi) the youth entrepreneurship grants scheme offered through the Ministry of Culture, Youth & Sport;
- (vii) the Guyana Online Academy (GOAL) scholarship scheme offered by the Government of Guyana started in 2021 and as of May 2023 has trained 20,000 men and women across the country in certificate, diploma and degree programmes;
- (viii) The Women Innovation and Investment Network (WIIN) programme started in 2021 and has trained over 6,000 women thus far;
- (ix) The Get Ready for Opportunities to Work (GROW) programme for persons who had dropped out of school or had done poorly at CXC was started in 2022 with 1400 graduating in the first year, 800 being eligible to access university education;
- (x) Government's part-time employment scheme for unemployed to help supplement family incomes and create opportunities for full time employment.

In 2022, Guyana made tremendous efforts to provide opportunities for low achievers through the Youth Entrepreneur and Skills Training (YEST) Programme for which tools and equipment were procured to train and enhance their skills. Grants were also distributed through the Youth Entrepreneur and Mentorship Programme, while an inaugural National Youth Science Fair was held in which more than 3,500 young Guyanese participated. In the area of robotics training, more than 1,300 youths participated and as a result 12 robotics hubs were established. The President's Youth Award Republic of Guyana (PYARG) Programme, an operator of the International Youth Award Programme under the Duke of Edinburgh, was re-launched after a few years of dormancy.

The Agriculture and Innovation Entrepreneurship Programme (AIEP) was launched in January 2022 which saw over 100 students engaged in shade house farming, growing non-traditional crops such as broccoli, cauliflower, carrots and romaine and iceberg lettuce for the local and export market in the Caribbean. Through this initiative, over 16 metric tonnes of vegetables were produced. At the end of 2022, 120 shade houses were constructed to support the production of high value crops across the country. In 2023, G\$200 million is budgeted for the expansion of the Agriculture and Innovation Entrepreneurship Programme with the aim of engaging a further 100 new young agri-entrepreneurs and increasing the production of these high value crops by 50 percent.

All these programmes are designed to ensure that youth attain the relevant skill sets and/or financial support required for the job market, either to become employable or to become self-employed/entrepreneurs. The programmes are designed to equip youths with the necessary quality education and market-oriented skills; encourage leadership, participation, and representation; promote good health, security and safety,<sup>5</sup> while supporting the development of knowledge and skills to actively participate in the economy and support the reduction of the rate of unemployment among the youth population. Taken together, in 2023, the Government of Guyana will be investing over G\$ 960.2 million<sup>24</sup> on youth programmes.

The Board of Industrial Training (BIT) under the Ministry of Labour continues to train young people in technical

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<sup>24</sup> MOF (Guyana 2023) Budget at a Glance

and vocational skills including masonry and carpentry, information and communication technology, forestry, home economics, heavy duty machinery operation and health services. From 2020 to 2022 over 12,000 youths benefitted from training and emphasis was placed on intensifying the delivery of relevant occupational, technical, and vocational skills training with the objective of addressing entry-level occupational skills demand for current and emerging industries/services in both the public and private sector. New courses have been added such as driving heavy duty equipment such as excavators, etc urgently needed in the construction, and drainage and irrigation sectors.

Between 2020 to 2022, the BIT trained 5,742 females, representing 66% of all persons trained for the said period. Of the number of persons trained between 2019 to 2022, over 281 persons with disabilities benefitted from BIT's training programme in an effort to equip people with disabilities with the necessary skills to become economically viable and have access to opportunities like every other citizen. G\$488.5 million has been allocated in the 2023 budget to train 7,890 persons under the BIT programmes (mechanical engineering, welding and fabrication, electrical installation and refrigeration technology).

The Ministry of Labour also established a National Job Bank in 2022. It is an online portal to assist job seekers to register and find employment and for employers to post their vacancies. Since the establishment of the National Job Bank Portal, more than 3,817 job seekers have registered and to date, 276 employers have utilized this platform. More than 600 people have found employment using this platform.

The Government expects that the impact of its measures together with the investments (including foreign direct investments) in the oil and gas sector and non-oil sectors would result in a highly skilled labour force and a reduction in unemployment.

Several key legislations govern employment of youth among which Employment of the Young Persons and Children Act (Revised 1999) allows persons at the age of 15 years old to be employed under safe conditions, in compliance with the (Occupational Safety and Health Act. Cap. 99:06 - Section 17) and paid according to the wage standards (National Minimum Wage Order 2022). The law requires record keeping and monitoring of the work environment to ensure compliance with the ILO convention concerning the night work of young persons employed in an industry.

## ***Education***

Guyana has made notable progress towards achieving universal primary education through critical investments in the Education sector. Guyana has met its target of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education and strives towards parity at the tertiary level where women outnumber men.

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2022, Guyana moved eighteen (18) slots in 2022 from 53<sup>rd</sup> ranking in 2021 and is now ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the Latin America and Caribbean Region. In this report Guyana ranks 1st globally in Education attainment along with 21 other countries. Guyana has also tied for 1st place with other countries in the ranking for enrollment in both secondary and tertiary education.

Investments in youth through specific public policies and differentiated access, especially through the provision, without discrimination, of universal, free, public, secular, high-quality, intercultural education is a priority of the Government as outlined in the Ministry of Education (MoE) "Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2021- 2025." The precursor to the 2021-2025 Education Strategic Plan was the Education Sector Plan (2019-2023) which relied on information gleaned from the Global out of School Survey in 2017. This plan includes enhancement of social welfare programmes to positively impact participation and access to education, expansion and upgrading of education facilities, and preventative programmes to address violence, bullying, drug use, mental health issues and other social issues. The Ministry has set the attainment of quality Universal Secondary Education (USE) as a major objective of the ESP.

Additionally, the Ministry is currently implementing the Guyana Secondary Education Improvement Project (GSEIP) with support from the World Bank to assist in meeting this objective. The objective of the GSEIP is to increase the number of students with access to secondary school mathematics teachers benefitting from continuous professional development nationwide, and to increase the number of students in secondary schools with improved learning conditions in targeted regions. This project comprises of three components - Strengthen the Capacity of Secondary School Mathematics Teachers Nationwide; Expansion of Secondary School Facilities in underserved areas in two Administrative Regions including the construction of new schools, provision of furniture and equipment for these schools as well as institutional capacity building and project management.

Of special note is that in 1992 there was only one high school in one of the four Interior Administrative Regions. By 2015 there were 13, all with dormitories to allow students from distant villages to attend school. As the Amerindian/indigenous population is the fastest growing ethnic group in Guyana, Government is focusing on expanding the interior secondary schools with dorms and teachers quarters as well as building new schools across the country to cater for the growing number of students, while at the same time training 5,000 teachers at the Cyril Potter College of Education.

It should be noted that every Amerindian/indigenous community and rural village has nursery and primary schools to allow for easy access for the children to attend school from 3 years old.

Investments have been made by the Government in pre-school education with the introduction of early childhood education (ECD) to enhance the well-being of children. In 2023, the total allocation of the national budget for education was G\$94.4 billion dollars for the estimated 193,000 students registered at schools across the country up from G\$18.6 billion in 2019 with an average of \$237,000 being expended on each per child<sup>25</sup>.

Since its re-introduction in October 2020, the "Because We Care Cash Grant" has increased from GY\$600 million in 2021 to GY\$2.1 billion dollars in 2022 for children registered in both public and private schools. Under this initiative parents are offered a cash grant to support them in attending to the school needs of each child. A uniform allowance is also distributed to each child at the same time as the cash grant. Between 2022 and 2023 Government's cash grant increased by 40% benefitting approximately 214,000 children.

Additionally, the School Feeding Program (SFP) which is a component of Education for All—Fast Track

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<sup>25</sup> Minister of Education 2023 budget presentation speech

Initiative (EFA—FTI) programme launched in 2010, was expanded to underserved hinterland regions of Guyana. The School Feeding Programme has been expanded to provide wider access to a larger cohort of students. The community-based hot meal programme has expanded from 110 schools to 172 schools. The programme now includes schools in the riverain communities, in addition to the hinterland regions. This initiative strives to build more community participation in schools and improve children’s development outcomes, such as student enrollment and attendance, nutritional status and learning outcomes in remote and rural areas with limited access. The School Feeding Programme aims to provide meals to 85,000 students in 2023.

A Special Education Needs (SEN) Unit has been established within the MoE aimed towards providing inclusive and accessible education for all children. The MoE’s overarching policy is to cater for inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools as well as SEN schools to cater to children with special needs.

Sensitization and empowerment sessions on autism and children with special needs have intensified in the communities to assist parents and to address stigmatization. The MoE’s SEN Unit has been involved in projects to provide the best learning techniques and practices for children with special education needs. Support is also received from the MoH and training for these teachers in this specialized area has also increased with over 2000 teachers being trained to ensure improved pedagogy in the area of SEN. Additionally, over 100 teachers are enrolled in higher education training via the GOAL programme to improve the learning outcomes of the SEN programme in order to benefit children with disabilities.

The Cyril Potter College of Education has launched its Special Education Needs Programme for special education needs teachers. Training areas include Foundation for SEN, SEN Data Collection Training, Sexuality and Disability, Teaching Methodology for SEN, Literacy and SEN and Inclusion and Inclusive practices. It is now mandatory for ALL trainee teachers at the Cyril Potter College of Education to participate in at least one special educational needs course.

Through the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security (MHSS), cash grants for children with disabilities have been provided to allow greater access to both health and education support.

Under the Education Act (1975-Revised) and the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2021-2025, corporal punishment is allowed according to the MOE guidelines which specify that it must only be administered by the head teacher, deputy or designated senior mistress or master. Since then, through civil society advocacy and the guidance of international norms and practice and in line with the Montevideo Consensus, active discourse on the subject is ongoing.

**Table 5** shows government investment in the education sector within the last five years. There has been an increase of budgetary allocations to the education sector overtime. These figures do not include the budgetary allocations for Education in the ten (10) Administrative Regions and the allocations in the capital budget in this sector under the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

**Table 5: Guyana National Budget Allocation to the Education Sector 2018 -2023**

<b>Education Sector</b>	<b>Percent of Total Budget</b>	<b>Year</b>
G\$41.9Billion	15.6%	<b>2018</b>
G\$52.2Billion	17.4%	<b>2019</b>
G\$52.0Billion	15.8%	<b>2020</b>
G\$60.7Billion	15.8%	<b>2021</b>
G\$74.4Billion	13.3%	<b>2022</b>
G\$94.4Billion	12.1%	<b>2023</b>

**Source: Budget Estimates, Ministry of Finance**

Guyana’s education sector was impacted no differently than the rest of the world by the COVID-19 pandemic. In keeping with the state’s obligation to act in the best interest of the child in all its efforts, decisions were made to pause in-person learning in schools and shift to more ICT online based means to ensure that students were still engaged in learning. For close to two years, the Ministry of Education implemented a series of measures to ensure that students across the country were accessing classes and education resources. In the first year of the pandemic, student learning was supported by the provision of technologically assisted learning tools. In the second year, the Ministry focused on implementing more technological measures to support online learning.

The Learning Channel - a satellite communication network that facilitates the production and nationwide broadcast of educational programmes - was expanded to reach more communities across the country with programmes geared to primary and secondary children. In areas where there was no or limited connectivity the Ministry of Education developed workbooks and sent to those areas so children could continue to learn.

“Operation Recovery” was an initiative which was implemented across the education sector to assist students who were absent after the resumption of in-person classroom learning in late 2022. The initiative was executed to sensitize the public and encourage children’s return to school after the pandemic.

The Government of Guyana also continued to provide humanitarian assistance to children migrants from Venezuela by integrating them into the public school system to ensure they can access education, regardless of their place of origin, and assisted with transitioning from Spanish to English. All children including migrant children are immunized free of cost.

### ***Social Protection***

The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security (MHSSS) established a Family Care Center for entire families in Georgetown in 2019, accessible round the clock. The objective was to provide safe spaces for children while avoiding unnecessary separation of these children from their biological families. The accommodation is made available to families in seriously vulnerable situations, mostly due to lack of adequate accommodation or victims of violence.

In 2019, free daycare services for preschoolers were launched in six Early Childhood Education Centres nationwide. During the height of the pandemic, MHSSS launched the Childcare Subsidy Programme for frontline essential workers in both the public and private sectors who have children aged seven years and below. This

initiative availed free childcare for essential workers. Four hundred and forty-four (444) essential workers received G\$15,000 per month for three months for childcare services and 60 day-care facilities benefitted from the disbursement of a one-off grant for the improvement of their facilities.

In June 2022, the Presidential Initiative to give each disabled child up to the age of 18 a cash grant of GYD100,000 and to place disabled children permanently on the Public Assistance Programme where they would receive monthly vouchers was introduced. For the first time, a database of children with disabilities was created reflecting all ten administrative regions. This was carried out with the involvement of the communities, health personnel and teachers. The database is developing well and with combined statistics from MHSSS, there is now information by gender, age, geographic location and type of disability. The cash grant distribution does not seek information on socio-economic status because all children living with disability are deserving of the cash grant. Approximately 4,971 children with permanent disabilities benefitted from this initiative, placing an additional G\$646 million disposable income into the hands of families to improve their lives.

### ***Access to Justice***

Guyana continues to make investments to provide human, technical, and financial resources to ensure that children in conflict with the law receive free legal advice and representation. The not-for-profit Guyana Legal Aid Clinic provides free legal aid to persons who cannot afford the services of lawyers. Children may receive free legal aid through the Clinic's "Children's Legal Aid Project (commonly known as "Children's Legal Aid"). They may directly approach the Clinic or be referred by government agencies or NGOs.

The Children's Legal Aid Project was initially a UNICEF-supported project under an agreement between the Clinic and the Ministry of Culture, Youth & Sports in 2007 to provide legal aid directly to children requiring assistance with criminal and/or civil matters. Currently, the Clinic is primarily supported by the Government of Guyana and receives donations from local and international agencies, businesses, or individuals. Government's annual subvention to the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic has substantially increased over the past 13yrs, from \$32Million in 2010 to G\$114Million in 2023 representing a 356% increase.

A functional Family Court has been established with its own fully staffed registry and two judges presiding over it. Divorce, division of property, custody and maintenance are henceforth streamlined within this special-purpose court with its own rules and procedures as set out in the Family (Proceedings and Procedure) Rules No. 1 of 2016. This has facilitated family law cases being concluded more speedily and the removal of the burden from the High Court.

### ***Priority Measures taken to: Reduce the high and unequal levels of adolescent pregnancy, forced marriage and abuse and sexual violence against adolescents***

One of the Government's primary objectives is reducing the high and unequal levels of adolescent pregnancy and equip our youths with the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become well-adjusted adults. According to the 2018 Situation Analysis of Adolescent Pregnancy in Guyana, conducted by UNICEF and UNFPA, more than 20 percent of adolescents are pregnant before the age of 18, which meant one out of five teens is pregnant or will become pregnant. According to UNFPA's 2021 report on the Socio-Economic Consequences of Adolescent

Pregnancy in Guyana, Guyana is reported to have 90 births out of every 1000 female between the ages of 15 and 19 during the period 2010-2015.<sup>26</sup> According to UNFPA's 2021 report on the Socio-Economic Consequences of Adolescent Pregnancy in Guyana, the United Nations has estimated Guyana's adolescent birth rate at 74 births out of every 1000 girls between the ages of 15 and 19 for the 2015-2020 period; **reflecting a reduction from the previous period**. This high rate of adolescent pregnancy is of great concern and presents a major challenge.

To address the above stated challenges, the Adolescent Health Unit of the Ministry of Health (MOH) has supported a suite of interventions during the period under review. The Ministry of Health in 2017 launched its Health's Adolescent and Men-Friendly Health Programme in several hinterland regions and subsequently sought to strengthen implementation in 2018 through to 2022/2023. The targeted communities now have access to Community Parenting Support Groups, Adolescent Antenatal Clinic Days, Adolescent Health and Wellness Days and a Men's Health Clinic.<sup>6</sup> Currently the health system has incorporated antenatal clinics for pregnant adolescents as well as support groups in 32 facilities where the incidence is very high. These clinics are designed to provide education for coping during pregnancy and early infancy. Additionally, the support groups seek to provide a platform for peer mentorship.

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education continue to support the Peer Education Programme to not only raise awareness of the risk of HIV/STI but also prevent pregnancies and adopting healthy life choices. The Cabinet approved the draft National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy on February 19, 2019. This is viewed as one of the more progressive models in the Caribbean region.

The Ministry of Health, with the support of UNFPA, the Technical Committee for Sexual and Reproductive Health and other key stakeholders, developed the National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy with the aim of achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health services in Guyana. The policy sets out the Government commitments for the delivery of quality sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services and is designed to be used by policymakers, programme managers and planners involved in the delivery of sexual and reproductive health services. This policy aims to form the mandate and provide direction for sexual and reproductive health-related decisions and interventions. It sets out the Government commitments in relation to SRH services and rights of adolescents in the following areas:

- Legal and Policy Framework
- Sexual and Reproductive Health Information, Education and Services
- Family Planning
- Safe Motherhood Initiatives (Ante-natal, safe delivery and post-natal care)
- Neonatal and Child Care (Ages 0 to 10)
- Adolescents and Youth (Ages 10 to 24)
- Male Sexual and Reproductive Health
- Termination of Pregnancy
- Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV
- Malignancies of the reproductive organs
- Infertility

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<sup>26</sup> Socio-Economic Consequences of Adolescent Pregnancy in Guyana- UNFPA- May 2021

- Sexual and Gender-based Violence
- Implementation
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Capacity Building
- Public-Private Partnership
- Resourcing

The National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy, among things, allows for age-appropriate access to sexual and reproductive health information and services for adolescents. In the healthcare setting, the health workers are permitted to assess the competence of each adolescent to consent on their own to requested or required interventions, in accordance with established guidelines. The policy will also feed-into a Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy which sets out the interventions and activities required to realise universal access to Sexual and Reproductive Health in Guyana, such as equipment, training, and increased availability of Sexual and Reproductive Health commodities (particularly modern long-term contraceptives) and service provision including outreaches in remote regions.

Between July 2019, to September 2022, the project - Reducing Adolescent Pregnancy in Guyana - was implemented in Guyana. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) served as the Executing Agency while the Ministry of Health in Guyana and the Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association served as the implementing partners under the project. The project was implemented in Administrative Regions 1 and 9 in Guyana which reflected the highest levels of adolescent pregnancy in Guyana.<sup>27</sup>

This project supported corresponding community level interventions targeting schools, students, teachers, parents, community leaders, faith-based leaders, and others, in the surrounding communities. The outcomes of this project included: (1) Increased use of quality adolescent sexual and reproductive health services in the communities of Administrative Regions 1 and 9; and (2) Adolescents, in particular adolescent girls, in these communities were empowered to prevent and reduce adolescent pregnancies.

Further, through these interventions, the following outputs were realized:

- Fifty-five (55) health professionals were trained to provide Adolescent Health Services and 100 teachers were trained to teach Comprehensive Sex Education in Administrative Regions 1 and 9;
- (2) Over 4000 Adolescents, 50 Community leaders, 55 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), 11 Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) as well as Parents in the eight-hinterland project targeted communities and eleven remote communities in those two Regions, were sensitized and received information and services through Outreaches and Adolescent Health Services delivery points;
- (3) Improved coordination between the health and education sectors at regional and district levels in the two Regions was achieved through collaboration and capacity strengthening of Health and Education personnel; and
- (4) Continuous engagements and advocacy with Health Care Workers and Facility Managers at the Regional, District and Community levels have resulted in the provision of Adolescent Health Services at

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<sup>27</sup> In Region 1, the project targeted the health facilities at Moruca (District Hospital), Manawarin (Health Post), Warapoka (Health Post), Kwebana (Health Post), and Santa Cruz (Health Post). In Region 9, the project targeted the health facilities at Aishalton (District Hospital), Lethem (Regional Hospital) and Annai (Health Centre). The Satellite Health Posts in the areas surrounding the above stated Health Facilities also benefitted.

thirty-eight Health Facilities including Regional and District Hospitals, Health Centres and Health Posts in Administrative Regions 1 and 9.

