



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under
article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms
of Discrimination against Women**

**List of issues and questions in relation to the ninth periodic
report of Guyana**

Addendum

Replies of Guyana to the list of issues and questions*

[Date received: 6 June 2019]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Visibility of the convention

Reply to paragraph 1 of CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9

1. The Government of Guyana wishes to state that work is ongoing as it relates to the visibility of the Convention. However, members of the judiciary and law enforcement officers who have participated in awareness sessions have become better equipped to handle cases of violence and discrimination against women. The CEDAW Convention is a part of the teaching curriculum that is used for the training of the gender focal points from the Ministry of Social Protection, gender focal points from other Ministries and selected State Agencies and the Regional Gender Affairs Committee. It must also be noted that the content of the convention was drawn to the attention of participations at the consultation for the creation of the National Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy that was held in all ten (10) Administrative Region of Guyana inclusive of indigenous regions.

Legal status of the convention

Reply to paragraph 2 of CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9

2. The Government of Guyana wishes to state that Article 154 (A) (6) is a right enshrined in the Constitution. Although it is enforceable, it is in keeping with the state's sovereign right. However, since no reservations were made before the Convention was ratified; the State has to honour its obligations under domestic law (the Constitution) and its obligations under international law.

Definition of non-discrimination

Reply to paragraph 3 of CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9

3. The Government of Guyana wishes to state that the definition of discrimination will be incorporated into national law by the making an amendment to the Prevention of Discrimination Act 1997. The Ministry of Social Protection is in the process of making a legal proposal to the Attorney General Chambers for an amendment bill to be drafted and upon completion of the drafting process, the bill will be sent to Cabinet and then submitted to the National Assembly by the Minister making the proposal for amendment.

Access to justice

Reply to paragraph 4 of CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9

4. The Government plans on expanding legal aid access to persons throughout Guyana. The Ministry of Finance has made provisions for the justice system by allocating \$3.6 billion dollars in the justice sector. With this allocation legal aid services can be provided in the hinterland regions since courts will be built and the number of judges and magistrates will be increased.

5. The Constitution of Guyana provides for the appointment of the Ombudsman pursuant to Article 191 (1) of the Constitution of Guyana. The Ombudsman is independent from public bodies and has the power to investigate any action taken by any department of Government or authority inclusive of complaints, related to discrimination on the basis of gender; that is subject to his jurisdiction. The Schedule of the Ombudsman Act Cap. 19:04, lists the authorities subject to the Ombudsman jurisdiction. Section 7 of Cap 19:04 also removes the Ombudsman actions from

review of the courts except to determine the Ombudsman jurisdiction. The Ombudsman independence is guaranteed through delegation of power, the power to determine whether to initiate, continue or discontinue an investigation, consideration of evidence and the power to conclude investigations. Consideration will be given at some point in the future to its eventual accreditation to the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

6. The passage of the Constitution Amendment Bill 2015 amended the Third Schedule relating to article 222 A of the Constitution, by assuring independence of the Office of the Ombudsman. It provides for the office to be financially autonomous, and to draw funds directly from the Consolidated Fund.

7. The Guyana Government budget estimates for the Office of the Ombudsman have been increasing over the last four years with the agency receiving 44 million in 2016, 48 million in 2017, 64 million in 2018 and 74 million in 2019.

National machinery for the advancement of women

Reply to paragraph 5 of CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9

8. As of January 01, 2016, the responsibilities of both the Men and Women's Bureau were merged to form "The Gender Affairs Bureau" (GAB). The role of the GAB is to promote and advance the gender issues to assist women and men in releasing their potentials as citizens of Guyana through the attainment of gender equality, equity, identity and social inclusion.

9. The Gender Affairs Bureau is the national body within the Ministry of Social Protection with responsibility for the formation, implementation and monitoring of policies to promote gender equality and social inclusion. It also served in an Advisory capacity on gender Affairs on established bodies such as the Commission Women and Gender Equality. The key objectives of the Bureau are:

- To contribute to the formulation of gender based policies for nation building;
- To initiate gender based research and provide data which can inform policies shift;
- To reflect on the shift in approaches to development from a Women and Men in Development to a focus on Gender and Development;
- To facilitate the integration of gender and development into all areas of national development, plans and policies that women and men can benefit equally;
- To co-ordinate the participation of gender awareness on gender issues utilizing existing laws for review if any;
- To facilitate Gender mainstreaming, gender equality and equity and social inclusion are core values of state agencies;
- To partner with communities to identify and satisfy needs through provision of gender programmes thereby improving a cohesive society;
- To advocate for community building- the roles of gender and attitudes and stereotypes;
- To coordinate activities which will prevent sex trade, Human trafficking and protecting its victims.

10. The Mission of the Gender Affairs Bureau is to work towards the representation of the interest of women and men at all levels in collaboration with government and

non-governmental organizations and to ensure their integration in the National Development of the country. Recent activities undertaken includes:

- Facilitating seven (7) Gender Responsive Sessions for Early Childhood Practitioners on Gender Sensitize teaching;
- Gender Sensitization session with members of the Community Policing of Guyana on how to deal with social issues in the community;
- Facilitate standard meetings and In-House Training of the Inter-Ministry Gender Focal Points (IMC) on Gender: equality, planning, budgeting, policy, etc.;
- Assist with the formation and training of the Gender Focal Point Network in other government agencies.

11. The Women and Gender Equality Commission (WE&EC) is one of the 5 constitutional rights commissions provided for under the revised 2003 constitution. It replaced the National Commission on Women created in 1990 which was the Presidential Advisory body.

12. This Commission appointed in 2010 and fully operational is guided by its constitutional mandate. It addresses gender issues, promotes the advancement of women in society and investigates and makes recommendations on gender equality to the Parliament. The Commission receives complaints, reports on issues affecting both women and men in regards to gender inequality and decimation. The commission also examines policies and programmes which affect the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

13. The Commission aims to promote national recognition and acceptance that women's rights are human rights, respect for gender equality and protection, development and attainment of equality.

14. The Commission has conducted a number of activities in accordance with its fourteen constitutional mandates. The W&GEC held several workshops to empower women and girls through advocacy and several NGOs and Governmental Agencies participated. The Commission implemented suggestion boxes and bill boards in strategic areas across the ten (10) Administrative Regions in an effort to reduce sexual and gender-based violence (GBV); to bring an awareness to GBV and to support victims of GBV to access available services. The results achieved under the W&GEC's Access to Justice programmes in all ten Administrative Regions of Guyana are making measurable differences in removing barriers to women in leadership. A notable number of female Indigenous leaders were elected to offices. Further, several females were elected to leadership positions in the Local Government Elections, 19 Chairpersons and 24 Vice chairpersons representing 27.1% and 34.8% respectively.

