



Permanent Mission of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the
United Nations Office and Other International Organisations in
Geneva

Note No: 87/2023

The Permanent Mission of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and has the honour to its Note Verbale Note No 75/2023 dated May 9, 2023 concerning the OCHCR's Joint Communication of March 27, 2023 from the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent; the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; the Special Rapporteur on the right to development; the Special Rapporteur on the right to education; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context; the Special Rapporteur on minority issues; the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls.

The Permanent Mission wishes to forward the attached Government of Guyana's report and request that this Report is shared with the relevant Special Rapporteurs. The Permanent Mission would be grateful to receive an acknowledgement of receipt of this Note Verbale and attachment.

The Permanent Mission of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva
May 25, 2023

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Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana

Response to

REF: AL GUY 1/2023

Joint Communication of the Special Procedures

Sent by the

Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent
Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights
Special Rapporteur on the right to development
Special Rapporteur on the right to education
Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions
Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression
Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health
Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context
Special Rapporteur on minority issues
Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance
Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief
Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity
Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences
Working Group on discrimination against women and girls

May 24, 2023

Introduction

As the Government of Guyana, we condemn all forms of racial discrimination and marginalization, given the destructive and divisive outcomes of such practices. The People's Progressive Party/Civic Government holds, as a cornerstone, its mission and vision of creating a 'One Guyana'- a pledge which we continue to put forward in every policy, legislation, initiative and action that we undertake as a Government, to bring about unity and prosperity for all Guyanese regardless of race, class, religious belief or any characteristic that may seek to divide.

We have documented in our initial response to the Joint Communication (JC) dated May 8, 2023 our profound concerns for the unsubstantiated or unverified allegations made against this Government. (See **Appendix 12**)

The Joint Communication is not only inaccurate in its narrative but has drawn numerous conclusions, adverse to the Government, without hearing a word from the Government. This unfair, capricious and unreasonable approach adopted by the signatories to the Joint Communication, which tramples upon the rules of natural justice and permeates the entirety of the Joint Communication, must be strenuously repudiated and condemned.

Guyana affirms that it is a democratic country governed by the rule of law and a written Constitution, which is supreme. This Constitution guarantees to every citizen all the internationally recognised basic human and inalienable rights and freedoms. These include the right to life, and protection against discrimination on the grounds of, inter alia, race, ethnicity, gender, class, and political associations; the right to counsel and to retain an Attorney-at-Law of one's choice; the presumption of innocence; and protection against cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. There is a large body of criminal laws in Guyana against brutality and violence of any type.

The Government of Guyana commits itself to the rule of law, human rights and development for all Guyanese.

PART I

Overview – The Road Guyana has Traversed

The Government of Guyana takes this opportunity to set the record straight on the history of race relations in British Guiana and Guyana. It is imperative that the Special Procedures Branch and its mandate holders take into consideration the facts of Guyana's history with the objective of better understanding the context of race and ethnic insecurities in Guyana.

It is unfortunate that the Special Procedures Branch would substantiate broad and unfounded allegations by a complainant or complainants without executing its own research to arrive at more objective analysis based on credible information; such as Guyana's three submissions and review before the UN UPR process between 2010 and 2020, its recent report to the ICCPR, and numerous responses to calls for inputs from various Special Rapporteurs since October 2020.

Further, it should be noted that the intent of this preamble is not to invalidate experiences or to disqualify the abhorrent realities of colonization, enslavement, indentureship and other forms of servitude. Undoubtedly, the effects of colonization are still relevant today across the globe, especially in the context of race relations, legislation, inequalities and even national development.

Instead, the State Party wishes only to provide the mandate holders with the information which they failed to gather in preparation for issuing the Joint Communication to the State.

Revisiting Guyana's history from an honest and untainted perspective is most important in addressing many of the facetious and willfully misrepresented allegations presented in the contents of the Joint Communication. These are the facts:

Post 1838, freed Africans in British Guiana refused wages to work on plantations in response to the harsh conditions that were meted out to them by the plantation owners and the British colonisers. Notably, the wages offered in British Guiana were higher than that of the West Indian islands, which resulted in over 40,000 freed Africans persons immigrating to British Guyana post 1838 to work on the plantations. These immigrant workers filled some of the vacancies that existed in the plantations.

In 1835, the first Portuguese indentured labourers would start arriving from Madeira and in 1838, indentured labourers from India. By 1853, indentured labourers would also be brought from China. This importation of indentured labourers by the British would continue until 1917. These were bonded workers who were not allowed to leave the plantations except with written permission from the owners. Over 300,000 Indians were brought to British Guiana as indentured labourers, with 30,000 Portuguese from Madeira and 30,000 from China between 1838- 1917. British Guiana imported the largest number of indentured labourers from India in comparison to the rest of the English-speaking colonies.

Freed Africans from British Guiana voluntarily chose to leave the functioning plantations and purchased abandoned plantations and house lots. After centuries of bondage, freedom was essential and owning their own lands and creating their communities was unique in British

Guyana. No other Caribbean country experienced this birth of the village movement with land owned by freed Africans. They pooled their resources and purchased plantations where they settled and started to build new lives for themselves.¹

Freed Africans further chose to cultivate ground provisions which were used for self-sustenance. However, there was no export market for these crops. They did not cultivate commercial cash crops such as rice, although this was done during enslavement by those from West Africa.

Further, owners of the purchased plantations were expected to maintain drainage and irrigation canals, however, because of the sub-divisions of the plantations among the freed Africans, coordination of these efforts was difficult. The British colonizers tried everything to dismantle these emerging communities, including flooding their lands.

After emancipation, the first generation of Africans attended schools in British Guiana. In fact, many of the Africans were not attracted to farming and did not venture into cash-crop and commercial farming. They were more ambitious and aspired to become engaged in teaching and other forms of non-manual labour.

Former APNU/AFC President of Guyana, David Granger, is recorded as saying “*Education, next to economic liberation, was the greatest gift of Emancipation. African-Guyanese embraced education as a means of providing a better life for themselves, their families and future generations. They supported the establishment of social institutions for education and religious instruction...*” at the second General Assembly Meeting of the International Decade for People of African Descent Assembly – Guyana (IDPAD-GY), in 2019.²

As such, many Africans voluntarily moved to the two existing urban centres, Georgetown and New Amsterdam, to seek out greater opportunities. There, opportunities for education and employment as clerks, servants, dockworkers were available.

Indians, who were brought to British Guiana as indentured labourers engaged in farming, but faced relentless discrimination from the Europeans, and were tagged as heathens, pagans, dirty and willing to do ‘slave labour’. Because of their religion (Hinduism and Islam) they were denied access to education and jobs. Numerous studies detail the abominable conditions Indian workers and their families were living under in the plantations in British Guiana.³

The Portuguese, who were also brought to British Guiana as indentured labourers, did in fact receive preferential credit from the British; they were allowed off the plantations and became itinerant vendors and later merchants utilizing these resources to establish businesses which

¹ *Post-Emancipation strides and the militant women of Buxton-Friendship* - Guyana Chronicle. (2022, August 1). Guyana Chronicle. <https://guyanachronicle.com/2022/08/01/post-emancipation-strides-and-the-militant-women-of-buxton-friendship-2/>

² *Education and culture are inextricably linked*. (2019, September 22). DPI Guyana. <https://dpi.gov.gy/education-and-culture-are-inextricably-linked/>

³ Kumar, M. (2013). MALARIA AND MORTALITY AMONG INDENTURED INDIANS: A STUDY OF HOUSING, SANITATION, AND HEALTH IN BRITISH GUIANA (1900-1939). Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 74, 746–757. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44158878>

imported goods for re-sale. The British used them as the buffer ethnic group between the African and Indian population and the white British class, as they were not considered white.

Notwithstanding, the villages that were formed in the post emancipation period had multi-racial compositions even though there was typically one dominant ethnic group. For instance, Buxton, a village bought by freed Africans, which was comprised predominantly of Africans also had a population of about 20% Indians and a significant Portuguese presence also. This multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious nature of villages across Guyana remains constant, even in 2023.

The British introduced a return passage to induce indentured labourers to return to their respective homelands. This agreement was considerably different from the one which was signed at the commencement of indentureship, which stipulated that the colonial state would bear the costs of the return passage. A unilateral revision of the contract shifted the sole responsibility from the colonial state to partial responsibility on the Indians, at sums which were estimated to be above their annual earnings. As such, many Indians could not afford to pay the share of the return passage which was imposed.⁴

Only about 3% of Indians who remained in Guyana accepted land in lieu of return passage. The lands this group received were invariably worth less than \$60 at that time. When the law on acquiring land was revised and amended circa 1880 to permit purchases less than 100 acres (an upgrade from the previous 5-acre ceiling), at \$5 per acre, the intent was to encourage gold prospecting in the interior. Miners, commonly referred to as pork-knockers in Guyana, were predominantly African. Any insinuation that the amendments to laws were implemented to favour Indians is completely unfounded.

This attempt to expand the mining industry coincided with a depression in the sugar industry. In response to this, planters plotted to retain indentured labourers and to support settlements near sugar estates and to encourage the labourers to settle, even if their period of indentureship had expired. Indians eventually purchased all the settlements which they occupied at prices above the market rate at the time. Indians always hedged their land purchases close to sugar plantations to secure opportunities for employment in the same sugar plantations.

Indians eventually cultivated rice on small plots leased or purchased from the owners of sugar plantations. Starting in the 1890s, Indians expanded their rice production exponentially by purchasing lands, including some plots from Africans. Exportation of rice to the West Indies followed shortly.

Notably, African leaders warned their communities against selling lands to Indians and recommended that the African communities should replicate the industrious utilization of the lands for production of export value crops.

⁴ Ex-indentured Indians contributed over US\$200,000 to their return passage from British Guiana to India, 1890-1955 - Guyana Chronicle. (2022, May 22). Guyana Chronicle. <https://guyanachronicle.com/2022/05/22/ex-indentured-indians-contributed-over-us200000-to-their-return-passages-from-british-guiana-to-india-1890-1955/>

By the turn of the 20th century, because of the income and literacy requirements for the franchise, and even while numbers for both groups were still relatively small, Africans qualified many times more than Indians to vote representatives to the Legislature.

African and coloured professionals, head teachers, teachers, civil servants and other persons of similar status formed the middle strata below the elite Europeans. Even though some Indian farmers may have qualified economically, their inability to read English disqualified them from voting – they were not to be considered “proper”. The Indians thus formed the bulk of the lower strata and were derided as “country coolies”

From 1914 to 1918, World War I disrupted shipping routes from Burma, a key competitor in the rice industry. This ironically landed the Guyanese rice industry in a strategic position, and expanded exports to the West Indies to meet the demands of the market placed Guyana’s rice industry on a solid foundation.⁵ Even as rice production was vamped up to meet those needs, the majority of Africans chose not to enter rice farming despite owning fertile land.

Indian immigration came to an end in 1917, however, the Planters strategised for the continuity of their plantations, albeit with “free labour”. The Europeans proposed a “Colonisation Scheme” in which both African and Indian leaders were facilitated to recruit labour from Africa and India respectively. One Indian leader of a delegation mentioned in a memo that if emigration were reopened, an Indian majority could form an Indian Colony in British Guiana. This request along with a request for a second delegation were rejected by Indian leaders such as Ghandi. The African Guyanese leaders did not receive a favourable response from Sierra Leone, which was their primary choice for recruitment.

Current activists invoke the aborted “Colonization Scheme” as a whipping horse for supposed “Indian domination”⁶, however, the fact remains that this was not the reality of these circumstances. Ironically, during the 1920’s, following the ‘end of Indian immigration’, approximately 500 settlers came to Guiana from India, while 1700 additional settlers came from the Caribbean, travelling primarily from Barbados.

It was out of the aroused fears of being “swamped” by Indians that African leaders launched a “Negro Progress Convention” (NPC), to oppose Indians’ entry into the middle class and prevent any attempts of upward mobility to mitigate Indian participation in the middle-class economy. The Indians responded by launching the “British Guiana East Indian Association” (BGEIA) in Georgetown in 1919. This ultimately was a critical moment in the conception of the African-Indian political rivalry in British Guiana - now Guyana.

Hubert Critchlow then formed the British Guiana Labour Union (BGLU) in the same year (1919) and organized Georgetown African Dock Workers. However, after Indian sugar workers from the

⁵ News, S. (2008, November 6). *The beginnings of rice cultivation in Guyana (Part 2)* - Stabroek News. Stabroek News. <https://www.stabroeknews.com/2008/11/06/features/the-beginnings-of-rice-cultivation-in-guyana-part-2/>

⁶ News, S. (2019, December 5). *The little known British Guiana Colonisation Scheme has influenced many attitudes in today’s Guyana* - Stabroek News. Stabroek News. <https://www.stabroeknews.com/2019/12/05/opinion/letters/the-little-known-british-guiana-colonisation-scheme-has-influenced-many-attitudes-in-todays-guyana/>

East Bank of Demerara were encouraged to march into Georgetown in 1924 to join African protestors, where 13 of those Indians were killed by police at Ruimveldt (an entry point to Georgetown from the East Bank of Demerara), their survivors sought leadership outside of the BGLU.

Critchlow moved on to become a staunch member of the NPC and while he initially supported the Universal Franchise at a Caribbean Labour Congress in 1926 (which would have ultimately benefitted workers in Guyana, including Indians), in 1945, he departed in practice and went on to explicitly oppose the Universal Franchise in the Legislature in fear of 'Indian dominance'. Hubert Critchlow, who had helped found the BGLU in 1919, was now almost always on the main platform of NPC activities throughout its existence.⁷

From 1929 and 1949, Indians, through their beginnings in rice, cattle, jewelry making, petty retailing and other forms of what was considered to be lower-level type economic activity, had made significant progress towards challenging the perpetuated class system in which whites, Africans and people of colour dominated. This then triggered the establishment of a branch of the League of Coloured Peoples (LCP) in 1937. The organisation started its work under the leadership of Dr. Claude Denbow who was succeeded by Sir John Carter who, upon his return from England in 1945, augmented the leadership to form what was an elitist group which focused on mobilizing Africans to enhance their achievements and solidify their place in the middle-class strata.

The Manpower Citizens Association (MPCA) was also formed in 1937 to represent the interests of Indian field workers in the sugar industry by Ayube Edun, as the BGLU represented mostly African factory workers.⁸ Edun promptly sold out to the Sugar Producers Association (SPA) in 1948 during a strike when four Indian sugar workers were killed by the British-led police while protesting for better working conditions.

In 1943, Dr. Cheddi Jagan returned to Guyana and formed the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) shortly after in 1946. The PAC was a vehicle to drive and articulate a more inclusive multi-race, working class ideology in the political realm through the involvement of a wide range of ethnic and economic groups in the executive of the Committee. Under this widened franchise, Jagan rejected the East Indian dominated BGEIA and MPCA and was elected to the Legislature in 1947 by Buxton, a heavily African influenced constituency.

The Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) was then formed on January 1, 1950 with Dr, Cheddi Jagan as General Secretary and the position of Chairman was reserved for Forbes Burnham, who would represent urban African pride. The PPP philosophy focused on the working people, equality, development, and the end to colonial rule. The PPP was then elected under the first Universal Franchise Election in 1953. Prior to this only those who could read and write and owned

⁷ News, S. (2021, August 22). *The Negro Progress Convention of Guyana (1922 - circa 1938)* - Stabroek News. Stabroek News. <https://www.stabroeknews.com/2021/08/22/sunday/the-negro-progress-convention-of-guyana-1922-circa-1938>

⁸ <https://www.guyanatimesinternational.com/establishment-early-years-of-man-power-citizens-association/>. (n.d.). <https://www.guyanatimesinternational.com/establishment-early-years-of-man-power-citizens-association/>

property could vote, the majority being urban middle class. Having won 18 of 24 seats, the first government comprised of Guianese was born, whilst Guiana was still a colony. The first Ministers were sworn in and Dr. Cheddi Jagan was Chief Minister. Three PPP women were elected – one white and two black – and became the first women to sit in the Legislature.

This was the beginning of the first Parliament, which celebrated its 70th anniversary on May 18, 2023.

Tyrannically, this democratically elected government was ousted by the British Churchill government after only 133 days. This was the first and only democratically elected government to be removed in the English-Speaking Caribbean.

These 133 days were considered by Guianese to be full of qualitative changes which were most important in British Guiana at this time. “The advent of the People’s Progressive Party gave Guianese a new breath of life. It was a good thing to be Guianese and people were beginning to walk about with pride and dignity...the feeling of equality was pervading the air. Inferior complexes, fear and other maladies with which ‘colonials’ are indoctrinated and made sick were gradually being cured.”⁹

Nonetheless, the reactionary forces concocted a plot to put an end to the progressive movement. The Waddington Constitution was suspended, the legislature suspended, Ministers removed and many arrested and placed under house arrest. Churchill considered Jagan’s approach to be too “radical”. The British and the American administrations were afraid of the liberation movements that were spreading in the region.