The Ministry of Health programming to reduce adolescent pregnancies in Guyana was strengthened, through the support of UNFPA.<sup>28</sup>

The Schools Health Unit of the Ministry of Education continues to coordinate and support implementation of the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE), at Primary and Secondary Levels. The Ministry of Education is also currently implementing the School Health and Nutrition and HIV Prevention Policy. This policy applies to all students, teachers, non-teaching staff, managers, employers, and other providers of education and training in all public and private, formal and non-formal educational institutions and in all parts of the education sector of Guyana. These programmes are complemented by regional welfare programmes that deals with intercultural and gender sensitive issues. Ongoing efforts to fully implement the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) into the national Primary and Secondary schools' curricula recognizes that HFLE encapsulates the required body of knowledge in a comprehensive life-skill educational programme that can be integrated across the curriculum. This is the medium through which teachers can impact and reinforce the positive behaviours that our young people are expected to adopt and display. Students are given a safe and open environment in which they can address a wide range of issues affecting young people. Perennial issues such as (ii) poverty, (ii) neglect, (iii) various forms of abuse, (iv) sex, (v) violence, (vi) health and well-being, (vii) suicide, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS/STDs and a range of potentially "high risk" behaviours and taboo" subjects, are examined in a well-structured holistic programme.

### *Teenage Pregnancies*

In 2018, the Ministry of Education approved a National Policy for the Reintegration of Adolescent Mothers into the Formal School System. The School Welfare Unit of the Ministry of Education is tasked with leading the implementation of the reintegration of teenage mothers into schools. This includes support measures that enable teenage mother to continue their secondary education in schools. Through this programme, Guyana now has a policy that addresses pregnant adolescents and young mothers dropping out of school. During the 5 years period under review, 172 girls in Administrative Regions 1 to 10 across Guyana were able to complete their secondary education. Girls were allowed to attend the same school they were going to when they became pregnant, or they were offered place at another secondary school or Practical Instruction Centers within the Administrative Region.

In 2021, the Ministry of Health received support from UNFPA with the conduct of an assessment of the economic impact of adolescent pregnancy and early motherhood in Guyana. The study revealed the considerable costs and losses to the economy and the State, relating to the disparities in education and labour between the adolescent mothers and those who delayed childbearing and the benefits to be derived from investing in the preventative measures. The main findings are as follows: **adolescent mothers are 13% more likely than mothers who delay**

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<sup>28</sup> Through collaboration with UNFPA the following interventions were completed:-

- The development of Standards for Quality Health Care Services of Adolescents in Guyana;
- The development of Adolescent Health Service Delivery Guidelines for Health Providers;
- The conduct of capacity building workshops for health care workers in Regions 1 and 9 to strengthen adolescent health services delivery;
- the procurement of contraceptive supplies, medical equipment, furniture for targeted health care facilities in the two regions

**pregnancy until early adulthood to withdraw from the labour market.** This inactivity carries an estimated loss of annual income of G\$166, 714, 064 the equivalent of USD799,588 for 2019; the unemployment rate for the adolescent mothers is 32%, approximately 45% higher than the 22% rate of unemployment for women who were mothers at an adult age, a gap of 10 percentage points. The higher unemployment rate for adolescent mothers observed for 2019 implies a loss of revenue estimated at \$295,958,250 or USD 1,419,464; the labour income gap between the adolescent mothers and those who delayed childbearing shows that the income of the adolescent mothers is about 10% lower than that of women who had a child in adulthood. The loss represents on average G\$ 6,250 (USD 29.98) per month for each adolescent mother during 2019. The estimated loss based on the gap in earnings between the two groups of mothers is G\$264,290,730 with equivalent USD 1,267,581. <sup>29</sup>

At every educational level the average income for the older mothers exceeds that for the adolescent mothers. Tertiary and university studies significantly increase the earning potential of both groups of mothers. Based on the observed gaps in the education levels and the resulting income difference between the two groups of mothers in 2019, the opportunity cost of education, indicating the loss of income is G\$230,777,890 the equivalent of USD1,106,848. The study used 2019 as the year of interest.

The assessment of the economic impact of adolescent pregnancy and early motherhood in Guyana highlighted other critical findings. With 3 deaths from pregnancy related causes among adolescents the adolescent maternal mortality ratio for Guyana for 2019 is estimated at 103 per 100,000 live births.<sup>30</sup> With a life expectancy for women of 73 years these 3 deaths with an average age at death due to pregnancy estimated at 17.5 years result in approximately 166 years of potential life lost. With an age of entry into the workforce of 15 years and a retirement age of 60 years, the potential productive years lost is estimated at 128 years. Bearing in mind therefore, that for each year of productive life women who had a child in adolescence earn an average of \$687,000, maternal mortality among adolescents results in an economic loss of \$ 87,592,500 (USD 420,108) each year; decreases in labour participation, employment and income resulting from adolescent pregnancy and early motherhood withhold taxes in the form of value-added tax (VAT) and personal income taxes. Total revenues forgone by the State during 2019 from VAT and for personal income tax due to inactivity, unemployment and reduced income levels among women who became mothers in adolescence amount to \$216,056,850 equivalent to USD 1,036,244.<sup>31</sup>

Given the foregoing, the Government of Guyana continues to explore and provide resources and trained personnel in health and education to address this social issue.

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<sup>29</sup> Socio-Economic Consequences of Adolescent Pregnancy in Guyana- UNFPA May 2021 p.14

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p.15

<sup>31</sup> Ibid p. 15

*Priority Measures taken to: Allow for effective implementation from early childhood of comprehensive sexuality education programmes.*

Since the introduction of the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) into the curriculum of Primary Schools in 1998 it has been revised and expanded to grades 7-11 of secondary schools in response to the HIV epidemic and the high rate of adolescent pregnancy. The programme achieved important successes with a total of 1,500 teachers trained at the Cyril Potter Training College and the University of Guyana to deliver the curriculum to primary secondary and vocational education programs.

The Ministry of Education commenced a phased roll out of the revised HFLE curriculum during academic year 2022-2023 for Grades 1 to IV expanded to all schools in six (6) Education Districts and Georgetown. The second phase is expected to occur in the 2023-2024 academic year in four other Education Districts. However, the Ministry has recognized that, given the challenges that children face in their daily lives, a more definitive “life skills” focus is required to help students manage the situations they encounter. In fact, advocates have recommended that a “life skills” approach should be adopted in the teaching of HFLE. The revised HFLE, therefore, focuses on recognizing the emotional dimension of human relationships, with respect for the evolving capacity of boys and girls and the informed decisions of adolescents and young people regarding their sexuality, from a participatory, intercultural, gender-sensitive, and human rights perspective.

The Government of Guyana, through the national health strategy - Health Vision 2020 - and the National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy defines youth-friendly sexual health and reproductive health services with a gender, human rights, intergenerational and intercultural perspective. The policy document, which was jointly developed with government agencies, civil CSOs, Faith based organizations, BOs, NGOs and the United Nations agencies, especially UNFPA, guarantee access to safe and effective modern contraceptive methods, respecting the principles of confidentiality and privacy and enable adolescents and young people to exercise their sexual rights and reproductive rights. Avoiding early and unwanted pregnancies as well as preventing the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections are cross-cutting themes with the SDG. The principal approach of the Guyana National Sexual & Reproductive Health Policy is for adolescents and youths to take free, informed, and responsible decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive lives and the exercise of their sexual orientation without fear of stigma and discrimination.

The National Sexual & Reproductive Health Policy prioritizes preventing/delaying pregnancy among adolescents and access to safe abortion services and contraceptive services through comprehensive education on emotional development and sexuality, and timely and confidential access to good-quality information, counselling, technologies and services, including emergency oral contraception without a prescription and male and female condoms.

**Table 6: Proportion of Adolescents receiving contraceptives 2019-2022**

Year	% of Adolescents receiving contraceptives of the total number of new clients
2019	11%
2020	11%
2021	12%
2022	13%

*Source: Ministry of Health*

In the area of adolescent sexual and reproductive health, while there is progress, much remains to be done to further reduce unwanted/unplanned teenage pregnancies, transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Special attention also needs to include the needs of LGBTQI adolescents and young people.

The Prevention of Discrimination Act is under review to include LGBTQI and disabled persons. In 2021 the 12<sup>th</sup> Parliament passed the Summary Jurisdiction Offences (Amendment) Act 1 (2021) which repealed the criminalization of cross dressing. This amendment brings Guyana into compliance with the ruling of the Caribbean Court of Justice in the case **McEwan et al v AG**<sup>32</sup>.

*Measures taken to: **Reduce the high levels of violence experienced by boys, girls, adolescents, and young people.***

The second phase of the Citizens Security Strengthening Programme (CSSP) was launched in 2016 and continued during the period under review. The CSSP was designed to tackle the problem of crime and violence by working to reduce risk factors and drivers of crime and violence and promoting and strengthening protective factors. The GoG/IDB CSSP, which is funded through a US\$15 million loan from the Inter-American Development Bank, aims to reducing crime and violence in Guyana, through a comprehensive approach that combines preventive strategies with institutional strengthening activities.

Some 20 communities in five of the ten administrative regions were identified for the ‘Community Crime and Violence Prevention’ project (component one) and 300 youth were targeted for training, in the areas of entrepreneurship, conflict resolution, violence prevention, and parenting, as part of the citizen security initiative. The objective of this component of the programme was to address the risk factors to crime and violence at the community, family, and individual levels. It involves promoting effective community-based crime prevention. Indicative interventions under this component that is relevant to youth includes:

- (i) Capacity-building for community-level governance and community-based organizations so that they can develop local solutions for crime and violence, and increase citizen engagement;
- (ii) Creation, formalization and strengthening of Community Action Committees to support community-led initiatives to prevent crime and violence;

<sup>32</sup><https://ccj.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2022-CCJ-7-AJ-1.pdf>

- (iii) Provision of training for community members to address risks associated with interpersonal violence and norms that promote acceptance of violence [Training programmes that cover parenting, gender norms, counselling and conflict resolution;
- (iv) Public awareness and behaviour change campaigns to prevent inter-personal violence;
- (v) A local diagnostic survey of crime phenomena, their characteristics, factors leading to them, the form they take and their extent;
- (vi) Activities for creating economic inclusion at-risk youth (ages 15-30), including vocational, job-readiness, job seeking and job placement, entrepreneurship, and mentoring training; as well as
- (vii) Rapid Impact Projects such as the rehabilitation of multi-purpose centers, sports infrastructure, and lighting, inter alia, as safe and inclusive spaces for youths and the wider community to interact.

It is important to highlight that in 2018, a Juvenile Justice Act was laid and passed in the National Assembly. The Act addresses diversionary options - diverting the juvenile away from formal Court procedures to informal procedures and includes restorative measures to deal with a juvenile alleged to have committed an offence and access to legal aid for children and youth. This legislation is under review due to some hurdles in implementation.

Following the enactment of the Juvenile Justice Act, Guyana's first Children's Court was established in Georgetown in October 2018 where emphasis is placed on rehabilitation, education and a more restorative approach for those in conflict with the law. Moreover, it is aimed at involving not only the offender but the victim, the parents and even members of the society. Guyana attaches utmost importance to the principle of the best interests of the child and will ensure that juveniles are treated fairly and humanely and that their rights are respected and protected.

Guyana's Family Court presides over matters such as divorce, division of property, custody and maintenance which are streamlined within this special-purpose court with its own rules and procedures as set out in the Family (Proceedings and Procedure) Rules No. 1 of 2016. This has facilitated family law cases being concluded more speedily and the removal of the burden from the High Court.

The Guyanese Judiciary launched the Juvenile Drug Treatment Court (JDTC) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH) in May 2022, opening a dozen of them simultaneously across Guyana. The JDTCs are domiciled at the level of Magistrate Courts and provides a treatment option for young persons with substance-use disorders who have committed minor offences to support their habit. The JDTCs seeks to reduce substance abuse, crime committed by adolescents and recidivism through long-term therapeutic interventions and judicial supervision. In keeping with international best practices and the Guyana's stance on diversion, this will reduce the number of adolescents being institutionalized for minor infractions of the law.

The Childcare Protection Agency (CCPA) of Guyana was strengthened over the reporting period. Its stated mission is to prevent, reduce and alleviate the effects of abuse and neglect of children by effective services, protect and promote children's rights in their communities and in the family setting. This agency is responsible for the administration of the Protection of Children Act, Status of Children Act, Adoption of Children Act, Sexual Offences Act, Childcare and Development Services Act, Custody, Contact, Guardianship & Maintenance Act.

During the period under review, the Government supported the development of Child Advocacy Centres (CACs) in collaboration with two non-governmental organizations, ChildLink Incorporated and Blossom Incorporated. The first CAC was established by MHSSS in partnership with ChildLinK and UNICEF in 2014. Currently, the CACs are operated in partnership with the CPA by NGOs ChildLinK and Blossom Inc, which receive reports from child victims of abuse, conduct forensic interviews and provide the necessary support.

There is now one in each Administrative Region (with two, in Region Four) with a total of 13 CACs that are operational nationwide. They provide a safe, child-friendly and neutral environment where child protection officers, law enforcement and medical personnel, victim support advocates and others work in partnership to make decisions on the treatment, investigation, management and prosecution of cases of abuse. Child and family members may receive counselling support, crisis intervention and referrals for mental health and medical treatment. These two NGOs receive an annual subvention from the Government for the management of these centres that enables them to implement their work programmes. These subventions have substantially increased over the past 5 years, moving from G\$24Mil in 2019 to G\$103Mil in 2023. This is now part of the Spotlight Initiative, a global multi-year partnership between the EU and UN to eliminate all forms of violence against women and children.

**Table 7: Government Subvention to Child Advocacy Centres (ChildLink and Blossom Inc.)**

<b>Government Subvention</b>	<b>Year</b>
G\$24Mil	2019
G\$11Mil	2020
G\$73,968Mil	2021
G\$73,968Mil	2022
G\$103 Mil	2023

*Source: Budget Estimates, Ministry of Finance*

Blossom Inc. also works with migrant communities (predominantly from Venezuela). Cases of unaccompanied minors or suspected child victims of trafficking/smuggling are referred to MHSSS and the Guyana Police Force. Children with disabilities are referred to the MoH and those with learning disability are referred to the Regional Children Disability and Diagnostic Centre.

### **Child Labour**

Recognizing that children are often at greater risk of being exposed to and encounter various forms of discrimination and violence and forced labour that hinders efforts towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in keeping with target 8.7 of the SDGs.

A National Policy on Child Labour was launched in 2019 with the support of UNICEF and ILO but was operational until 2022. This, together with the National Policy on Occupational Safety and Health which was launched simultaneously, aims to eliminate child labour and promote and improve the safety of workers in

Guyana. Target 8.7 of the SDGs is linked to other targets including target 16.2 of the SDGs which seeks to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against / torture of children as well as Goal 1 on poverty, Goal 4 on education and Goal 5 on ending violence against girls and women and ensuring gender equality.

The Child Labour Policy aims to strengthen the government's efforts to eliminate child labour in all its forms. The policy is intended to provide outcomes that include strengthened coordination and collective action, mitigation of economic and social vulnerabilities associated with child labour, reduction of the factors that often lead to child labour, expand school access to vulnerable populations and increased access to post-secondary and vocational education. Specific objectives of this policy are to:

- (I) To reconcile gaps and inconsistencies of existing national policies with ratified international conventions;
- (II) To establish a national framework for coordinating, enforcing, monitoring and evaluating all efforts that seek to prevent and eliminate child labour, reduce poverty and increase access to education;
- (III) To remove children involved in the worst forms of child labour as matter of urgency;
- (IV) To build sustained civic engagement in addressing child labour through tangible participation of both adults and children in development and implementation of programmes and initiatives to combat child labour;
- (V) To provide special emphasis for the protection of vulnerable indigenous children living in the hinterland from child labour.

The programmes of the Education and the Social Services sectors identified earlier in this document form a critical component of the implementation of this policy.

Guyana continues to undertake proactive measures to address child labour and has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labour, while intensifying efforts to address gaps in legislation, policy, operations and enforcement.

UNICEF's 2019-20 MICS revealed a strong decline in the prevalence of child labour<sup>33</sup> across all of Guyana's regions. The overall percentage of children aged 5-17 involved in child labour declined from 18.3 percent in 2014 to 6.4 percent, in 2019, with 4.9 percent of children involved in economic activities at or above the age-specific threshold and 1.8 percent involved in household chores at or above the age-specific threshold in 2019. While the rates of occurrence remained highest in the hinterland regions with family activities, the prevalence was reduced across all regions. The proportion of children involved in hazardous work also declined to 8 percent in 2019-20 compared to 13 percent in 2014. In 2022 one individual was prosecuted for forced labor involving a female child while another individual was prosecuted in a case of sex trafficking involving a female child.

CPA intensified awareness on violence and child abuse from 2019 to 2022 with the goal of identifying hidden instances of all forms of child abuse. The agency focused on creating awareness and reporting in the hinterland community through messaging on child abuse issues translated in Amerindian languages, increase use of social networking for reporting and merging of the toll-free Hotline Services to the dedicated 914 GBV hotline service

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<sup>33</sup> It should be noted that compulsory education is from 5 to 15 years. A child can work from 15 years of age legally under the protection of labour and occupational and safety laws.

[implemented during the period under review] that is accessible throughout all Regions. The initiative directly led to increased reporting of child abuse cases. The mass media especially social media has been a valuable tool in promoting public awareness and education on abuse and neglect and is widely used by government agencies as well as NGOs.

Some key successful nationwide awareness-raising programmes in recent years include:

- “Every Child Safe” Campaign (2021);
- “Supporting families to prevent child abuse through education and community development” (2018);
- “The National Multimedia Child Abuse Awareness Campaign;”
- Annual “Child Protecting Week” with specific themes on child protection.

The Government of Guyana, through the Ministry of Culture, Youth & Sports, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, provides opportunities for boys, girls, adolescents and young people for harmonious coexistence and a life free from violence, through the youth, education, and health strategies. Partnerships with faith-based organization (Christian, Hindu and Muslim), sports clubs (Cricket, Football, Squash, Volleyball), and service organization (Rotaract, Lions and the Toastmasters clubs) provide forums to address the factors that disrupt harmony in the community and foster violence. These partnerships also allow for education that promotes tolerance, an appreciation for diversity, mutual respect and respect for human rights, conflict resolution and peace, and to ensure protection, timely access to justice and compensation for victims. The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security has supported the strengthening of dedicated Adolescent/ Youth Friendly Spaces in several communities in Administrative Regions 3, 4 and 6.

*Measures taken to: **Promote the participation of youth in all spheres and at all levels.***

The Government has made strides to include youth in policy, legislative and programming decision making processes. This has been done through mechanisms such as the National Youth Parliament, the Young Influencers programme, and the Presidents’ Youth Advisory Council. The annual Youth Parliament initiated in 2011 with a youth organization and the Parliament Office has become an annual feature on the programme of the National Assembly. The Youth Parliament involves students in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> forms in secondary schools representing all 10 Administrative Regions. It aims at developing elocution skills, ensuring young people understand and are involved in parliamentary democracy, in particular about the role and functions of Parliament. The program is funded by the Government and implemented by the Parliament Office. The Seventh Annual Youth Parliament in 2022 convened with 40 participants in the junior category and 46 in the senior category, while 36 issues related to youth were developed with 9 matters forwarded to the various ministries for consideration.

The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security in January 2021 launched its ‘Young Influencers’ programme as part of its efforts to push the country’s youth to participate in voluntary work and self-development to better their communities. The programme which seeks to empower youth and encourage them to harness their abilities to make a meaningful impact on their respective communities.

In 2022, the President’s Youth Advisory Council was launched and is tasked with sharing youth perspectives with the Government on a broad scope of matters which concern them such as education, mental health, constitutional reform, primary health care and agriculture. This mechanism enables their views to be heard and considered by

the Government's policymaking machinery. The Council works with state agencies and Ministries to advance the interests of young people, build capacity and motivate youths. The multi-member Youth Advisory Council comprises young professionals from various fields including medicine, academia, science and environment, legal, military, sport and students from throughout Guyana.