15. The W&GEC in collaboration with the Institute of Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) of the University of Guyana (UG) jointly collaborated and undertook the implementation of mutually beneficial activities in the realm of women's studies and gender equality in accordance with the mandates of both organizations. The W&GEC also contracted an International Human Rights Lawyer to evaluate Women's rights under National and International Laws in order to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls."

16. The Commission in collaboration with UNESCO has undertaken a series of workshops on gender and development. The first two workshops were hosted for female members of parliament and female Toshaos (Indigenous community leaders). The objectives of the workshops are to facilitate women in leadership positions to become aware of the importance of gender budgeting and issues affecting gender equality in Guyana.

17. Since its establishment the Commission has received an annual subvention of approximately GDY 25,000,000.00 from the National Treasury for payments towards emoluments and stipends and minimal programming. Through successful lobbying the subvention was increased to approximately GDY\$40,000,000 in 2019. This has increased the number of programme activities implemented.

18. To strengthen its ability to adequately address exclusion, gender inequality, and acknowledge the unique conditions and barriers that limit or deny vulnerable persons and communities access to services, resources or benefits, the Ministry of Social Protection, in collaboration with Cuso International, has developed the National Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy (NGESIP) for Guyana. The NGESIP will be used as a framework to guide the implementation of appropriate mechanisms, policies and protocols to address issues of gender inequality and social exclusion cross-regionally with the fundamental goal to promote Guyana's development by improving the capacities and opportunities for diverse groups of women, men, girls, boys and other vulnerable groups including persons living with and affected by HIV/AIDS, the elderly, Hinterland communities, the LGBTQ community and, persons with disabilities based on a framework that will foster the dignity of these groups.

19. In keeping with the intersectionality methodology, Guyana's Constitution, National legislation and international commitments premised on inclusion and gender equality such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Sustainable Development Goal's 5 (gender equality and women's empowerment) and 10 (reduced inequalities), the NGESIP is guided by the following policy objectives:

- Eradicate discrimination;
- Eliminate all forms of violence;
- Right to safe public spaces;
- Promotion of economic development and inclusion;
- Governance and the Law;
- Health, wellness and healthcare;
- Agriculture, The Environment, and Climate Change;
- Education, Training and Skills Development;
- Security, Human Rights and Justice (Peace and Conflict);
- Media and Information.

20. The Institutional and National Action Plan for Implementation proposes a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach that requires the core sectoral Ministries, civil society, and other key stakeholders to implement the Policy and mainstream GESI in order to eliminate the mechanisms by which gender inequality is maintained and ensure fair and just outcomes for diverse groups of women, men, boys and girls irrespective of age, citizenship status, sexual orientation, race, class, gender, socioeconomic status, Indigenous status, religious affiliation, abilities or geographic location.

21. The Government of Guyana is committed to accelerate its efforts to advance the agenda for achieving gender equality, the empowerment of women and social inclusion through the implementation of the Policy and to provide strong leadership within its institutions to ensure that a gender perspective is reflected in all its practices, policies and programmes.

22. The first phase of the implementation process is scheduled to commence soon and is estimated to run for two (2) years and sets out to focus on five key elements for promotion of gender equality, women's empowerment and social inclusion:

- Country gender assessment;
- Establish structural linkages, lobbying and advocacy;
- Capacity building for institutions and individuals;
- Public education and outreach;
- Monitoring and Evaluation.

23. This phase will facilitate an analysis of strengths and weaknesses across all institutions, and identify the resources and capacity needed to build on strengths and fill gaps.

24. The second phase of the implementation process will be done through inter-sectoral activities and coordination, and joint programming among ministries, establishing linkages with institutions such as Women and Gender Equality Commission, National Commission on Disability, National Task Force for the Prevention of Sexual Violence, University of Guyana's (UG) Institute for Gender Studies (IGS) among others to Harmonization and alignment of Initiatives. The second phase will focus on:

- Economic Empowerment: Establishment of a National Women's Fund;
- Participation and Representation: effective participation and representation in institutions;
- Entrepreneurial Education, Training and Skills Development. Cooperatives, Rural enterprises, Internships and Science and Technology;
- Review and Reform legislation to eliminate discrimination laws and regulation and include new legislation to punish hate crime;
- Monitoring and Evaluation.

25. The Ministry of Social Protection on behalf of the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana will be the implementing agency of the policy. A Multi-Sectoral Coordination Mechanism (MCM) comprising Government Officials, Civil Society and the Private Sector will be established and chaired by the Director of Social Services; and will meet on a regular basis to review and approve quarterly plans and monitor the implementation of the approved plans.

26. The multi-sectoral coordination mechanism will oversee the implementation of the policy and will work closely with the Gender Affairs Bureau, evaluating the monthly progress reports and take necessary actions on the issues highlighted for intervention.

27. The Gender Affairs Bureau will be the central office charged with the responsibility for integrating gender and social inclusion issues within Government Agencies. It will monitor the implementation of the different activities identified in the Action Plan and take the necessary follow-up actions.

28. The Gender Affairs Bureau will develop a strategy to collect gender-specific information by using a range of methods: survey questionnaires, measuring skills and knowledge of target groups, regular record keeping, supervision of checklists and reports, spot checks, etc. The relevant information gathered will be analyzed and reports will be prepared for informing the multisectoral coordination mechanism. The Bureau will continuously work for obtaining compliance of the issues which require

follow-up and develop easy-to use monitoring tools for ensuring a smooth flow of information.

29. Monitoring and Evaluation will be an important tool for the National Gender Equality & Social Inclusion Policy, to ensure the processes, products and services developed during the implementation phase.

30. Some of the major activities selected to ensure a successful integration during the monitoring and evaluation process of the policy will include: identification of gender sensitive indicators, training of personnel on gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation concepts and conducting monitoring and evaluation interventions. These specific inputs will facilitate the identification of the opportunities and challenges experienced during the implementation phase of the Policy and inform future planning interventions.

31. To the extent possible, participatory monitoring methodologies will be adopted based on quantitative, qualitative and gender-disaggregated indicators that meet the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Relevant and Time-bound) criteria for gathering the data. A Mid-Term Review will be undertaken 15 months after the actual implementation of the Policy has begun to assess the major interventions at the level of government, civil society and the private sector.

32. The multisectoral coordination mechanism will decide the composition of a committee to undertake the review which will include representatives from government, civil society and the private sector who will be selected on the basis of their expertise and knowledge on Gender and Development. A report will be prepared for publication after discussing the draft with concerned stakeholders before the publication of its final version.