Burnham, who was also among the most radical actors working for the development of all peoples would then made an unprecedented move to commence courting the British and Americans as a more moderate alternative to Jagan’s frontal approach which both the British and Americans heavily opposed. As Arthur Schlesinger Jr., revealed in *A Thousand Days*, John F. Kennedy in the White House: “*Then in May 1962, Burnham came to Washington...Burnham’s visit left the feeling as I reported to the president, that ‘an independent British Guiana under Burnham (if Burnham will commit himself to a multiracial policy) would cause us many fewer problems than an independent British Guiana’ and the way was open to bring it about...An obvious solution would be to establish a system of proportional representation*”.¹⁰

Burnham would then move to challenge Jagan at a PPP Congress and having failed went on to split the PPP in 1955 along racial lines and as such, the united multi-racial movement which had emerged from the late 1940s was severely damaged and split along ethnic lines into African and Indian factions. This split along racial lines was not necessarily natural, but was a result of efforts by the British and American rulers who “deliberately fomented racial disturbances in order to prevent the transfer of full powers”¹¹ to local leaders.

⁹ Chase, Ashton (1954). 133 Days Towards Freedom in Guiana. This is the “communist Plot”; a Factual and Authoritative Account of the PPP Term of Office. Peoples Progressive Party

¹⁰ Jagan, C. (2004, January 1). The West on Trial: My Fight for Guyana’s Freedom.

¹¹ Ibid

PPP (Burnham) and PPP (Jagan) then moved on to contest the 1957 elections – PPP (Jagan) won and formed the government. Burnham was tremendously displeased with this outcome and moved to merge with the LCP backed UDP to form the Peoples National Congress (PNC).

The PPP also contested and won the 1961 elections. The United States then decided that a minimum, Jagan was too “Moscow oriented” and moved to remove him from office.

Declassified CIA documents uncovered that President John F. Kennedy decided that Jagan would have to go, and urged London to cooperate in the effort. As early as mid-1962, JFK informed the British Prime Minister that the notion of an independent state led by Jagan “disturbs us seriously,” adding: *“We must be entirely frank in saying that we simply cannot afford to see another Castro-type regime established in this Hemisphere. It follows that we should set as our objective an independent British Guiana under some other leader.”*¹²

The CIA incited riots and arson in the Georgetown business district in 1962 and violence was inflicted on Indian presumed supporters of the PPP. This ultimately heightened the racial chasm and created more pervasive insecurities and tensions. Further, CIA-supported riots were unleashed during a 1963 Public Service strike, and racial tensions increased even further. The Public Service was dominated by African Guyanese, and that has remained up to the present day in 2023.

These acts were done in spite of the assurance of President Kennedy in December 1961 that the USA would not intervene in Guyana’s domestic affairs; and further in spite of the fact that, as Schlesinger put it *“Thus far, our policies have been based on the assumption that Forbes Burnham was, as the British described him, an opportunist, racist and demagogue, intent only on personal power.”*¹³

The violence continued. The Report of the Wismar, Christianburg, Mackenzie Commission, (see **Appendix 11**) termed the “Wismar Report”, was the result of the enquiry of a Commission appointed in September 1964 by the Governor of British Guiana, Sir Richard Luyt. It was given the task to investigate the causes of the racial violence on May 25, 1964 by Africans against the minority East Indian population residing in Wismar, Christianburg and Mackenzie. During the course of these attacks, a number of Indians were murdered, scores of others brutally beaten and injured, and women and girls publicly raped. These violent acts were accompanied by large scale arson which saw the destruction of more than 200 houses and business places owned by Indians. Very little was done by the Police and the British Guiana Volunteer Force to protect the East Indian population at those locations, and it was not until a contingent of British soldiers arrived on the scene late in the evening that there was an ease in the attacks.

¹² CIA Covert Operations: The 1964 Overthrow of Cheddi Jagan in British Guiana | National Security Archive. (2020, April 6). CIA Covert Operations: The 1964 Overthrow of Cheddi Jagan in British Guiana | National Security Archive. https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/intelligence/2020-04-06/cia-covert-operations-overthrow-cheddi-jagan-british-guiana-1964#_edn1

¹³ Jagan, C. (2004, January 1). The West on Trial: My Fight for Guyana’s Freedom.

More than 3,000 East Indians were, within a few days after, evacuated by the security forces from the area and taken to Georgetown. Most of them, soon after, re-settled in the coastal villages, but a small number, probably feeling satisfied that the presence of British troops in the area assured a state of security, decided to return to the area to continue their employment in the bauxite industry.

The Commission concluded that the disturbances were politically and racially inspired. They noted that *"the thorough destruction of East Indian property, and the fact that the security forces were in no case able to apprehend arsonists, force us to conclude that the destruction was organised, and well organised"*.¹⁴

In the aftermath of these horrible occurrences, Mrs. Janet Jagan, the Minister of Home Affairs, tendered her resignation from her ministerial post. She cited the non-cooperation of the Commissioner of Police who refused to obey her instructions given early on the afternoon of 25 May for reinforcements, including British troops, to be sent to the area to protect life and property.

Despite the presence of British troops in the area, a state of violence broke out again on the evening of 6 July 1964 when a passenger launch, the Sun Chapman, travelling on the Demerara River from Georgetown to Mackenzie was completely destroyed by a huge explosion not far from its destination. More than 36 persons, all Africans, died in this mishap. When the news of this incident reached Mackenzie, many Africans there, assuming that the launch was bombed by Indians, became highly enraged, and in acts of reprisal, they brutally attacked Indians in the town. Five of them died as a result while many others suffered injuries.

The report goes on to note that the disturbances in Wismar-Christianburg-Mackenzie have been examined by the diverse group of Commissioners in the context of the wider pattern of planned violence, murders, arson, bombings, reprisals and counter-reprisals that characterised life in British Guiana during 1964. *"Although the number of deaths caused by violence and the amount of property destroyed was greater in the rest of the Colony, Wismar brought the months of violence into sharp focus."*¹⁵

Shortly after these tragic series of events, at the behest of the USA, the British imposed proportional representation for the 1964 elections, and facilitated the coalition of the PNC and the UF to oust the PPP which received the largest block of votes. Burnham, a more pliable and sympathetic option, was then installed after the 1964 elections, with the support of the British Colonial office and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's decree appointing the PNC-UF Coalition government..

The PNC-UF government proceeded to wage the colonial recommendations and reversed the PPP government's focus on capitalizing on British Guiana's comparative advantage in agriculture from which the Indian peasants dominated the rice industry. The Rice Marketing

¹⁴ Ishmael (Ed.). (1965, January 29). Report of the Wismar, Christianburg and Mackenzie Commission. In *Cheddi Jagan Research Centre*. GNI Publications.

¹⁵ Ibid

Board and the Guyana Rice Development Board were packed with PNC acolytes¹⁶, all African Guyanese; all paddy was being sold to the government which established government-owned mills also staffed with African PNC supporters. After 1965, the PNC mandated all rice be bought and sold through governmental entities. It fixed a low domestic price, and then exported the rice at much higher prices. The huge 118% implicit tax on rice farmers crippled the industry.¹⁷ The Indian dominated rice industry suffered severely, shrunk precipitously and was eventually ruined as there were no incentives for farmers to plant paddy any longer. In 1965, the PNC carved out a portion of Black Bush Polder and leased the lands to their supporters; it was dubbed “Zambia”. In the late 1970’s, the PNC then opened up over 54,000 acres in the Mahaica-Mahaicony-Abary Scheme (MMA) and leased lands to both African and Indian farmers.

In 1965, the PNC also disbanded the ethnically balanced Special Services Unit (SSU) which was formed by the departing British. The PNC government then formed the Guyana Defence Force which was predominantly comprised of African Guyanese. Further, in 1974, Burnham moved to launch a Guyana National Service and a People’s Militia with fundamentally the same composition as the Guyana Defence Force. These forces were equipped with a total of 23,000 personnel, and all officers had to swear personal loyalty to Burnham and the PNC.¹⁸

In 1970, after Guyana had gained Independence from the British in 1966, the PNC then also formed the External Trade Bureau (ETB) to control all trade. The PNC moved on to use the ETB to penalize all small business that were owned primarily by Indian Guyanese. It then created a Knowledge Sharing Institute (KSI) to distribute food supplies primarily in African Guyanese neighbourhoods.

In 1971, the bauxite industry in Linden was nationalized and its workforce, which had been ethnically cleansed of Indians in the pre-1964 violence, formed a bastion of PNC support. Management which was installed by the PNC took control of the company and within a decade, ran the industry into the ground.

The economy was in dire straits - poverty was increasing. Several strikes by the sugar workers, predominantly Indian, in the sugar industry led to the Guyana Sugar Company (GUYSUCO) (privately owned by Booker Tate and Lyle) granting an annual 40-60% profit sharing formula in 1968 that boosted their yearly income, and provided some relief to the dire economic circumstances. By 1974, when sugar prices were skyrocketing, the PNC imposed a levy that creamed off all profits, leaving the workers with little to nothing. The profits were diverted to ‘industrialise’ the economy through the formation of 36 state corporations – which were all placed in the hands of PNC supporters.

¹⁶ Rampertab. (2001). *The price of rice in Guyana*. Guyana Under Siege.

¹⁷ Guyana Times Inc. (2021, August 29). PNC’s racist economic policies. *Guyana Times*. Retrieved May 23, 2023, from <https://guyanatimesgy.com/pncs-racist-economic-policies/>

¹⁸ G. (2021, May 30). *Burnham’s totalitarian legacy* - *Guyana Times*. Guyana Times. <https://guyanatimesgy.com/burnhams-totalitarian-legacy/>

By 1976, the PNC had nationalized the sugar industry and installed their party affiliates as managers. They promptly ran the sugar industry into the ground causing great suffering in 28,000 families – this went on until President Hoyte moved to re-establish “Booker Tate” as private managers in 1990.

The PNC also launched the “Co-Op Movement” to offer their lower strata and rural African Guyanese a share of the economic pie. Land, machinery, livestock, seeds, and expertise were transferred to them. The Guyana Marketing Corporation was also placed under the chairmanship of an African ideologue, Eusi Kwayana, to ensure that products produced by African Guyanese were sold.

The Guyana National Cooperative Bank (GNCB) was then formed to provide loans to the co-op sector. The Guyana Cooperative Agricultural and Industrial Development Bank (GAIBANK) also offered loans to larger enterprises, which were predominantly owned by PNC supporters.

During the PNC’s “Feed, Clothe and House (FCH)” the nation 1972 to 1976 plan, housing schemes were launched and established in predominantly African Guyanese communities including Georgetown. Even though the grandiose FCH plan would eventually fail miserably, at least 4000 homes were built for African Guyanese.

In order to stay in government and hold power, elections were rigged in 1968, 1973, 1978 (referendum on a new constitution), 1980 and 1985.

Burnham then banned essential food items and goods including flour to try to save foreign currency. This has disastrous consequences for people and led to the evolution of the black market. Traders, mostly women and African Guyanese, would then be forced to cross to the Caribbean islands and Suriname to buy banned goods and sell gold in order to survive.

The emergence of pro-democracy forces in the labour movement and new political parties with the PPP were vilified, and the young leader, Dr. Walter Rodney, an African Guyanese historian, was denied a job at the University. In 1980, he was assassinated. The 2012 international Commission of Inquiry, which was aborted in 2015 by President Granger, on the assassination of Dr. Walter Rodney found Burnham and the PNC responsible for his death. The commission noted in its findings: *“We have no hesitation in holding that Gregory Smith was responsible for Dr. Walter Rodney’s death on 13 June, 1980 and that in so doing he was acting as an agent of the State having been aided and abetted so to do, by individuals holding positions of leadership in State agencies and committed to carrying out the wishes of the PNC administration”*¹⁹ (see **Appendix 10**)

¹⁹ *Report of the Commission of Inquiry Appointed to Enquire and Report on the Circumstances Surrounding the Death of the Late Dr. Walter Rodney on Thirteenth Day of June, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Eighty at Georgetown, February 2016 | Atlanta University Center.* (2019, June 21). Report of the Commission of Inquiry Appointed to Enquire and Report on the Circumstances Surrounding the Death of the Late Dr. Walter Rodney on Thirteenth Day of June, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Eighty at Georgetown, February 2016 | Atlanta University Center. https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/coi%3Arodney_report

It was under the PNC that the country was ruined economically so that the McIntyre Economic Report in 1989 showed Guyana hovering just above Haiti. Guyana had an external debt of US\$2.1 billion, greater than its own GDP.

The country was deemed un-creditworthy and the PNC under President Hoyte were forced to go to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1989 to seek relief; the conditionalities imposed were harsh - privatisation, economic liberalisation, and stabilisation. This Economic Recovery Programme plunged the middle class into conditions of the working class and the levels of poverty and malnutrition, especially among children (54% under the age of 5) climbed alarmingly. Hoyte started the downsizing of the Public Service and further downsized the Bauxite Industry, as well as the National Service all of which had employed thousands of people, majority were African Guyanese. This undoubtedly threw thousands of African Guyanese out of work and into poverty. Poverty in the interior Amerindian communities was unspeakable.

These socio-economic conditions were appalling; this was confirmed more granularly in 1992 by a United Nations ILO Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) which clearly showed that all ethnic groups were mired in poverty at 43% with the Indigenous Peoples/Amerindians worst off at 75%. Africans and Indians on the coastland were equally poor as a result of the failed governance systems and lack of economic vision of successive PNC from 1964- 1992.

After the first free and fair elections in 1992, the newly elected Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) government immediately launched a Poverty Reduction Strategy and by 1999, as shown in another HIES, there was a significant reduction of poverty (35%) but significantly, the reduction was greater among African Guyanese (and in urban areas) than among Indian Guyanese and Amerindians.

The trend continued, as shown by a 2006 survey - 31.6% African Guyanese, 30% Indian Guyanese and 33.7% Mixed Guyanese and 70 % of Amerindians due to geographic locations in the interior, were in poverty. This reduction was confirmed by the PNC figure, Dr. Clive Thomas, who noted the poverty reduction rates in his Stabroek News series on poverty.

Between 1992 and 2015, the People's Progressive Party/Civic government demonstrated clearly that it did not discriminate in any of its development plans. All sectors of the economy were developed with fundamental principles of equal rights, equal opportunities and equitable access to good and services.²⁰

The PPP took the necessary steps to ensure that Guyanese of all races could live comfortable lives, even, for example, by maintaining heavily subsidized electricity to African Guyanese dominated Linden, who pay the lowest electricity prices in the country, even though the Alumina Plant which justified the generation of electricity was shuttered in 1982 by the PNC.

The 1997 Elections were the most violent led by the People's National Congress with attacks on mainly Indian women and men. In the aftermath, although these elections were found to be an

²⁰ See Guyana report to the Universal Periodic 2010 and 2015.

fair by the international observers, the PPP/C elected had to give up two and half of its 5 year term to return to normalcy under the CARICOM brokered Herdsmartsen and St Lucia Accords.

All general and regional since 1992 have been observed by international observer missions.

Between 1964 and 1992, the PNC government had awarded scholarships to overseas universities to its supporters' children who replenished the ranks of the African Guyanese ruling strata. The University of Guyana always had a preponderance (over 75%) of African Guyanese lecturers and students. These blatant acts of discrimination echoed into the PNC 2015-2020 government, during which they formed the Bertram Collins Public Service College with an all African Guyanese board and an enrollment of 92% African Guyanese.

Between 2015-2020, the PNC, now called APNU+AFC Coalition, dismantled the PPP/C government social protection programmes, imposed increases in over 200 taxes, returned paramouncy of the party, abandoned the Because We Care cash grant and school uniform programmes for school children, stopped the 13th month salary for the disciplined services, mismanaged the housing programme, and placed party acolytes on all the state boards with over 65 % African Guyanese. The economy by 2018 was in trouble and 30,000 people had lost their jobs with the closure of many businesses in numerous sectors.

During the Granger-led APNU/AFC tenure, the highest number of cases in court, both local courts and Guyana's apex court the Caribbean Court of Justice, of executive lawlessness was recorded versus a sitting Head of state in any other part of the English-speaking Caribbean.

In fact, what is so hurtful and offensive to the Guyana Government and majority of its people is that the Special Procedures Branch seems to be unaware of what happened in Guyana between December 21, 2018 and August 2, 2020,²¹ although well documented even by the Secretariat of the Secretary General of the United Nations.

The local government elections of 70 Local Authorities in March 2016 led to the PPP/C winning the majority of these bodies. In the November 2018 local government elections with 80 local authorities saw the PPP/C winning 65% of these bodies. These 80 local authorities represent the majority of voters of Guyana. As a result, the government had lost its mandate to govern. On December 21, 2018 after a six week wait for the PPP/C's no confidence motion to be debated in the National Assembly, the motion was successively passed.

According to the constitution, elections must be held within 3 months of a no confidence motion - instead the courts were embroiled as a means to use every avenue of litigation possible by the then government to stall the elections. The apex court, the Caribbean Court of Justice²², ruled that the Chairperson of the Guyana Elections Commission had been appointed in breach of the constitution by President Granger. This then began consecutive months of rejection by the President of eighteen names of eminent persons proposed by the then Leader of the Opposition

²¹ Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance. (2021, December). Democracy Prevails - The Chronicle of the Guyana 2020 Elections. Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance.

²² Mustapha V, Attorney General of Guyana, CCJ Appeal No GYCV2019/007. <http://www.ccj.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2019-CCJ-9-AJ1.pdf>

to chair the commission, as required by the constitution. The court had also ruled that the APNU/AFC Government had curtailed authority and was an interim or caretaker government pending elections – reiterating that elections must be held in 3 months.