The "StoryBoard Initiative" was launched in 2021 to allow girls from vulnerable groups and alternative care facilities to share their views by developing storyboards on their lives and the challenges which they have surmounted. Their stories are published to raise awareness, inspire other young people, and influence positive change, with the proceeds from the publication going back to them to help them. The first group consisted of 25 girls under the mentoring of six teachers and six journalists who have volunteered to assist with creative writing skills. Funding came from the GOG/UN Spotlight Initiative and the EU and will be continued by MHSSS beyond the initial Spotlight funding.

In 2021, the Guyana Youth and Environment Network organized the "Children Voices for Nature-Art Challenge" programme where children 12 years and under were invited to share their thoughts and dreams for a future with nature and diversity of life - through drawings or building something creative based on three selected environmental themes. The initiative allowed children to amplify their voices and perspectives on the environment as part of the Network's on-going children and youth mobilisation and celebration from International Day of Biodiversity to the World Environment Day.

As a priority, and in keeping with the 2018 theme for International Youth Day, "Safe Spaces for Youth", a number of past Youth-Friendly Spaces have been resuscitated and new ones established across Guyana to provide children and youth with safe spaces for open sharing and discussing social issues concerning them with facilitators without fear or discrimination. The "Safe Spaces" also host programmes designed by youth officers and social workers who have worked with schools and communities (including 'edutainment' sessions, good governance sessions, crime prevention workshops, talks on unsafe lifestyle behaviours, etc.). These spaces provide facilities for children to do homework with hot meals. Voices and views of children count, but not necessarily only in areas that affect them. Their views and voices can also be a medium of message transmission to society at large as Guyana had witnessed during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the lockdown, UNICEF, in partnership with the WHO, provided an opportunity for youth volunteers to raise their voices on video on the pandemic with messages for families, children and the society on the measures they should take to stay safe and slow the spread of COVID-19. These videos were posted on social media which enjoyed a very wide coverage across the country. In 2022, UNFPA provided support to the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security and the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, for the strengthening/ resuscitation of a number of these Adolescent/ Youth Friendly Spaces.

In accordance with Article 12 of the Convention, the Rights of the Child Commission, a constitutional rights body, established its "Youth Ambassadors" Programme in 2015 to promote youth participation and decision-making in areas concerning them. An annual camp is organized with activities to empower them to be a voice on issues affecting them, and to return to their specific districts and communities as youth representatives. The Programme was initiated by a group of youth to create a platform to foster youth empowerment and create capacity building among young people.

The Rights of the Child Commission plays an equally important role in ensuring that communities are secure from child labour, trafficking in persons, child prostitution and all related issues. It has ongoing engagements with government agencies, the business community and child protection stakeholders to nurture a national approach to addressing the exploitation of children across business sectors. The Commission has been championing positive reinforcement as an alternative to corporal punishment in the school system with teachers, students and Parent Teachers Association.

Within the governance system for public schools, youth representation is mandated on all school boards, committees and review process.

Through the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, youth involvement in the Amerindian/indigenous village governance system is now a standard practice. There has been a noticeable increase in 2021 in the number of young leaders elected to their Village Councils.

### **C. Ageing, Social Protection and Socioeconomic Challenges for Older Persons**

*Priority Measures taken to: Eliminate social, legal, institutional and physical barriers that prevent or limit substantive equality for older persons with respect to other population groups; allow older persons to make their own decisions and live independent lives, as much as possible facilitate contact and communication between persons of different ages as well as encourage ties and mutual learning.*

In Guyana the ageing population is now growing with incremental increases in each age cohort from 55 to 75+. In 2012 the total population from 55 to 75+ was 88,288. In 2018 this segment of the population gradually increased to 102,825 while in 2022 it rose to 112,371. Noteworthy is that those within the population age range of 65+ had the highest margin of increase in the senior category. Improvement in the health sector and availability of more modern services and medication have contributed in no small way to the increase of this population group.

Recognizing this, the government has substantially increased its non- contributory Old Age pension scheme by over 60% since 2020. The Old Age Pension Act (1944/Amended 1980) establishes an “Old Age Pensioner” as a person who attained the age of 65 years and as such is entitled once residing in Guyana for the previous 12 years to receive Government pension at a rate determined by the National Assembly. Old Age Pension is a non-contributory pension, payable to all eligible senior citizens in Guyana.

Nationally, the working age population, as defined by the National Insurance and Social Security Act (1971), is all persons between the ages of 16 and 60. Every employed person within the working age population is required to contribute to the scheme. As such, persons who attain the age of 60 and having met the contribution requirements are entitled to an “NIS Pension.” The formal Public Services of Guyana, however, establishes the

age of 55 years old or having served 33 1/3 years as a civil servant (public, police, and teachers) to qualify for retirement and to receive government service pension.

The Government of Guyana has recognized the importance of providing a good quality of life for senior citizens and has continued to strengthen its programmes and services for older persons. The National Commission for the Elderly was constituted and commenced discharging its mandate in 2012, with the aim of supporting the continued involvement of senior citizens in the economic and community life of the country. The Commission serves as the major body responsible for providing advice to the Government in the formulation of comprehensive policies for elders. The main objectives of the Commission are to improve the quality of life of the elderly population and provide them with a sense of security, belonging and a feeling of health and worthiness.

The Commission receives an annual subvention from the annual National Budget. The main areas addressed during the period under review centers on the following:

- Development of a policy for the Minimum Operating Standards for Elderly Residential Facilities together with residential care and the development of handbook for facilities operations;
- Monitored elderly care facilities to ensure the implementation of the minimum standards by establishment of a visiting committee;
- Engaged with elderly community at various services meeting points (post offices, health clinics, utilities payment sites);
- Registered the senior citizens clubs across the country and designed a concept paper to guide the establishment and operations of the clubs.

In 2020 the government removed the taxes on water and provides a subsidy per annum for electricity to the elderly. Furthermore, the monthly disbursement of the Old Age Pension was increased in 2020, 2022 and 2023. The recent economic growth experienced has provided the fiscal space to scale up implementation efforts to address vulnerable populations. Consideration is currently being given to the following areas:

- Pension funds and schemes (Public Service, NIS, Old Age, Private Pensions)
- Government relief – tax relief and cash grant programme.
- Subsidies and entitlement - free passport, removal of travel tax, Seniors Day at supermarkets and restaurants
- Priority access - facilities for all elderly to access services easily at public offices, commercial banks and other financial institution

The Old Age Pension allocation by the Ministry of Finance in 2023 annual Budget caters for 73,000 persons at a coverage of 100% of eligible persons in all 10 Administrative Regions of Guyana. The Old Age Pension is administered by the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security (MHSSS) through the Guyana Post Office Corporation and established financial institutions across the country. Pension Books are distributed to each pensioner annually and each monthly voucher is redeemable for cash at the nearest post office, bank or money transfer agency nationwide. The Social Services Unit of the Ministry and the Regional Democratic Councils collaborated to improve the delivery and payment old age pension, with direct delivery to shut-ins, persons with disabilities, and hinterland pensioners in 2021 and in 2022 reaching an estimated 1,891 persons who may have

been accessing this before. In 2023, the MHSSS collaborated with the Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Company to allow for the old age pension to be payable digitally through Mobile Money to allow for easier transfers, especially for older persons with mobility or transportation constraints. The mobile money can be used for direct payments or can be cashed-in at agents within the communities.

Additional measures taken to increase Pensioner’s Disposable Income by the Ministry of Finance through various government agencies include:

- Removal of 14 percent VAT from electricity and water bills for all Old Age Pensioners from October 2020.
- Removal of 14 percent VAT from cell phones to make communication more affordable in 2020.
- Zero rate VAT on essential food items from 2021.
- One-off cash grant was given to pensioners in 2022.
- Subsidized water charges to pensioners (effective Oct 2020), benefiting 27,436 pensioners as of 2022.
- Provision of credits on electricity charges, benefiting 49,966 households including pensioners.

**Table 8: Increases in Old Age Pension 2019-2023**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Pensioners</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>
2019	53,989	\$19,500	\$20,500
2020	58,100	\$20,500	\$20,500
2021	62,616	\$20,500	\$25,000
2022	69,478	\$25,000	\$28,000
2023	73,000	\$28,000	\$33,000
<b>Total Increase</b>			

Since 2020 the cumulative increase granted to the Old Age Pension scheme now exceeds 60%.

**Table 9** shows the % of annual national budget that is allocated to pensioners. This signifies Guyana’s commitment to work to improve the financial and livelihood well-being of the elderly.

**Table 9: Guyana Budget Allocation to Old Age Pension 2018-2022**

<b>Total Budget Allocation</b>	<b>Total allocated to Pensioners</b>	<b>Percentage of Budget allocated to pensioners</b>	<b>Year</b>
G\$267.1Billion	G\$12.6Billion	4.7%	<b>2018</b>
G\$ 300.7Billion	G\$13.2Billion	4.3%	<b>2019</b>
G\$329.5Billion	G\$16.2Billion	4.9%	<b>2020</b>
G\$383.6Billion	G\$16.8Billion	4.3%	<b>2021</b>
G\$553.1Billion	G\$18.6Billion	3.3%	<b>2022</b>

*Source: Budget Estimates, Ministry of Finance*

Guyana continues to work on providing adequate health and wellbeing policies appropriate for the challenges of the varied and changing epidemiological profile arising from ageing, including efforts to eliminate communicable diseases and actions for the control and treatment of noncommunicable disease and conditions of degeneration.

In 2021 the Ministry of Health extended the scope of the Programme of Non-Communicable Diseases to include work on prevention and treatment of chronic diseases and expand home based care for elderly in Administrative Regions 2,3, 5, 6 and 9. The Minister of Health also re-launched the Presidential Commission on the prevention and control of NCD. Currently, the Presidential Commission works closely with the Commission for the Elderly to further enhance the access to treatment for cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers and lung conditions by the introduction of innovative and modern methods of management.

Additionally, a situation analysis of Older Persons was developed in the Guyana Country Cooperation Strategy (2016-2020) of PAHO/WHO along with promotion of healthy aging. With PAHO's support, the Ministry of Health established an Elder Health Unit and trained several categories of health professionals and care providers. The programme works in close collaboration with PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centers for the elderly in developing protocols and guidelines for elderly medical management and care.

Existing legislative, policy and programme are under review in regard to residential care, transportation, financial security and protection from abuse and exploitation. Emerging issues related to older migrants especially with the influx of migrants from neighboring Venezuela, linguistic minorities, homeless, and those with mental health and physical disabilities are identified for priority attention. The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security (MHSSS) along with the Ministry of Health (MOH) and Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) have already established a registry of elderly migrants and have commenced provision of critical health and financial support for these persons.

The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security (MHSSS) along with the National Commission of the Elderly, monitors the occurrence of all forms of violence in the family and where the elderly is involved support is provided to ensure that the rights of the elderly are not violated. Systems and mechanisms for the elderly to

seek redress when their rights are violated are now integrated into the Social Services Unit of the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security (MHSSS).

Assistance is available to senior citizens through the Difficult Circumstances Unit at the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security to purchase food supplies and medication for those who may be experiencing economic difficulties. Free medical assistance is offered to all senior citizens at all public medical facilities as well as all senior citizens' homes controlled by the Government without discrimination.

There is currently no policy for the elderly, however, a National Policy on Ageing is expected to be completed in 2024. The overarching goal of the national ageing policy is to achieve the overall social, economic and cultural reintegration of older persons into mainstream society and to enable senior citizen population as far as practicable to fully participate in the national development process.

#### **D. Universal Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services**

*Measures taken to: Identify and review legislation, standards and practices that restrict access to sexual and reproductive health services.*

Initiatives are being implemented in keeping with universal access to sexual and reproductive health that remain a national priority in keeping with SDG 3. The national health sector strategy – the Health Vision 2020 – continues to guide investments and interventions in the sector, with the ultimate aim of achieving universal coverage of health care inclusive of sexual and reproductive health services. During the period under review, a National Sexual & Reproductive Health Policy was launched and is considered the most progressive National Sexual & Reproductive Health Policy in the English-speaking Caribbean. The NS&RH policy was elaborated on earlier in this report see pages 23-24)

The challenges faced by the public health sector are many and varied: shortage of nursing staff who are attracted to leave and work overseas, and disparities between the hinterland and coastland. Nevertheless, the government continues to make every effort to ensure investment in the public health system is geared towards improving service delivery – quality, efficiency, and effectiveness. **Table 9** highlights the significant portion of the annual budget allocated to the Health Sector and the continuous increase over the past 5yrs.

**Table 10: Guyana Budget Allocation to Health Sector 2018-2022**

<b>Health Sector</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Budget</b>	<b>Year</b>
G\$33.3Billion	12.5%	<b>2018</b>
G\$35.9Billion	11.9%	<b>2019</b>
G\$51.7Billion	15.7%	<b>2020</b>
G\$53.5Billion	14%	<b>2021</b>
G\$73.2Billion	13.2%	<b>2022</b>

*Source: Budget Estimates, Ministry of Finance*

Guyana recognizes Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights as an integral component of the human right to health and accepts the recommendations in the Programme of Action (POA) of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the resultant priorities reflected in the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development.

Efforts to strengthen universal access to Sexual and Reproductive Health services in Guyana have focused on the high rates of adolescent pregnancy, high maternal mortality, high prevalence of HIV and STI among the reproductive age population and the compounding issues of stigma, discrimination and high levels of Gender-Based Violence, inclusive of sexual violence. Guyana guarantees Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and the Constitution of Guyana, the Public Health Ordinance (1934), the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1997 and the Ministry of Health Act (2007) guarantee medical care and free access to essential health services, inclusive of Sexual and Reproductive Health services, as a basic right.

The policy establishes the right of all persons to make free, informed, voluntary and responsible decisions on their sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender identity, without coercion, discrimination, or violence, and the right to information and the means necessary for decisions with regards to their sexual health and reproductive health.

Guyana continues to strengthen measures for detection of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections in pregnant women and for prevention of the vertical transmission of the virus since the introduction of the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission Treatment (PMCTT) in 1998. Guyana is on the path for Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis.

Guyana continues to offer free Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission Treatment and free Anti- Retroviral Treatment at its facilities, thus, significantly reducing levels of transmission and extending life and wellness of those affected. All pregnant women are tested for HIV, Syphilis and other STIs. Once tested HIV positive, the Prevention of Mother To Child Transmission (PMTCT) Plus programme is activated which guarantees the initiation of antiretroviral (ARVs) regardless of CD4 count. One Hundred and ninety (190) Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission sites have been established in all 10 Administrative Regions as Guyana seeks to eliminate mother to child transmission.

Within hard-to-reach communities' pregnant women who are HIV are monitored to ensure adherence to treatment. Psychosocial support to HIV positive pregnant women is available as an additional measure to ensure the reduction of transmission as well as the provision of nutritional items to mothers and babies as a part of the service delivery process. Family planning is also a part of the service provision to ensure adequate spacing of the HIV positive woman before another pregnancy.

**Table 11: Prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV - Guyana 2019-2022**

<b>PMTCT Elements</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
Pregnant women registered at Ante Natal Clinic	16,390	17,097	16,145	15,386
Pregnant women tested for HIV/STI	15,972	16,394	15,986	15,272
Positive Pregnant Women treated	7	11	14	9

*Source: Ministry of Health Preliminary Data*

Universal access to quality sexual and reproductive health services for individuals across the life course remains a benchmark for the health care system in Guyana. In 2023, the Ministry of Health launched its Family Health Manual which is the guiding document for service delivery at the primary health care levels in Guyana. This document reflects the value which the Ministry of Health places on universal access to quality sexual and reproductive health services.

The elimination of preventable cases of maternal morbidity and mortality in Guyana has occupied the attention of Government since 2012 when Guyana ranked as one of the top three countries with the highest maternal mortality ratio. Since then, the Cabinet and Ministry of Health with the support of PAHO/WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA initiated a set of integrated benefits through early ante natal care, delivery and post-partum care, measures for preventing and avoiding unsafe abortion, sexual health and reproductive health education, access to modern and effective contraceptive methods, as well as comprehensive post-abortion care, where necessary, based on a risk- and harm-reduction strategy.

**Table 12: Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)</b>
<b>2018</b>	<b>12.4</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>11.9</b>
<b>2020</b>	<b>9.1</b>
<b>2021</b>	<b>9.3</b>
<b>2022</b>	<b>10</b>

*Source: Appendix 1 to Budget Speeches 2018-2023, Ministry of Finance*

During the reporting period, the Inter-American Development Bank provided support through a US\$8 Million funded five-year project (2017-2021) to help reduce maternal, perinatal, and neonatal deaths in Guyana. The project addressed interventions such as building additional maternity resting homes where a high-risk mother in hinterland area can be observed and cared for whilst she awaits delivery or transportation out of the region for delivery, rehabilitating the obstetric units at Regional Hospitals, and providing essential obstetric and newborn care equipment for the largest hospital in Guyana (Guyana Public Hospital Corporation). The project also involved capacity building towards an eventually improved supply chain management system for health facilities. These

initiatives and more were intended to improve the health outcomes for mothers and children, by contributing to the reduction of the maternal and infant mortality rates.

The Government has budgetary allocations that are directed each year into the Maternal & Child Health programme that provides for ongoing training, procurement of family planning commodities, vaccines for pregnant women as well as allows for supportive supervision, monitoring, and evaluation. There is ongoing training through the University of Guyana and the Health Sciences department with the aim of expanding the skilled work force that is directly involved in essential and emergency obstetrics and neonatal care.

The Ministry of Health Act (2007) and regulations requires any maternal death in a public or private health facility must be reported in a timely manner and for an independent review by a specialist technical committee and recommendation made and implemented based on findings<sup>34</sup>. All the above provides the basis for improved quality of services for pregnant women and by extension reduction in preventable maternal deaths.

**Table 13 Shows the Maternal Mortality Ratio/100,000 live births from 2018-2022** <sup>35</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Maternal Mortality Ratio</b>
2018	70
2019	70
2020	123
2021	140
2022	113

*Source: Budget Estimates - Volume 2, Ministry of Finance*

Guyana has primary health care clinics across in every village in all 10 Administrative Regions which promote prenatal health and post natal health for mothers and infants to reduce maternal deaths and infant mortality rates. District health huts have been upgraded to district hospitals in villages such as Aishalton and Mabaruma. Maternal waiting homes have been constructed in Region Nine, two in Region One, one in Region Two, two in Region Four and one in Region 10. These maternal waiting homes are centres, near hospitals, where at risk pregnant women who are close to their delivery date can stay until they are ready to deliver. In 2023, several new initiatives are being launched, including one that aims at expectant mothers in the hinterland having at least one ultrasound, and are visited at least once by an obstetrician during her pregnancy.

A National Telemedicine Programme pilot project was officially launched in December 2022 and has been rolled out in remote indigenous communities in Administrative Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 to complement and enhance the quality of healthcare delivered in established health facilities. These facilities deploy communication technology to facilitate real time, remote diagnosis and treatment, thereby bringing modern healthcare to remote indigenous

<sup>34</sup> MOH Guyana (2009)Reporting Maternal and Child Death in Guyana

<sup>35</sup> Maternal mortality ratio is the number of women who die from pregnancy-related causes while pregnant or within 42 days of pregnancy termination per 100,000 live births.

communities. In 2023, 15 additional sites are expected to be opened in Region One, four in Region Seven, four in Region Eight and four more in Region Nine. A total of G\$1.8 billion has been allocated to this project.

PAHO/WHO provides technical assistance and support critical to the training of maternal and childcare officers in the ten Regions. Assistance is provided to public and private hospitals to improve the health information systems on maternal and neonatal health.<sup>36</sup>

MoH continues its close partnership with PAHO/WHO as it pushes towards zero maternal mortality. Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Surveillance is done at all birthing facilities. Under the Universal Health Coverage Partnership initiative, capacity-building has been undertaken in regional maternal mortality ratio activities and the electronic Perinatal Information System has been completed for implementation. The Perinatal Information System had been implemented in a paper-based format and assessments are in progress for transition to the electronic system. Data and findings from Maternal Mortality Surveillance and the Perinatal Information System are always employed in programmes implemented to address maternal and perinatal deaths.