33. On completion of the first three years since the launching of the implementation process of the Policy, an Evaluation Report will be prepared following the same stages as the mid-term review report. The multisectoral coordination mechanisms will be responsible for selecting the committee to undertake this exercise.

Temporary special measures

Reply to paragraph 6 of CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9

34. The Government of Guyana has identified four priority areas to define a path to development and improve strategic planning capacity across all budget agencies. The country will receive the support of the Inter-American Development Bank's (IDB) Support for Management for Development Results technical cooperation (GY-T1101) to engage in a four-component program that includes: i) strategic planning; ii) results-based budgeting; iii) internal audit, and; iv) monitoring and evaluation.

35. To address these priorities, there is an effort to generate a development strategic initiative for the Ministry of Social Protection and Women's Development. The objectives of this initiative are: to ensure that the development plans help the budget agencies: properly allocate resources by prioritizing activities; ensure consistency across sectors and sub-sectors, and; facilitate comparison as it relates to the allocation of national budget resources.

36. The development plan methodology meets the objectives of the proposed country program by aligning it with those principles that should encourage a development plan for women. This methodology establishes a relationship between development programs through the establishment of transversal principles that promote the mainstreaming of women's and gender equality and equity in the different state programs. The methodology framework is based on the Convention on

the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) that establishes a wider scope for understanding inequality and inequities as obstacles for women's development.

37. The methodology for developing the Strategic Plan for Women's and Gender Development and the Addressing Underachievement among Boys in Guyana makes it possible to mainstream human rights to equality in all spheres of state management and generates immediate actions that create the necessary conditions to address the structural issues of development and democracy.

Stereotypes and harmful practices

Reply to paragraph 7 and 8 of CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9

38. Aside from societal pressures and gender-based discrimination, women face challenges within their families and with their intimate partners. Girls and women sacrifice their time and take on the role of caretakers to fulfil the expectations of their families. In cases of forced marriage, young women often take on such roles within very unequal power relationships with their husbands. Societal and family pressure, especially in the home, can result in girls abandoning school and women sacrificing their aspirations to perform traditional roles as mothers and homemakers.

39. It is believed that the misrepresentation, discrimination and perpetuation of violence of women in media programming and advertising, which is often overlooked as a policy issue. Given that consumers are subject to messages constantly via an array of mediums – print media, street advertising, radio, television, social media, etc. – the depiction and dissemination of harmful images or material plays a significant role in shaping attitudes, perceptions and behaviours which minimize, enable, and perpetuate violence against women. The proposed policies regarding media will provide guidance on addressing media's messages about women's sexuality, place in society, capabilities and how to prevent victims of violence from being re-victimized by media. The portrayal of women in the media reflects societal values and sends a strong message to all consumers of media including impressionable children.

40. The National Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy promotes tolerance as a principle to help deconstruct exclusion prejudices and instill a new paradigm wherein "Human beings must respect one other, in all their diversity of belief, culture, and language. Differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed but cherished as a precious asset of humanity. A culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations should be actively promoted".

41. This policy considers public spaces as a means of integration and recognition of diversity. Vulnerable groups in Guyana face exclusion from public spaces due to prejudice. Green infrastructure can help bring people together, engaging individuals from different social groups that may not normally interact. Green space offers the possibility of increasing social activity, improving community cohesion and developing an attachment to a local shared area. It promotes preventive measures to mitigate common behaviour that causes exclusion and discrimination and proper access to public services and affirmative measures to help people and communities to overcome social exclusion.

42. Through the inclusion of subjects on the school curriculum that seek to promote equality and respect for all irrespective of Gender, the Ministry of Education has been quite successful in this regard. Health and Family Life education is part of the school curriculum. This subject has been exposing students to values that will engender qualities that are desirable for the respect of family life.

43. During the period under review the Ministry of Social Protection's, Gender Affairs Bureau in collaboration with other organisations conducted outreach sessions targeting men and boys that addressed topics such as Gender Based Violence, Substance Abuse, Anger Management, Conflict Resolution etc. Some of the institutions focused on were the New Opportunity Corp (120 boys), outreach in various communities that reached the grass roots men and boys would have reached approximately 15,000 men and boys. The Ministry has also played an integral role in expanding its awareness activities to challenge gender roles and promote gender equality in hinterland regions.

Gender-based violence against women

Reply to paragraph 9, 10 and 11 of CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9

44. The National Policy on Domestic Violence which was approved and had a cycle from 2008 – 2013 was to inform and guide Government's future interventions in activities and programmes towards prevention of domestic violence and the provision of services to victims/survivors. The implementation of the Policy resulted in strengthened prevention mechanisms and increased protection and service provision for those affected by Domestic Violence. It must be noted that there was a review of the policy to determine the true impact of the policy.

45. Over the last few years, the Ministry along with Women's organisations have drawn attention to violence against women as a crippling social challenge to development and to realizing women's full potential in Guyana. As an issue of growing international concern, the state has viewed and addressed this from a "rights based" approach. Gender-based violence occurs all across Guyana, irrespective of ethnicity, social, economic, religious and cultural groups.

46. The Ministry Commissioned a Study "The incidences and drivers of gender-based violence in Guyana" The main objective of the study was to identify the prevalence of gender-based violence and learning from women their personal accounts and to understand "the drivers" and factors associated to the many forms of Violence.

47. Root causes of gender-based violence: What came out of the Study among other causes is the high use of alcohol. Regions 3, 5 and 6 are all rice farming and sugar belt communities where the families depend heavily on their income from these two main sources. After work their only relaxation is to imbibe alcohol and this leads to abuse in all its forms in the family. There is also an out of crop season where the men do not work and during that time they resort to the consumption of alcohol. While alcohol is one or the main contributing factor to gender-based violence, poverty is another contributing factor to gender-based violence.

48. Sessions were held with owners of beer garden to sensitize them on the dangers of selling alcohol to minors and to also limit the sale and use of alcohol to members in their communities. They were also made to understand that the constant and over use of alcohol causes violence in the families and as such can lead to breaking up of families. Sessions were also held with men on the consumption of alcohol and its impact on the lives of their families. In addition, sessions were held with senior workers from the various sugar industries with the aim that they become aware how serious it is for their workers and they can assist in bringing awareness to their employees. With the number of sessions held there has been a decline in the consumption of alcohol.

49. The Sexual Offences Act 2010 was the culmination of a lot of initiatives and collaboration to address concerns that were permeating our society with respect to

sexual offences. The Government of Guyana through the (then) Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security launched the ‘Stamp It Out!’ campaign country wide from 2007 to 2008.