In October 2019, President Granger announced elections would be held in March 2020; the Parliament was dissolved on December 31, 2019 and general and regional elections were set for March 2, 2020 - a full 14 following the no confidence motion.

These Elections were observed by the European Electoral Observer Mission, the Commonwealth Electoral Observer Mission, the OAS Electoral Observer Mission, the CARICOM Observer Mission and the Carter Centre. All the Electoral Observer Reports document the travesty which occurred from March 3- August 2, 2020. No effort was spared by the Granger government nor the then government²³ appointed members of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) in collusion with the most senior officials of the GECOM to thwart the will of the electorate and stay in power.

The Commission of Inquiry on the March 2, 2020 elections submitted their findings in April 2023 which clearly stated that *“There was a conscious and deliberate – even brazen – effort to violate the provisions of section 84(1) of the Representation of the People Act. Senior GECOM officials abandoned all need for neutrality and impartiality and demonstrated a bias for a competing political party and, in the course of events over those days, showed an open connection with that party and, by their efforts, sought a desired result for that party.”*²⁴ (see **Appendix 9**)

Guyana and its electorate had to wait for 5 months for the declaration of the results, which the Statements of Poll²⁵ proved that the PPP/C had won the elections. From December 21, 2018 the electorate had to wait for 19 months for the declaration of the President and Government of Guyana.

²³ It is rather interesting that the head of IDPADA-G is one of these APNU/AFC GECOM commissioners, and that one of the senior GECOM staff charged with post-election cases for misconduct in public office is also employed within IDPADA-G.

²⁴ Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the General and Regional Elections of Guyana on March 2, 2020. (2023, April 26). DPI Guyana. <https://dpi.gov.gy/report-of-the-commission-of-inquiry-into-the-general-and-regional-elections-of-guyana-on-march-2-2020/>

²⁵ Counting of the ballots takes place in Guyana at each polling station at the close of polls and a Statement of Poll is signed by all election day staff at that station with all party polling agents. This is the evidence of the wish of the electorate.

PART II

Constitutional and Legislative Framework

Today, Guyana proudly boasts a robust and comprehensive constitutional, legislative, and policy framework for protecting the human rights of all Guyanese and strongly prohibiting all forms of racism and racial discrimination.

During the Constitutional Reform process of 1999-2001, the broad-based Parliamentary Constitution Reform Commission (CRC) comprised of 10 representatives of Government and opposition political parties and 10 representatives of civil society from religious, labour, business, Indigenous, women and youth organizations held consultations across the country in all 10 Administrative Regions and communities. All ethnic groups, individuals and community groups were able to express their views and make informal and formal proposals for amending the 1980 Constitution. Out of this process, very progressive provisions were included, and substantial amendments were made incorporate and enshrine human rights in the Constitution as enforceable.

Article 149 (1) of the Constitution of Guyana, Cap 1:01, Laws of Guyana specifically proscribes “*any person acting by virtue of any written law or in the performance of the functions of any public office or any public authority*” from discriminating against persons, whereas Article 149 (2) expressly proscribes discrimination on the basis of “race”:

Article 149 (2) “*In this article the expression 'discriminatory' means affording different treatment to different persons attributable wholly or mainly to their or their parents' or guardians' respective descriptions by race, place of origin, political opinion, colour, creed, age, disability, marital status, sex, gender, language, birth, social class, pregnancy, religion, conscience, belief or culture whereby persons of one such description are subjected to disabilities or restrictions to which other persons of the same or another such description are not made subject or are accorded privileges or advantages which are not afforded to other persons of the same or another such description.*”

The Fourth Schedule of the Constitution incorporates the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Convention on the Rights of Child, and the Convention Against Torture in their entirety, giving the provisions therein the status of constitutional rights.

The recently amended Representation of People Act, Chapter 1:03, and the National Registration Act Chapter 19:08 have been further strengthened to ensure and protect the rights of all of the electorate to vote freely and without fear to elect their representatives at periodic elections at the national, regional and local government levels.

Sections 139 D and 139 E were inserted in the Representation of the People Act, Cap1:03 by the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act 2001 to prohibit any person or political party from causing racial or ethnic violence or hatred and debarment from holding an elected position.

The Racial Hostility Act, Chapter 23:01, Laws of Guyana criminalizes conduct which intentionally or unintentionally excites hostility against persons on the basis of race; an elected official can be barred from holding office if found guilty.

The Termination and Severance Pay Act, Chapter 96:01, Laws of Guyana, and the Prevention of Discrimination Act, Chapter 99:08, Laws of Guyana, work to protect persons from racial and sexual discrimination in the workplace and provide mechanisms to address any issues where such discrimination may take place.

Any claim of racism, racial discrimination, or any other such intolerance may be reported to the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), a constitutional rights body, which is empowered to investigate, adjudicate and implement penalties.

Noteworthy is that the High Court of the Supreme Court of Guyana has a special constitutional and public law court, established in 2011, which deals exclusively with constitutional and public law matters. This has allowed for constitutional motions to be addressed expeditiously.

Additionally, claims of racial discrimination or racism by the State may be brought before a Court on a constitutional motion under Article 153 of the Constitution for violations or anticipated violations of the fundamental rights contained therein. Constitutional motions are handled expeditiously by the court.

Recent legislation pursuant to the Joint Communication

A plethora of bills have been passed in the new 12th Parliament (2020-).Some are very relevant to this response.

The Restorative Justice Act (Act 20 of 2022) 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 revised sentences and other means of dealing with offenders outside of the traditional sentencing processes.

Part III of the Act provides for the appointment, by the Minister, of a Director of Restorative Justice who shall be responsible for managing the restorative justice programme and supervising persons in the programme. In April 2023, a Director was appointed and the Restorative Justice Centre was commissioned.

The Criminal Justice System has been further strengthened with the passage of the Bail Act (Act 21 of 2022). This Act was passed in the National Assembly on November 7, 2022 and assented to 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.

A major development provided by this Act is the provision for police bail. Section 4 establishes that in circumstances where a person is arrested without a warrant, and it is not practicable to bring them before a magistrate within 24 hours, the Police Officer shall examine the case and (a) if the offence is not punishable by imprisonment, shall grant the person bail with every convenient speed, and (b) if the offence is punishable by imprisonment may, unless the offence is a serious one, grant bail as soon as practicable.

The Court of Appeal (Amendment) Bill (No. 22 of 2022) was passed in the National Assembly on April 24, 2023. The Act amended section 34(1) of the Court of Appeal Act, Cap 3:01, to provide for an increase in the complement of Court of Appeal judges to “not less than five and not more than nine Justices of Appeal”. This will improve cases being expeditiously discharged, thus reducing the lengthy delays in cases before the judiciary. This bill will be assented by the President shortly.

Part III

Interventions from August 2020 to Present

The new PPP/C Government headed by President Irfaan Ali was sworn in on August 2, 2020 in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic and a country that had stood still for 19 months during the electoral crisis with 30,000 newly unemployed before 2018 and many who lost their jobs as the pandemic wore on and business could not sustain their activities.

The Government introduced urgent measures in the last quarter of 2020 and 2021 to bring relief and cushion the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and the global fuel and food crisis:

- Removal of the 2015-2017 200 tax increases and reverting to the level of taxation to 2006.
- GY\$25,000.00 Public Sector Grant – This one-off grant was provided to all public servants at the end of 2021 in an effort to commence cushioning the effects of the pandemic. Whilst this grant was only one measure implemented to benefit public servants, government has consistently introduced increases to salaries over the past three national budgets. Further, government has also raised the minimum wage, along with the PAYE tax threshold to ensure that the annual net income of all public servants changes positively. Increases to salaries also remained retroactive to ensure that the public servants' commitment to their work over the full year is remunerated.
- GY\$25,000.00 COVID Relief Grant – this grant was given to all Guyanese households in an effort to alleviate some of the burdens imposed by skyrocketing prices during the COVID-19 pandemic. Every household in Guyana, regardless of its makeup, was entitled to the grant.
- GY\$7,000,000,000.00 (7 billion) Flood Relief Grants – in 2021, government rolled out an extensive relief programme for persons who were affected by the unprecedented flooding across Guyana. This level of flooding was an especially new experience for persons who lived inland, including Guyana's Amerindian/indigenous peoples. In response to the massive losses experienced, government introduced cash grants for affected persons, especially those whose cash-crop farms were inundated, rendering them profitless.

COVID-19 AND HINTERLAND GRANT						
	COVID-19 GRANT			HINTERLAND GTRANT		Total Covid-19 & Hinterland Grant
	Number of Households	Total Value		Number of Households	Total Value	
Region 1	9,529	238,225,000		9,898	247,450,000	485,675,000
Region 2	15,939	398,475,000		4,067	101,675,000	500,150,000
Region 3	47,075	1,176,875,000		4,001	100,025,000	1,276,900,000
Region 4	132,762	3,319,050,000		7,153	178,825,000	3,497,875,000
Region 5	22,443	561,075,000		1,351	33,775,000	594,850,000
Region 6	39,738	993,450,000		929	23,225,000	1,016,675,000
Region 7	7,509	187,725,000		6,384	159,600,000	347,325,000
Region 8	3,418	85,450,000		3,962	99,050,000	184,500,000
Region 9	7,882	197,050,000		8,735	218,375,000	415,425,000
Region 10	16,055	401,375,000		3,681	92,025,000	493,400,000
Total	302,350	7,558,750,000		50,161	1,254,025,000	8,812,775,000
G\$						

Source: Ministry of Finance 2021, 2022

- GY\$28,000.00 Cash Grant for Old Age Pensioners – This one-off grant to all old age pensioners amounts to an additional 1.8 billion dollars being placed in the pockets of Guyana’s pensioners. Every Guyanese 65 years of age and older is legally entitled to a monthly old-age pension, which has also been raised consistently over the past three national budgets. This one-off grant does not affect the regular monthly payments and benefits all pensioners, regardless of race, geographic location, religion or any other characteristic.
- The “Because We Care” cash grant was restored and increased incrementally to improve families’ disposable incomes, and to incentivize school enrollment and attendance. In 2021, the cash grant was increased from \$10,000 to \$15,000, in 2022 to \$25,000, and in 2023 to \$35,000. The School Uniform grant was also increased to \$2,000 in 2021, \$4,000 in 2022, and is now up to \$5,000 in 2023. This means parents will now receive a total of \$40,000 for each child enrolled in public or private schools across the country, totaling approximately 214,000 children. This will deliver to parents an additional \$8.6 billion in 2023 to ease the cost-of-living and ensure that parents can purchase the basic necessities to ensure that children attend and actively participate in all levels of school. Guyana has achieved universal nursery and primary education and will soon achieve universal secondary education with the capital injections to build new schools all across the country, especially in hinterland regions.
- GY\$150,000 Fisherfolk Cash Grant – this cash grant shifted focus to fisherfolk who advocated for support from government at community meetings held in fishing communities. Government responded by offering exactly what was requested, a grant to

all fisherfolk to help cushion the effects of climate change, COVID-19 and rising prices globally. Further, it was specifically noted that fisherfolk would not have to be licensed to receive the grant. This step was taken to ensure that the most vulnerable and under-resourced fisherfolk would benefit from the grant, as it is estimated that 50% of fisherfolk are not licensed for a variety of reasons. The distribution of the grant also provided government with the opportunity to create a more substantial database of the fisherfolk across Guyana in an effort to better inform future projects.

FISHERFOLK CASH GRANT INITIATIVE - \$150,000		
	Number of persons	Total Grants
Region 1	248	37,200,000
Region 2	707	106,050,000
Region 3	1,444	216,600,000
Region 4	2,826	423,900,000
Region 5	812	121,800,000
Region 6	1,765	264,750,000
Total	7,802	1,170,300,000

- GY\$150,000.00 Cash Grant to private cane farmers – This was delivered in response to intensive flooding and the continued effects of the COVID-19 pandemic which ultimately affect the crop output of the farmers, thus creating a negative impact on their income. The cash grant aims to offer some stabilization, and create opportunities for investments into the farmers businesses to ensure continuous income. The grants were distributed to all affected private cane farmers, regardless of race. This amounts to a total of 44 million dollars being placed in the pockets of average Guyanese who depend on cane farming for income generation.
- GY\$100,000 Disability Cash Grant – This initiative which totals approximately 700 million dollars was injected into the pockets of parents and guardians of children with disabilities was rolled out in 2022 by government in an effort to continuously reach the most vulnerable and marginalized cross sections of the Guyanese population. All children below the age of 18 years with disabilities were entitled to this grant, once relevant documentation was provided by their parents or guardians. It is estimated that this grant reached 7000 children living with disabilities. Government also continues to support an additional 8000 Guyanese living with disabilities through the public assistance system which offers a monthly grant to these persons. The children were registered and received

the GY\$100,000 cash grant will now also be added to that database to receive monthly public assistance. The database created will also be used to better inform future projects, and can even be used across sectors for various purposes including epidemiological studies.

Other initiatives and projects include:

- Rehiring of over 2000 Community Service Officers in Amerindian Villages across Guyana;
- Continuous budgetary allocations, consistent with requests, to all constitutional bodies including the four rights commissions including the Ethnic Relations and Indigenous Peoples Commissions;
- Appointment of the Ethnic Relations Commission through the constitutional parliamentary process in April 2023;
- Stakeholder consultations on a variety of issues with Civil Society Actors through the National Stakeholders Forum coordinated by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance;
- Advancements in housing programmes including improved efficiency in the distribution of house lots, fully built homes, etc.;
- Improvements to existing roads and bridges and construction of new roads and bridges in communities all across the country;
- Introduction of GOAL scholarships benefitting over 8000 Guyanese so far with free tertiary level education;
- Introduction of the GROW scholarship initiative to improve education levels and make Guyanese more employable across a variety of sectors;
- Implementation of the Women's Innovation and Investment Network (WIIN) initiative, facilitated by the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute (GWLI) benefitting women from all backgrounds in an effort to promote more equal opportunity and equitable access to training, resources and small monetary project support. The Women's Innovation Investment Network (WIIN) upskilling project was launched in May 2021. This initiative, like many other social welfare intervention programmes, falls under the purview of the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security. Since its launch, over 600 women from all across the 10 Administrative Regions of Guyana have directly benefited from the range of training courses being offered by WIIN. WIIN continues to transform the lives of thousands of women across all the regions of Guyana through its flexible, inclusive, and impactful hybrid training format. The free training initiative continues to yield entrepreneurs and women owned businesses while also empowering women who are knowledgeable in various technical vocational areas. This is a dynamic programme that adapts to fit the needs of the population and is continually reviewed to ensure that there is a high probability for employment for all beneficiaries.

- The Guyana Women's Leadership Institute (GWLII) was rehabilitated and expanded, and the first female business incubator was launched at the facility in July 2021. Since then, more businesses have joined the incubator and are accessing a range of services including training and small grants. Through the Empowerment Fund, aimed at encouraging women to create new start-up businesses, 4,200 women received \$50,000 cash grants.
- Eliminating domestic violence and gender-based violence in all its forms also remains a priority of the Government of Guyana. The launch of the 914 Domestic Violence Hotline has also significantly increased the number of reports of domestic violence and childcare violations. From December 2020 to June 2022 a total of 17, 231 calls and 1,878 messages were received and responded to with appropriate actions. These calls include reports of domestic violence and childcare issues.
- The creation of 10,000 to 15,000 part-time jobs within Government Ministries, Regional Administrations and Local Authorities has also aided in closing income gaps and improving job preparedness for persons all across the country. This initiative especially targeted persons who were not able to work full-time jobs, including single parents, and young adults who are advancing their education.

NB: Sections in this Response to Part IV specific allegations and to responses to the Joint Communication and Working Group of Experts of People of African Descent provides facts and details regarding the programmes implemented between 2020 September to present under the PPP/C government.

PART IV

Responses to Specific Concerns Raised by the Joint Communication

Please note that this response shall go through allegation after allegation in the Joint Communication herein and will be supported with appendices where availability of space or the size of supporting documentation may prove challenging.

Page 1-2: “Information we have received concerning the delicate and deteriorating situation of human rights of people of African descent in Guyana, who live on the fringes of society and suffer from numerous violations of their rights”

Page 2: “Afro Guyanese continue to live in separate areas, usually far from the rest of the population and often the least urbanised. These regions of the country are characterised by the inadequacy of infrastructure, substandard housing, roads and services, homelessness, inadequate social programmes to assist low-income families, remoteness from universities and other services required for their personal and economic development, as well as from fundamental health services”.

Page 2: “Relegated to these remote and residual areas, they still do not own or enjoy the land to which they are entitled

These allegations are totally false.

In fact, so preposterous are these allegations that any and every Guyanese regardless of ethnicity know these allegations to be false.

First of all, it must clearly be understood that Guyana is a country of minorities – a country of six peoples where no single ethnic group comprises 50 % and more of the population.

Claims of disenfranchisement of African Guyanese based on geography are absurd – for example, more than 78% of the capital city, Georgetown’s population is comprised of African and Mixed Guyanese, and as such, have access to the only tertiary hospital (and choices of other public and private healthcare facilities), the University of Guyana Turkeyen Campus, all social and cultural institutions, all Government Ministries, nursery, primary and secondary schools, vocational education schools, art schools, the vast majority of civil society organisations’ offices, all major hotels, malls, parks, zoos, playgrounds, and every other service and institution which makes Georgetown the economic hub of Guyana.