For the past decade Guyana has recorded between 90 to 95% of all births being attended to by a skilled birthing attendant.

**Table 14: Percentage of births attended by skilled birthing attendants**

Year	% of births attended by skilled birthing attendants
2019	99%
2020	95%
2021	95%
2022	95%

*Source: Ministry of Health*

Six new, modern additional Regional hospitals are being built in the interior and coastal areas to improve access to health care. The Specialized Maternity and Pediatric Hospital is under construction which will offer highly sophisticated diagnostic and treatment for all free of cost. This is a joint venture between the Government and Mount Sinai Hospital.

Guyana remains only one of two countries in the English-speaking Caribbean with progressive abortion legislation: the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act Chapter 32:05 of the Laws of Guyana. Medical Practitioners are required to be trained and certified by the Guyana Medical Council to be permitted to provide termination services. Only certified institutions can offer termination of pregnancy services. In Guyana, recognizing that legislation allows for the provision of abortion services, the Ministry of Health continues to support interventions that would allow for safe and quality abortion services, to protect the lives and health of women and adolescent girls, improve

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<sup>36</sup> De worming is done for women as part of anti-neonatal services. Refresher training on the Zero Maternal Death from Hemorrhage, the Condom Tamponade, and the Non-Pneumatic Anti-Shock Garment are conducted with community health workers.

their quality of life, and reduce the female morbidity and mortality. The Act requires that there is a Medical Termination of Pregnancy Advisory Board that monitors the implementation of the Act.

*Measures that: Aim to eradicate discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in the exercise of sexual rights.*

The eradication of discrimination and stigma based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression is an ongoing process within the legal and health system of Guyana. There are still gaps in societal stigma and discrimination with regards to LGBTQ+ community. The constitutional provisions prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, age, nationality and religion, however, these provisions do not prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.

The MOH as part of its National Strategic Plan - HIVision 2025, has been working with key stakeholders to address legal barriers around discrimination and stigma towards persons of the LGBTQ+ community.

Training workshops were held by the National AIDS Programme Secretariat (NAPS) with key partners to address stigma, discrimination, Gender-Based Violence, bullying and other human right issues. In 2022, these workshops were held with health care workers, Police Officers, Prison Officers, Soldiers, security guards, members of the Judiciary [including Magistrates], Teachers, and University students. A help desk is available at the National AIDS Programme Secretariat to address stigma and discrimination matters. A hotline is also available.

The National AIDS Programme Secretariat has been using the mystery client's technique to assess the services delivery at the services delivery points. In 2021, a Biological and Behavioural Surveillance Survey (BBSS) was done to better tailor the Ministry of Health and the National AIDS Programme approaches to the LGBTQ+ community. As embodied in the HIVISION 2025 strategic document, all vulnerable groups and key population are entitled to receive adequate SRH services.

The BBSS 2021 survey provides some insights to the gaps in access to SRH services and are currently under review with the donor partners for additional support. Currently all primary health care sites (Health Post, Health Centers, Clinics, Hospitals) are mandated to provide SRH services throughout Guyana as guided by the Maternal and Child Health policy and Care and treatment Guidelines for HIV/STI.

HIV/AIDS prevention, detection and treatment have significantly progressed over the last 10-15 years in reducing the number of AIDS-related deaths, mainly due to the introduction and access to free antiretroviral treatment. Since the introduction of HIV treatment in 2001 and the adaption of the "treat all protocol" strides has been made in this area; with HIV self-testing being introduced into Guyana in 2022.

Achieving the 90–90–90 targets will depend on individuals at an early stage seeking HIV testing and treatment without fear of being stigmatized either by their family, community, or by health service providers. Religious beliefs and cultural norms negatively impact on the free exercise of sexual rights, particularly the right to take decisions about sexual orientation and gender identity.

The LGBTQI+ community is seeking amendments to specific laws which they believe discriminate against the community and hinder the enjoyment of their basic human rights. The outdated 1865 Criminal Offences Act criminalises same sex intimacy for men; whilst the Prevention against Discrimination Act, Cap. 99:08 does not include ground for the protection of LGBTQI+ persons in hiring and in other employment matters. Article 149 of the Constitution of Guyana prohibits discrimination at the executive, judicial and administration. Regrettably, attempts to include sexual orientation as a grounds for non-discrimination in 2003 was defeated due to very strong opposition by the faith-based lobbyists.

Regarding amendments to the PDA, these are presently under review. The discussion on the amendment of article 149 will take place in the context of the new Constitutional Reform process which is expected to commence in 2024.

Government wishes to emphasize that the state does not discriminate against persons based on their sexual orientation and that every Guyanese is entitled to their right to freedom of expression, employment, housing, medical care and education as provided for in the constitution, laws and policies of Guyana. Any aggrieved person is free to approach the courts on a constitutional motion.

*Measures taken to: **Encourage men to take responsibility in sexual and reproductive health matters and in the reproductive care burden.***

To ensure that males are adequately informed about the benefits of sexual and reproductive health for themselves, their partners and families, and actively participate in and access sexual and reproductive health services, the Government through the Ministry of Health is committed to:

- reorienting sexual and reproductive health services to make them male-friendly and cater to the specific needs of men and boys;
- implement strategies to encourage men to access sexual and reproductive health counselling and services;
- develop programmes to increase awareness among men and boys of their role in SRH so that men and boys take responsibility for their own health as well as that of their partners and families;
- engage men and boys as positive agents of change for achieving gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights and ending violence against women and girls;
- ensure the active involvement and participation of males in the development of sexual and reproductive health programmes and interventions;
- support men and encourage them to share equally in child rearing and child support, household and family responsibilities and family planning practices;
- develop and disseminate information, education, communication (IEC) material that respond to the specific needs of men;
- provide information, education and services to prevent and treat male sexual dysfunction; and provide complete and accurate information to parents and men to allow them to make informed decisions regarding circumcision.

These measures are aligned to encouraging men to take a more responsible role in SRH. The Ministry of Health Men's Health Unit and the Gender Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security along with NGOs such as Help and Shelter and Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association (GRPA) support programming in these areas.

The President's initiative in launching the 1000 Men on Mission (MOM) in October 2022 is focused on responsible male behavior and participation regarding their partners, families and communities not only complements the work of the MOH and MHSSS but also addresses the issue of male absenteeism and marginalization in society.

*Measures taken to: Guarantee conditions for the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights, including those of adolescents.*

*(See also section on Priority Measures taken to: Reduce the high and unequal levels of adolescent pregnancy, forced marriage and abuse and sexual violence against adolescents.)*

In accordance with the CEDAW and Beijing+20 commitments to remove regulatory and social barriers to reproductive health information and care for adolescents, Guyana has taken steps to ensure that health care providers do not restrict access of adolescents to reproductive health information and counseling. The application of the Gillick Competency Test and the Fraser Guidelines, as outlined in the National Sexual & Reproductive Health Policy, provides policy coverage for the provision of Sexual and Reproductive Health services and information to adolescents. The SRH Policy requires the following four elements to be institutionalized throughout all health facilities if universal access to sexual and reproductive health is to be achieved: availability, accessibility, acceptability, and quality.

Guyana has reviewed and upgraded standards and practices that restrict access to Sexual and Reproductive Health services, including the provision of comprehensive user-friendly services for adolescents and youth; guaranteeing access to full information on all of the service options available to all persons, without any form of discrimination, in order to ensure that the highest international standards of protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms are met. During the period under review, the Ministry of Health developed an Adolescent Health Service Delivery Guidelines for Health Care Providers as well as Standards for Quality Health Care Services for Adolescents in 2022 to further strengthen adolescent sexual and reproductive health programming in Guyana.

The Ministry has reoriented the health services that are delivered to adolescents to ensure that all health workers in the primary care setting (where these services are mostly delivered) are trained in adolescent health, are oriented about the standards for service delivery to adolescents, and that materials for them to perform the duties are available. Additionally, there are increased efforts to link services and information to the education system via mechanisms such as school health clubs, allowing adolescents in the school system to have access to information within their school space.

Guyana is pleased to report that there has been a sustained thrust to educate the public on family planning and contraception by the Ministry of Health and, more specifically, through the Regional Health Departments of all hinterland Regions.

Given the high rate of teenage pregnancy, high risk pregnancies and maternity complications from hinterland regions, these interventions have continued during the period under review at the level of schools, village councils and community-based organisations. The referral system in case of high-risk pregnancies includes medivacking patients to regional and tertiary care hospitals in order to reduce maternal mortality. Other interventions were outlined earlier (see pages 51-52 herein).

The existing data provides basic estimates and targets for national programme planning and with the completion of the Census 2022 report more accurate information will be available to continue expanding the provision of SRH measures. The estimated mid-year population of Guyana in (2022)<sup>37</sup> for Guyana stands at 775,790 (49.9 % males and 50.1% Females)<sup>38</sup> up from the last National Census<sup>39</sup> in 2012 with an increase of 4.3%. In the reproductive population age group of 397,159 (defined as males and female 15-49 years) 19.4% are 15-24 while 32% are 25-49 years old. The total fertility rate stood at 2.5 with 15,197 live births with a crude birth rate of 19.21 per 1000 people. Of these 2,122 live births occurred in girls under 19 years with an adolescent pregnancy rate of 66.6 per 1000 girls 15-19 years old at the end of 2022.

**The trends in adolescent birth rates of Guyana over the past 5 years have started to decline from the high rates of 84.2 per 1000 girls 15-19 in 2016 to under 48/1000 girls in 2022, following targeted interventions at reducing adolescent pregnancy in the most affected areas, particularly Administrative Regions 1 and 9 in Guyana. The promotion of family planning has made modern methods of contraception more easily available, although challenges with accessibility remain.**

## E. Gender Equality

*Priority Measures taken to: Eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls in public and private places.*

During the period under review, Guyana made significant investments to address gender equality. A significant part of these investments was made through the Guyana Spotlight Initiative programme. The Spotlight Initiative (SI) is a partnership between the European Union (EU) and the United Nations that was created to eliminate all forms of violence experienced by women and girls all over the world. This Initiative considers, as critical, the political will and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), #3 Sound Health and Wellbeing, #16 Inclusive and Peaceful Societies, and #5 Gender Equality. The SI programme is implemented through a multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder (government/civil society/UN) partnership.

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<sup>37</sup> BOS (2022) Guyana Est Population

<sup>38</sup> BOS (2023) Guyana Est\_Population\_2019-2022

<sup>39</sup> BOS (2016) Guyana Final\_2012\_Census\_Count

The Spotlight Initiative in Guyana addresses the root causes of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) by focusing on the prevention of family violence and addresses the culture of VAWG through a survivor-centered approach. This approach incorporates a human rights-based approach that survivors' rights and needs are placed first. Thus, the survivor has a right to be treated with dignity and respect, rather than being blamed for the violence experienced. The survivor has a right to choose the course of action to address the violence experienced, a right to privacy and non-discrimination based on gender, age, race/ethnicity, ability, and sexual orientation.<sup>40</sup>

The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security (MHSSS), the national coordinating entity for Spotlight in Guyana, leads in conceptualizing holistic national efforts for preventing and responding to GBV, engages other sectors of the Government in this national effort, partners at community levels for increasing participation and involvement in reducing violence against women and children. If there is any distinguishing feature of Spotlight in Guyana is that it has political leadership and national ownership. At the most recent National Stakeholders Consultation of the Programme, the Minister of MHSSS committed to incorporating elements of Spotlight into the national budgets, noting the **preventive community-level activities that address root causes of family violence.**

Below is a description of how Spotlight activities are integrated with national initiatives and benefit from national ownership and political leadership.

- The legislative and policy analysis on domestic and sexual violence, conducted by the Ministry with Spotlight support, led to clear and specific recommendations for the formulation of Guyana's draft **new Family Violence Bill**. The Spotlight Civil Society National Reference Group is fully behind this new bill noting its acknowledgement of new and emerging forms of violence against girls and women.
- the MHSSS developed a **GBV Essential Services Package for Guyana** in line with international standards. The package concerns multiple sectors: social services, health, law enforcement and justice. It is complemented by ongoing revisions to sector plans that integrate domestic and sexual violence prevention and response activities. This is well ahead of experiences in other English speaking Caribbean territories. The leadership from the UN for this services package is provided by UNFPA.
- The MHSSS runs a dedicated 24-hour **914 GBV Hotline service** through its own budgetary resources, with some financial and technical assistance from UNICEF and UNFPA. SOPs guide the operations of this Hotline service. This is a first for the English-speaking Caribbean.
- Linked to the 914 GBV Hotline is the **GBV App**, available for free download in the Google play and Apple stores. The App is essential for delivery of GBV information to GBV survivors and persons at risk, especially considering Guyana's hard to access geography and communities. The App is another first for the English-speaking Caribbean. Through CARICOM and UNFPA, Spotlight is sharing these experiences with the rest of the Caribbean.
- COPSQUAD is an initiative of the MHSSS and the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2021 aimed at training every police officer in the county in GBV and to build trust in the police's handling of GBV cases. More than 1400 officers out of the total of 5000 have been trained thus far. Spotlight

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<sup>40</sup> Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence. Core Elements and Quality Guidelines.

complements this initiative with monitoring and accountability mechanisms to help increase effectiveness of this training.

- Linked to COPSQUAD is the MHSSS partnership with the Guyana Bar Association, supported by Spotlight to provide **legal pro bono services** to GBV survivors and individuals at risk of GBV.
- On GBV case management, the MHSSS has added an innovative cadre of GBV response personnel to the GBV case management system through its national budgetary resources and the support of Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in the form of **Survivors' Advocates**. The Survivors' Advocates, some of whom are survivors themselves, work at community levels and support GBV survivors and persons at risk of GBV in accessing GBV related services provided by the Government. They complement the social work force and have access to **GBV case management tools** that have been developed and strengthened by Spotlight initiative.
- The government has invested resources in **shelters and safe spaces over the last 20 years**. Spotlight in turn complemented these investments by supporting the procurement of furniture and equipment for shelters and safe spaces as well as developing several models for GBV services delivery.
- A **GBV mobile and remote services delivery** model, along with an implementation plan, has been developed. Similarly, a model for the **GBV one-stop centre services delivery** has been finalized.
- The MHSSS is utilizing national resources and resources made available to Guyana through IFIs for increased GBV service delivery. It partnered with the Attorney General's Office and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) for investing in **"Hope and Justice"** Centres around the country for GBV service delivery which will utilize Spotlight supported service delivery models.
- Building on successful initiatives in Guyana, the MHSSS executed innovate **preventive community-level actions that address root causes of family violence**, tailored to target groups (girls and adolescent women, men and boys, out-of-school youth), involving school, community, and family. *The Ministry has committed to incorporate some of the UNWOMEN tools in this regard, e.g. Partnership for Peace and Foundations Programs into the Ministry's own community level prevention activities and its own budgets.*
- Noting that economic empowerment is likely the most effective strategy for GBV prevention, the Ministry has taken major progress with advancing **economic empowerment strategies for women and girls** in Guyana, notably through the **Women's Innovation and Investment Network (WIIN) which was launched in May 2021**. Through this and its sister incubation programs, the Ministry offers women and girls skills training and business development services as well as seed funding. In addition to Spotlight agencies, the WFP also supports this scheme.
- The Ministry also promotes **private sector initiatives** that prevent work-related spill overs of family violence and that help create safe spaces at work – building in part on the UNWOMEN led Women's Empowerment Principles through Spotlight.
- **Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs)**: Under the Spotlight Initiative, the Guyana programme (Phase 1), thirteen (13) private sector companies have signed on to the Women's Empowerment Principles, which are a set of Principles offering guidance to businesses on how to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community. Established by UN Global Compact and UN Women, the WEPs are informed by international labour and human rights standards and grounded in the recognition that businesses have a stake in, and a responsibility for, gender equality and women's empowerment. WEPs are a primary vehicle for corporate delivery

on gender equality dimensions of the 2030 agenda and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. By joining the WEPs community, the company commits to this agenda at the highest levels of the company and to work collaboratively in multi-stakeholder networks to foster business practices that empower women. These include equal pay for work of equal value, gender-responsive supply chain practices and zero tolerance against sexual harassment in the workplace.

- Thirteen (13) companies have successfully completed Gender Gap Analyses and Gender Action Plans underpinned by specific initiatives that support Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) aligned to the overarching goals of the Spotlight Initiative, primarily to reduce the workplace spillover of Family Violence and gender inequality.
- In May 2022, a Strategy for Implementation of Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) in Guyana was approved by the Gender Technical Working Group, including proposed partnerships to support the sustainability of the activity, and communications components. The objectives of the communications elements are to raise awareness and interest in the overall Spotlight Initiative in Guyana programme and showcase how it leverages the WEPs – in the language of the business sector, thereby connecting critical Gender Equality issues to a wider group of private sector entities.
- Eight (8) companies among the thirteen (13) that have signed on to the WEPs supported the production of videos on topics related to Domestic Violence Policies in the workplace, and Paternity Leave. Significant progress has been made in this area as three (3) companies have forged ahead to implement paternity leave policies despite there being no law or national policy in place to support this. Five (5) companies have also included training, mental health and wellbeing support, and internal support mechanisms in their action plans to address issues related to domestic violence in the workplace. By the end of 2022, three (3) additional organizations had been sensitized on the WEPs and were taking steps to complete Gender Action Plans, and a further eight (8) organizations were sensitized and engaged in the process.

The Government has supported the scale up and expansion of the Foundations Programme, integrating violence prevention messaging that targets teens, mothers, and fathers in addition to endowing children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and strategies for addressing conflict (resolution/mediation) techniques). The interventions support the delivery of response services to address stress and stressors that arise in relationships, while supporting the establishing and modeling of an atmosphere of respect within group relations among and between young people. Community advocacy platforms have been strengthened to develop strategies and programmes, including community dialogues, public information, and advocacy campaigns, to promote gender-equitable norms, attitudes, and behaviors, including in relation to women and girls' sexuality and reproduction, self-confidence and self-esteem and promoting positive masculinities. The Government, through the MHSSS has also supported the rollout of gender transformative programmes targeting men and boys on violent masculinities and men's violence linked to alcohol abuse including through Batterer Prevention programmes such as the Partnership for Peace.

The Spotlight Initiative has provided significant financial and technical support in a multi-stakeholder approach to addressing domestic and sexual violence.

The development agenda of the Government includes multiple programmes such as Men on Mission, Women Innovation and Investment Network, the Survivor's Advocate Programme, among many others, that are geared

towards empowerment and the provision of support for marginalized groups, including those affected by GBV. These interventions complement and support the objectives of the Spotlight Initiative, and demonstrate the Government's commitment to, and national ownership of, the fight to end VAWG in Guyana as well as to secure gender equality in Guyana.

The Government recognizes that supporting women's and adolescent girls' access to and control over economic resources can be an effective means to enhance resilience, reduce vulnerability, mitigate the risk of GBV, and help ensure that the needs of women, girls and their families are met. Access to education, vocational training and skills development helps to promote self-sufficiency, empowerment and resilience. Economic empowerment programmes also help to shift negative gender and social norms that confine women to the domestic sphere, build women's participation in public life, and enhance the economic, physical and psychological well-being of individuals, families and communities.<sup>41</sup> Economic empowerment also plays a crucial role in a GBV survivor's ability to gain the independence needed to assist them in escaping their situation and rebuilding their life. These are all catered to in other Government programmes mentioned in the report as well as access to home ownership through the National Housing programme, loans to build their homes at low interest rates, small loans and grants to develop their entrepreneurial skills.