50. Some the recommendations which were supported in the ‘Stamp It Out’ consultations related to modernisation of the law and required the introduction of new offences and provisions such as voyeurism; preparatory offences e.g. using drugs to stupefy a person; to be gender neutral to remove bias in favour of girls/females. A recommendation was also made for offences committed by parents and persons in trust and authority (which were usually covered up) and the National Action Plan for the strategic implementation of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act (2014 to 2017).

51. The National Action Plan involving all stakeholders in order to ensure comprehension of the legislation and maximum co-operation in its implementation and seek to educate the public on the provisions of the Sexual Offences Act 2010 (SOA) and their meaning. In this regard there will also be a focus on vulnerable persons. It also provides relevant and key communication tools which are suitable for sensitization on the SOA 2010, including material specifically tailored for effective communication in Amerindian villages. More particularly, pursuant to section 90 of the SOA, provide guidelines and support material for public awareness programmes for Government Ministries and agencies.

52. In 2016, UNICEF published “A Review of the Implementation of the Sexual Offences Act in Guyana”. The purpose of this study was to document positive facilitating factors of the SOA, the challenges in its operationalisation. In this document, specific and detailed recommendations were provided to highlight what was needed for the SOA’s proper implementation.

53. The Ministry of Social Protection, in 2017, did host several training and education and awareness sessions but not as a formal implementation of the draft plan. Several publications to support implementation of the SOA have over the years been produced. These include draft protocols for prosecutors, medical practitioners, social workers and police. Help & Shelter Inc. has produced a “Handbook on the Sexual Offences Act”. Additionally, the Rights of the Child Commission has published and widely circulated Guides for the general public and social workers/practitioners on the Sexual Offences Act.

54. Workshops have been held for Judges, Magistrates and the Director of Public Prosecutions and staff. One workshop was in relation to Model Guidelines for Sexual Offence Cases in the Caribbean Region. In relation to the Sexual Offences Court, please find below the information in relation to the Sexual Offences Court.

55. Its territorial and subject matter Jurisdiction: It is one of the Courts in the High Court in the County of Demerara that deals with cases from all the Magisterial Districts in Demerara. The Magisterial Districts in Demerara are all densely populated and therefore they are a lot of matters listed in this court to be heard.

56. The number and nature of the cases processed: The Sexual Offences Court was opened during the October 2017 Assizes. The cases that are dealt with in the Sexual Offences Court are the indictable charges under the Sexual Offences Act Chapter 8:03. In 2017, a total of twenty-two (22) sexual offence cases were prosecuted and some of these were done in the Sexual Offences Court. In the years 2018, a total of thirty-eight (38) sexual offence cases were prosecuted in the Sexual Offences Court. During the months of January to March, 2019, ten (10) sexual offence cases were prosecuted. At present there are one hundred fifty-three (153) sexual offence cases listed for April 2019 Assizes in the Sexual Offences Court in Demerara.

57. The number of convictions and the penalties imposed: For sexual offences convictions there were six (6) guilty verdicts for 2017, twenty-one (21) for 2018 and two (2) for January 2019. Penalties for the convictions ranged from 20 years to life imprisonment.

58. Its backlog of pending cases: More than half of the 153 cases listed for the April 2019 Assizes were on previous lists but were not heard and so has been placed on the new list. Due to the large backlog of cases there is a need for a second Sexual Offences Court to deal with the various Magisterial Districts in the densely populated County of Demerara.

59. Human, financial and technical resources allocated: Three State Counsels are presently prosecuting cases in the Sexual Offences Court. Further, a multidisciplinary team has been created so that court support for complainants is provided by different NGOs and the Ministry of Social Protection who provide counseling for complainants before and after trial. The court makes provisions to reimburse the complainant for travelling expenses.

60. How it will contribute to effective prosecution of cases of gender-based violence against women: The only gender-based violence cases in the Sexual Offences Court are the sexual violence cases. The prosecutions of gender based cases for Violence against women are for Murder, assaults and wounding which are tried in different courts in Guyana.

61. Whether there is a plan establish similar courts in other areas of the State party: A Sexual Offences Court was recently established in Berbice which will deal with cases from all Magisterial Districts in Berbice. There are also plans for a similar court to be set up in Essequibo to deal with cases in all Magisterial Districts in Essequibo. The state party is currently taking steps and investing resources to establish shelters throughout Guyana.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

Reply to paragraph 12 and 13 of CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9

62. The Government of Guyana through the Ministry of Social Protection has several Programmes/Departments which is aimed at addressing the root causes of human trafficking and prostitution particularly as it relates to poverty. These departments within the Ministry of Social Protection provide the following services:

- Provision of counselling services;
- Provision of Public Assistance to assist in alleviating poverty;
- Provision of necessary psychosocial support according to the *Combating of trafficking in persons act 2005* to identified alleged victims and survivors of human trafficking to reduce their vulnerabilities of being re-victimized;
- Provision of vocational training to the public to reduce their vulnerabilities;
- Provision of grants and loans to at risk families;
- Enforcement of the Labour Laws of Guyana and protection of workers' rights;
- Enforcement of all Laws of Guyana relating to protection of all children;
- Conducting workshops, awareness campaigns, educational materials etc. to heighten awareness and sensitize the public on the phenomena.

63. Additionally, the Government of Guyana has established a National Task Force on Trafficking in Persons which is in keeping with the rudiments identified in the

Combating of trafficking in persons act 2005. This Task Force was established in 2005 and has as its members' personnel from vast spectrum of agencies both Governmental and Non-Governmental. The Task Force is chaired by the Minister of Public Security as is regulated by the act. The Task Force constitutionally has the overarching responsibilities for identifying, recovering and the social reintegration of all victims. In efforts to efficiently execute its mandate the Task Force has subdivided in to Sub-Committees. These Sub-committees are:

- The Training Sub-Committee – chaired by the Ministry of Public Security;
- The Awareness Sub-Committee – chaired by the Ministry of Social Protection;
- The Protection and Reintegration Sub-Committee – chaired by the Ministry of Social Protection;
- The Investigation, Prosecution and Legal Issues Sub-Committee – chaired by the Chambers of the Director of Public Prosecution;
- The Research and Information Gathering Sub-Committee – chaired by the Ministry of Public Security;
- The Action Sub-Committee – chaired by the Guyana Police Force.

64. The Government of Guyana through the Ministry of Social Protection provides the medical and psychological services and other forms of assistance based on the *Combating of trafficking in persons act 2005*, Section 18, to ensure that all persons suspected of being a victim of trafficking in persons receive the necessary psychosocial support in forms inclusive of: medical services, counselling services, legal services, food, clothing and shelter, training opportunities, academic opportunities and job placements.