Regional population breakdown by ethnic background, Guyana 2012											
Ethnic background	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Total
African	635	5891	22774	126378	16472	23383	2135	858	353	19604	218483
Amerindian	17846	8834	2820	7066	1270	1801	6833	8009	20808	3205	78492
Chinese	14	41	192	737	44	178	25	9	10	127	1377
East Indian	472	20861	64183	109105	27234	72406	1569	282	253	1128	297493
Mixed	8616	11046	17652	66844	4740	11727	7514	1838	2708	15847	148532
Portuguese	46	105	84	1148	41	73	223	76	73	41	1910
White	12	31	31	192	16	60	9	5	29	30	415
Other	2	1	49	93	3	24	67	0	4	10	253
Total	27643	46810	107785	311563	49820	109652	18375	11077	24238	39992	746955

Ethnic Demographic data by Region, 2012 Census - Source: Bureau of Statistics.

From the table it is clear that the majority of persons of African descent do not live on the ‘fringes of society’, nor in isolated areas, but live in the populous and urbanized coastal regions. In fact, Afro Guyanese are historically the most urbanized ethnic group in Guyana.

Of the 218,483 Afro Guyanese living in Guyana 214,502 live in the more developed Administrative Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10 and more than 50 % live in Region 4 where the capital is located.

Only 3,981 (less than 2%) live in the interior Administrative Regions 1, 7, 8, and 9.

The public, teaching and health services are occupied by majority Afro Guyanese, and so are the Disciplined services (Guyana Defence Force, the Guyana Police Force, the Guyana Prison Service and the Guyana Fire Service).

An example that Afro-Guyanese are not marginalized is the electricity subsidy given to all residents and commercial businesses of the Linden municipality and all residents of Administrative Region #10 who pay Electricity Tariffs of \$5/KWH for residential customers whereas all other areas of the country including hinterland towns pay the GPL Tariffs of \$42/KWH average for residential customers.

ELECTRICITY SUBSIDY TO REGION 10 - LINMINE

Year	Actual in billions
2020	4,470,057
2021	2,314,368
2022	4,948,527
Total	11,732,952

Source: Ministry of Finance 2023 Budget Figures: G\$000

Notes:

- 1. 2020 Includes arrears payment of \$2 billion*
- 2. 2022 Increase allocation relates to the over 40 percent increase in world oil prices in 2022 Vs 2021*

Page 2- “According to information received Afro-Guyanese are subject to social, economic and cultural marginalisation, which leads to subsequent disparities in all areas of life, including education, employment, social security access, access to justice, infrastructure, housing, access to adequate healthcare, access to clean, healthy and sustainable environment, freedom of movement and personal integrity..... Vicious cycle, makes it more difficult to correct the wealth gap between the Afro descendant population and the rest of Guyanese population.”

Totally untrue.

Policy of “NO one left Behind”

All of the Social Security safety net programmes implemented by the present government are available to all Guyanese across ethnicities, social classes, sexual orientation, economic backgrounds, and statuses of relationships. Eligibility may be based on specific criteria such as age, disability, poverty, or gender as laid out in the respective legislative or policy documents - none of which are tied to ethnicity.

All policies and programmes with regards to economic advancement, skills training, small loans, housing and water are open to all, with the focus on the poor and vulnerable - women, children, youth, elderly, Amerindians/Indigenous and disabled.

We do not deny there is poverty but with our programmes and policies the levels of poverty are declining across the country especially among those living in the interior communities, who have traditionally been the poorest.

Education

Right to education -Making sure no child is left behind

Guyana has achieved universal primary school education. Universal Secondary Education will be a reality by 2025.

New secondary schools are being constructed especially in the most disadvantaged Administrative Regions; 1, 7, 8 and 9. New secondary schools are also being constructed in Administrative Regions 3, 4 and 6. Twenty schools that were burnt mysteriously in last 3 years are being rebuilt.

The table shows a low level of drop outs, unlike what is claimed in the Joint Communication. However, efforts continue to be made to ensure each child finishes primary and secondary education.

Drop Out rates by level for 2019-2021			
Primary			
Year and Gender	M	F	T
2018	2%	2%	2%
2019	1%	1%	1%
2020	1%	1%	1%
Primary Top			
Year and Gender	M	F	T
2018	4%	5%	4%
2019	4%	3%	5%
2020	4%	3%	5%
Secondary			
Year and Gender	M	F	T
2018	3%	2%	3%
2019	2%	2%	2%
2020	2%	2%	2%

Every Amerindian/Indigenous community has a nursery and primary school, as does every coastal community. Secondary schools in the interior include dormitories to allow students from far-away areas to attend. As the Amerindian population is the fastest growing ethnic group, the government has an aggressive infrastructure programme to expand and build new schools in these areas.

Access to Quality education and employment through integrated development strategies is a means of fighting poverty, exclusion and promoting social integration

On average 17%-20% of the national budget is allocated to the education sector. The other sources of funding within the education sector are the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the World Bank (WB), Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and UNICEF.

Teacher Training

By 2025 all teachers will be trained or in-training. This initiative is currently ongoing with the training of teachers moving to the online modality. Five thousand teachers (online and insitu) are being trained this year at the Cyril Potter College of Education, the largest intake in the history of this institution, and includes applicants from every region of Guyana.

Provision of cash transfers to school children

The Government of Guyana in 2021 re-introduced the “*Because we Care cash grant*”²⁶, which is an annual direct cash transfer aimed at improving attendance and reducing dropouts for school aged children enrolled in both public and private schools from nursery to secondary levels. This initiative benefitted 192,000 children in 2021 and 196,000 in 2022. In 2023, over 214,000 children in public and private schools will benefit from \$40,000 cash grant (\$35,000 “Because we care cash grant” and \$5,000 uniform grant). \$8.6 billion were allocated in 2023 budget. This cash grant has increased from \$15,000 per child in 2021 to \$25,000 per child in 2022 to \$40,000 in 2023.

2022 ACTUALS BECAUSE WE CARE CASH GRANT DISTRIBUTION			
	No. of Students	Value of Grant	Total Grants
Region 1	12,594	30,000	377,820,000
Region 2	12,447	30,000	373,410,000
Region 3	25,818	30,000	774,540,000
Region 4	39,205	30,000	1,176,150,000
Region 5	11,465	30,000	343,950,000
Region 6	22,933	30,000	687,990,000
Region 7	7,867	30,000	236,010,000
Region 8	4,188	30,000	125,640,000
Region 9	10,045	30,000	301,350,000
Region 10	11,712	30,000	351,360,000
Georgetown	37,748	30,000	1,132,440,000
TOTAL	196,022		5,880,660,000
GRANT: \$25,000 for BWC and \$5,000 for School Uniforms			

Source: Ministry of Finance Budget office

²⁶ This programme which was introduced in 2012 was abandoned by the former Government from 2015 to 2020

National Breakfast Programme

The Breakfast Programme is run centrally by the Ministry of Education. Daily meals are prepared and delivered to classrooms during the morning hours before the commencement of academic instructions.

The programme operates on a contractor-based modality which involves women being employed from the catchment area of the school they serve.

All meals are designed and crafted by Carnegie Home of Economics, of the Ministry of Education, and made standard to all contractors of the programme through training. Quality control checks (home kitchen standard, meal preparations and delivery of meals in school) are done by regional field officers employed by the programme.

The Breakfast Programme serves grade six students in primary schools on the coastland (students transitioning to secondary school). The 2021-2022 enrollment shows that the programme serves 100% of all grade six (6) coastland students attending Government schools.

Community Based School Feeding Programme (Hot Meals)

The Community Based School Feeding Programme is run by a School Feeding Management Committee established in each school. The management committee includes a wide cross section of stakeholders from the community who are responsible for the effective implementation and management of the School Feeding Program. These committee members are volunteers who are dedicated to improving the health, nutrition and educational outcomes of the children in schools.

Cooks for the Community Based School Feeding Program are trained by the Ministry of Health and sample menus on nutritional content are provided at these training.

2,651 Nursery children and 26,544 Primary Pupils, a total of 29,195 children are benefitting from this programme.

National School Feeding Programme

This programme provides snacks, breakfast, and hot meals, and continues to be expanded. At least 85,000 students currently benefit from this programme; schools are selected based on assessment of poverty levels. In the hinterland communities where the majority of the population is Indigenous, all the students receive breakfast and lunches. In 2023, a new Home-Grown School Feeding programme is being introduced, which will allow communities to provide fresh locally produced ingredients to schools for the preparation of nutritious meals for learners.

Special education, inclusion, and social integration

Currently there are 13 designated spaces (schools and classrooms) throughout Guyana to cater to the needs of persons with disabilities who are moderately to severely affected. The Ministry will soon establish additional SEN spaces based on location and need. The Ministry of Education has now established the SEN sector at its headquarters, in Georgetown, Region 4.

The Regional Special Education Needs/Disability Diagnostic and Treatment Centre is responsible for providing comprehensive psycho-education evaluations and furnishing Individual Education Plans. This centre is located in the Cyril Potter College of Education compound, Region 4.

The teacher's training college is for the first time offering an associate degree in special education, and over one hundred individuals have registered for this programme already.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in SEN will continue at the National Center for Education Resource Development (NCERD). More than 2000 teachers have accessed CPD in SEND to date.

Teenage Mothers

A reintegration of teenage mothers' policy is fully in place. This allows teen mothers to complete their formal education in a public school.

Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL).

Regarding post-secondary and tertiary education, the Government established the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) in 2021. GOAL is designed to create and expand educational opportunities for all Guyanese by providing 20,000 online scholarships in five years. In 2021, 6000 scholarships were awarded to beneficiaries across all ten Administrative Regions, (over 4000 of the fully sponsored scholarships were awarded to women) and in 2022 an additional 4,500 scholarships were awarded. The application process for 2023 is currently ongoing. These are online scholarships from certificate, diploma and bachelor's and master's degrees at international Universities, the University of West Indies and the University of Guyana. The scholarships are paid for by the government and the student is **not** bound on completion to serve the public sector.

“Get Ready for Opportunities to Work” (GROW)

GROW is a special programme under the GOAL which provides opportunities for persons who did not successfully complete secondary education to pursue the SCQF Level 5 Diploma or the GED online. In April 2023, 1400 students successfully graduated and 800 are now eligible to apply to become trained teachers or to enter the university's degree programmes. Persons applied and completed their courses from all 10 Administrative Regions of Guyana.

Technical Vocational Education Training

Further, recognizing the importance of TVET, the Government of Guyana in 2022 expended \$2.1B to expand the programmes offered by TVET Institutions across the country, which benefitted approximately 3,655 persons.

Housing

Right to shelter and a safe and clean environment

With specific reference to the alleged discrimination against Afro-Guyanese in connection with the allocation of house lots, it is pertinent to state that the PPP/C Administration via the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA), executes a fair allocation programme when distributing plots of land - there is no qualification criteria based on race, religion, gender, political affiliation or financial means. Additionally, it allows for easy access to home ownership, whether through the allocation of lands, built housing units and/or various home construction projects.

The Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA), which falls under the purview of the Ministry of Housing and Water (MHW), is mandated to manage the national housing programme to provide **subsidized house lots or houses to Guyanese without discrimination**. The process by which the Central Housing and Planning Authority allocates house lots and housing units does not allow for there to be any marginalization in relation to who is allocated a house lots or house in a particular housing area.

Through a computerized system and based on year of application, and catering for exceptional circumstances to accommodate vulnerable situations, a preliminary list of applicants is compiled consistent with the amount of house lots available for allocation. The applicant is then given the opportunity to choose their house lots in public in a random process based on predetermined affordability categories. In this process the affordability categories are the only variable of the applicant that is taken into consideration – allocations are made from among cost appropriate moderate, middle or high income house lots.

Persons who have acquired a house lot or house can use their title of ownership and a guarantee letter from the CHPA to obtain a low interest loan from a commercial bank at low interest rates. As such there no bias whatsoever regarding ethnicity and all are on equal footing. Notable successes in this area include:

- Allocation of over 21,000 house lots from 2020-2022, primarily to low and middle-income households.
- Construction of over 1,200 housing units for low and moderate-income households and young professionals.
- Regularization of over 800 squatter families by 2022.
- Construction of Core Home and provision of Home Improvement Subsidies to over 300 vulnerable families between 2021 and 2022.
- Provision of Vouchers was launched in 2022 to provide the steel and cement required for the construction of foundations to over 667 house owners who were allocated house lots from the CHPA, mainly in coastal Regions where the majority of Afro-Guyanese live. This programme continues, and is expanding.

The physical manifestation of the establishment of a housing area developed through the Ministry of Housing and Water and the Central Housing and Planning Authority is usually seen

through the infrastructure works completed. This includes the construction of the road and drainage networks, the installation of pure water distribution systems and interconnectivity to existing water supply mains through the Guyana Water Inc., and the construction of the electrical distribution network and connectivity of the electricity grid in the respective area.

This ensures that persons living within CHPA established housing areas have adequate access to their property, access to potable water and access to electricity. These basic elements help to ensure that the right to adequate standard of living is sustained through the provisions and interventions by the Government of Guyana via the MHW, the CHPA, and partnering agencies.

Selection of Applicants for Allocation

Generally, applicants are considered for allocation of land based on four main criteria:

- i. Year of Application: Each application for house lot is dated and earlier years are given priority for allocation.
- ii. Total Household Income: At the interview stage, each application is evaluated and potential land owners are pre-qualified based on their total household income. In other words, this method of pre-qualification ascertains the income category of the house lot that will be allocated using the agency's income category criteria.
- iii. Administrative Region of Preference: each applicant is asked to indicate their region of preference on the application form and their choice is discussed during a face-to-face interview.
- iv. Availability of Land: An applicant who may be eligible for a Low-Income house lot can only be offered a plot of land as low-income lots are made available in the region and scheme of their choice.

Acceptance of Allocation Offers

After applicants are selected for allocation, they are given allocation offers in newly established housing schemes based on their region of preference and the category of land that they were prequalified for. Important to note, is that, the ethnic composition of adjacent schemes or the race of potential allottees do not determine which applicants are shortlisted for an allocation. Nonetheless, shortlisted applicants can exercise their right to refuse an offer if they desire a different location.

Distributing House Lots

The MHW via the CHPA administers an unbiased and transparent system for the distribution of house lots. In that, the Housing Authority employs a 'lottery selection' method to distribute lands for residential purposes. This method allows for house lot numbers to be placed in bags and thoroughly shook in public settings. Then, all pre-qualified applicants are required to select their house lot number from the bag. This procedure prohibits applicants from choosing their neighbors

Status of Housing Programme post 2020

In August, 2020, the PPP/C Administration inherited a total of seventy thousand and sixty (70,060) pending applications from persons who had applied in all ten Administrative Regions across Guyana and were awaiting an allocation.

Region	2019 and Prior	January – July 31 st 2020	Total
1	172	0	172
2	1,993	61	2,054
3	10,680	112	10,792
4	41,949	1,104	43,053
5	2,956	401	3,357
6	4,564	431	4,995
7	825	0	825
8	44	0	44
9	557	31	588
10	4,109	71	4,180
Total	67,849	2,211	70,060

Source: CHPA

Having observed this significant number of active pending applications, the Government of Guyana via the MHW; CHPA, increased the allocation target to at least 10,000 allocations to be made annually. Overall, the aim is to allocate 50,000 house lots by 2025. In light of this, the current Administration has been working assiduously to reduce this backlog of applications by not only making lands available for all Guyanese, but by ensuring that their dream of homeownership is realized.