Access and participation in these well-planned, targeted livelihood interventions lead to an increase in women's and girls' access to resources, opportunities and decision-making power. Over time, these also contribute to changing social, cultural and gender norms. In addition to helping to meet immediate basic needs, livelihood interventions can improve the prospects of women and adolescent girls and change the way the community recognises their contribution to economic security.<sup>42</sup>

The Gender Affairs Bureau under the MHSSS works relentlessly on Gender-Based Violence. It conducts public education and awareness campaigns on gender-related issues, including violence, across the ten Administrative Regions of Guyana regularly. The Bureau has established Gender Focal Points in all line ministries and critical statutory bodies. It facilitates quarterly meetings and in house training of Inter- Ministry Gender Focal Points; Gender & Development Training & Capacity Building with Regional, Local Leaders and Community Based Groups and staff of the MHSSS; the provision of continuous guidance and training to members of the established Regional Gender Affairs Committees of the elected Regional Democratic Councils. Whilst training has also been conducted for employees in the media on the topic of gender equality (presenting legislative and Strategic framework, importance of media coverage). In June 2021, Administrative Region Two Gender Affairs Committee held its first men's forum, with support from the GAB.

The Sexual Offences Court was established in 2017 as a specialist court to hear all first instance charges of rape and sexual assault, as well as offences of domestic violence. Guyana has been lauded by its apex court, the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) for being the first country in the English-speaking Caribbean to establish a Sexual Offences Court. There are now three Sexual Offences Courts, within the High Courts, in the three counties of Guyana- Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice.

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<sup>41</sup> GBV AoR (2019). The Interagency Minimum Standards for Gender Based Violence in Emergencies Programming

<sup>42</sup> GBV AoR (2019). The Interagency Minimum Standards for Gender Based Violence in Emergencies Programming

*Measures taken that: Aim to eliminate gender discrimination and asymmetries in relation to access to decent employment, job security, wages and decision-making on labour issues.*

The MHSSS remains steadfast in its committed to the empowerment of women through its various programmes such as its WIIN (Women's Innovation and Investment Network) initiative. WIIN aims to improve the education and skillset of our most vulnerable women in communities across the country and increase their opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. Since its launch in 2021, the programme has trained 6,000 people, with another 6,000 slated to be trained in the latter half of 2023. The total expenditure on WIIN for 2023 is projected at over \$360 Million Guyana. To date, an estimated 25 percent of all women who have been trained have started a micro-enterprise, another 48 percent have gained employment opportunities, and over 2,000 have accessed empowerment funds to help start a small business.

The programme also offers a Business Clinic, which functions as a one-stop shop for people desirous of starting a small business. The Business Clinic offers training in business plan proposals and development, networking with micro-financing agencies and linkages with government agencies critical for obtaining compliance and licenses.

More than 1,000 persons have benefited from support through the WIIN's Business Clinic and Incubator, and more than 220 women have registered a business through this initiative, with many more expected to benefit in the latter half of 2023. It is expected or projected that over 30% of all WIIN applicants will benefit from support through the Clinic and Incubator while 20% will go on to start a small business.

The Government recognizes that gender equality cannot be addressed without a broad-based, multi-sectoral approach to tackling this issue. Having recognized the importance of such an approach, the Programme maintained and strengthened strategic partnerships that were previously established and sought opportunities to foster new collaborations. The objective of this methodology is to ensure that every aspect of gender equality is addressed in keeping with the principle of leaving no one behind.

*Priority measure taken to ensure: **Equal participation of women in high level decision-making and Gender parity and mechanisms that guarantee access to power of women in electoral processes***

Guyana continues to make progress on the status of women in public life and has been maintaining steady ratings with regards to representation of women in Parliament. Since the amendment of the constitution in 2001 and the consequential amendments to the electoral laws the proportion of women in Parliament has increased in each consecutive Parliament. It is well ahead of many developed countries on the Women in National Parliament Index. As of February 2023, the **Inter-Parliamentary Union** ranked Guyana at 39 out of 186 countries for the number of women in Parliament, with a percentage of 36.6% in comparison to 2019 where the percentage of women in parliament stood at 31.9%. The 2022 Global Gender Gap Report ranked Guyana at 42 out of 145 in the area of overall Political Empowerment, up two places from 2021. In Women in Parliament, Guyana is ranked at 37th and 40th for Women in Ministerial Positions.

The 2022 edition of the Global Gender Gap report which covers 146 countries, ranked Guyana 35<sup>th</sup> in overall ranking moving up 18 spots from its 53<sup>rd</sup> ranking in 2021. Guyana also ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the overall regional ranking for the Latin America and Caribbean Region. Guyana has therefore, recorded significant progress towards achieving gender equality, consistent with our ongoing rapid economic development.

In the area of economic participation and opportunity, Guyana ranked 53<sup>rd</sup> globally. Gender equality at the level of legislators, senior officials and managers placed Guyana in 17<sup>th</sup> place, an astonishing score of 0.879/1, and tied with other countries in 1<sup>st</sup> place for gender equality at the level of professional and technical workers globally.

Notably, in the areas of access to financial services, land assets and non-land assets, Guyana recorded “**near equal rights**” with distinctively equal rights for widows and daughters with regards to inheritance. These statistics are mere reflections of the accumulative results of the numerous projects and initiatives being implemented by Government through its various ministries and agencies.

Seven (7) women Ministers are currently serving as Members of Parliament, in the 12<sup>th</sup> Parliament (2020-2025). Also the Chief Whips for both the Government and the Opposition during the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Parliaments were female MPs while the Chief Whip for the Government in the current 12<sup>th</sup> Parliament remains a female MP. Female MPs are present in all the parliamentary committees which work to influence policies and decision making to better the lives of all Guyanese.

Women continue to occupy key ministerial positions in Education, Human Services and Social Security, Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, Amerindian Affairs, Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Public Service, and Housing and Water. Six (6) women are currently cabinet members while more than ½ or fifty-two percent (52%) of the Permanent Secretaries are women. Women also hold key decision-making portfolios which include the Director of Budget, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Director of Public Prosecutions, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly, Registrar of the Supreme Court, Registrar of Deeds, Registrar of the Land Registry, Registrar of the Commercial Court, Chief Magistrate and Principal Magistrate. Most notably, the current Chief Justice and the Chancellor of the Judiciary are both women while the majority of High Court Judges and Magistrates are female and there are more female lawyers practicing at the Bar than male lawyers.

Guyana’s Constitution and the Representation of the Peoples Act Section 11B requires that women comprise at least one third of list for candidates for geographic constituency and national top-up list of each political party at General and regional elections.<sup>43</sup> A revised Local Government Act requires candidate lists to contain a minimum one third women of each contesting party.

Women serve on all the national commissions, statutory boards and are represented in mediation and resolution commitments.

During the period 2020 to 2022 women representatives made up more than 30 percent in most of the elected Regional Democratic Councils. Overall, women’s representation in the tier of regional government was 34 percent in 2011, remained consistently over one-third for successive years and declined to 29 percent in 2015. Prior to

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<sup>43</sup> Constitution (Amendment) (No. 3) Act 2000, <https://parliament.gov.gy/>

March 2016, only 30 percent of women held positions in municipalities, after local government elections in 2023, 50 percent of all elected representatives in municipalities are women.

Guyana has been making notable progress to ensure the inclusivity of women in all spheres of life. Below is a synopsis:

- More than half of the people benefitting from public sector scholarships (some 57 per cent) are women.
- 69 per cent of the people accessing public sector training are women,
- In the healthcare system, 60 per cent of Guyana's doctors are women, while 98 per cent of nurses are women,
- In the judicial system, 60 per cent of those who administer justice are women,
- 22 per cent of Guyana's law enforcement officers are women.
- In the government's new shade house agriculture venture, women participation accounted for about 40 percent.
- Government will be training 500 women in heavy-duty machine operations. More women are set to receive skills in the health, agriculture and business sectors
- Beyond the newer efforts, 72.6 per cent of the students participating in the government's new Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) scholarship programme are women,
- 70 per cent of the students at the University of Guyana (UG) are women, with those students having an extremely low withdrawal rate (only 0.4 percent),
- 85% of the Ministry of Housing home improvement subsidy went to women and
- 65% of Core Homes have been allocated to women.<sup>44</sup>

The Equal Rights Act and the Prevention of Discrimination Act (1997) continues to provide protection regardless of gender race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation in relation to access to the labour market and employment opportunities as well as sexual harassment in the workplace. The National Minimum Wage for regular Working Hours (For All Workers in Guyana) Order, made under Section 8 of the Labour Act, Chapter 98:01 also remains in place. The Government of Guyana approved a National Minimum Wage and a forty (40) hour work week for both Private and Public sector employees. The National Minimum Wage specifies that a minimum wage shall apply but is not limited to workers employed in all the sectors and shall be applicable to all workers in similar categories. A new Minimum Wage Order was approved in 2022.<sup>45</sup>

The Government of Guyana through the Ministry of Finance (MOF) has taken steps to promote and strengthen the preparation, implementation, and accountability of gender-sensitive budgets. The approach is incorporated into the preparation of each of the 72 budget agencies including 21 Ministries, 4 constitutional bodies and the 10 Administrative Regions of Guyana. The process involves analysis of actual expenditure on women and girls in comparison to expenditure on men and boys considering their different needs and priorities.

The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance has facilitated training to build capacity of constitutional agencies such as the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC),

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<sup>44</sup> Excerpt-H.E Irfaan Ali speech- International Women's Day

<sup>45</sup> <https://officialgazette.gov.gy/index.php/publications/1831-extraordinary-gazettes-24th-june-2022-order-no-20-of-2022-the-labour-national-minimum-wage-order-2022>

the Women and Gender Equality Commission (W&GEC) and the Indigenous Peoples Commission (IPC) on the human right based approach to budgeting and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

*Priority measures taken to: **Protection against harassment and sexual harassment: Establish mechanisms for preventing sexual and other forms of harassment and violence against women and men, especially in the workplace and educational settings, as well as for filing relevant complaints and punishing such practices.***

**Eradication of all forms of violence:** Through MHSSS, the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, several national agencies collaborate (Gender Affairs Bureau, Guyana Police Force) to enforce existing policies and adopt preventative and punitive measures for protecting and caring for women to eradicate all forms of violence. Legal provisions exist to ensure immediate effective and universal access to fundamental services for all victims and survivors of gender-based violence, with special attention to women in high-risk situations<sup>46</sup>.

The Guyana Women's Health and Life Experiences Survey (GWHLE) was conducted in 2018 and published in 2019.<sup>47</sup> Key findings were that patriarchal norms in which the status of men and boys is higher than that of women and girls are a primary driver of Violence Against Women and Girls. The survey findings reveal a higher rate of Intimate Partner Violence in Guyana than the global average, with 55 percent of survey respondents who had ever had a male partner reporting some form of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), and 38 percent of them had experienced physical and/or sexual violence. Additionally, more than 1 in 10 has experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a male partner in the previous 12 months of the study being conducted. Beyond IPV, the survey results reveal that 20 percent of women in Guyana have experienced non-partner sexual violence, with 13 percent experiencing this abuse before the age of 18. Further analysis of the survey data revealed several risk factors associated with a higher likelihood of a women experiencing gender-based violence. Women who began their union at a young age, lack family support, or have a controlling partner all have an increased risk of experiencing physical and/or sexual IPV.

The Government enhances the provision of comprehensive services and established special units in hospitals/health centers and at other appropriate venues, where services are centralized and victim-centered, with medical staff trained in the gathering of forensic evidence using the approved rape kits and provide treatment to sexual violence survivors. Additionally, trained counsellors to address the psychological and physical trauma, and trained police officers to take statements in a humane and professional manner are in place at regional levels to support. Through the GAB and NGOs, counselors and court advocates attend to needs of women survivors and their families throughout the court process.

Guyana over the last 3 years has reaffirms its commitment and political will at the highest levels to combat and eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women, including domestic violence and actively promote awareness-raising regarding gender mainstreaming among law enforcement personnel.

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<sup>46</sup> BOS (2018) Guyana-Womens-Health-Report-11

<sup>47</sup> <https://statisticsguyana.gov.gy/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/20191117-Guyana-Womens-Health-Report-11-for-digital-single-pages.pdf>

***New masculinity: Promote the shared responsibility of the State, the private sector, the community, families, women and men in unpaid domestic tasks and care work.***

In 2022 the Men on Mission (MoM) was launched by the President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, Mohamed Irfaan Ali, with the objective of creating a new movement that fosters greater appreciation among men for the way they take individual and collective action and become models of responsible behaviour. This will create role models for boys to emulate so that they can enter adult life as responsible and respectful citizens. The idea behind this initiative is “*to tackle toxic masculinity and create a positive environment and safe space for men, promoting integrity, productivity and accountability and character- building*”.

Through the Men on Mission (MOM) programme 1,000 men under the “One Guyana” initiative of the President of Guyana and several national institutions and the business sector, Guyana has broadened the access available to men, including boys, adolescents and young men to the equal participation of men in care work through programmes for raising men’s awareness of gender equality, and foster the development of new masculinities.

The initiative even though established nationally, is guided by a regional level coordinating mechanism involving the Minister responsible for regional development, the Regional Chairman, the Regional Executive Officer, a Guyana Defense Force (GDF) Representative, Guyana Police Force (GPF) - Regional Commander, Private Sector Representative, religious organization and Sports Groups. The main areas of focus include:

- Health (targets raising awareness for health issues among men and boys)
- Administrative (organizing logistics for MOM related projects and activities)
- Planning and Marketing to ensure wide community participation.
- Education and training of men and boys from a wide cross section of society in the areas of skill development, prevention of violence, avoidance of sexual harassment and elimination of all forms of discrimination
- Sports events to promote the involvement of friendly competition and improve physical health.
- Employment and Business for especially men with limited or no education or skills

## F. International migration and protection of the human rights of all migrants

Provide information that shows the gap between migrants and national populations and between migrants of different origins:

**Table 15 Guyana Mid-Year Population ('000)**

Year	Mid-Year Population	Population Growth Rate
2018	763.9	3.0
2019	767.0	0.4
2020	777.0	0.4
2021	773.0	0.3
2022	775.8	0.4

*Measures taken to: Encourage the elimination of all forms of discrimination experienced by migrants. Encourage the implementation of standards and policies based on the protection of all migrants, independent of their status or condition.*

Guyana over the years has developed strong regional and bilateral co-operation and agreements with its neighbouring countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Through its membership in the OAS, UNASUR, MERCOSUR and CARICOM it has friendly and constructive engagements for the free movement of people, goods, and services.

At the level of international cooperation in migration in the Caribbean, the United States of America on 10 June 2022, announced the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection, signed by 21 governments including Guyana from the Americas. The hemispheric agreement aims to create conditions for safe, orderly, humane, and regular migration and strengthen frameworks for international protection and cooperation. This agreement along with the development of local policies, procedures and systems have aided Guyana in advancing the efforts toward the fulfillment of the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, as they emphasize the need for protection and for affirmative strategies on the part of the international community.

Guyana has an open and liberal approach to migration with most countries especially its neighbouring countries and CARICOM member states. Legal migrant workers and members of their family are treated equally and enjoy almost the same benefits as most Guyanese nationals. They are entitled to free health care and education for their children. Section 17 of Chapter 14:02 of the Immigration Act identifies measures taken to permit a prohibited immigrant to remain in Guyana. The criteria set out for a migrant student is not discriminatory and all children in Guyana, including separated, unaccepted, or illegal migrant children, have equal access to social services such as the right to health, housing, and education. Guyana's open immigration policy encourages foreigners to work and invest in Guyana. Work permits are facilitated through this mechanism. Once the relevant contributions have been

made, non-nationals can contribute and make claims through the National Insurance Scheme, and enjoy the same privileges given to a Guyanese national; the same is afforded to a non-national or migrant worker and members of their families. According to the Act once a person is gainfully occupied in insurable employment that person shall be insured under this Act and shall remain so insured for life.

Guyana has been experiencing a sizeable influx of migrant arrivals from Venezuela since 2017 and increased numbers in last 3 years who have sought safety in the Guyana amidst the ongoing political crisis and economic hardships in their country of origin. While the influx of migrants puts an additional strain on available resources and services, especially during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Guyana continued to take a humanitarian approach to this issue on compassionate grounds. This continues despite the escalation of threats to Guyana’s territorial integrity and sovereignty by Maduro’s government’s claim of two-thirds of its territory. Guyana through the UN Secretary General and the Geneva Agreement has approached the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to rule on Venezuela’s claim that the 1899 Arbitral Award that set the land borders of the two countries is null and void.

Regarding the more than 20,000 migrants from Venezuela, Guyana has taken a humanitarian approach regularizing their illegal entry and providing documents for their stay and work permits. It should be noted that approximately 25% of these migrants are Venezuelans of Guyanese descent who fled to Venezuela in large numbers in the 1980s due to fraudulent elections, economic hardships, and discrimination.

**Table 16: General Summary for Venezuelans migrants that arrived in Guyana from 2018-04-24, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022-01-01 to 2023-10-29.**

Regions	Years						Total
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
1	1536	4806	968	1555	1483	473	<b>10821</b>
2	1034	1677	202	143	177	88	<b>3321</b>
3	88	416	63	86	153	114	<b>920</b>
4	303	268	71	59	317	518	<b>1536</b>
5	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	<b>Nil</b>
6	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	<b>Nil</b>
7	735	1627	510	810	285	212	<b>4179</b>
8	Nil	Nil	18	39	13	Nil	<b>70</b>
9	140	788	125	43	41	433	<b>1570</b>
10	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	<b>Nil</b>
	<b>3836</b>	<b>9582</b>	<b>1957</b>	<b>2735</b>	<b>2469</b>	<b>1838</b>	<b>22417</b>

*Source: Ministry of Home Affairs Immigration Data, October 2023*

Whilst Guyana extends humanitarian assistance to migrants from Venezuelans within available resources it recognizes that it must strike an appropriate balance between protecting the legitimate rights and expectations of migrants with the need to preserve the rights and needs of its citizens.

The human rights of persons entering the country illegally are still upheld. Although Guyana has not ratified the Convention on Refugees nor does it have asylum legislation, it ratified the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families in 2010.

**Strategies for the protection of the rights of migrants:** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation activated a Multi-Agency Coordinating Committee to address the influx of migrants entering Guyana via the Guyana/Venezuela border. The Committee is co-chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation and the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance. The main objective of the Committee is to lead and coordinate a national response involving Guyana and its international Partners, to address the needs of the migrants from Venezuela. It is responsible for the coordination of all projects geared to the provision of critical humanitarian assistance. The projects include the provision of food, shelter, free access to health care, education, and basic training for those interested in acquiring the necessary skills to participate in the local workforce, among other things.

To provide temporary protection, there is the provision of an extension of stay status that is renewable every three months, with no restriction on the number of renewals allowed. Migrants can also apply for work permits.

The migrants are given access to public healthcare free of charge and access to education for children, as well as referrals to protective and other services for victims of gender-based violence and trafficking--with special attention given to women and children. The Guyanese Central Recruitment and Manpower Agency, in collaboration with UNHCR, is actively involved in efforts to upskill and integrate Venezuelan migrants into the local labour force.

In 2019, the MHSSS and UNICEF initiated a Shock Response Project. The project aimed to ensure access to essential services, including primary health care, social welfare & child protection services and education for migrants and returning Guyanese.

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has been working closely with the Ministry of Health to monitor the condition of migrants and strengthen epidemiological surveillance, information management, detection, verification, risk assessments, and alerts on events related to epidemic-prone diseases and early warning and outbreak response. Consequently, over 8,200 persons migrants were vaccinated (for measles, mumps, polio, and other contagious diseases) and there is an ongoing process for continued provision of these services.

The MOH has stationed temporary medical teams at the very active ports of entry and has deployed doctors and nurses into the hinterland regions to conduct surveillance, screening, immunization, and other general treatment of conditions that require immediate medical attention of the communities and migrants from Venezuela. These medical personnel also execute referrals to appropriate health facilities where necessary.

Additionally, the Government has been providing temporary shelter for migrants from Venezuela to Administrative Region 1, which is on the western border of Guyana and Venezuela. Furthermore, a shelter has

been constructed and available land has been made for farming for approximately 200 migrants from Venezuela near this border.