65. These services are provided on a voluntary basis to adult alleged victims while, child victims are referred to the Child Care and Protection Agency in keeping with constitutional regulations. These services are not restricted to the alleged victims only but also to close families e.g. children and other dependents.

66. For the reporting period, there has been no report of official complicity in the crime of Trafficking in Persons. However, a Police Officer was convicted of the crime in 2014 after being charged in 2013. Officials found to be complicit are subject to the legislative provisions of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act No. 2 of 2005 in equal measure to any other individual.

67. The Ministry of Social Protection conducted various training and awareness programmes across the ten administrative regions of Guyana. During the period 2014 to current, training and awareness sessions were done with Toshaos and other village leaders. Capacity building in the form of training led or contributed to by the Ministerial Task Force on Trafficking in Persons began in the last quarter of 2016 with the Major Crimes Investigations Unit of the Guyana Police Force and Frontline Officials from multiple regions being trained.

68. In 2017, Focal Points selected from eight (8) Indigenous communities and schools across the eight administrative regions were also exposed to various trainings by the Ministry of Social Protection. In addition, staff of the Counter-Trafficking in Persons Unit, received training in general investigative skills and reporting writing.

69. Media Officials, Police Prosecutors, Police Officers and other stakeholders in Region 1, Immigration Officers, Village Councillors and Toshaos were trained, whilst the International Organization for Migration in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Protection, also conducted a Training of Trainers Course for multiple stakeholders including Task Force Members and another course for Medical Practitioners.

70. 2018 saw training courses for Mines Officers and the Corps of Wardens, Diplomats/Foreign Service Officials, Interpreters, Community Policing Groups, Immigration and Citizenship and Police Intelligence Officers by the Ministerial Task Force of Trafficking in Person. From 2016–2018, three (3) Police Investigators, two (2) Immigration Officers and three (3) Police Prosecutors also underwent a series of trafficking in persons regional training courses conducted by INTERPOL.

71. In 2019, the Ministry of Social Protection held a Training Course for Labour Officials and Occupational Health and Safety Officers. All training courses included persons from various administrative regions, including those in Guyana's remote areas, being trained in victim identification and referral amongst other key aspects of Trafficking in Persons. Training courses were also conducted with medical practitioners, teachers and civil society members in Essequibo, Region No. 2.

72. The Government of Guyana through the Ministry of Social Protection made significant strides with regard to care facility services in establishing one (1) safe house located in Georgetown and two (2) transitional facilities located outside the capital, whilst providing progressively increasing subventions for the Non-Governmental Organizations tasked with the management of all shelters. Victims of Trafficking in Persons are provided with healthcare, psychosocial and other support services by the Ministry of Social Protection. The Ministry of Social Protection also conducted a Training Course for Shelter Managers in 2019 since the Ministry saw the importance of training and equipping service providers with the necessary skills needed to help persons who pose various challenges while being in protective care. Please see Annex A for statistics on number of victims of trafficking who have been identified.

73. The Ministerial Task Force on Trafficking in Persons and other stakeholders including the Ministry of Social Protection, have been addressing this issue through the Training Courses for Frontline Officials mentioned above who are heavily engaged in the mining sector, including Police, Mines Officers and the Corps of Wardens. There have also been a number of awareness exercises conducted by anti-TIP stakeholders, including the Task Force and the Ministry of Social Protection, with community leaders and members. Awareness exercises were also conducted in various schools. The Guyana Geology and Mines Commission has also established a Trafficking in Persons Unit, further exemplifying the commitment to stamping out the crime of trafficking in persons in the mining sector.

Participation in public and political life

Reply to paragraph 14 of CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9

74. The Government of Guyana commitment to ensure that women are given the necessary wherewithal to take on leadership roles has manifested itself mainly through the training programmes of the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute (GWLI) and the Gender Affairs Bureau. Over the last three years 480 women participated in these programmes. The programmes cater for Women leaders involved in community work throughout the country with participants enhancing their leadership skills and preparing them for participation in the Local and Region Government System. Most of the participants are already serving members of both Regional and Neighborhood Democratic Councils.

75. The programmes comprise courses in leadership, organizational skills for development, laws of local government, gender and Local Government, local government promoting gender equality, local development through women's eyes, understanding gender, gender mainstreaming, planning and budgeting, team building

for success. Additionally, each class benefit from courses in Office Procedures and entrepreneurial skills.

Education

Reply to paragraph 15 and 16 of CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9

76. The exposure of students to Technical, Vocational and Education Training has been extending progressively over a period of time. The figures indicate that six thousand two hundred and seventy-five (6,275) females have been enrolled during the years 2016–2018. This figure is higher than the males by six hundred and eight (608). Notwithstanding the centers are not located in the regions mentioned students from Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 are enrolled.

77. The Ministry of Education has been proactive in addressing the rate of dropout over the years by implementing policies and taking corrective actions. One such policy was implemented in 2018 – The Reintegration of Teenage mothers in the education system. Students who were impregnated during their school years have been provided a second opportunity to complete their education. The goal of this policy is to advance the prevention of adolescent pregnancy and the management of the reintegration of adolescent mothers into the formal school system. This will ultimately help to reduce the number of pregnancies among school-age girls and increase the number of adolescent mothers who re-enter the formal school system to complete their secondary education. The aim of the Policy is to outline the process that will facilitate the reintegration of adolescent mothers into the formal school system and the conditions under which the re-entry should take place. However, the onus will be on the adolescent girls and their families to decide if and when they will take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Policy. Please see Annex 2 for dropout rates.

78. The Education Act does not address the issue of “exclusion”. When a pregnancy is detected, steps shall be taken to ensure that the pregnant student is provided with the necessary support during that period of pregnancy. The focus after delivery is to encourage the adolescent mother to continue her education as soon as circumstances permit. The required support systems and services shall be in place to guarantee the safety and well-being of the infant and the adolescent.

Employment

Reply to paragraph 17 of CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9

79. Taking cognizance of the various groupings that make up the formal economy, the Government can recommend a quota system of women to the employed within the public sector and civil service. However, when it comes to the other entities that make up the formal sector, this would be somewhat difficult, since they have their own employment policies which may differ somewhat from the Government’s. Never-the-less, the Government can strongly recommend that they adopt an identical or similar approach in-keeping with the Labour Laws of the country.