Allocation Data – August, 2020 to December, 2022

The Government of Guyana disclaims and refutes all statements made with regards to the implementation of a racial house lot distribution system. The Irfaan Ali-led Administration, has never discriminated against Afro-Guyanese when distributing house lots. In fact, the table below outlines the total number of allocations done during the period of August 2nd, 2020 to December 31st, 2022. The data shows that based on geographic location that 45% of the house lots distributed were to Afro-Guyanese, 48% to Indo-Guyanese and the remaining 7% to persons of mixed races.

a. Allocations disaggregated by ethnicity

Ethnicity	2020 (Aug. – Dec.)	2021 (Jan. – Dec.)	2022 (Jan. – Dec.)	Total	%
Afro-Guyanese	1,385	3,696	3,850	8,931	45
Indo-Guyanese	1,327	2,574	5,632	9,533	48
Mixed Race	6	518	802	1,326	7

Total Allocations	2,718	6,788	10,284	19,790	100
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Source: CHPA

As indicated in the table above, for 2020 and 2021, 54% of the offers/lots were accepted by Afro-Guyanese while, 38% were taken-up by Indo-Guyanese. On the other hand, in 2022, the percentage of lands allocated to Afro-Guyanese slightly decreased as compared to the total given to Indo-Guyanese. This is as a result of the location of housing schemes that were established in 2022 and the applicants' choice to accept offers for those housing areas.

b. Allocations disaggregated by Administrative Region

Administrative Regions	2020 (Aug. – Dec.)	2021 (Jan. – Dec.)	2022 (Jan. – Dec.)	Total
2	0	639	66	705
3	1,464	361	2792	4,617
4	1,076	4,889	5397	11,362
5	6		766	772
6	161	218	921	1,300
9	9	331	240	580
10	2	350	102	454
Total Allocations	2,718	6,788	10,284	19,790

Source: CHPA

c. Allocations disaggregated by Gender

Sex	2020 (Aug. – Dec.)	2021 (Jan. – Dec.)	2022 (Jan. – Dec.)	Total	%
Male	738	1,910	2,817	5,465	28
Female	1,119	3,055	4,589	8,763	44
Joint Ownership	861	1,823	2,878	5,562	28
Total Allocations	2,718	6,788	10,284	19,790	100

Source: CHPA

Note: 44% of all house lot owners are female.

d. Allocations disaggregated by Age

Age (years)	2020 (Aug. – Dec.)	2021 (Jan. – Dec.)	2022 (Jan. – Dec.)	Total	%
21-35	1,399	3,669	5,817	10,885	55
36-50	928	2,068	3,098	6,094	31
51 and above	391	1,051	1,369	2,811	14
Total Allocations	2,718	6,788	10,284	19,790	100

e. Prices used to allocate Residential house lots

Region	Low Income \$Gy	Moderate Income \$Gy	Middle Income \$Gy	High Income \$Gy
2	92,000 150,000	300,000	-	-
3	150,000 200,000	500,000 550,000	800,000	-
4	250,000 500,000 } EBD 600,000	750,000 - 1,000,000 800,000	1,800,000 - 2,300,000	4.0 M 6.0 M
	500,000 - ECD	803,000 - 900,000	1,100,000 – 2,300,000	-
5	200,000	300,000	500,000	-
6	150,000 -182,000	286,000 -320,000	520,000 -585,000	-
9	250,000 -280,000	385,000	515,000	-
10	250,000 -500,000	350,000 -410,000	460,000 -625,000	-

The Authority's system for house lot allocation mandates that, all pre-qualified applicants (regardless of their ethnicity, gender or age) should be offered house lots according to their year

of application and the availability of land. Therefore, over the years, the agency has been offering and allocating lands to applicants by means of this system.

Allocation Data – June, 2015 to July, 2020

The allocation figure achieved under the previous Administration, for the five-year period (June, 2015 to July, 2020) is by far, significantly less than the distribution total attained within merely two and a half years under the current PPP/C government.

The allocation data presented above (19,790 in 2.5years) indicates an increase in the distribution of house lots by 163% when compared to the seven thousand, five hundred and thirty-four (7,534) allocations done in five years.

Presented below is a breakdown of allocations done by the previous Administration:

Regions	2015 (Jun. – Dec.)	2016 (Jan. – Dec.)	2017 (Jan. – Dec.)	2018 (Jan. – Dec.)	2019 (Jan. – Dec.)	2020 (Jan. – Jul.)	Total
1	0	1	52	0	0	0	53
2	0	2	28	0	110	0	140
3	6	286	77	27	98	2	496
4	111	1,156	513	773	477	1,232	4,262
5	5	165	29	9	306	369	883
6	39	319	99	3	257	383	1,100
7	0	5	0	1	12	0	18
8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	0	50	132	0	41	0	223
10	0	36	201	121	0	1	359
Total	161	2,020	1,131	934	1,301	1,987	7,534

Noteworthy is that the majority of house lots distributed in the period 2015-2020 is in Administrative Region # 4.

Access to Adequate and Affordable Housing

It is obvious that the Government of Guyana has been giving ardent attention to the housing needs of the population by ensuring that all Guyanese can access adequate and affordable housing as a means of improving their standard of living. It is not only from the standpoint of developing new housing schemes, to make homeownership within the reach of people and a resounding reality but also, by being strategic with developing programmes and projects which

provide jobs for people, and embeds the creation of new businesses in the construction and manufacturing sectors.

Home Construction Assistance Facility (HCAF)

HCAF was established with the aim of making access to housing more affordable and to increase occupancy of lands allocated not only by the Government of Guyana but for citizens who privately own house lots. In other words, the facility helps Guyanese in government-developed and non-government housing schemes who have been unable to construct on their houses.

This initiative thus far, has seen an increase in the capacity of land owners to own and occupy their own home by being able to easily access home financing via the bank or through the provision of subsidy from the government. In addition, it has reduced dependency on rental and resulted in an increase of activities in the construction sector.

The facility employs unbiased procedures and uses fair criteria to select beneficiaries. Beneficiaries are selected from housing areas across all Administrative Region regardless of their race.

The following projects fall under the purview of the Home Construction Assistance Facility:

- i. Home Construction Assistance Programme– which allows for the collaboration of the Ministry; CHPA with the banks to facilitate access to lending institutions for the construction of three main housing designs across all regions.
- ii. Bartica Housing Project – that will see the construction and allocation of 500 affordable housing units in Region 7. (*This project has been initiated and will be fully executed later in 2023*)
- iii. Lethem Housing Subsidy – that provides a grant of \$1M to potential homeowners in Region 9 as well as, loans that are offered for up to \$2M at a rate of 3.5%.
- iv. Housing Subsidy Programme – Provides steel and cement, and subsidies to potential homeowners & private home developers across Guyana in two categories:
 - a. Estimated Construction Cost of $\leq \$6M$ = **1 sling of cement + steel for foundation**
 - b. Estimated Construction Cost of $> \$6M$ but $\leq \$25M$ = **2 slings of cement**

Adequate Housing and Urban Accessibility Programme

This programme is funded through the Inter-American Development Bank specifically targeting low-income households. The programme's Affordable and Sustainable Housing Component facilitates the distribution of Home Improvement Subsidies and the Construction of Core Homes to eligible low-income beneficiaries. This is aimed to improve the quality of a habitable structure through the home improvement subsidy and the construction of homes for low-income earners who cannot afford it or replacement homes for persons whose are deemed uninhabitable.

Security of Tenure

Under international law, to be adequately housed means having security of tenure and not having to worry about being evicted or having your home or lands taken away. It is ensured that these households have security of tenure through the document of ownership such as Certificates of Title or Transports. These legal documents held by the owners of the land show the transfer of the land from the Government of Guyana to legal ownership by the persons allotted.

This provision of adequate housing has had many benefits as home ownership and adequate housing has allowed persons to live in safe and secure environments with access to all basic services, in proximity to educational and health care facilities (for example). Also, it has opened opportunities for others to further improve their standard of living through the improvements of their properties or expansion of business ventures using their properties as collateral.

Regularization and/or Relocation of Informal Settlements

Regularization

It should first of all be noted that squatting is illegal and it is discouraged by the Government of Guyana. In spite of this, the government has great respect for persons' right to be adequately housed and as such, implements measures as far as possible, to ensure that any adverse effects as a result of squatting are minimized.

To this end, the CHPA has implemented a squatter regularization and relocation programme. It is pertinent to mention that the regularization of informal settlements is not based on the ethnic composition of the area. Through the programme, though no new informal settlement is encouraged, the regularization of an area is taken into consideration once there is no dispute of ownership of the lands, or the lands are not reserved for drainage and irrigation, river or sea defense purposes and there are no plans for future national development for the said area. In this case, the CHPA facilitates the process toward legal ownership of the lands by the informal settlers.

Relocation

In the cases where the formalization of the settlement cannot be facilitated, the Government of Guyana through the Ministry of Housing and Water - CHPA, initiates a relocation process for informal households to be relocated to existing communities. This is done through the construction and allocation of homes or land allocation which allows for persons to acquire land to construct their home.

Throughout the years, Guyanese of all races have benefited from various relocation interventions undertaken by the Government of Guyana. Some of these benefits include:

- Resettlement into a more cohesive, sustainable and empowered community;
- Accessing a formal electrical distribution network, potable water and good sanitation;
- Accessing physical infrastructure such as proper roads, bridges, sidewalks, etc.;
- Accessing facilities such as educational, recreational, health, social, etc.;

- Obtaining Security of Tenure (Lot allocation, Transfer of ownership via Certificates of Title);
- Experiencing an improved quality of life (security, comfort, etc.) through adequate housing.

The following steps are taken by the MHW - CHPA when relocating informal households:

- Engagement of the households by the MHW - CHPA
- Inventory of the Households and the structures in the informal settlement
- Valuation of Properties (each informal structure is valued by the Valuation Authority)
- Identification of housing areas to relocate the informal settlers
- Application for Land by Household heads that is facilitated through the CH&PA
- Allocation of house lots / housing units by CH&PA
- Provision of Financial Compensation²⁷
- Signing of Settlement Agreements and Processing of Certificates of Title
- Relocation (this is facilitated and supported by the CH&PA where possible)
- Dismantling of Informal Settlements Structures
- Post Relocation Support (to facilitate the community integration)

Cane View/Herstelling (Mocha) Relocation Project

Block 'X' Pln. Herstelling is also known to residents of the area as "Caneview" or as an extension of the "Mocha Arcadia" community. It was a rural informal settlement, predominantly occupied by Afro-Guyanese and situated on a portion of road-reserved land with no physical infrastructure, electricity or water distribution network. The informal households in the area obtained electricity through illegal connections while others used batteries to charge appliances. This area was deemed as inadequate for housing and resulted in poor quality of life.

Therefore, the PPP/C Government intervened via the Central Housing and Planning Authority's Relocation programme and the following measures were undertaken to protect (as far as possible) the livelihood of the settlers during and after the relocation process:

- ✓ May 2008 – Engagement with residents and preliminary inventory exercise carried out.
- ✓ 2009 -Block and Occupational Survey done by CHPA.
- ✓ Land identified at Pln. Farm Phase II and Plot 'B' Pln. Herstelling for relocation
- ✓ Sept 2021–Household inventory exercise and building numbering were completed.
- ✓ Oct 2021 - Valuation of properties done by Valuation Office
- ✓ Oct 2021 - House lot applications and interview processes were facilitated.

²⁷ In cases where the request to be relocated are deemed necessary for national development projects, compensation is provided to the households in compliance with the Constitution. This compensation is provided based on the valuation done by the Ministry of Finance Valuation Office and is inclusive of relocations costs and other support.

- ✓ Dec 2021 - Drafted relocation contracts between CHPA and beneficiaries
- ✓ Dec 2021 - Allocation of house lot to beneficiaries
- ✓ Dec 2021-Distribution of cheques and signed Agreements in the total of Building Valuation, displacement and site improvement costs
- ✓ Jan 2022 - Land identification exercise was done
- ✓ Jan 2022 - Beneficiaries commenced construction of their homes
- ✓ March 2022 - Beneficiaries register/sign-up for titles
- ✓ Financial Compensation was issued to Informal Settlers for their structures.
- ✓ June 2022 - Valuation of crops by the National Agricultural Research and Extension institute (NAREI) was completed
- ✓ July 2022 - Compensation was provided for crops as per valuated amount by NAREI
- ✓ Application for Electricity and water by beneficiaries was done. (CHPA wrote the GPL and GWI to expedite the process).
- ✓ Additional assistance (Labour and other materials) was given to beneficiaries to complete their structures and improve living environments (landfilling).
- \$250,050,000Gy was compensated to Informal Settlers for their structures.
- \$5,103,009 was given as compensation for crops
- Over seven million Guyana dollars was expended on additional works
- 28 persons were relocated to Farm and Herstelling housing schemes
- 7 persons are yet to be relocated.²⁸

Government's Intervention in Linden, Region 10

The town of Linden, Region 10, predominantly populated by Afro-Guyanese, has by no means been excluded from the Government's housing programme. The Government has made significant strides through interventions in the town and has designed major plans for the Region in relation to housing and the development of Sustainable communities.

It should be underscored that, as in other communities, Linden, Region 10, is not exempt from the considerations made when planning and designing the housing areas. The housing areas are designed with lands allocated for education, healthcare and other necessary amenities such as, cultural and religious development and it is ensured that the communities have adequate recreational and green spaces.

Since August 2020, the Government has allocated four hundred and fifty-four (454) lots in housing areas that were designed in Region 10, and plans are already underway to develop new housing areas in the Region. This allocation figure was achieved in a two and a half-year period

²⁸ The 7 persons have refused to engage and comply with CH&PA although frequent engagements were made. The engagement process continues.

and it is 26.5% greater than the number of house lots issued in the Region during a five-year period, by the previous administration.

Infrastructure works also continue to progress. Government has injected \$40 million dollars, towards road rehabilitation and upgrades in Linden. Another \$100 million was expended to put in the necessary infrastructure in virgin lands, which were acquired by the CHPA for new housing development. This resulted in approximately 8,000 acres of land being outfitted with roads, access bridges, and water and electrical networks.

In addition to the development of housing areas and the allocation of lands, the Government of Guyana is committed to constructing 1,000 houses in this Region. To date, construction has been completed for a portion of the total units and houses have been allocated to Lindeners.

Further, informal settlers of Linden have benefitted from the Government's Relocation Programme whereby they were afforded access to affordable and adequate housing, provided with financial compensation and support during and after the relocation process.

Government's interventions in Linden have transformed lives and increased standard of living and the PPP/C Administration is also committed to reviving economic activities in Region 10. Such that, an aggressive plan for job creation has been designed and is being implemented. The intention is to tap into the skills of residents needed in the housing and construction sectors as well as, to source the building and construction materials from the suppliers in Linden.

It can be concluded that, the Government of Guyana's Housing programme does not marginalize Afro-Guyanese nor deprives them of the right to an adequate standard of living or housing. Afro-Guyanese have been allowed to equally enjoy land and home ownership in communities as any other citizen of Guyana. In fact, Afro-Guyanese have benefited from the Government's Housing Programme either through the allocation of land and/or turn-key housing, as well as, various forms of Government subsidies inclusive of land development, supply of building materials, issuance of funding, facilitation of access to mortgages, etc.

Community-based Employment Stimulation Project (CESP)

The CESP engages vulnerable groups through block-making initiatives providing employment for persons with disabilities and youth from low-income and vulnerable communities. This project has employed youth from vulnerable communities or vulnerable groups who produce and sell concrete blocks for the housing programme. During a visit to the block-making programme in Leopold Street, Georgetown, a high-risk area, where the programme is being taught, President Dr Ali encouraged youths who were constructively engaged in this project to use the experience to embark on business ventures. The project scope includes start-up support, tools, materials, transportation, market sourcing for blocks, and project management.

This is one of the many ventures which the Government has embarked on to ensure the upskilling of Guyanese across several sectors, to fill gaps that exist in the labour force, as well as to help Guyanese to learn valuable skills and improve their financial situations.

Health

Right to access to health services, treatment and care

The Ministry of Health is responsible for the national public healthcare system in Guyana which is available free of cost to all persons in Guyana. The services are available to all individuals regardless of sex, ethnicity, profession, medical status, gender, socioeconomic status, nationality, or any other factor.

Public health services include but are not limited to medical outpatient care, primary health care services, maternal and child health services, immunization, chronic disease care (including hypertension, cardiac and diabetic care), STDS and HIV Aids services, emergency health services, medical transportation, advanced and specialized healthcare services, laboratory services, radiological examination and imaging services, mental health services, and pharmacy services, etc.

Every village, and Amerindian Community, has a health post/ health centre, every town has health centres, and every administrative region has district hospitals and a regional hospital.

Ministry of Health - Under 5 Immunization Programme

This is a classic case of inclusion and the Government of Guyana's commitment to the "no child left behind" policy.

The below data is comprised information on the Pentavalent and Measles Mumps and Rubella (MMR) Vaccines since these are used as the international indicators for vaccination. Please see the narrative that follows the below tables.

Pentavalent Vaccine Data

Region	2022					2021					2020				
	Target (M)	Target(F)	Male %	Female %	Total %	Target (M)	Target(F)	Male %	Female %	Total %	Target(M)	Target(F)	Male %	Female %	Total %
1	534	532	105	100	103	605	562	86	89	88	568	531	94	98	96
2	516	556	93	85	89	550	455	86	87	87	599	537	81	83	82
3	1006	943	95	97	96	975	1000	95	90	93	1042	978	91	95	93
4	671	662	86	86	86	730	719	90	92	91	786	678	83	95	89

EBD															
4 ECD	313	285	91	95	93	846	894	90	80	85	896	890	89	93	91
4 Mun	818	765	95	103	99	301	262	88	100	94	374	331	75	82	78
4 GT	792	714	92	97	94	714	684	87	94	91	766	750	96	100	98
5	461	398	91	99	95	413	422	104	94	99	470	445	87	93	89
6	839	822	100	94	97	906	860	98	98	98	971	942	91	94	93
7	340	321	93	94	93	366	357	105	91	98	318	340	110	85	98
8	179	169	93	98	95	214	232	86	79	83	206	186	91	79	85
9	356	425	104	94	100	427	394	85	91	88	372	408	107	85	96
10	374	415	101	90	95	410	383	82	94	88	502	454	75	81	78
Private	1111					1067					1252				
Total					100%					98%					97%

Measles Mumps and Rubella (MMR) Vaccine Data

Region	2020					2021					2022				
	Target (M)	Target(F)	Male %	Female %	Total %	Target (M)	Target(F)	Male %	Female %	Total %	Target(M)	Target(F)	Male %	Female %	Total %
1	534	532	99	125	113	605	562	75	82	79	568	531	108	90	99
2	516	556	85	89	87	550	455	88	81	85	599	537	94	110	102
3	1006	943	96	94	95	975	1000	91	94	93	1042	978	104	99	102
4 EBD	671	662	90	98	94	730	719	85	90	88	786	678	98	94	96
4 ECD	313	285	95	101	98	846	894	77	80	79	896	890	91	82	87
4 Mun	818	765	83	94	89	301	262	96	89	93	374	331	98	100	99
4 GT	792	714	94	91	93	714	684	78	85	81	766	750	90	94	92

5	461	398	92	99	96	413	422	82	84	83	470	445	108	95	102
6	839	822	98	98	98	906	860	98	88	93	971	942	96	96	96
7	340	321	132	109	121	366	357	106	98	102	318	340	100	99	99
8	179	169	87	75	81	214	232	121	107	114	206	186	87	81	84
9	356	425	116	95	105	427	394	101	103	102	372	408	89	108	99
10	374	415	76	89	83	410	383	81	84	83	502	454	102	101	101
Private	1432					930					988				
Total					104%					94%					103%

Source: Ministry of Health, 2023

A review of data suggests that there is no disparity in relation to gender in the delivery of services across the country.