**Social security for migrants:** The Official Immigration Records Report the presence of over 20,000 migrants from Venezuela in 2022 which include other nationals who were residing in Venezuela. In 2022 the Warraus- an indigenous nomadic group, and sister group on the Guyana side, started migrating to Guyana. This group is very poor, and who has had little or no access to healthcare and other services in their homeland. Many are undocumented so their numbers are not verifiable.

UNICEF has assisted the Ministry of Home Affairs with electronic equipment for birth registration outreaches as well as offered mental health and psychosocial support to the migrants.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), together with the Government, coordinated income-generating activities in various regions for female migrant headed households. These activities included the production of cloth masks and hand-woven hammocks.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, migrants from Venezuela and other migrants, were also able to access all forms of food and sanitization relief hampers distributed to all Guyanese. Notably, all children of migrants, whether legal or illegal, from Venezuela and other countries are permitted to enroll in the public school system within the host communities, and benefit from government-funded support programmes including school feeding programmes, school uniform vouchers, and the ‘Because We Care’ cash grants given to all students enrolled in both public and private schools throughout Guyana to support education related expenses of families. As of September 2022, there were approximately 2108 migrant children enrolled in Government schools throughout the 10 administrative regions in Guyana. This number has increased in 2023 to 2223.

**Table 16 Migrant Enrolment in the 11 Education Districts<sup>48</sup>**

Regions	Number Nursery school	Number Primary school	Number Secondary school	Total schools	Number Male	Number Female	Total Migrants
1	6	12	2	20	130	148	278
2	10	11	6	27	97	108	205
3	38	43	10	91	415	370	785
4	20	28	8	56	165	183	348
5	5	7	4	16	20	16	36
6	2	7	5	14	21	22	43
7	3	9	4	16	172	94	266

<sup>48</sup> This enrolment consists of Venezuelans, Haitians, Cubans, Brazilians, Trinidadians, Barbadians, and Surinamese, among other nationalities. (The Venezuelans are the largest group of children)

8	1	1	1	3	2	4	6
9	1	2	1	4	17	13	30
10	0	5	1	6	10	9	19
GT	17	16	0	33	98	109	207
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>1147</b>	<b>1076</b>	<b>2223</b>

*Source: Ministry of Education, September 2023*

In some communities, near the Guyana/Venezuela border, Spanish interpreters have been trained to help the teachers in the schools. The situation in Venezuela has also led thousands of Guyanese living in Venezuela for the past few decades and their families and children to return to Guyana. The Govt through various ministries assist the returning Guyanese in re-integration into society. In addition, there have also been migrant arrivals from Cuba, albeit in much smaller numbers, and cases of Haitians, including youth, children and women, smuggled or trafficked through Guyana as a transit country to Brazil. This latter migrant group has decreased over the last 3 years to other destinations.

Cognizant that migrants are often vulnerable to trafficking, Guyana has been unwavering in its sustained efforts towards eliminating trafficking during the reporting period. Since 2017, Guyana has maintained Tier One status for its work towards eliminating and reducing TIP.

**Principles of reciprocity and coherence in assistance to migrants:** Since the Second High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in 2013, a framework linking the Regional and subregional initiatives offer a platform for developing and monitoring the priority measures. With the Los Angeles Declaration, the increasing migration of Venezuelans in the region as well as in Guyana will involve a shared responsibility. The Declaration aims to mobilize the region to take bold actions to transform the approach to migration in the Americas. Twenty-one countries have signed the Agreement and affirmed their commitment to protecting the safety and dignity of all migrants, and to respect the principle of non-refoulement.

The endorsing countries to the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection, commit to:

- promote stability and assistance for communities of origin, destination, transit, and return,
- promote regular pathways for migration and international protection,
- promote humane migration management,

In terms of cross-country collaboration, the Global Compact for Migration's, the International Migration Review Forum, the South American Conference on Migration, the IOM's International Dialogue on Migration, and the CARICOM Single Market and Economy are all intergovernmental spaces where countries deliberate on enhancing cooperation for migration management.

The Government of Guyana participates in several mechanisms that are concerned with strengthening migration governance across all levels. Efforts include developing or enhancing national policies on migration, experience sharing, and streamlining migration governance across countries and regions.

Among the mechanisms in which Guyana participates are the following:

1. The IOM’s International Dialogues on Migration (IDM). The IDM provides a space to analyze current and emerging issues in migration governance and to exchange experiences, policy approaches and effective practices. It is the IOM’s principal forum for migration policy dialogue.
2. Action Committee Groups in the framework of the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration.
3. The International Migration Review Forum in the context of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.
4. The CARICOM Free Movement of People regime

In the context of the Caribbean Community, in response to recent data that smuggling of migrants around the Caribbean was on the increase, the CARICOM Implementing Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) in collaboration with the IOM organized a meeting in 2021 on drafting legislation to counter migrant smuggling in the region that can respond to regional and national needs.

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has been working closely with the Ministry of Health to monitor the condition of migrants and strengthen surveillance, information management, detection, verification, risk assessments, and alerts on events related to epidemic-prone diseases and early warning and outbreak response.

The Immigration Support Services within the Ministry of Home Affairs has created a Venezuelan Department to ensure Venezuelan migrants continue to have a hassle-free experience in acquiring extensions of stay at no cost to the migrants.

Registration of migrants is made easier with the presence of “*roaming immigration officers*” who traverse areas populated by migrants and offer registration and extension of stay services remotely. This process is focused on regularization to prevent/reduce human trafficking and labour exploitation. This permit allows those individuals the chance to not just legally stay in Guyana, but also to work, earn and educate themselves to improve the lives of their children.

**Table 17: Registration of Venezuelan Migrants by Administrative Region of Guyana 2020-2022**

Venezuelans Migrant Procedure	Central data	13385
Registration of Venezuelans	Region 1	6925
Registration of Venezuelans	Region 4	23
Registration of Venezuelans	Region 7	1092
Registration of Venezuelan Migrants	Region 8	61
<b>Total</b>		<b>21,486</b>

*Source: Ministry of Home Affairs Immigration Department, June 2023*

The Government remains fully committed to safeguard the rights and overall protection of migrants within available resources.

## **Territorial Inequality, Spatial Mobility and Vulnerability**

*Priority action taken to: **Guarantee universal access to basic services (drinking water, sewerage, electricity) for the entire population and in all territories.***

Guyana is committed to promoting the development and well-being of people without any form of discrimination and provide full access to basic social services and equal opportunities for the population whether they live in urban, rural or hinterland areas, in small intermediate or large cities or in isolated areas or small rural and hinterland settlements. In keeping with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of ensuring universal access to basic services (drinking water, sewerage, electricity) for the entire population, the Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI) initiated several policies, projects, and programmes.

As reported in Guyana's second Voluntary National Review of the SDGs (2023), for the years 2019 to 2022, in July 2023 at the United Nations, more than 43,000 persons have gained access to safe water supply for the first-time, that is, from an improved source such as a piped household water connection, public standpipe, or well among other sources. The proportion of Guyana's population with access to a safe water supply service remained at 97 percent, from 2019 and 2022. Notwithstanding the increase in access to potable water supply, the change in treated water coverage from 61 percent in 2019, to 52 percent currently was precipitated by the new expanded housing and home ownership drive by Government, which commenced in latter half of 2020. This has resulted in a population shift into peri- urban areas stretching the current 28 treatment plants and facilitates capacity. In response, Guyana has commenced the implementation of a US\$195 million 90 percent Coastal Treated Water Programme. The programme aims to bridge the treated water gap by increasing treated water coverage from 52 to 90 percent over the period 2021-2025 through major capital investments in the potable water supply sector. These investments will provide improved water quality and service level to 260,000 persons or 65,000 households which represents 34 percent of the coastal population of Guyana.

Notably, while the coastland benefits from increased access to potable water supply, work continues to provide these services to the communities in the hinterland. To achieve the reduction in the gap in access between the coastland and hinterland communities, Guyana procured three (3) new drill rigs between 2020 and 2022. This has aided in intensifying the hinterland drilling programme and increased access to safe and reliable water supply in over 200 hinterland and riverain communities. Potable water received by hinterland communities is sourced from 173 wells, 29 springs, and over 20 rivers and creeks.

Under a Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Programme (WASH), new photovoltaic and water distribution systems were installed at Kurkutuku, Cuyuni/Mazaruni - Region 7, and Riverview/Goshen in Upper Demerara/Berbice- Region 10 and hygiene training was also conducted in Barima/Waini -Regions 1 and Upper Takatu/Upper Essequibo-Region 9. Approximately 30 wells were and are being drilled in 2022-2023 in interior

Amerindian communities to provide safe water supply, especially in dry season. Wells in several interior areas are under construction and some will be completed before the end of this year and new ones are scheduled for 2024 Budget.

Another key intervention regarding wastewater management is the Global Environment Facility Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater Management (GEF- CREW+) that builds on the progress made under the previous CREW project which concluded in 2017. This regional project has four components of which Guyana will be benefitting directly, from two, particularly the rehabilitation of the Kwakwani Sewerage System which will benefit approximately 2,700 residents of this community and the waste to energy conversion project which aims to generate energy to offset a proportion of its energy costs. Currently, the estimated cost of constructing a wastewater treatment facility in Georgetown is approximately US\$40 million and technical proposals are being pursued.

To address the management of wastewater and solid waste more effectively, Guyana is also introducing environmental education, including solid waste separation and storage. In the area of sanitation, the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program (JMP) for Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Progress Report 2020-2021, reported that 86 percent of the population has access to at least basic sanitation. The JMP report is further supported by the UNDP Human Development Report 2019, that shows that 86 percent of the population is using basic sanitation or have access to ‘improved’ sanitation services, that is, improved facilities that are not shared with other households.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, 200 waste receptacles were distributed to 50 primary schools in nine (9) municipalities across the country (SDG Target 6.b)<sup>50</sup>. Additionally, 200 waste receptacles were distributed to 50 primary schools in nine (9) municipalities across the country (SDG Target 6.b).

Importantly, to further improve sanitation management, Guyana, has expended over \$2.1 billion in financing to local democratic government organs to support their delivery of these services to communities. Technical assistance has also been provided in the areas of onsite wastewater treatment, waste management, handwashing, drainage maintenance, procurement and organising clean-up campaigns and community outreaches.

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<sup>49</sup> Guyana- 2<sup>nd</sup> Voluntary National Review of the SDGs

<sup>50</sup> A ‘hand washing’ programme for maintaining good hygiene was implemented in primary schools to sensitise children on the 7 - steps hand washing technique.

**Table 18: Selected SDG Indicators (Goal 6)**

<b>SDG Target</b>	<b>National indicator</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>6.1</b>	Proportion of population with access to a reliable supply of potable water	97	97	97	97
	Proportion of hinterland population with access to a reliable supply of potable water	33.8	46	60	75
	Number of water treatment plants	29	29	29	29
	Number of wells drilled	8	6	14	15
	Number of coastal wells drilled	1	1	4	0
	Number of hinterland wells drilled	7	5	10	15
<b>6.2</b>	Proportion of population with access to improved sanitation facility	85.8	98	98	98

*Source: Guyana 2<sup>nd</sup> Voluntary National Review of the SDGs, 2023*

Guyana’s second VNR also reported progress in achieving goal 17. Implementation of the strategic energy policies and programmes, to date, has resulted in approximately 89 percent of the country’s population being connected to the national electricity grid and services. In addition, about 92.6 percent of the urban population and 82.9 percent of the population in rural areas have access to electricity. Of note, in licensed areas, the percentage of dwelling units with access to electricity increased from 70 percent in 2002 to 89 percent in 2022. Notwithstanding, the current position, Guyana intends to achieve full coverage of licensed areas within the next 10 years.

Affordability is a critical component to Guyana’s energy transition journey. Currently, the average electricity rates (USD/kWh) for each customer category are as follows: residential customers – US\$0.20, commercial customers – US\$0.26 and industrial customers – US\$0.24. Guyana is aware of these higher-than-average rates for electricity, and thus the Gas to Energy project which is under construction is expected to provide badly needed energy to the national grid and cut electricity costs by at least half.

In 2013-2015, over 15,000 households received solar panels under the Hinterland Household Electrification Project, over 20,000 solar panels have been imported and a programme of distribution of panels for households have commenced in interior Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9. Furthermore, most schools, health centres and police stations

in the interior have installed solar panels.

Guyana has already taken steps toward ensuring affordability of electricity, including through the exemption of Customs Duties and VAT on machinery and equipment imported for the purposes of generating and utilising renewable energy. These include solar panels, solar lamps, deep-cycle batteries, solar generators, solar water heaters, solar cookers, direct current (DC) solar refrigerators, direct current (DC) solar freezers, direct current (DC) solar air-conditioners, wind turbines, water turbines, and power inverters; and energy-efficient lighting, including compact fluorescent lamps and light-emitting diode (LED) lamps. Guyana's Government has removed all taxes, on all-electric motor vehicles of any power rating in keeping with the commitment to develop the country along a low carbon pathway. Further, in support of business' investment decisions to switch to more environmentally friendly vehicles, Guyana has implemented an increase in the writing down allowance applicable to all-electric motor vehicles to 50 percent annually. When combined with the major energy initiatives Guyana is pursuing, accessibility and affordability will be well within reach by 2030.

*Measures taken to: Promote sustainable urban development and strengthening of city systems and their rural environments.*

The implementation of several key interventions has contributed to significant progress being realised towards achieving sustainable housing settlements.

Guyana's National Housing Programme<sup>51</sup> managed by the Central Planning and Housing Authority under the Ministry of Housing and Water aims to allocate 10,000 house lots annually, and 50,000 house lots by 2025, in order to address the backlog of housing applications it met in 2020. With a youthful population, there is growing demand for housing within recent years due to economic activities being centred in urban and newly emerging peri urban areas, migration and the emerging oil and gas sector. Between 2020 and 2022, approximately 20,240 or 83 percent of house lots were allocated to low- and middle-income earners and at a subsidised price.

Notably, there was also increased focus on allocating to female headed households. Allocations to female headed household in 2022 stood at 45 percent, up from 42 percent in 2021. Further, in 2021, allocations to men only stood at 35 percent and fell to 27 percent in 2022, while allocations to joint applications increased from 23 percent in 2021 to 28 percent in 2022. Due to Guyana's low-lying coastal topography, a new energy efficient low carbon city, called Silica City is planned and is emerging on higher ground.

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<sup>51</sup> This programme began in 1996 and has provided 100,000 houselots at subsidized prices to low-income families up to 2015.

**Table 19: House lot allocation 2019 – 2022**

<b>Years</b>	<b>Lots Allocated to applicants</b>	<b>Squatter Lots allocated for regularisation of informal settlements</b>	<b>Total Lots Allocated</b>	<b>Titles Distributed</b>
<b>2019</b>	1,301	197	1,498	2,099
<b>2020</b>	4,705	89	4,794	899
<b>2021</b>	7,119	180	7,299	1,266
<b>2022</b>	7,672	108	7,780	1,470
	<b>20,797</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>21,371</b>	<b>5,734</b>

*Source: Central Housing and Planning Authority*

**Table 19** above shows the breakdown for lots allocated for applicants, lots allocated for the regularization of informal settlements and the land titles distributed. There has been a significant increase in house lots allocated during the years 2021-2022. Additionally, it should be noted that during 2021-2022, the MHW recorded between 89% and 92% respectively of allocations were low- and middle-income households, and 42% and 44% percentage of the house lots were allocated to women only.

**Table 20- Shows the percentage of males and females allocated house-lots.**

<b>2021</b>	<b>% of Total Allocations</b>
<b>Male</b>	34.91%
<b>Female</b>	<b>42.49%</b>
<b>Both</b>	22.61%
<b>2022</b>	<b>% of Total Allocations</b>
<b>Male</b>	26.97%
<b>Female</b>	<b>44.90%</b>
<b>Both</b>	28.13%

*Source: Central Housing and Planning Authority*

Additionally, Guyana is implementing the Squatter Regularisation and Relocation Programme, which resulted in 825 settlers being allocated lots and 6 (six) informal communities being regularised, over the past four (4) years.

Continuous programmes towards expanding community engagement activities have been strengthened; 176 local democratic organs were engaged in project activities and planning, 146 community leaders were trained and 22 community projects such as training workshops, clean up exercises, hamper distribution were implemented, in an inclusive and participatory manner. These interventions have helped Guyana to target segments of the population that would be considered furthest left behind.

These interventions have included subsidy programmes aimed at promoting affordable housing construction, facilitating affordable home financing solutions such as Mortgage Interest Relief (MIR) on loans up to \$30 million, informal settlers' regularisation initiatives and removal of taxes from several construction materials.

Importantly, green, and public spaces and recreational facilities were planned and established for all residents in the new national housing schemes that have been developed. At the community level, for every 1,000 persons, there is a public/green space of at least 0.5 acre in size, planned. For the period 2020 to 2022, 11 additional recreational facilities and playgrounds were instituted in the municipalities of Lethem and Mabaruma. In 2023, there are 10 more being constructed in other municipalities.

Under the Central Housing Planning Authority (CHPA), notable progress has been made towards achieving the priority measures of sustainable land use planning and environmental risk management as well as territorial planning, management, and development. Further, revisions are being made to the 2022 Draft National Housing Strategy, based on a housing profile that was completed with the support of UN-Habitat. This strategy when implemented, will address land use and urbanisation master plans that embrace growth, infrastructure, and sustainability; strengthening of land administration systems; affordable and resilient housing solutions; regularisation of existing informal or squatter settlements; fiscally sustainable government interventions into the housing market, among other interventions.

Additionally, the draft of the Guyana Strategy for Informal Settlements Upgrading and Prevention was concluded in 2022 and once finalized will seek to establish strategic priorities and actionable policy proposals aimed at addressing issues surrounding informal settlements in Guyana with the aim to continue facilitating settlement regularization, relocation from zero tolerance areas and reduce the likelihood of informal settlement development in urban and rural areas.

Legislative reforms in the housing sector:

- ▶ In 2022, the Ministry successfully passed the **Condominium Act** which provides a structured and clear policy framework to guide the ownership and management of town houses and condominiums, a vital step in implementing effective urban management systems.
- ▶ The **Planning and Development Single Window System Act** which was passed in 2023 is another significant milestone of the nation which caters for the establishment of a single window electronic processing system for development permits, considerably reducing the processing time from land allocation to construction. This Act seeks to improve the ease of doing business in Guyana with the establishment of a single-entry point and platform for processing and approving planning and development applications. It specifies the functions related to land use planning and development, creates an appeal tribunal, and includes consequential amendments to other pieces of legislation to prevent duplication and overlap.

## SILICA CITY – GUYANA’S FIRST SMART CITY

Guyana has embarked on a transformative project; the development of Guyana’s first climate-smart city, Silica City. Silica City was conceptualised in 2013 and is envisaged to tackle the issue of non-coastal urban settlement development and the challenges of climate change and sea-level rise. The idea of Silica City is primarily born out of the need for Guyana to have an urban centre that is complementary to the existing capital city of Georgetown. The vision for Silica City is the creation of “A vibrant, sustainable, resilient and modern city”, which is in keeping with the Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030, Guyana’s international commitments (Paris Agreement and UNFCCC) and SDG 11. The “smart city” approach is proposed for creating a new city that is compact, (agglomeration of land uses); pedestrian-oriented (walkable); energy efficient, interconnected, and sustainable, comfortable, attractive, and secure.

A key area of focus is the preservation and enhancement of the valuable, natural, and cultural resources of the area. (SDG Target 11.4) For the development of this new city, land has already been identified, which is located approximately 40 km from the capital city Georgetown. It is envisaged that over the next 20 years, the projected population for this new city will be approximately 50,000 (12,500 households) considering employment creation and accommodating new households within a non-coastal settlement.

The Government has commenced the first phase of the housing development, whereby approximately 109.865 acres were cleared, surveyed and the execution of development works have begun. This initial block of land within Silica City will be developed as a Young Professional Scheme. The design yields a total of 300 lots, that are appropriately apportioned to facilitate the placement of young professional houses, commercial lots, mixed-use development, apartments, and condos as well as provisions for reserve spaces for institutional and community use. The key sustainable and smart city principles formed the basis for the conceptualization of the layout, with a unique sense of place, a community to live, work and play, incorporation of the concept of mix-use development, enhancement of natural attributes, multi-functional open space and provision of employment centres, community facilities and services.