80. The Guyana Equal Rights Act Chapter 38:01 addresses the issue of paid equal remuneration for the same work or work of the same nature for both women and men. This is achieved through collective bargaining and negotiation between the employers and their respective Unions. Employees can have redress by seeking an audience with their Union representative(s), if they feel that they have been discriminated against. The Union if they feel they have a justifiable case can take up the matter with the employer(s). This is applicable in the case of both private and public sectors.

81. The Government of Guyana has noted that unemployment needs to be addressed. Cognizance was also taken of the fact that many women who are single parents need to be gainfully employed to support themselves and their families. Consequently, several initiatives were undertaken to deal with the issue which also speak to youth unemployment. Several life skills projects were designed to aid persons in becoming empowered to either own their own businesses or to become employable either within the public or private sectors. Annex C Table 3 for Women participation in the labour market.

82. Some of the Initiatives undertaken by the Government to assist women in gaining employment were centered on some of the following life skills projects: Sustainable Livelihood Entrepreneurial Development (SLED); Hinterland Employment and Youth Service (HEYS); Youth Innovation Project of Guyana (YIPoG), using STEAMS (Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture, Anthropology, Archeology, The Arts, Architecture, Mathematics and Spirituality), projects.

83. For the YIPoG project, two hundred and seventy-one (271) proposals, were submitted which were aimed at fostering a green economy, of which, 30 qualified proposals received grant funding of \$45.0 million. The Guyana Youth Business Summit project received 255 proposals and eleven (11) qualified for grants totaling \$9,305,860. Additionally, persons also received training from the Kuru Kuru Training Centre; the Sophia Training Centre and the Vryman Erven Training Centre; the Business Incubators and Small Business Development Fund. Two business incubators were established at Belvedere, Corentyne, Berbice and Lethem, Rupununi. (rural regions).

84. Women were actively involved in these training sessions and some of the skill areas were: Catering, Information Technology, Garment construction, Data Operations; Plumbing; Food technology; Card making; Agriculture venture and Salt fish processing et al.

Health

Reply to paragraph 18 and 19 of CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9

85. The maternal Mortality and infant mortality in Guyana continues to be a challenge based on Multiple Factors

86. Main Causes of Maternal Deaths from 2015–2018.

2015	2016	2017	2018
Post Partum Haemorrhage	Post Partum Haemorrhage	Post Partum Haemorrhage	Post Partum Haemorrhage
Pregnancy Induced Hypertension	Pregnancy Induced Hypertension	Pregnancy Induced Hypertension	Pregnancy Induced Hypertension
Sepsis	Sepsis	Sepsis	Abortion
Abortion	Pulmonary Thrombolism	Indirect Causes	Sepsis
Indirect Causes	–	–	Indirect Causes

87. The high rate of infant mortality is as a result of a high neonatal mortality rate (death of the infant from birth to 28 days). The main causes of death of this

population; prematurity, respiratory illness, sepsis, congenital malformation. Contributing factors to these causes that are currently hindering the reduction:

- Access to services especially in the Hinterland location where transportation is not readily available (especially in location with no health facility);
- Limited skilled human resources (inadequate midwives, obstetrician-gynecologists);
- Harmful cultural practices (e.g. Home deliveries without a skilled birth attendant, attending antenatal clinic very late or not at all);
- Social determinants of health (persons of low socioeconomic status in many cases are unable to access services due to lack of financial resources, persons with lower education in some communities are more likely to follow traditional practices, lack of roads and means of access contributes to low health seeking behaviors among hinterland communities);
- Lack of means of communication in some locations (making transfer of patients and even call for assistance difficult).

Measures taken to address discrimination among HIV positive women and girls

88. The Ministry of Public Health through the National AIDS secretariat and the Maternal and Child Health Department provides training in Prevention of Mother Child Transmission of HIV for health workers under which there is a module directed towards Stigma and discrimination. There are ongoing empowerment activities with mothers living with HIV Regions 1, 7 and 9. This is carried out by health staff with the aim of building stronger relationships with patient and provider while empowering them both. The MCH programme is currently building capacity in the area of quality improvement with a built-in component that focuses on patient satisfaction and discrimination is one of the areas of focus.

On the issue of adolescent Pregnancies

89. A 2018 study on Adolescent pregnancies supported by UNICEF was conducted. This study will inform a costed action plan and a national adolescent strategy to reduce teen pregnancies.

90. In 2017 the Ministry of Public Health undertook an intervention called, “Community Parenting Support Groups.” The goal was to promote safe motherhood especially for the teen mothers in the community and to aid in the reduction teen pregnancy country wide The objectives include:

- Create a forum for mentorship and empowerment of new and expecting mothers as well as couples by means of interactions with Community Health Personnel;
- Increasing family planning education at each health center;
- To provide a safe and friendly environment for discussion and empowerment;
- This program continues today in all regions at Major Health facilities.

91. The Ministry of Social Protection under the Child Care Protection Agency rolled out its Teen Pregnancy Prevention and a Better Parenting Skills Programmes in the Indigenous community of St. Cuthbert’s Mission. The programme includes discussions on topics such as sexual and reproductive health, suicide, peer pressure, drug addiction. The “Better Parenting Skills focuses on understanding the psychological development of children as well as parents.

92. The survey to establish the root causes of suicide in Guyana is currently being done but the results are not yet available. In general, it has been observed that many

self-harm is the greatest predictor of future suicides and many instances of self-harm are from homes in which alcohol and substance abuse is a strong factor either with the victim or the family members. Two important strategies of the Ministry of Public health for combating suicides and treating all the common mental health conditions are (1) to train 80% of doctors and nurses in mhGAP-IG which is World Health Organization program teaching non specialist doctors and nurses to treat and manage the most common mental health conditions (2) Self harm surveillance – in which all patients presenting with self-harm are reported and subsequently it is ensured that they must see a psychiatrist, and psychologist and be followed up by a social worker.

93. In keeping with the National Suicide Prevention Plan, strategic lines of action are being implemented such as *Risk factor reduction, health promotion and prevention*. The Mental Health Unit (MHU) has embarked on institutionalizing methods to measure the magnitude, risks and consequences of suicidal behaviour and to gather information about the profile, epidemiological and clinical characteristics of suicidal behaviour. Towards these end questionnaires have been developed. In so doing the unit will be able to plan effective interventions or strategies for favourable outcomes.

94. The MHU has placed technical staff at the hospitals in the regions with the highest incidence of suicides. A psychologist has been placed in Region #2, two social workers have been placed at Region #3, and a social worker has been placed in Region #6. These staff ensure that the protocol is adhered to regarding all persons presenting at these hospitals with self-harm.