It must be stated that services are accessible across the country and there has been an improvement in relation to equity in immunization service delivery, despite the difficult terrain to traverse in the hinterland and the difficult weather pattern.

The Ministry of Health has expanded the cold chain availability across the country with a lot of investments in the hinterland regions as such vaccine availability has improved significantly.

Education for immunization is ongoing which also accounts for stable immunization coverage even through the pandemic years (2020-2021). In 2021 there were some decreases in the coverage for MMR from above 95% (which is the target) to 94% due to vaccine hesitancy that spilled over from the COVID-19 vaccine, efforts are on-going and there has been a change in coverage for 2022, resulting in a coverage of 103%.

Kindly note that data on ethnicity is not routinely collected to inform programme monitoring and evaluation.

Government over next two years is investing in converting a number of hospitals to smart hospitals and also building six new hospitals. A new specialty maternal and child hospital is under construction in Administrative Region #4.

The Ministry of Health also provides cash grants to diabetic patients who require dialysis which is offered at present in the private health sector.

Social security safety net programmes

Over the period 2020 to 2022, non-contributory Old Age Pension was increased by 40% for the benefit of 69,000 senior citizens aged 65 and above. Pensioners also benefitted from a one-off cash grant in 2022 and 28,450 pensioners who own property benefitted from subsidized water and electricity charges. The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security (MHSSS) is mandated to provide essential services to our most vulnerable. As such, all persons 65 years and older access old age pension. Meanwhile, any person can apply for public assistance which is approved by the local board of guardians, unless it is a permanently disabled person who is automatically entitled to public assistance until he/she becomes eligible for pension.

In May 2021, the GoG through the MHSSS launched the Women's Innovation and Investment Network (WIIN) to provide vulnerable women and girls with economic benefits through the provision of training and accredited certification in emerging fields. The programme benefitted 2,170 women in 2021 and 6,193 in 2022. The programme is on-going.

The Ministry also conducts training programmes across the country, taking its services to the people of Guyana. Persons are exposed to training in domestic violence, trafficking in persons, gender equality, parenting skills and the legislation relating to abuse, among many others.

Additionally, through the WIIN programme, any person, regardless of age, gender, sex or education level can register and be trained online or in person with the opportunity of learning to prepare business plans and eventually launching their business. This government is focused on ensuring that all of its services to all to benefit all the citizens

In 2022, persons 18 years and older living with permanent disabilities started to benefit from Public Assistance support of \$14,000 per month for life.

In addition, parents of children living with disabilities received a one-off cash grant of \$100,000 per child; over 4000 children with disabilities have now been transitioned to receive the same monthly stipend as adults under the Public Assistance Programme.

Further, over 205 persons received assistive aids inclusive of wheelchairs, folding canes and walkers, while over 170 persons living with disabilities were trained in the areas of garment construction, social media marketing, audio/video editing and computer skills to improve their livelihoods.

Government has also partnered with the Disabilities Council and Disabilities Commission to craft training programmes for persons living with disabilities (PWD) to improve their employability and their entrepreneurial skills. Free skills training was also provided through the Job Access With Speech (JAWS) programme to 124 blind and visually impaired people. The beneficiaries were also provided with pre-programmed tablets to assist with learning. JAWS is a globally recognized leading screen reader, developed for computer users whose visual impairments prevent them from viewing screen content or navigating with a mouse. Construction of a \$30 million modern training hub facility at the Mahaica Hospital was also budgeted for.

On May 22 2023, the MHSSS officially opened The Learning Lab which is a training and empowerment centre, providing training in various technical vocation skills and entrepreneurship and equipping persons with disabilities to seek employment or start their own businesses.

This type of training is on-going in several Administrative Regions and 400 persons with disabilities have received and completed training.

A new programme, Men on Mission, (MOM), was launched by the President at the end of 2022 with 1000 participating men - to address male absenteeism from the home and community, and to involve men in all 10 Administrative Regions to play a more responsible role in being engaged and involved in the welfare of their families, and especially in their children and the development of communities.

In conclusion the Government of Guyana since it assumed office has been making major strides through progressive and innovative programmes and projects to reduce poverty, ensure equitable access to goods and services, transform the economy and ensure “no one is left behind” regardless of race, culture, gender, religion, ability or geographic location.

Pg2- Afro- Guyanese women often face inequalities and multiple forms of discrimination on the grounds of their race, colour, gender and religion or belief....

Untrue.

Firstly, Guyana is considered one of the most tolerant nations with many religions - Christian, Hindus, Muslims, Bahai's, Rastafarian, and cultural beliefs, practices and traditions that have survived for thousands of years. People freely practice their religion and beliefs.

The Government of Guyana even moved to join the International Freedom of Religion and Belief Alliance, as a friend, and attended and presented at the 2022 meeting of the Alliance. The Alliance is a network of like-minded countries fully committed to advancing freedom of religion or belief around the world. Alliance members must fully commit to the Declaration of Principles.

The Declaration is grounded in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights, which states everyone has freedom to believe or not believe, to change faith, to meet alone for prayer or corporately for worship.

Afro-Guyanese women benefit from all the programmes listed in sections above regarding **education, housing, health and social programmes.**

In the World Economic Forum's 2022 Gender Gap Report²⁹ Guyana ranks 35th out of 146 countries that were studied in the 2022 Index – this is a significant improvement from our ranking of 53rd in 2021. (difference of 18 spaces upward in only one year)

Economic Participation and Opportunity - In the areas of Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers, Guyana ranks 17th globally for gender equality in these positions, with a remarkable

²⁹ Global Gender Gap Report 2022. (2022, July 13). World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/>

score of 87.9%. In the areas of Professional and Technical workers, Guyana ranks 1st in the global index, tying with some of the most progressive and developed countries globally.

Education Attainment - Guyana's literacy rate is at an exceptional level of with a score of 0.985. Guyana is again tied for 1st for enrollment in both secondary and tertiary education. Guyana's primary education enrollment was not measured in the 2022 index.

Health and Survival - Guyana yet again placed 1st for sex ratio at birth and also placed 1st on the global scale for life expectancy, tying with other countries.

The World Economic Forum also reported in 2022 that 95.80% of live births in Guyana are attended to by trained personnel.

Political empowerment - Regarding women in parliament, Guyana is ranked 37th on the global index whilst the number of women in Ministerial Positions ranks Guyana 40th on the global index.

Whilst Guyana has only had one female head of state, H.E. President Janet Jagan, it still in ranked 50th on the 2022 index, as many other states have not had even one female president.

Access to Finance - In access to 1- financial services; 2 - land assets; and 3 - other non-land assets, Guyana records "near equal rights", whilst inheritance rights for widows and daughters is noted in the report to be equal (perhaps indicative of the impact of recent legislative reform regarding inheritances).

Civil and Political Freedom - The report notably makes one error in stating that women were afforded the right to vote in 1966, when in fact, women were given the right to vote long before that in 1953.

It is also important to note that with regards to Access to Justice, Guyana is noted as having "Equal Rights".

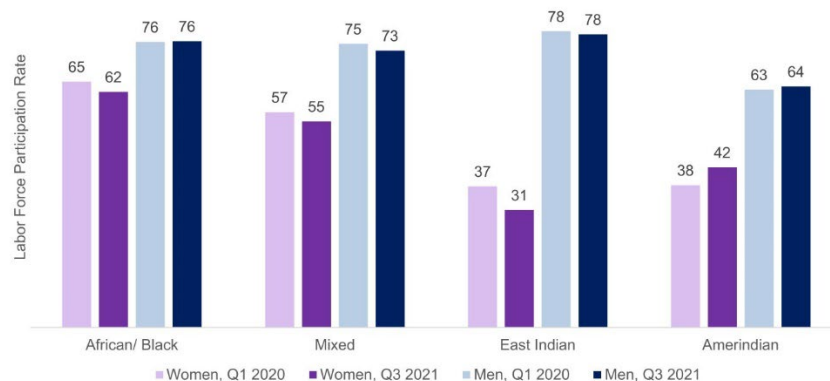
Family and Care - The mean age of women at birth of first child is somewhere between 26 and 27 years old which is a healthy figure in comparison to some much lower ages recorded in Guyana decades ago. Reproductive autonomy in Guyana is also noted in the report – a legal fundamental right that has been afforded to Guyanese for decades.

Afro-Guyanese women are the majority in the teaching, medical, nursing and legal professions, including the judiciary. Afro-Guyanese women are the largest cohort of students and lecturers, and staff at the University of Guyana. More Afro-Guyanese women have traditionally been owners of small business and vendors than any other ethnic groups. See below results of an IDB study on labour participation:-

Guyana Labor Force Survey

**Working age
Population
(15-65)**

Labor Force Participation by Self-Reported
Ethnicity and Gender, Q1 2021 and Q3 2021



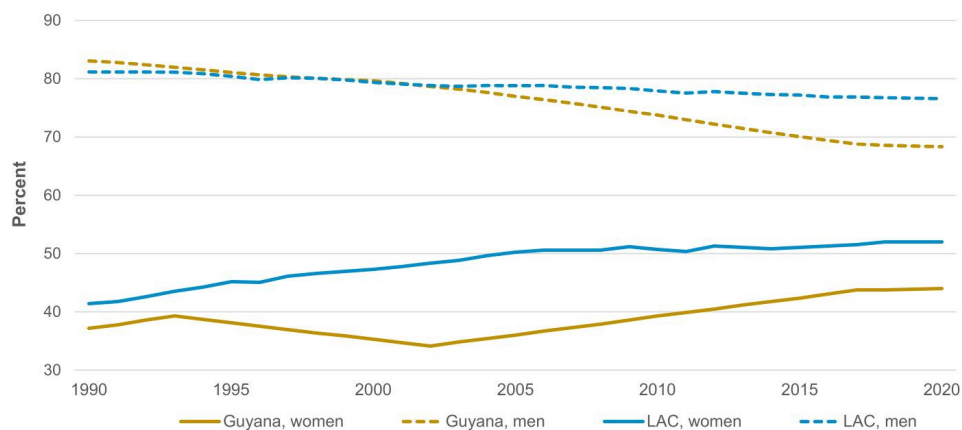
Source: Bureau of Statistics – Guyana Labour Force Survey



Women's Labor Force Participation in Latin America and the Caribbean

Labor Force

Labor force participation rate:
Women (% of female population ages 15+)
Men (% of male population ages 15+)



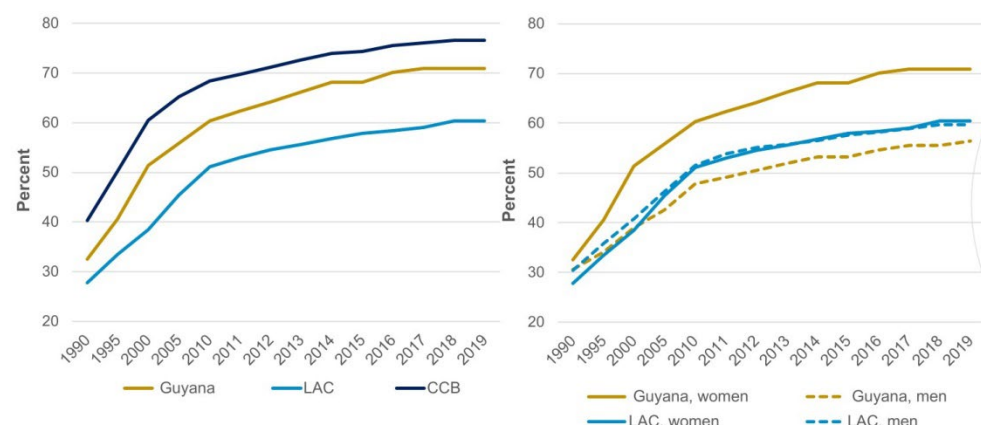
Definition: Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)
LAC: Latin America & Caribbean.



Women's Labor Force Participation in Latin America and the Caribbean

Education

Population with at least some secondary education (% ages 25 and older), female.



Definition: Percentage of the population ages 25 and older that has reached (but not necessarily completed) a secondary level of education.
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2020) and Barro and Lee (2018).
Country Department Caribbean (CCB) includes The Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.
LAC: Latin America & Caribbean.



The volume and value of grants distributed by the Small Business Bureau (SBB) over the period August 2020 to present is notably higher than that of the five previous years. Further, over 60% of the awarded grants went to women.

One of the factors slowing down the upward mobility of women and contributing to a vicious cycle of poverty is the large percentage of women, 29%, of all ethnicities who are single-handedly raising children. This is a social problem which permeates race, culture, class, education and many other characteristics, but is NOT an issue of racial discrimination, and should never be considered a such.

Pg 2-3 “They do not own or enjoy the land to which they should be entitled. This is a long standing issue, rooted in the forced, illegal and uncompensated evictions that, pursuant to Ordinance 1 and 4 of 1866 and 1883, deprived people of African descent from the lands that they had bought in the aftermath of their liberation from slavery. The government continues to exclude them from the distribution of state-owned commercial lands and has encouraged Indo-Guyanese squatters to occupy the lands legally owned by Afro-descent Guyanese and forcibly evicted them.

The last sentence is totally untrue. The accusation is unsubstantiated and egregious.

See sections on above-mentioned **housing** with particular attention to the **regularization** of squatter settlements.

With regards to the land issues during British colonial rule, this is historical and can be referenced in Section I of this document; but it should be clearly noted that the final nail in the

coffin on lands purchased by freed Africans, was driven by the PNC (now APNU/AFC) government in the 1970s - who took away their village councils and created new local authorities as Neighbourhood Democratic Councils, which included villages of various ethnic groups. It was the PNC that re-demarcated boundaries and lands formerly considered theirs and placed them under the new councils.

In 2015-2020, the period under the Granger government, the Coalition's record on land giveaways, particularly after the December 2018 no-confidence motion and after the March 2020 General and Regional Elections, during the 5 month wait, seems to have been forgotten conveniently by those reporting to the Special Rapporteurs:

- 45 Orders for land transfers (Orders 4 to 49), which included land to the Coalition's Jermaine Figueira, his brother and others. The orders were signed on February 28, 2020, and published in the Official Gazette on March 23, 2020.
- 18 Orders for land transfers (Orders 50 to 67), which included land to the Coalition's Amanza Walton-Desir and others. The orders were signed on August 23, 2019, and published in the Official Gazette on August 31, 2019.
- 6 Orders for land transfers (Orders 75 to 80), which included land to the Coalition's Valerie Patterson-Adams and others. The orders were signed on September 13, 2023, and published in the Official Gazette on October 19, 2019

(The first 2 persons are Members of Parliament for the Parliamentary Opposition in this the 12th Parliament. The third person was a Minister of that Government.)

Land Giveaways

Among the most prominent giveaways were those that took place in June 2019. These included:

1. Marlon Bristol, Head of the Project Management Office within the Ministry of the Presidency received:
 - 1 acre in Mocha, Region 4 - February 2019
 - 12 acres in Linden (at Dallawalla, the proposed site for Deep Water Harbour), Region 10 - June 2019
 - 80 acres in Bohemia, Region 6 (the proposed site for Deep Water Harbour) – February 2019
2. Great Wall Inc. – of which Saratu Phillips is a Director, received:
 - 20 acres at Schoonard Foreshore, Region 3 (in the Demerara River – proposed site for shore-based facility) – File Number 332242/3
 - 20 acres at Good Fortuin, Region 3 (in the Demerara River – proposed site for shore-based facility) – File number 3322421/3
 - 50 acres at Best Foreshore, Region 3 – File Number 332231/38
3. Aubrey Heath-Retemeyer, Deputy Head of State Asset Recovery Authority (SARA), within the Ministry of the Presidency received:

- 10 acres on the Linden/ Soesdyke Highway, Region 4, in 2019 – File number 411412/522b
 - 1 acre Mocha, Region 4, in 2019
4. Eric Phillips,³⁰ SARA Special Assistant, within the Ministry of the Presidency - received:
 - 1000 acres in the Essequibo River - April 2019 – File Number 321132/1604
 - 1000 acres in the Demerara River in 2019 – File Number 331231/7
 5. Chief Elections Officer (CEO) of the Guyana Elections Commission, Keith Lowenfield.³¹ received:
 - 216 acres at Millie’s Hideout, Region 10 – June 2019;
 - 2 acres at Mocha, Region 4

In addition to these transactions, handled by National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL) and Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission (GLSC), lands were also given away in the Mahaica-Mahaicony-Abary Agricultural Development Authority (MMA/ADA) scheme.