*Measures taken to: **Facilitate the prevention and mitigation of the impact of socio-environmental disasters and environmental vulnerability.***

**Disaster Risk Management:** Guyana is a country with below sea levels along its coasts and therefore very vulnerable to unpredictable weather patterns due to climate change. In fact, Guyana is listed as one of most vulnerable countries to climate change. As a result, the Government is expending large sums of money on Guyana’s large and interlinked drainage and irrigation infrastructural systems and sea and river defence systems through the Ministries of Agriculture and Public Works in order improve disaster risk management (DRM).

The Civil Defence Commission (CDC) is the lead agency responsible for DRM and has been instrumental in shaping Guyana’s DRM policies and plans in compliance with international human rights standards. Guyana’s DRM policy articulates that across phases of disaster management, all people are assessed equally, and that provisions are made for prioritizing vulnerable groups including women, children, the elderly, and people living

with disabilities<sup>52</sup> based on the strategic and practical needs arising from impacts caused by various hazard events. These measures are also included in the LCDS 2030 and are aligned with the SDGs.

In May 2021, Guyana recorded the second highest rainfall levels since 1981. Prolonged above-normal rainfall and above normal sea levels resulted in extensive and devastating flooding that affected all ten Administrative Regions. Data from the Civil Defence Commission estimates that almost 52,000 households were directly affected. Preliminary estimates also recorded over 33,000 farmers and over 90,000 acres of farm and farmlands affected<sup>53</sup>. Almost 4,000 livestock farms and over 17,000 acres of commercial crops were lost, the latter substantially higher than the 4,440 acres lost in the 2005 floods<sup>54</sup>, while preliminary damage and loss assessment reports estimates that damage was recorded in more than 6,000 homes, of which approximately 302 experienced severe damage, 308 experienced moderate damage and 5,549 with minor damage<sup>55</sup>. The final assessment of the 2021 floods indicated that the sector hardest hit was agriculture with the loss of livestock, cash crops and commercial crops.

As part of its response, the Government of Guyana designed a comprehensive compensation package totaling GY\$7.8 billion dollars to bring relief to affected households. Given that most severe losses were experienced in the form of loss of livelihood, this was the primary thrust of the relief efforts. As part of the compensation package, the ceiling of assistance to large-scale farmers was \$10 million per farmer. Homestead farmers received \$100,000 while all other affected households (both with and without kitchen gardens) received \$50,000 each to compensate for their losses<sup>56</sup>. In addition, through the Civil Defence Commission, households received support in the form of sanitation hampers to aid in the clean-up efforts, as well as food hampers and bottled water during the flood events.

There have been some region-specific floods in the interior in 2022 whereby CDC distributed water, food hampers and sanitizing materials. Relief efforts through the Civil Defence Commission occur year-round even during smaller-scale emergency events. In addition to central government funding, resources are mobilized through partnerships with the private sector and international organizations.

Guyana is a recipient of the Enabling Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery, Climate and Environmental Resilience (EnGenDER) Project that began in 2019 in nine Caribbean countries. The project is aimed at improving climate resilience for women and girls and key vulnerable populations and future generations in the Caribbean, through enhanced practices of relevant actors for the sustainable implementation of gender-responsive climate change action and disaster recovery and improved national capacity for gender-responsive climate change planning and implementation among state and non-state actors in the target countries.

A key activity under the project was the development of a Gender-based Climate Resilience Analysis for Guyana<sup>57</sup>, which was completed and published in February 2021. The report describes the existing gender and social inequities and the ways in which climate change will impact on the vulnerabilities among men, women, and key vulnerable groups. Importantly, it also highlights key gaps, opportunities, and challenges for two priority

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<sup>52</sup> Guyana ratified the Convention on rights of person with disabilities and the PWD Act in 2010

<sup>53</sup> Ministry of Finance (2021) Midyear Report 2021 < <https://finance.gov.gy/mid-year-reports/>>

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, pg 50

<sup>55</sup> Data provided by the Civil Defence Commission

<sup>56</sup> <https://dpi.gov.gy/7-8b-assistance-for-households-farmers-affected-by-floods-president-ali/>

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.bb.undp.org/content/barbados/en/home/engender/country-reports.html>

sectors for Guyana, i.e., agriculture and health, and provides recommendations for developing gender-responsive and socially inclusive policies and plans to build climate resilience in the priority sectors identified for Guyana.

Guyana's overarching development framework, the revised and expanded Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030 specifies gender equality and social inclusion as central tenets for its effective implementation. Gender equality and social inclusion will be mainstreamed by building on the indispensable contributions of women in key sectors, including agriculture, where many of the subsectors are dominated by women. The LCDS 2030 will also promote the inclusion of women in decision-making in non-traditional fields such as the mining sector through continuous training and mentorship and will foster a range of opportunities for women to play an active role in their communities in low-carbon sectors such as sustainable tourism, particularly in rural and Amerindian communities.

A significant development in this regard is the creation in 2021 of a **National Risk Management Policy for the Education Sector**. The Policy was developed with the recognition that natural and man-made hazards, and disease outbreaks (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) have led to unexpected and devastating impacts on the education sector, including on education infrastructure, and most especially on learners, teachers, education staff and families. Importantly, the policy recognizes that, beyond the generalized impacts on infrastructure, accessibility, and learning, such hazardous events tend to exacerbate vulnerabilities for girls, learners with disabilities, and poor groups, and includes actions to reduce these disparities and improve equity in education access across the country.

## **H. Indigenous Peoples: Inter-Culturalism and Rights**

*Priority measures taken to: Adapt the legal and institutional framework to make it coherent with international standards with regard to the rights of indigenous peoples.*

Guyana remains fully committed to enhancing the quality of life of its Indigenous/Amerindian Peoples through formulating policies and implementing programmes that facilitate cultural, social and economic development, promotes equity and protect Indigenous rights. Policies have been developed and actions carried out with full recognition of and respect for indigenous peoples' rights in accordance with international norms, including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the related human rights instruments. The Constitution recognizes Guyana's indigenous people and their special rights. To further the rights of indigenous peoples, the first Ministry of Amerindian Affairs was established in October 1992 headed by a Minister who was Amerindian.

The Amerindian Act of 2006, the only one of its kind globally provides for Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), the recognition and protection of the collective land rights of indigenous villages and communities, the granting of communal land to indigenous communities, and the promotion of good governance within their communities. This Act is the primary legislation on the property rights of indigenous peoples over lands and territories making Guyana's land ownership unique. The largest landowner is the state, and the second largest landowner is the indigenous/Amerindian villages who own communal land titles totaling almost 16% of Guyana's land mass.

The Act establishes a system for governance of indigenous affairs led by their elected Amerindian Village Councils. The Amerindian Act (2006) provides for local governance of Amerindians and defines an Amerindian as a person who is a member of a tribe indigenous to Guyana. Additionally, the Act provides for the establishment of Districts, Amerindian Areas and Amerindian Villages through a participatory administration defined for each unit.

***The Principles of Guyana's legal framework consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:***

**Self-determination and self-governance**

**Amerindian Village Councils**

The right to self-determination of the Amerindian people in Guyana is continuously being implemented and respected by the Government in numerous ways, especially in comparison with our counterparts across the world. The Amerindian peoples of Guyana are encouraged to determine freely their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.

The affairs of Amerindian Villages are managed by elected Village Councils, statutorily established by section 10 of the **Amerindian Act (2006), Cap 29:01, Laws of Guyana**. Section 11 provides that the Village Council shall be led by a Toshao and establishes a numeric formula for determining the maximum number of Councilors commensurate to the population of the Village. The functions of the Village Council are elaborated in section 13 of the Act, while section 14 empowers the Council to make rules to govern a range of aspects of village life, including the occupation and use of village lands, protection and preservation of wildlife, infrastructural development, and regulating the conduct of non-residents when within village lands.

The functions and powers of the Toshao are elaborated in section 20s and 21 establishes that the Toshao shall serve as an ex-officio Justice of the Peace and Rural Constable for the Village. Village Elections are governed by Part IV of the Act. Section 65 provides that each Toshao and Councilor shall be elected by secret ballot, and that elections are to be held within three-year intervals. With the support of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, village elections are conducted, in accordance with the Act, at specified intervals.

Under the ambit of the Amerindian Act, the Village Council is also required to keep a village register which is essential to providing information on the number, gender and age of the residents in the Village. Schools, health centers, the NTC annual reports also provide useful relevant information on indigenous peoples.

## **National Tashaos' Council**

The National Tashaos Council is statutorily established by the Amerindian Act and consists of all Tashaos and Councillors of the 242 Communities across the country. Every two years, at the annual NTC conference the executive is elected which manages the affairs of the indigenous peoples. A key policy decision that is unique to Guyana is the government's support to the National Tashaos Council (NTC) Conference, as required by law, which takes place annually and is funded by the Government of Guyana. It is the gathering of all indigenous leaders from 242 villages, satellites, and communities across all 10 administrative regions of Guyana. The Secretariat of the NTC receives an annual subvention from Government. In August 2023, the NTC commissioned its very own secretariat funded by the Government of Guyana to the tune of G\$147Million to promote its work in the continued advancement of indigenous peoples' rights and communities.

During the July 2022 National Tashaos Council (NTC) Conference-the NTC adopted a resolution in support of the LCDS 2030. The resolution stated that :-

“The National Tashaos' Council:

Welcomes Guyana's pursuance of an expanded Low Carbon Development Strategy, LCDS 2030, and the proposal to move to a second phase for accessing forest carbon financing, to continue the approach outlined in the LCDS 2009.”

Recognises that extensive national scale and community-based consultations, conducted over the past seven months, have informed the main aspects of LCDS 2030.

Further, the Resolution welcomes the commitment expressed in the LCDS 2030 to continued consultation and engagement with Indigenous Communities and Villages as the LCDS moves to implementation.

The Council agrees with Guyana's national approach of engaging with forest carbon financing that is aimed at bringing benefits to Guyanese and particularly Indigenous Villages and Communities and welcomes the information in the LCDS 2030 that from 2022, there is a strong possibility that Guyana's sale of forest climate services can be structured around high-quality voluntary carbon markets that could include private, as well as international public sector, financing.

The Council further supports the proposal prior to the LCDS 2030 being adopted in the National Assembly in August 2022, which resulted from the national consultation that:

- The LCDS, and engagement with carbon markets, nonetheless will create new opportunities to opt into revenue-sharing mechanisms where Amerindian and other local communities can choose to access revenues through a combination of:
- -national programmes as outlined in the draft LCDS 2030 (e.g., renewable energy, land titling, protection against climate change), and
- -community/village-led programmes for indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) as set out in Village Sustainability Plans or equivalent, put together by communities themselves.

- All Amerindian communities will have the opportunity to engage with both pathways for carbon market revenues, in accordance with the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).
- A dedicated 15% of all revenues from forest carbon markets will be allocated for Amerindian communities. These funds will be available to the villages to support development initiatives. This will be supplementary to the considerable funds communities are expected to receive from national-level programmes.
- This dedicated revenue stream will be shared equally with villages and communities, including those that are covered with forest as well as those in non-forest ecosystems.
- Communities are free to opt into this dedicated revenue mechanism for local communities.
- No deadline will be set for opting in.”

Guyana has earned US\$150 million in payments from the sale of ART-TREES credits for the year 2023. Approximately 85% of these funds are being invested in multi-community and national priorities identified by stakeholders during a seven-month consultation on the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030. Of this 15% - or GYD 4.7 billion – has been directly transferred through grants to every Amerindian village bank account for investment in village plans, formulated by the villagers themselves. In all cases, the village processes must culminate with a vote of approval from at least two-thirds of all adult villagers present at village meetings (in many villages, support has been unanimous). All 242 communities have their own carbon credit bank accounts and finance committees chosen by villagers and community members. Villages have mobilised to invest in areas identified by community members.

This Programme will see continuous financing flows to villages as Guyana draws down annually on its carbon credits. A total of 242 communities formulated their Village Development plans and some of the projects are completed while some in progress. To date, over 500 projects are being implemented at Village level, led by Amerindian people. Projects that are being financed include priorities as varied as building shade houses, improving local guesthouses for tourism, supporting cassava farming, providing craft classes, and purchasing village tractors. These projects, financed by carbon credits revenues, are transforming village livelihoods through climate adaptation and resilience action.

### **Participation in National Elections**

Significantly, Amerindian people exercise their democratic right to freely participate in national elections not solely as voters but also as candidates in the elections without any limitation or discrimination based on ethnicity. In 2020, the current Parliament took the historic step of electing the first indigenous Deputy Speaker of the House. Furthermore, this Parliament has the highest number of Amerindians elected as Members of Parliament representing 12.6% of the National Assembly. Even further, Guyana’s indigenous peoples have been represented at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Guyana’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations is a former Minister of Foreign Affairs and she is Amerindian.

### **Free, Prior, and Informed Consent**

The principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent is guaranteed to all Amerindian People, pursuant to the Amerindian Act of 2006. Part V Section 44 of the Act expressly recognizes the inalienability of Village lands. Further to this, Part VI thoroughly provides for the recognition and protection of Amerindian lands by setting out

the process through which Amerindians can apply for legally protected grants of communal land which they have traditionally occupied as well as provision for application for extensions to Village lands. The procedure as set out by the Act stipulates that evidence of a collective decision must be provided to support an application for village lands. Every decision which affects the indigenous peoples within villages is based upon engaging the Village through a Village General Meeting. Such decisions include project proposals which must be decided or approved at such a meeting. The Village General meeting is therefore the most important forum for decision-making within Amerindian Villages.

The Amerindian Land Titling Project, which supports the facilitation of the process for land applications within the ambit of the Amerindian Act, has established written guidelines that even further underscore the importance of adherence to FPIC. The Amerindian Act specifically sets out that, save for functions and powers specifically delegated to the Village Council, all decisions are to be made by way of the Village General Meeting. Even those decisions which the Council has the delegated power to make must be made collectively by a duly elected council whose functions are specifically laid out in the Amerindian Act.

The principle is amplified in various legislation such as the Mining Act and the Forestry Act, which expressly recognize and protect indigenous people’s right to traditional use of their lands. These laws are duly enforced and protected by the Government of Guyana.

**Table 21: Budget allocations to Ministry of Amerindian Affairs 2018-2022**

<b>Amount allocated</b>	<b>% National Budget allocated to Ministry of Amerindian Peoples Affairs</b>	<b>Year</b>
G\$2.2Billion	0.8%	2018
G\$1.8Billion	0.6%	2019
G\$2.7Billion	0.82%	2020
G\$3Billion	0.81%	2021
G\$4.8Billion	0.9%	2022

*Source: Budget Estimates 2018 – 2022, Ministry of Finance*

*Measures that aim to: Eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against indigenous individuals and peoples and guarantee their right to health and physical and cultural survival.*

## **Constitutional Provisions**

**Article 149G** of the Constitution recognizes the rights of Amerindian peoples to their way of life and culture. Moreover, it specifies that indigenous peoples shall have the right to the protection, preservation and promulgation of their languages, cultural heritage and way of life.

**Article 149 (2)** of the **Constitution of Guyana, Cap 1:01, Laws of Guyana**, protects people from discrimination based on race, religion, gender, beliefs, origin, class, etc. It is also noteworthy that the *International Covenant on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)* in its entirety has been incorporated into Guyana's legal system by its inclusion in the **Fourth Schedule** of the **Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, Chapter 1:01, Laws of Guyana (the Constitution)**. This exceptional step not only gives the ICERD legal effect by creating rights for citizens and placing obligations upon Guyana, but it also elevates the rights articulated therein to constitutional, supreme law status, requiring that all state actions, including those by its agents, are compliant. It is also worth noting that the Preamble of the Constitution includes a commitment to celebrate racial diversity by "eliminating every form of discrimination."

## **Statute**

Guyana has enacted the **Racial Hostility Act, Chapter 23:01, Laws of Guyana**. Section 2 of this Act distinctly criminalises acts which incite racial hostility and conduct which can have the effect of causing racial discrimination. Additionally, section 139D of the **Representation of the People Act, Chapter 1:03, Laws of Guyana** criminalises any conduct which results in or can result in racial or ethnic violence or hatred. Racial discrimination is also clearly proscribed by the **Prevention of Discrimination Act, Chapter 99:08, which predates the constitutional reforms of 2001-2003**, was enacted to "provide for the elimination of" discrimination in employment, training, recruitment, and membership of professional bodies...". Section 4 of the **Prevention of Discrimination Act (1997)** expressly proscribes persons from making any distinction, exclusion or preference which nullifies or impairs equality, opportunity or treatment in employment or training on the basis of race, among other characteristics which pertain to or are imputed to race. These provisions are in harmony with Articles 1, 2 and 3 of the ICERD.

Further, **section 8 of the Termination of Employment and Severance Pay Act, Chapter 96:01, Laws of Guyana (TESPA)** operates to proscribe persons from being dismissed solely, or at all, based on race.

## **The Indigenous People's Commission**

Indigenous People's Commission is one of five Constitutional Rights Commissions established during the 1999-2001 Constitutional Reform process. This Commission is established pursuant to **Article 212S of the Constitution**, with its primary purpose being to establish mechanisms to enhance the status of indigenous peoples and to respond to their legitimate demands and needs.

**The functions of the Commission, include, inter alia,** promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous people, raising awareness of the contributions of, and the problems faced by, indigenous people, promoting the empowerment of indigenous people, making recommendations on economic and education policies to advance the interest of indigenous peoples, and promoting consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples, especially with regard to their participation in national decision-making and other decisions that affect their lives.

The Commission comprises not more than ten members nominated by entities after the entities have been determined by the votes of not less than two-thirds of the members of the National Assembly. Its membership shall also include three persons, at least one being a woman nominated by the National Toshihos Council and two persons including one woman nominated by Amerindian organizations; determined by the votes of not less than two-thirds of the members of the National Assembly, and a non-voting member nominated by and from each of the other rights commission.

**Indigenous peoples' rights:** In accordance with the Guyana Constitution (1980 amended 2001 - Art. 142(b)(i), Amerindians own the land they occupy collectively, for an unlimited period and Amerindian land cannot be expropriated by the State. Guyana is in compliance with Priority Measure 85 of the Montevideo Consensus which requires respect and implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Further, indigenous peoples in Guyana have the right to **maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage**. In the Guyanese context, Amerindians have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health, and social security. The Government has taken effective measures to ensure continuous improvement of indigenous peoples economic and social conditions, especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

To further develop Amerindian communities, in 2022, Government spent G\$4.9 billion through the Amerindian Development Fund (ADF) on Presidential Grants, the Youth Entrepreneurship and Apprenticeship Programme, and additional financial support in areas of food security, youth development, tourism, and micro projects. In 2023, a sum of \$2.7 billion has been budgeted for the ADF, which includes continued training in tourism and hospitality, business development plans, garment construction, ATV, and small engine repairs, as well as provisions for Presidential Grants to 233 communities. Several commercial, eco-tourism, agricultural and infrastructural projects are also catered for. Furthermore, the sum of \$5 billion is budgeted for hinterland roads development.

Between 2020-2022 G\$880 million were allocated to villages and communities in Presidential grants for agricultural projects, business enterprises, transportation projects, infrastructural projects, and tourism projects. This has led to the creation of 2,737 direct employment opportunities being created, and 590 projects being implemented. These projects are developed by the villages and are subject to the principle of FPIC.

In 2015, 1,972 Amerindian Community Service Officers were terminated by the then government. In 2021, the programme was re-introduced with the new government. In 2022, the number of Community Service Officers (CSOs) increased to 2,645 and further training was provided to 372 Amerindian Leaders in governance, financial

accountability, leadership, and project management, while 254 CSOs completed training in garment construction and small engine repairs. An additional \$93.3 million is budgeted to 2023 to support 804 students through the hinterland scholarships programme.