95. Beginning with the Let's Talk Campaign on World Health Day 2017, the MHU has been relentless on spreading the word on recognizing and managing depression at health fairs, at health centers, at malls, at churches and other places of worship, at schools, at worksites and other public gatherings and places. Success in reducing to incidence of depression will lead to a reduction in suicides. In 2017 the staff of the Mental Health unit was involved in 41 mental health promotion and prevention activities.

96. Thirty-five health care workers have been trained as Drug Treatment Specialists in a collaboration between the University of the West Indies, the Ministry of Public Health and The Organization of American States. Persons trained in the mhGAP are also trained to manage cases of alcohol and substance abuse. A significant number of suicides in Guyana are done while under the influence of alcohol. Also a significant number of persons with self-harm come from homes in which substance abuse is a major stressor.

97. The Mental Health Unit is very active in spreading the word in how to prevent mental illness and managing mental health conditions. They take every opportunity to have booths/displays/tables/talks at health fairs, churches, schools, health centres, malls, workplaces, camps etc.

98. The MHU in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture is in the process of producing a short film on the proper use, handling, storage and disposal of pesticides as well as recognizing persons at risk of suicide and advice to persons on what to do in such situations. This will be used for public education as a means to reduce access to means of suicide.

99. Approximately 157 persons have been trained in the mhGAP-IG, of which 90 are doctors, 35 are nurses, 11 are medexes, 15 medical social workers and 6 are psychologists. Twenty-nine persons have been trained in Problem Management Plus. As persons are trained they become more vigilant in detecting priority mental health condition early including self-harm/suicide and to make the necessary interventions.

100. The suicide hotline is supported by the Mental Health Unit but managed by the Guyana Police Force and manned by specially trained personnel. It is interconnected with all police stations in Guyana should assistance be needed to access a caller in any part of Guyana.

101. Training of doctors and other health care workers in mhGAP-IG is ongoing. Efforts are being made to increase the number of health centres that are mhGAP adapted. In July 2017, the MHU piloted its Self Harm Surveillance Project at 3 the hospital in the 3 regions with the highest incidence of suicides in Guyana. The Suddie Regional hospital in Region #2, the West Demerara Regional Hospital in Region #3/ and the New Amsterdam Regional Hospital in Region #6. All persons presenting at these hospitals with self-harm must be reported to the Mental Health unit through its staff stationed strategically at these hospitals. It is mandatory for these cases to be seen by a psychiatrist, social worker and a psychologist and to be followed up until no longer considered to be at risk. The MHU is in the process of rolling out this surveillance to all the public hospitals in Guyana.

Rural women

Reply to paragraph 20 of CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9

102. The Government of Guyana wishes to state that women in rural areas are receiving access to training from various organizations for agro-processing groups to encourage women to be more involved in business ventures. For example, the Farine Factories at Wowetta and Moco Moco which are led by women who are involved in all the stages from planting to processing. The income derived from the sale of products are shared among the women who are better able to contribute economically to the subsistence of their families. These examples are not isolated, communities such as Parishara, Shulinab, Meriwau, Karasabai, St. Ignatius are also notable examples of thriving women's groups. In addition, the initiative fosters linkages between farmers and school feeding programme/hot meal programme whereby farmers can sell their produce directly to the school's kitchen. In several cases, these are women farmers including those who are single parents which creates an income generation for them.

103. The Ministries of Social Protection and the Ministry of Education through the Board of Industrial Training (BIT) promote technical and vocational training for persons in Lethem and other rural areas. These programs promote entrepreneurship/income-generating opportunities for youth with non-academic talent and in some cases second chances. Several women have been trained as heavy duty operators, a field which is typically identified as male dominated.

104. Generally, there has been a greater move to train women to establish and manage entrepreneurial enterprises including financial management and business start-ups. This is a commendable step which recognizes the ability of women to take their future in their hands and break free of gender defined roles.

105. Rupununi Ventures, a low interest loan facility by the Guyana Bank for Trade and Industry actively encourages women's entrepreneurship effort. Traditionally, it has been easier for men to access loans and for women desirous of accessing same, their application has to be signed by their male partner. The Commercial Bank has been working to move away from this requirement and recognizing that women can and are able to govern their own affairs.

106. Women in leadership is actively being encouraged which moves away from the traditional view that women are merely home-makers. Rural communities have seen the emergence of women in leadership position from being Village Toshaos, Regional

Councillors, Councillors at the Municipality level, and Heads of Educational Institutions, among others. Training for women in leadership is being provided by the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute.

107. Fostering of an environment where girls are exposed to telecommunications through the setting up of ICT Hubs and encouraging the involvement of Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Radio stations (Radio Lethem and Aishalton) established which provide access to information and for which women are the lead broadcasters. Young women in rural areas are also receiving access to Regional Scholarships to University of Guyana, Kuru Kuru Cooperative College, Guyana School of Agriculture, among others.

108. In Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo Region there are four (4) buses under the 5B's project which enable the safe transportation of students to and from school. These are used in the following villages: Awarewaunau, Annai, St. Ignatius and Bina Hill. There have been 150 bicycles distributed to students at St. Ignatius and Yupukari. The programme has been expanded to all the hinterland and additionally, there is the hot meal programme and snack feeding programme which provide a meal or snack to children of different ages. It has been recognized that this helps to provide a well-balanced meal to children. Plans are in place to ensure the expansion and continuity of the 5B's Programme in rural and hinterland regions.

109. Each Regional Democratic Council has what is called the Regional Gender Affairs Committee which is an Ad Hoc Committee of the Council which allows participants to discuss issues related to gender and women's empowerment. Previously it was the Women's Affairs Committee, however it was recognized that both genders are affected by social issues and men ought to be part of the conversation if there will be changes to strategies in curbing social ills. The selection of female councillors at the Regional Democratic Council Upper in rural areas have provided them an opportunity to make representation on behalf of their villages and input in other regional issues/development projects.

110. A number of seminars and workshops are held throughout the year to address the negative customs and traditional practices in rural and hinterland areas. These seminars and workshops are conducted by the Gender Affairs Bureau, Child Care and Protection Agency and other NGO's.

111. Two studies were done to assess the situation of women living in rural, hinterland, remote areas and the general female population of Guyana. These studies are: The 2016 Guyana Situation Analysis of Children and Women (SitAn) which was a cooperation between the Government of Guyana and UNICEF, and it has as its main objective to support the Government in the development and implementation of National Strategic Development Plans and Programmes so as to advance the realization of the rights and development of Guyanese children, with a strong equity focus on the most vulnerable children and their families.