Efforts to Recover Lands

Notably, in March 2021, in the National Assembly, the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, Hon, Mohabir Anil Nandlall M.P. S.C. cited instances where thousands of acres of prime State lands in Georgetown and in other areas, including prime ocean front and river front parcels of land, were illegally given to the friends and cronies of the Coalition. He had said, “*The Honourable members gifted BK Marine a wharf valued \$40 billion for only \$20 million, passing Title to him which expressly says that it is free from all liabilities, meaning that he does not have to pay a cent more and passing this Title after they lost the March 2nd 2020 elections. Point to any Afro-Guyanese or better yet any Afro-Guyanese village that the Honourable Members have spent \$40 billion in over the last five years.*”

Pg 3 - Actions taken in Linden since 2020

Pg 3 - The operations of the Linden Enterprise Network which provided business development support to hundreds of residents have been suspended... and grants in support of new businesses in Linden have been frozen without publicly stated reason”

Totally untrue.

The Government has not suspended the Linden Enterprise Network - it continues to function. However, it is founded on a revolving loan portfolio which regrettably has been unable to

³⁰ Head of the National reparations Committee and a member of the CARICOM Reparations Commission.

³¹ Keith Lowenfield has been charged for electoral fraud and named in the COI on the March 2020 elections as culpable for efforts to rig the election in favour of the then Government.

replenish its fund due to the non-compliance of its borrowers to pay back for their loans very little money remains in the fund to be re-allocated³². Since its operationalization, 600 persons have benefitted from this programme.

It should be noted that this Government has brought small grants, jobs and investment to Linden in last 2 years more than in previous 5 years. See table below.

Region 10		
Years	Number of Grants	Value of grants
2015	12	3,494,840.00
2016	4	1,097,655.00
2017	18	5,502,713.00
2018	8	2,734,901.00
2019	15	3,496,155.00
2020	33	8,117,252.00
2021	91	41,142,823.00
2022	100	18,501,550.00

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce 2023

It must be emphasized that 60% of these small grants went to women in Administrative Region 10.

The Government, through the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce has catered for the development of 2 new industrial estates in its first 2.5 years in office, one will be located in Region 10. Over \$279,000,000 has been catered for its infrastructural work.

The Government, through the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce also continues to support Tourism development in Region 10 as well as African owned initiatives. (see **Appendix 1**). It must be noted that the government was able to find an investor for a call-centre in Linden which had been closed down in the period of the former government. It is operating and constantly expanding.³³

Page 3 – “The Ministry of Health abruptly and without a publicly stated reason decided on the closure of the School of Nursing in Linden, depriving the young Afro-Guyanese who were already admitted to the school of educational and future employment opportunities. “

Totally untrue.

³² Chabrol, D. (2021, January 22). Linden Enterprise Network borrowers hardly repaying loans. Demerara Waves Online News- Guyana. <https://demerarawaves.com/2021/01/22/linden-enterprise-network-borrowers-hardly-repaying-loans/>

³³ Linden call centre to recruit 150 more persons - Guyana Chronicle. (2022, October 21). Guyana Chronicle. <https://guyanachronicle.com/2022/10/21/linden-call-centre-to-recruit-150-more-persons/>

The Ministry of Health in 2023 has three Nursing Schools, namely the New Amsterdam School of Nursing (NASON), Georgetown School of Nursing (GSON) and the Charles Roza School of Nursing (CRSON) which all cater for the training of nurses across the country.

The Charles Roza School of Nursing (CRSON), located in Linden, Region # 10, has always been open; it was never closed. Presently it offers the following training programmes:

- Professional Nursing Program (RN)
- Registered Nursing Assistant (RNA)
- Post Basic Midwifery Program (RNM)
- Single Trained Midwife Program (RM)
- Midwifery aspect of the Medex Program

For 2020 to 2023, C.R.S.O.N. enrolled 252 students, of which 207 have graduated

Number of Students Enrolled Across Programmes between years 2020 - 2023

PROGRAM	BATCH/CLASS	INTAKE YEAR	YEAR COMPLETED	NUMBER AT TIME ENROLLMENT	NUMBER WITHDRAWN	NUMBER COMPLETED
Registered Nursing Assistant	Class 16	2018	2020	30	3	27
Professional Nursing	Batch 64	2018	2021	43	5 + (1 deceased)	37
Professional Nursing	Batch 65	2018	2021	27	-	27
Medex (Midwifery)		2019	2020	19	1	18
Registered Nursing Assistant	Class 17	2021	Current	18	1	17
Professional Nursing	Batch 66	2021	Current	20	-	20

Professional Nursing		2021	Suspended	33	-	-
Registered Nursing Assistant	Class 18	2023	Current	27	-	26
Single Trained Midwifery		2023	Current	35	-	35
TOTAL				252	10 + (1 deceased)	207

Source: Ministry of Health

The CRSON continues to train nurses for all Hinterland regions. (see **Appendix 2** - letter from Chief Nursing Officer, MOH)

Hybrid Nursing Programme

In addition to this programme, all regions of Guyana can now access the Hybrid Registered Nursing Programme offered by the Ministry of Health. This year the MoH plans to start with 1,000 students, so far approximately 800 students have completed their online registration.

Page 3 – “The contract of over 20 nurses working for the Red Cross-affiliated St John Ambulance Brigade was suddenly terminated by Government’s intervention after decades of work.”

Untrue. Misinformation.

St John Ambulance Brigade

The St John’s Ambulance Brigade was contracted by the Linden Hospital Complex, Region 10, to provide staff for two of the hospital’s ambulances.

Firstly, The Linden Hospital Complex did not employ any staff for the ambulances; the Hospital contracted the St John’s Ambulance Brigade to provide a service. The contract stipulated at least one attendant per shift - three persons for a 24-hour period. With two ambulances in operation, that meant that six persons were provided. In addition, there was one dispatcher present at all times, that was one dispatcher per shift, a **total of nine persons (not 20 nurses)**.

The ambulance attendants were trained in basic first aid, which was inadequate for a modern service. As far as the MOH is aware, St John Ambulance Brigade did not provide registered nursing staff.

Increasing the cost of the service

The St John Ambulance Brigade always wanted additional sums of monies:

- In 2019, the hospital paid \$10,039,172 to the St John Ambulance Brigade.
- In 2020, the hospital paid \$12,010,544 to the St John Ambulance Brigade.

Linden Hospital Review of the Service

Upon review of the situation, the Linden Hospital decided that it had enough staff to operate the two ambulances professionally. The Hospital Administrator advised the St John Ambulance Brigade that their annual contract would not be renewed and that the hospital was now in a position to utilize its own trained staff to operate the ambulances. The last contract commenced on April 21, 2020. At the end of the term, the contract was not renewed.

In addition, the Red Cross and St John's Ambulance Brigade are two distinct and separate organizations. The latter historically operated in Linden, the former did not.

The Government did not terminate any employee – a service contract was not renewed, on the account that there was no longer a requirement for the service since the Hospital was equipped with sufficiently trained staff.

Pg. 3 - “20 Lindeners of African descent were abruptly fired from the National Data Management Authority”

Untrue.

Please note the following facts as it pertains to this matter:

The Land Registry Digitization Project began in 2017 and concluded in December, 2020. This project sought to transcribe physical property registers into electronic form. To facilitate the processing of this data (entry and verification), over sixty (60) persons from Berbice, Linden and Georgetown were contracted and trained to be a part of the temporary project unit.

As such in 2021, the services of these data entry clerks were no longer required once the project's duration was completed. The data entry clerks (a 59-person unit at that time) were informed of this on February 5, 2021, and that their engagement as data entry clerks with NDMA would come to an end with immediate effect. All were given one month's remuneration at that time.

Pg 3- “Dozens of Afro-Guyanese lost their jobs as the result of the Government's decision to move the Community Infrastructure Improvement Project from the Municipality's competency to the Regional Democratic Council competence”

Untrue.

The policy of the Government is that the Community Infrastructure Improvement Project (CIIP) would be placed under the 10 elected Regional Democratic Councils (RDC) to ensure that all areas within and given region, and not only the municipalities, would benefit.

In Region 10, both the Municipality and RDC are controlled by the Opposition political party, the APNU/AFC Coalition. Presently CIIP Workers are spread across the demographic characteristics of Region 10, including in Amerindian/Indigenous areas. The Region also benefits from the Community Enhancement Programme where people are hired by the municipality.

CIIP – Region 10				
Year	Village	No. Workers	Ethnicity	Monthly Exp.
August 2020 to 2023	Malali	4	4 Amerindians	\$ 140,000
	Muritaro	4	4 Amerindians	\$ 140,000
	Three Friends	9	4 Indian	\$ 315,000
			5 Amerindian	
	Coomaka Mines	9	6 Africans	\$ 385,000
			3 Amerindian	
	Sibernian	10	5 Africans	\$ 350,000
			1 East Indian	
			4 Amerindians	
	Nottang Hamphsire	9	3 Africans	\$ 315,000
			4 East Indian	
			2 Amerindians	
	Speightland	10	3 Africans	\$ 350,000
			2 East Indians	
			5 Amerindians	
	Block 42	4	4 Amerindians	\$ 140,000
	Bamia	4	2 East Indians	\$ 140,000
			2 Amerindians	
	Aroaima	3	3 Africans	\$ 140,000
	Kwakwani	6	4 Africans	\$ 245,000
			2 Amerindians	

Pg 3 - “The community of Linden has been facing scarcity in terms of receiving economic resources from the government which have been already approved.”

Untrue, no specifics provided.

The annual Budget for the Region Democratic Council, the Municipality of Linden and the Neighbourhood Democratic Council of Kwakwani are all presented to, debated and approved by the National Assembly and disbursed in accordance to financial rules.

The Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce had cause to respond in a public statement to allegations by Mayor Arrindell of Linden which sought to convey a theme of neglect for Linden, making specific reference to the Linden Town Week 2023.

“The Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce has been consistent in its support for Linden and the wider Region 10 as have other ministries of the Government. The ministry routinely receives requests for sponsorship from across the country.

These requests are assessed for merit, their alignment with the ministry’s strategic direction, and in light of budgetary realities. Over the last 12 months, the ministry has received numerous requests from Linden and the wider Region 10, and we have responded favourably to many of these.

In 2022, we supported activities in Region 10 for Tourism Awareness Month with approximately \$1.1 million in funding, and in totality, \$500,000 was given in the fiscal year 2022 in support of Linden Town Week activities.

In fact, during that period, in recognition of the tremendous tourism potential of Region 10, the Ministry launched National Tourism Awareness Month in Linden. We did so to manifest our commitment to and support for the community and exemplify our policy that all regions have valuable roles to play in our country’s development.

This year we are supporting event organizers from Linden, who have planned activities to coincide with Town Week 2023, such as the Linden Building Expo and the Entrepreneurial Village & Arts Festival....

Outside of these events, the ministry supported the Inter-school Kayaking Competition for 2022 and 2023, the Inter-regions Kayaking Competition, and the Fish Extravaganza. Funding has also been approved for sponsorship of the Best of Linden Magazine 2023 publication.

On a related note, the ministry continues to work closely with stakeholders in Region 10 as part of our broader work plan, including facilitating Regional Tourism Workshops. Overall, contrary to the misrepresentations proffered by the Mayor, the Ministry has invested just shy of \$5M in support of activities and initiatives in Region 10 – including Linden – over the last 12 months.

The government will continue to actively support sustainable and feasible initiatives in Linden, as we do in all our communities in our country.”

Pg 3 - Significantly more funds have been given to other municipalities when compared to Linden, predominated by Indo-Guyanese... for instance ...\$45,000 US (\$9,000,000) had been budgeted for an agro processing facility in Linden, while \$36,500,000 US (\$7.3 billion) had been allocated for Enmore, a predominantly Indo- Guyanese community.

Untrue.

Firstly, the table below shows that the Linden municipality with eight (8) other municipalities all received \$29 Million in 2023.

Budgetary Allocations to Municipalities (2016 to 2023)			
Year	Municipality	Subventions	Grants
2016	Mabaruma	\$ 15,000,000	
2017		\$ 15,000,000	
2018		\$ 15,000,000	
2019		\$ 18,000,000	
2020		\$ 10,000,000	
2021		\$ 18,000,000	
2022		\$ 21,000,000	
2023 (Budget allocation)		\$ 29,000,000	
2015	Anna Regina	\$ 13,581,395	
2016		\$ 15,000,000	
2017		\$ 15,000,000	
2018		\$ 15,000,000	
2019		\$ 18,000,000	\$ 8,501,320
2020		\$ 10,000,000	
2021		\$ 18,000,000	
2022		\$ 21,000,000	
2023 (Budget allocation)		\$ 29,000,000	
2015	Georgetown	\$ 22,000,000	
2016		N.A	
2017		\$ 24,000,000	
2018		\$ 24,000,000	

2019		\$ 30,000,000	
2020		-	-
2021		-	\$ 30,000,000
2022		\$ 35,000,000	
2023 (Budget allocation)		\$ 49,000,000	
2015	New Amsterdam	\$ 13,668,605	
2016		\$ 16,000,000	
2017		\$ 16,000,000	
2018		\$ 16,000,000	
2019		\$ 18,000,000	
2020		\$ 10,000,000	
2021		\$ 18,000,000	
2022		\$ 21,000,000	
2023 (Budget allocation)		\$ 29,000,000	
2015	Rose Hall	\$ 12,909,884	
2016		\$ 15,000,000	
2017		\$ 15,000,000	
2018		\$ 15,000,000	
2019		\$ 18,000,000	
2020		\$ 10,000,000	
2021		\$ 18,000,000	
2022		\$ 21,000,000	
2023 (Budget allocation)		\$ 29,000,000	
2015	Corriverton	\$ 13,965,116	
2016		\$ 15,000,000	
2017		\$ 15,000,000	
2018		\$ 15,000,000	
2019		\$ 18,000,000	
2020		\$ 10,000,000	
2021		\$ 18,000,000	

2022		\$ 21,000,000	
2023 (Budget allocation)		\$ 29,000,000	
2016	Bartica	\$ 15,000,000	
2017		\$ 15,000,000	
2018		\$ 15,000,000	
2019		\$ 18,000,000	
2020		\$ 10,000,000	
2021		\$ 18,000,000	
2022		\$ 21,000,000	
2023 (Budget allocation)		\$ 29,000,000	
2019	Mahdia	\$ 18,000,000	\$ 5,000,000
2020		\$ 10,000,000	
2021		\$ 18,000,000	
2022		\$ 21,000,000	
2023 (Budget allocation)		\$ 29,000,000	
2016	Lethem	\$ 15,000,000	
2017		\$ 15,000,000	\$ 3,000,000
2018		\$ 15,000,000	\$ 3,000,000
2019		\$ 18,000,000	\$ 3,000,000
2020		\$ 10,000,000	
2021		\$ 18,000,000	
2022		\$ 21,000,000	
2023 (Budget allocation)		\$ 29,000,000	
2015	Linden	\$ 15,000,000	\$ 3,000,000
2016		\$ 15,000,000	
2017		\$ 15,000,000	
2018		\$ 15,000,000	\$ 1,000,000
2019		\$ 18,000,000	
2020		\$ 10,000,000	

2021		\$ 18,000,000	
2022		\$ 21,000,000	
2023 (Budget allocation)		\$ 29,000,000	

In addition to the annual budget to the Regional Democratic Council of Administrative Region #10, central government has also provided funds for major infrastructural development in the region.

With regards to the accusation referencing the Linden and Enmore agro-processing plants, the government wishes to provide the following information:

The total amount for the Agro-processing Facility at Linden is **\$14,135,853 GY**. It should be noted that Linden is mainly a bauxite mining town with potential for agriculture on a larger scale.

Agro-processing facilities were established in the following areas:

- Fort Wellington - \$39,057,116.00
- Mabaruma - \$12,097,877
- Charity - \$28,106,603
- Georgetown - \$92,244,617
- Mabaruma - \$12,079,153
- Muraranau - \$9,982,830
- Karandarnau - \$9,993,575
- St. Ignatius - \$5,542,776
- White Water Creek - \$39,092,082
- Hope - \$14,354,648

With regards to the Agro-processing Facility, Enmore:

CARIBBEAN International Distributors Incorporated, a member of the RUDISA Group of Companies, has signalled its intention to build a US\$35 million (\$7.3 billion GYD) agro-processing facility at Enmore, on the East Coast Demerara (ECD). To this effect, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was recently signed (Guyana has noted that this MOU was signed in fact after the Joint Communication was sent from the UN) with the Government of Guyana, through the Guyana Office for Investment (Go-Invest). It should be noted that this is a **private investment** whilst Linden's facility is being built and equipped by the Government of Guyana for access by agro-processors who can utilize the facility to add value to their Products.

The comparison of Linden and Enmore is absurd and mischievous and clearly intended to willfully mislead.