Public policy development in Guyana is driven by Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030, with strong emphasis on the sustainable development of the country while preserving the environment and culture of its people. Guyana's through the carbon credit programme and the domestic local budgetary allocations are channeled towards development of policies under the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and Ministry of Local Government to ensure Amerindian communities across the country have equal access to essential services (housing, roads, land and water transportation and improved social services, health and education facilities).

### **Traditional medicine and indigenous health practices:**

The historical use of traditional “bush medicine” provided a historic resilient response to inaccessible biomedical healthcare in Guyana before independence. However, the use of traditional medicine is still practiced in communities across the country and parallels the work of the health huts, health centres in each Amerindian community. People refer to both sources for help and care.

The national health strategy, Health Vision 2020 and the new smart healthcare systems promote a modern health care approach to medical conditions while integrating traditional practices in prevention and control of diseases. The transmission of such knowledge is important as it contributes to the overall protection of traditional and cultural practices of the Indigenous peoples and holds potential knowledge for science and new treatments.

The Ministry of Health through the Maternal & Child Health Department and Women's Health Unit, in collaboration with the Welfare Department and hostel of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and the Regional health Authorities specifically supports medical intervention and work towards the reduction of maternal deaths

A National Telemedicine Pilot Programme was officially launched in December 2022, and is being rolled out in remote indigenous communities in Administrative Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9<sup>58</sup> to complement and enhance the quality of healthcare delivered in established health facilities. These facilities deploy communication technology to facilitate real time, remote diagnosis, and treatment, thereby bringing modern healthcare to remote indigenous communities. G\$1.8 billion has been allocated in Budget 2023 for this pilot programme.

### **Indigenous peoples and territorial rights:**

As stated earlier, Indigenous peoples have the right to traditional lands, which they have traditionally occupied or otherwise used or acquired. In addition to the general constitutional provisions, the Amerindian Act (2006) of Guyana provides for the recognition and protection of collective rights of Amerindian Villages and Communities in Guyana and the promotion of good governance.

Since coming into office, the current Government re-established the Amerindian Land Titling Unit in the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. Officers of this unit are tasked to conduct extensive investigations to ensure the lands and

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<sup>58</sup> In 2023, 15 additional sites will be opened in Region One, four in Region Seven, four in Region Eight and four more in Region Nine.

extensions do not form part of a mining concession or do not interfere with the boundaries of another village. The government is committed to Amerindian development and empowerment through the land titling programme.

The President of Guyana, under a special power of the State Lands Act, may issue land titles to Amerindian communities. Ownership of the land is transferred from the State to an Amerindian community. These are absolute grants to Amerindians to own the land communally and forever.

The Amerindian Land Titling project seeks to enable Amerindians to secure their lands with a view towards sustainable, social, and economic development. It is expected that the titling of communities will strengthen land tenure security and the expansion of the asset base of Amerindians, enabling improved long-term planning for their future development.

Government allocated over GY\$560M in 2022 and over GY\$500M in 2023 towards land titling only. This does not include the multi-billion-dollar budgets geared towards Amerindian Development, nor the carbon credit financing for Amerindian villages as part of the carbon credits partnerships under the Low Carbon Development Strategy and REDD+GRIF.

Village consultations and meetings are provided for with respect to activities and projects related to mining and forestry and the establishment of protected areas. A rule, and any amendment to a rule, made by a Village Council comes into effect when the Village Council has consulted the community in general meeting and two-thirds of the members of the Village general meeting have given their approval.

A miner who wishes to carry out mining activities on Village lands or in any river, creek, stream or other source of water within the boundaries of the Village lands shall attend any consultations with the Village Council or Village and request and obtain the consent of at least two-thirds of those present and entitled to vote at a Village general meeting. Having obtained their approval, the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC ) would issue the license, The GGMC would also facilitate the consultations and ensure compliance with all regulations. Under the provisions, if the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission intends to issue a mining permit, concession, license, or other permission it shall first notify the Village and satisfy itself that the impact of mining on the Village will not be harmful. A person who wishes to use forest produce from Village lands shall attend any consultations the Village requests and obtain the consent of at least two-thirds of those present and entitled to vote at a Village general meeting. The Guyana Forestry Commission may facilitate the consultations.

**Restitution of indigenous rights and protection against all forms of violence:**

Guyana has adopted, in conjunction with representatives of indigenous peoples, measures to ensure that indigenous women, boys, girls, adolescents and young people enjoy protection from all forms of violence and discrimination. Through the National Assembly, Local Government authorities and the Village Councils, various laws protect the rights of the indigenous community, and members to participate in decisions affecting their communities, land, and national issues.

**Right to communication and information of indigenous peoples:**

To bridge the digital gap between the hinterland and the coast Government's reinstated Information and Communications Technology (ICT) access and e-services for the Hinterland, Poor, and Remote Communities Project under the ambit of the Prime Minister's Office. Government's 'ICT access and e-services for Hinterland, Poor and Remote Communities' project seeks to provide internet connectivity within 200 Amerindian Villages across the 10 Administrative Regions as a key means of fostering sustainable development and access to services. This remains one of the core priority outcomes of Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030. A key component in achieving such an outcome is the provision of public services and information via the deployment and use of new Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs).

Consistent with our internet connectivity objectives, Government deployed VSAT equipment which is now serving over 60,000 residents in 161 hinterland communities with internet service. In addition, 93 hinterland communities have benefitted from grants to prepare spaces to host ICT hubs, with another 107 communities slated to benefit by the third quarter of 2023. The 93 beneficiaries would have also seen the construction and equipping of ICT hubs in their villages. of which 72 are operational and the remainder are slated to be completed in 2023. Further, works have commenced on the expansion of the fibre cable network by 115 km, expected to be completed in 2023. A sum of \$500 million is budgeted in 2023 to finance these initiatives.

Guyana became a state party to the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean in April 2021. The regional agreement has as its objective to guarantee the full and effective implementation in Guyana of the rights of access to environmental information, public participation in the environmental decision-making process and access to justice in environmental matters, and the creation and strengthening of capacities and cooperation, contributing to the protection of the right of every person of present and future generations to live in a healthy environment and to sustainable development.

Over the last five years several radio stations were established in Amerindian communities and through a diverse programming management, state support content and independent views are delivered. Through the Leaning Channel, the Ministry of Education provides diverse education and entertainment television programmes and documentaries along with pre-approved movies. Access to Internet, through both Government (ICT Hubs) providing free Wi-Fi and the local telephone companies (GTT and DIGICEL), internet access to Amerindian Communities have increased to over 75% of all communities. The E-governance platform provides for most schools and health facilities along with police, social protection, and public works agencies in these areas to access the internet.

The Government of Guyana facilitates active participation at the highest possible level, with provision for the inclusion of indigenous peoples in national delegations and at the United Nations General Assembly.

*Measures taken to: Provide timely, good-quality and relevant information on the situation of indigenous individuals and people from a gender and generational perspective.*

Guyana has 79,143 people that identify themselves as Amerindians which represents about 10.2 per cent of the total population. Across the Americas, data strongly suggests that indigenous peoples are much more likely to be living in poverty, suffering from material deprivation, a lack of basic services, or affected by other social inequalities. Guyana however, has for the last 30 years targeted poverty alleviation, education, health, employment opportunity and sustaining traditional lifestyle for indigenous communities while facilitating their integration into the nation's development. Article 149-G of the Constitution of Guyana specifies that indigenous peoples shall have the right to the protection, preservation and promulgation of their languages, cultural heritage, and way of life. The Constitution further guarantees the right of citizenship and equal access to all basic rights, liberties, and protection as all Guyanese. Special provisions are also enshrined in the governance arrangement for active participation in government decision making and sharing in the benefits of the state.

The Government of Guyana is cognizant of the critical role that data has in decision-making process when planning for the development of a society and its people. The Government has invested heavily in the conduct of a thorough Census exercise that commenced in 2022 and is expected to be finalized soon. When this is finalized critical data on indigenous peoples will be utilized to improve and strengthen policies and programmes.

## **I. Afro-descendants: Rights and Combating Racial Discrimination**

*Measures taken to: implement laws, standards and policies (including institution strengthening) to promote and protect the rights of Afro-descendants.*

*Measures that aim to: eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against Afro-descendants and the overlapping of ethnic, racial, gender and generational inequalities.*

Guyana is a nation of six diverse ethnic groups in which not one group has a majority of 50% of the population. As described in this document, the Constitution prohibits discrimination including discrimination based on race or ethnicity. Article 149 of the Constitution of Guyana makes provisions for the protection from discrimination on the grounds of race, etc. Article 149 states – (1) Subject to the provisions of this article – “(a) no law shall make any provision that is discriminatory either of itself or in its effect;” and “(b) no person shall be treated in a discriminatory manner by any person acting by virtue of any written law or in the performance of the functions of any public office or any public authority.” The laws of Guyana provide for equal treatment for each ethnic group, one of which is Afro-Guyanese.

The Constitution provides for the establishment of an Ethnic Relations Commission. Members of the Commission are appointed through a parliamentary consensual mechanism. The Ethnic Relations Commission is a redress mechanism to seek to combat ethnic discrimination and ensure gender equality. The Commission was recently appointed to ensure its works towards equality and non-discrimination among the races will continue.

This Commission is a constitutional mechanism that seeks to ensure that the standards and policies as it relates to protecting and promoting the rights of all ethnic groups are given due cognizance. The Commission is mandated to uphold equal opportunity among different ethnic groups, encourages good relations among people of different racial backgrounds, receives and investigates complaints and makes decisions regarding their findings, monitors media reports and the behaviour of the government and political parties with regards to anti-discrimination rights and statutes, and makes recommendations for its improvements. Article 212D (j) of the Constitution mandates the Ethnic Relations Commission to “investigate complaints of racial discrimination and make recommendations on measures to be taken if such complaints are valid.”

Section 4 of the **Prevention Against Discrimination Act, Cap. 99:08** (Prohibits grounds for discrimination.) **The Racial Hostility Act** Chapter 23:01, makes provision for preventing any conduct tending to excite hostility or ill-will against persons by reason of their race and prohibits incitement to racial hatred as a criminal offence. While these laws do not specifically target Afro-descendants, they protect all Guyanese (inclusive of Afro-descendants) from discriminatory laws being made based on race and also protect from discriminatory treatment in the employment sector on the basis of race.

Guyana like many other countries endorsed the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and is therefore, committed to enhancing measures to ensure equity in individual rights to health, education, social protection. In order to ensure that there are no situations of discrimination in the delivery of health services, and that racism, xenophobia and related intolerance do not occur in the provision of services, the Ministry of Health is mandated by law to ensure free and accessible healthcare, with no discrimination among citizens, at the more than 300 health facilities across Guyana.

Guyana continues to strongly support initiatives for reparations for the historical atrocities associated with slavery and the slave trade and is part of the CARICOM Reparations Commission. Guyana also established a **National Reparations Committee** comprising and led by Afro-Guyanese leaders that receives an annual subvention from the government. Guyana’s is considered the most successful of the 13 national reparations committees. It is the only committee that has regular television programs, a Guyana Reparations Story booklet (requirement of the operational plan), an annual budget, a Youth for Reparations Group (IKEMBA with its own TV Program), a community outreach programme that has touched 90 villages.

The Chair of the Guyana Reparations Committee interfaces with the President of Guyana and interfaces with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation as it is a CARICOM resolution that established the Reparations structure. Noteworthy is that Guyana also contributes annually to the CARICOM Reparations Commission.

The CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC) was established in July 2013 with unanimous support from the Heads of Government of member states. The CRC was established to, inter alia, prepare a case for reparatory justice for the region’s indigenous and African-descendant communities for crimes against humanity, including genocide, slavery and slave trading and those who were brought as indentured labourers. The mandate of the CRC is being implemented through the CARICOM Reparatory Justice Programme (CJRP), a collaboration between the University of the West Indies and the CRC, which asserts that the victims of these crimes and their descendants

have a legal right to reparatory justice. CARICOM has hired a British law firm to examine their case for compensation from Britain and other European nations.

The CARICOM Reparations Commission operates within a ten-point plan for reparatory justice, which involves:

- i. Full Formal Apology: the healing process for victims and the descendants of the enslaved and the enslavers requires, as a precondition, the offer of a full, formal apology by the governments of Europe.
- ii. Repatriation: the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was the largest forced migration in human history, with over 10 million Africans forcefully transported to the Caribbean as the enslaved chattel and property of Europeans. The CRC endorses a legal right to repatriation for descendants of the enslaved people.
- iii. Indigenous People's Development Programme: the governments of Europe committed genocide on the native Caribbean population along with land appropriation. A development plan is needed to rehabilitate the descendants who remain the most marginalized social group in the region.
- iv. Cultural institutions: Caribbean people and researchers lack the relevant institutional systems through which the experiences of their ancestors can be scientifically told. This is intended to be remedied through the CARICOM Reparatory Justice Programme.
- v. Public Health Crisis: the CJRP calls upon the governments of Europe to take responsibility, through the injection of capital, science and technology, to support the eradication of the high levels of hypertension and type two diabetes that continue to plague descendants of the slave trade.
- vi. Illiteracy eradication: Caribbean governments allocate a significant proportion of public education to health and education in an effort to uproot the legacies of slavery and colonization. European governments have a responsibility to participate in this effort.
- vii. African knowledge programmes: the forced separation of Africans from their homeland has resulted in cultural and social alienation from identity and existential belonging. A programme of action is required to build bridges of belonging, through programmes such as school exchanges and cultural tours, community artistic and performance programmes, etc.
- viii. Psychological rehabilitation: for over 400 years, Africans and their descendants were classified in law as non-human, chattel, property, and real estate. This history has inflicted massive psychological trauma on African descendant populations. Only a reparatory justice approach to truth and educational exposure can begin the process of healing and repair.
- ix. Technology transfer: for over 400 years, trade production policies of Europe could be summarized by the British slogan 'not a nail is to be made in the colonies. The Caribbean was denied participation in Europe's industrialization process by being confined to the role of producer and exporter of raw materials. The impact of these policies is still being felt today. Technology transfer and science sharing for development are, therefore, core tenets of the CJRP.
- x. Debt cancellation: Caribbean governments are still plagued with cleaning up the remnants of colonization which has resulted in the accumulation of high levels of public debt. Support for the payment of domestic debt and cancellation of international debt are necessary reparatory actions.

The chair of Guyana's Reparations Committee was elected a vice chair of the CARICOM Reparations Commission in 2020 and re-elected in 2022. It aims to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against Afro-descendants and the overlapping of ethnic, racial, gender and generational inequalities.

The Government of Guyana holds the position that ancestors who have profited from the transatlantic slave trade should pay reparations to today's generations as outlined in the CARICOM Resolution on Reparatory justice.

*Measures taken to: provide timely and good-quality information on the situation of Afro-descendants from a gender and generational perspective.*

The University of Guyana established a Diaspora and Migration Centre in September 2023 to pursue five (5) specific areas of research interest including, but not limited to Diaspora and Migration in and around Academia, Youth, Technology and Vulnerable Communities, Indigeneity, Indentureship and Slavery as specific and integral aspects of dispersion. The University indicated that the research track for Slavery and indentureship is the reason why it was deemed appropriate to launch the Diaspora and Migration Centre.

Guyana does not collect ethnic data as a norm or a requirement by law. Government agencies do not ask or record people's ethnicity only the Ministry of Health and the Guyana Police Force for obvious reasons. The 2012 National Population and Housing Census has provided considerable amount of data, on Afro Guyanese as well as other ethnicities. The current census is being conducted and upon completion will provide critical data and information on all ethnicities in Guyana.

The data from the 2022 Census will assist the Government to assess progress made, and identify social gaps in social and economic conditions. In addition to that the data will also be used to assess and guide the formulation of new initiatives, policies and programmes.

## Part IV: Conclusion

### Conclusion and Future Priority Actions

The Montevideo Consensus provides an opportunity to measure the progress made by and challenges faced by Guyana and other reporting countries. While progress has been made in several areas the state party is cognizant of the numerous challenges that exist specifically with the collection and analysis of disaggregated data within the private sector, social issues among others.

As a small developing country Guyana will continue to implement programmes and policies that will address poverty reduction, equal access to health, education, water and housing, development of new sectors such as ICT, tourism, and hospitality services, climate services and the oil and gas sector, and continue to work towards gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, while at same time addressing particular problems of male absenteeism, and gaps between indigenous population in the interior and those the coastlands.

As Guyana moves forward to align itself into greater compliance with the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), other treaty obligations and its own national developmental agenda, there are real present and future challenges which must be recognized:-

#### Exogenous factors:

1. The threat of climate change on a low-lying country with unpredictable weather patterns and raising sea levels and its impact on key sectors such as agriculture and food security and people's safety.
2. Impact of increased cost of fuel and food as experienced during the Covid 19 pandemic impacting on increased cost of living.
3. The impact of war and invasions such as Ukraine and Palestine on global stability and cost of fuel, wheat, and other commodities.
4. Recent threats of annexation by Venezuela over two-thirds of Guyana's territory
5. Another new global pandemic.
6. Prices on the world market decline for Guyana's exports such as rice, sugar, gold, diamonds, bauxite, and oil

#### Internal factors:

1. Natural disasters or manmade disasters that impact on economy and people's security and well-being.
2. Too large an influx of migrants from Venezuela or other neighbouring countries beyond Guyana's available resources
3. Political instability
4. Crime escalates as it did in 2002-2008

In this context and projected present and future challenges, the following are considered for priority focus:

## **Full integration of population dynamics into sustainable development with equality and respect for human rights:**

- Continue the implementation of the Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030 - To raise the quality of life for all people through appropriate population and development policies and programmes aimed at reducing poverty, sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development, sustainable patterns of consumption and production, human resource development and the guarantee of all human rights, including the right to development as a universal and inalienable right.
- Continue to strengthen the human and financial resource capacity of the institutions with responsibility for population and development.
- Enhance statistical data systems that will contribute to new policies and programmes.

## **Rights, needs, responsibilities and requirements of girls, boys, adolescents and youth priority actions for the future will include:**

- Continue to invest and implement programmes that will lower youth unemployment rate.
- Continue to improve literacy and education attainment.
- Continue to address and reduce all forms of violence against children.
- Continue to advance youth participation.
- Expand more special focus on male absenteeism and male health issues in NCDs.

## **Ageing, social protection and socioeconomic challenges for older persons.**

- Continue to implement supportive social protection measures that will improve the lives of the elderly.
- Continue to improve health care including access to treatment for non-communicable diseases.

## **Universal access to sexual and reproductive health services:**

- Continue to ensure the effective implementation of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy.
- Continue to implement the policy on reintegration of teenage mothers.
- Continue to implement programmes and policies to reduce the high level of teen pregnancy.
- Continue to expand access to health for all regardless of sexual orientation.
- Continue efforts to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity.

## **Gender equality:**

- Continue to work towards effective implementation of legislation, policies, and programmes relevant to reducing Gender-Based Violence.
- Continue implementation of programmes that facilitate the economic empowerment of women,
- Continue to advocate for women in non-traditional sectors and in the private sector and labour movement.

## **International migration and protection of the human rights of all migrants:**

- Continue to provide socio-economic support to migrants from Venezuela within available resources.
- Work towards the development of a Migration policy in a consultative framework with national stakeholders
- Continue to work towards the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their families,

**Territorial inequality, spatial mobility and vulnerability:**

- Continue to expand access to quality, affordable housing, water, and sanitation within coastal, riverine and hinterland communities,
- Continue to improve Disaster risk reduction and preparedness.

**Indigenous Peoples: Inter-culturalism and rights:**

- Continue the demarcation and land titling based on applications,
- Continue to increase access to health, education social services, skills training, economic activities, and access to ICT.
- Continue to improve communication, infrastructure & transportation.
- Continue to build capacity training for councilors to improve village governance for indigenous peoples.

**Afro-descendants: rights and combating racial discrimination:**

- Continue to further negotiations and conversations on realization of reparatory justice through the CARICOM 10 Point Plan for Reparatory Justice.
- Continue support and implement the mandate of United Nations General Assembly Resolution on the International Decade for People of African Descent and the associated Programme of Action.
- Continue to provide access to goods and services and opportunities on an equitable basis.