112. The 2017 Study on Indigenous Women and Children in Guyana which is key to ensuring a better understanding of the situation of indigenous boys, girls and their families. This study represents a partnership between the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs (MoIPA) and UNICEF. Its main objective is to inform local, national and regional strategies, projects and programmes that are aimed at the realisation of children's and women's rights, and the empowerment of indigenous women, children and adolescents.

Disadvantaged groups of women

Reply to paragraph 21 and 22 of CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9

113. The Government of Guyana wishes to state that the National Stigma and discrimination policy was developed in 2010 and reviewed in 2018. This policy came about because reports were received at the National Care and Treatment Center that members of the key populations (Men who have sex with Men, Sex Workers and Transgender women) were being discriminated against when accessing health care. Subsequently, a meeting was held amongst the groups and health care workers and a decision was taken for stigma and discrimination trainings to be conducted. Health care workers and members of the key population were trained on how to eliminate stigma and discrimination. The training was titled “Partnership defines quality of Service”. An outcome of the training was the development of a policy, a code of conduct for persons accessing care and treatment services, a policy statement against stigma and discrimination, a suggestion box and a log book for receiving reports of discrimination. This training was rolled out to other regions. Further several sessions were done with health care providers, probation officers, law enforcement officers and members of the key population on stigma and discrimination, sexual orientation and gender identity and human rights, Members of the key populations are facilitators of some sessions. Also Community Based Organisations have been conducting internal sessions with their beneficiaries on self-stigma.

114. The national key population’s guidelines also address stigma and discrimination. Under “Critical Enablers/Structure Environment”, sections look at reducing and addressing stigma and discrimination and Violence Prevention. Peer educations Programme Manual also include elements of stigma and discrimination. Vulnerable groups are continuously sensitized on stigma and discrimination and course of redress available.

115. Extended hour (After hours) Clinic started in June 2018 to provide services for the sex workers, men who have sex with men and transgender women. Two persons from the key populations were recruited as Key Populations Advocates to provide navigation services between prevention, care and treatment to their peers.

116. A Terms of Reference has been drafted and submitted for advertising in the local newspapers for a consultant to develop curriculum and training tools for pre-service training for health care workers on stigma and discrimination and sexual minorities. This was a recommendation from a 2014 rapid assessment by USAID/APC study on addressing stigma and gender based violence to improve service delivery for the key population. Stigma and discrimination is also included in national Voluntary and Counseling Testing training of counselor and Tester. Stigma and Discrimination sessions are held at workplaces around the country.

117. In a recent case of *Quincy Mc Ewan and others and the Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD) v The Attorney General of Guyana*, the Caribbean Court of Justice, ruled that the cross-dressing law in Guyana, which makes it a criminal offence for a man or a woman to appear in a public place while dressed in clothing of the opposite sex for an “improper purpose”, is unconstitutional. The landmark ruling means it is now acceptable for men to dress as women in Guyana. The appeal was advanced by transgender and other Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual advocates.

118. Over the past few months, Guyana has recorded an increased influx of Venezuelans crossing the borders to escape the socioeconomic and political turmoil in their homeland. A multi-agency committee, which includes the Civil Defence Commission (CDC), the Guyana Police Force (GPF), the Department of Citizenship,

the Ministries of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, Public Health, Communities and Social Protection, was established to address the influx of Venezuelans in Guyana's border regions. Through the CDC, the committee has been providing relief to migrants in the border regions. The mission of the multi-agency committee is to coordinate effort to give structure to the Government's response to the arrival of Venezuelans in Guyana.

119. The Government is also collaborating with UN Agencies to address the needs and identify the vulnerabilities of Venezuelan migrants. Agencies such IOM continue to provide support to the government of Guyana to facilitate with providing temporary accommodation to vulnerable women and children. Food items, personal hygiene kits as well as counseling among others services is provided.

120. Universal access to health-care services is offered through its mobile health teams, health screening for Venezuelan women and children across the regions are conducted. Migrants who enter the country are encouraged to receive free careening and vaccinations. Approximately 30 doctors who are fluent in Spanish have been deployed to health posts in the border regions which is access regularly by migrants entering Guyana.

121. While the language barrier is a hindrance, Guyana has been willing to support Venezuelans by granting access to education. UNICEF and UNHRC are providing support while local NGOs and the Roman Catholic Church are offering free English classes. They are also working with Guyanese teachers to teach English language as a foreign language to equip the foreign students with adequate facility in English. There are over eight hundred and fifty (850) Venezuelan students attending schools across the regions in Guyana and more than half are women.

122. The provision of livelihood activities such as farming and entrepreneurship support in the form of small grants for micro-business. IOM and other UN agencies are continually seeking partnerships with local NGOs and have engaged several private companies to provide job opportunities for Venezuelan women.

Marriage and family relation

Reply to paragraph 23 of CEDAW/C/GUY/Q/9

123. The Government of Guyana wishes to state that the Protection of Children Act 2009 provides for the protection of children at risk, children in difficult circumstances and children in general and for related matters:

124. A person who by commission or omission willfully contributes to a child being a child in need of protective intervention commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of \$200,000 or to imprisonment for 6 months.

125. Employing a child in an establishment to engage in acts of prostitution is liable on summary conviction of \$200,000 or to imprisonment.

126. The Act give all a duty to report when child abuse is suspected, that is, a person has a moral and legal responsibility to report it to the Childcare & Protection Agency (CPA) or the Police and *Failure to report* a suspected incident of child abuse is an offence. The Childcare & Protection Agency responds to cases of child abuse through an intake process which consist of:

- Walk-in, (at our various offices across Guyana);
- Calling-in (between the hours of 08:00hrs to 16:30hrs from Monday to Thursday and on Fridays 08:00hrs to 15:30hrs);
- 24hrs hotline;

- Referral process (medical social workers or other agencies).

127. All reports are treated with the strict confidentiality.

128. It is extremely uncommon to receive reports of child/under age marriages. If a child has to be married it is procedural that it be sanctioned by a Judge in chambers of the High Court in the Supreme Court of Judicature. That is to say, that a lawyer makes an application to the court on behalf of the child seeking the court's permission for the child to be married. (see section 32 (1) and (2) of the Marriage Act Chapter 45:01).

129. During the last year or two (2016–2018) there has not been a significant number of child marriages reported to CPA. If the Agency however, receives a report of child marriage presumably it would have a sexual meaning which now warrants the intervention of the CPA on a sexual level because, sexual activity, with a minor is a criminal offence. Hence, this matter now has to be reported to the Police with the involvement of the CPA and the child advocacy center. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the police to enforce all laws pertaining to child/underage marriages. CPA is not singularly and directly involved in the prevention of child/under age marriages....it is shared responsibility between the church, CPA, Police and the wider community.