Pg 3 - "Government transferred 70% of the public contracts originally linked to Linden and Region 10 to private businesses registered outside of Linden."

Untrue.

Since returning to Government in 2020, the Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali Administration has put into place a massive infrastructural plan which stretches across all 10 Administrative Regions. In keeping with His Excellency President Ali's "One Guyana" vision of promoting greater inclusion at the legislative, political and social levels, communities are informed and involved.

The Ministry of Public Works is one of the largest ministries of the PPP/C Administration, tasked with "Building for The Future", and ensuring Guyana's infrastructure is expanded, modernized and becomes more efficient to support a flourishing economy.

Its portfolio, includes Transport Infrastructure - over land or road and, air and river, Sea and River Defense, Drainage, and Utilities – Electricity (in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister), and requires the best and most skilled persons work on these projects.

When a need (in the form of a project) has been identified, and the Engineer conducts his or her evaluation and produces an estimate, this is then re-checked and once approved, goes to the Procurement Department, who in turn puts the package together and then delivers to the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB). Here, tenders will go out publicly and persons and companies have a FAIR chance to bid on the project in accordance with the Procurement Act.

Please note that at no time of this process does a person's ethnicity, gender, or political affiliation comes into question, only that they are qualified and can get the project done.

Based on the nature of the project, they can be awarded or short listed for another round of bidding.

Here are some facts:

To enhance the country's roads and bridges network system \$136 billion was allocated; \$11.9 billion allocated to continue work on the first phase of link from Linden to Lethem: \$5 billion was allocated for the rehabilitation of the Linden -Soesdyke Highway and for construction of the Wismar Bridge.

In addition, \$38.5 billion was also allocated to construct, rehabilitate and maintain community roads, particularly in underserved areas.

Thus far in region 10, completed projects are as follows:

- Rehabilitation of Coomacka to 3 Friends Access Road,
- Rehabilitation of the Kara Kara Nursery School Road. (A previously badly patched part of this road in front of the Guyana Forestry Commission was also done in this project. This will benefit the entire Linden community.)
- Rehabilitation of Wismar Hill Access Road (Approximately 200 households, as well as a Primary School would benefit from this road).
- Rehabilitation of City Gates Road. (Amelia's Ward, approximately 300 households to benefit)

- Rehabilitation of 4th Corner Lovers Lane.(Approximately 150 households to benefit)
- Meanwhile, some smaller Concrete Roads and Footpaths were also done in Victory Valley, Wismar-Linden.
- Victory Valley - 10 projects were given to the community members \$5,000,000 each. = \$50,000,000 in total.
- Block 22 Main Access Road also done at a cost of \$25,000,000
- Buch Hill Access Road was done at a cost of \$23,000,000
- Wismar Hill Access Road was done at a cost of \$25,000,000
- 3rd Alley Wismar also done at a cost of \$19,000,000
- Kara Kara Nursery School Road done at a cost of \$43,000,000
- Kwakwani Internal Road One (1) - \$157,000,000
- Matthew Lane - \$18,000,000
- 4th Corner Lovers Lane Amelia's Ward - \$37,000,000
- City Gates Amelia's Ward - \$48,000,000
- Moblissa Main Road - \$120,000,000
- Bamia Drive - \$50,000,000

These projects supplied Region 10 contractors with employment for Lindeners and other residents of Region 10. The government policy also includes that any contractor outside of any region must employ available skills within that region.

The Ministry of Public Works is currently executing projects in communities in other regions of Guyana, and for the sake of this report, in communities, and for the benefit of all Guyanese, irrespective of their race.

The Ministry has also gone a step further to ensure small contractors are not left out of the fold. Even as the Government undertakes large projects, it also implements smaller community projects, and emergency projects which can be handled by smaller contracting groups. This is precisely the reason why the Government has embarked on the training of contractors and other groups interested in this type of work. There are now one thousand (1,000) mini and small contractors across the country who bid and are awarded small contracts in their surrounding communities, including from Linden and Region 10. Each small contractor hires at least 5 persons creating a minimum of 5000 jobs across the country. Many Afro-Guyanese women are heading these small companies.

Last year, this Ministry invited contractors in the Buxton community for a special training exercise focused on business compliance, Guyana Revenue Authority, and National Insurance Scheme and the general procurement process and bidding to win contracts.

A total of 25 contractors were trained and later, those contractors were able to benefit from \$56 million worth of contracts to rehabilitate bridges in their village. This is evidence that the PPP/C Administration wants to ensure that every small, medium, and large contractor gets 'a piece of the pie' as we build, develop and transform our beautiful country.

In 2023, MPW also collaborated with the Black Entrepreneur Association (BEA) to offer training to its membership regarding the process of bidding and acquiring contracts from the Government. This training is open to communities and groups everywhere.

Further, please note that these are only projects being done by the Ministry of Public Works - other contracts are issued by the Regional Democratic Council of Region 10, as well as other Ministries including Health, Education, Housing and Water, and others.

Not only infrastructural projects must be mentioned but the Government brought investors to Region 10. For instance, the aforementioned call-centre was re-opened with a new investor.

Pg 4 - “Government has not addressed racist comments and discriminatory practices by Ministers and other govt officials ...Ethnic Relations Commission was removed from the Ministry (unnamed) and not been re-established yet”.

Untrue.

The society is not polarized against Afro-Guyanese. In fact, it is the leadership of the main Opposition party, APNU+AFC Coalition, and supporters who have made racist statements against the members of the Government and supporters of the ruling party. The brunt of these racist attacks is firstly aimed at Indo-Guyanese and secondly at Afro-Guyanese who support the PPP/C and its ongoing projects. Any random check on social media platforms such as Facebook will illustrate the level of racist and political attacks by PNC/APNU/AFC activists against the Government and its supporters.

Secondly, the Ethnic Relations Commission is a constitutional body appointed under a consensual agreed upon consultative parliamentary mechanism. It is not a department or creature of any Ministry, it is independent, and enjoys constitutionally protected programmatic autonomy. The ERC receives an annual budget each year as a direct charge on the consolidated fund

The ERC was appointed in 2018 and expired in 2021. In April 2022 after the parliamentary process of selection civil society organisations to form clusters and nominate commissioners received the required two thirds vote in the National Assembly (impossible without the support of the opposition) a broad base of diverse civil society organisations made their nominations in a consultative process and the National Assembly gave its unanimous support to the appointment of its nominees. The newly appointed ERC was sworn in by the President in April 2023, is functioning and has a budget for 2023 approved by the National Assembly.

The ERC was created to allow for complaints and grievances regarding race and ethnicity to be reported and to addressed. (See more information about the ERC in Section II)

Pg 4 - “Of the 9 oil blocks awarded by the state, 6 have been awarded to Indo Guyanese entrepreneurs and none were granted to Afro- Guyanese.

Untrue.

The GOG rejects this claim by the authors pursuant to the following facts:

The Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), a statutory body, is the entity which has the authority to issue Petroleum Permits. The entity which is ISO-certified, relative to its administrative procedures processes applications on a sequential basis and not under any other means. The requirements for the granting of such a license are in keeping with international requirements. Further, the details of the entire application process and requirements can be found at <https://www.ggmc.gov.gy/services/all/petroleum-prospecting-and-production-licences>.

From June 2012 to March 2015, eight Petroleum Blocks were awarded. Of these eight, only three had any Guyanese participants (Guyanese companies and/or Guyanese partners). It's also imperative to note that these blocks were awarded at a time when it was difficult to attract investors (pre-discovery), and they were respectively awarded on the basis of the requirements being met. The Petroleum Agreements are public, and the companies who were awarded can be found at <https://petroleum.gov.gy/docs?keyword=&tid=4>

From 2015 to 2020, the then government did not award any Petroleum Blocks to any Guyanese. Instead, one block was awarded to Tullow, a British Company. The Stabroek Block Petroleum Agreement was renegotiated when this government came into office.

It should also be noted that the current administration has since moved to have open competitive bidding instead of direct application, now that the basin has been de-risked and petroleum resources discovered. The 2022/2023 competitive bidding round is ongoing. Guyanese were encouraged to submit bids. The bids will be evaluated against financial and technical experience criteria. Further information on the competitive bidding rounds can be found here - <https://petroleum.gov.gy/guyana-offshore-licensing-round-2022>

Active Oil Blocks

Name of Block	Date Petroleum Agreement Signed	Name of Company	Parent Company Headquarter	Local Partner
Corentyne	27 th November 2012	CGX Resources Inc.	Canada	None.
Kanuku	14 th May 2013	Repsol Exploracion S.A	Spain	None.
Canje	4 th March 2015	Mid-Atlantic Oil and Gas Inc.	Guyana	Guyanese Company
Kaieteur	28 th April 2015	Ratio Energy Limited	Israel	Ryan Pereira
		Ratio Guyana Limited		None.
Stabroek	27 th June 2016	Esso Exploration and	United States of	None.

		Production Guyana Limited (EEPGL)	America	
		CNOOC Nexen Petroleum Guyana Limited (CNOOC)	China	
		Hess Guyana Exploration Limited (Hess)	United States of America	
Orinduik	14 th January 2016	Tullow Guyana B.V.	United Kingdom	None.
		Eco (Atlantic) Guyana Inc.	Canada	

Inactive Oil Blocks

(Either surrendered or block under Force Majeure)

Name of Block	Date Petroleum Agreement Signed	Name of Company	Parent Company Headquarter	Local Partner
Roraima (<i>Force Majeure</i>)	27 th August 2012	Anadarko	United States of America	None
Area 4 Nabi (<i>Surrendered</i>)	4 th June 2012	NABI Oil and Gas Inc.	Guyana	Guyanese company.
Berbice (<i>Surrendered</i>)	27 th November 2012	OnEnergy Inc.	Canada	None.
Demerara (<i>Surrendered</i>)	12 th February 2013	CGX Resources Inc.	Canada	None.

Pg 4 - “Emergency relief funds granted post pandemic were unevenly distributed to the detriment of Afro Guyanese.”

Untrue. Please see Table in Part II which has the data disaggregated by Region.

Pg 4 - “Afro Guyanese communities did not receive sufficient funding to rebuild post the 2021 floods.”

Untrue.

The Government rejects this allegation and hereby provides information contrary to the falsehoods of this allegation, please see **Appendix 3** (Agriculture) which documents the efforts of the Government through the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) to assist those who were flooded in villages and farming areas, in particular Afro-Guyanese communities.

Years – Number of persons employed

In addition, please see also revisit the table in **Part II** on cash grants for flood relief which were distributed on the basis of the number of households/farms/businesses affected in each Region.

Pg 4- “Afro Guyanese have been disproportionately affected by Government layoffs in the public sector and contract terminations from the public sector.”

Untrue.

As with all change of governments, those who are politically appointed either resign or their contracts are terminated. In this case, there were many political appointees including Mayors, political activists, friends and family who were given political appointments on contract, some with no qualifications in every Ministry. A case in point - the Petroleum Advisor, a political activist, with no qualification of merit, particularly in oil and gas, was terminated. The largest percentage of such political appointments were placed in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development and the Ministry of the Presidency (which was established from 2015 to 2020)

There is no evidence to support that Afro-Guyanese public servants were fired when the government changed and certainly no evidence that they have been “disproportionately affected by Government layoffs and contract terminations” as there were no layoffs from the public service.

The Bertram Collins Public Service College of Education was closed down in 2021 and 26 staff were terminated as the institution was not functioning, as was the State Asset Recovery Authority, comprised of PNC/APNU/AFC party activists - which cost the tax payers hundreds of millions every year and brought **not one case** to the court. The State Asset Recovery Act has to be revised to remove the super powers of the Director who could assume and take over the constitutional mandates of any constitutional post holder such as the Director of Public Prosecution, as well as the Commissioner of Police etc.

However, the Public Service In-Service training programmes have been modernized and in-service training continues.

Employment within the Public Service with effect from August 2020 to May 19th 2023.

Source: Ministry of Public Service

2020 (Aug)	2021	2022	2023	Total
667	1169	3215	925	5976

Pg. 4 - “Afro-Guyanese employees are facing economic instability due to the decline of the mining industry, not benefitting from any kind of protection and support by the State. Afro-Guyanese employees are deprived of their possibility to earn a living, they receive an extremely low severance pay and do not have a pension to support them and their families.”

Untrue.

The GoG rejects this claim by the authors pursuant to the following facts:

Although Guyana gained independence in 1966, Bauxite has been mined in Guyana for over 100 years. The main labour force for the bauxite mining operations was made up of Afro-Guyanese given the proximity to the mining towns of Linden, Region 10, and New Amsterdam, Berbice, Region 6.

It was under the PNC government that the Bauxite operations were closed in Linden. The PPP/C government found an investor and restarted the operation which today employs over 635 workers. It was the PPP/C Government in 2004 that facilitated the acquisition of the Mines by RUSAL which this led to over 700 persons being employed in the mining and transshipping of Bauxite. All of this was done in keeping with Environmental guidelines. For information on the PPP government finding investors for the Mines, please see the following article: <https://www.gtreview.com/news/americas/rusal-buys-into-guyana-bauxite-2/>

In 2020, it should be noted that it was the former Government that allowed the Aroaima mines in the Berbice River to also be closed which rendered hundreds of workers unemployed.

Whilst the Bauxite mining operations in Linden continue to employ over 600 persons, the same cannot be said for their Bauxite operations in Berbice which suffered a series of organized protests by politically aligned figures that resulted in the eventual closure of the operations - as the former government ignored the company’s warning and refused to intervene with the protesters. Please see more on the closure in this article <https://www.fastmarkets.com/insights/rusal-suspends-all-bauxite-operations-in-guyana-on-continued-unrest>

It was reported on January 23, 2020, that RUSAL laid off 140 employees. The company informed employees that this was due to the downsizing of operations because of a fuel shortage owing to industrial action. It is reported that those laid-off had been informed that they will be recalled as soon as the situation stabilises.

On January 24, 2020, workers blocked the upper Berbice River to demand the reinstatement of the 140 workers who were laid off and the settlement of other grievances. According to the Guyana Bauxite and General Workers Union (GBGWU), *“the opening of the Berbice River; where our members are involved, will only be facilitated on the condition that the issue of wages and salary be settled now through arbitration or some similar condition”*. With the river blocked, the barges could not move bauxite consignments from the mines to a transshipment vessel waiting at the mouth of the Berbice River for loading to ocean-going ships. Effectively, the operations were brought to a halt by the protesters.

On January 30, 2020, an additional 146 workers were laid off by RUSAL, which brought the total number of workers laid off in one week to 288. The company said the decision was based on the unfavourable circumstances of its operations, including the Berbice River blockage.

Subsequently, on February 3, 2020, RUSAL fired 326 workers and suspended all operations. According to a statement released by the company *“the suspension of BCGI will have no impact on the Company’s overall performance, as the expected decline in the overall bauxite supply from Guyana will be substituted with raw material from other mines. The company said the possibility of doing business in Guyana had declined. Since the unrest impacting the Company’s operations continues, Rusal believes the opportunities for doing further business in Guyana are now severely limited.”*

After taking Office this government has commenced discussions with RUSAL on how to restart operations.³⁴

Pg 4. People of African descent have faced challenges when it came to their right to freedom of expression. 90% of the press is Indo Guyanese owned and government owned. Racist discourses have been spread and condoned in the mass media.

Untrue.

The Free Press & Access to Information

Under the PPP/C Government, the Guyana National Broadcasting Authority (GNBA) was established in 2013. The GNBA immediately set about developing subsidiary legislation to effectively liberalize and regulate a free and robust sector.

The GNBA developed guidelines for broadcasters and media practitioners to ensure that the public’s right to know is balanced within the parameters of universal professional industry standards and ethics.

³⁴ Please see more of that story at this link:

<https://www.stabroeknews.com/2022/02/19/news/guyana/rusal-executives-to-meet-govt-team-on-resuming-bauxite-operations/>

The Authority conducted several interactive workshops to reinforce legislative understanding, industry best practices and examine media evolution. Through its affiliation with the Caribbean Broadcasting Union, the GNBA has also facilitated a plethora of knowledge exchange and training programmes.

Guyana's Access to Information Act No 21 of 2011, was introduced and passed in the National Assembly by the PPP/C government and brought into force in 2013, with the appointment of the new post of Commissioner of Information (COI), headed by a former Puisne Judge.

This Commissioner was terminated and office was suspended in 2015 by the APNU/AFC Coalition government and left dormant, until it was reactivated by the PPP/C government in 2021.

The Mediascape

In 2013, the PPP/C government granted a broadcasting license in Trust, for the establishment of the Guyana Learning Channel to be operated in consonance with the National Centre for Educational Development.

In 2014, the PPP/C government, authorized the National Frequency Management Unit (NFMU) to release a protracted freeze on frequency allocation, making available 97 new broadcast frequencies

Across the current mediascape, there are 21 Television Stations, of which only one is owned and operated nationally by the state; 23 radio stations, with 8 of those owned and operated by the state; and three (3) daily newspapers, one being state owned. Therefore, the majority of the media is privately owned.

Print (State)	Print (Private)	Radio (State)	Radio (Private)	TV (State)	TV (Private)	Online (State)	Online (Private)
Guyana Chronicle	Stabroek News	Voice of Guyana (102.5 FM)	News Talk (Demerara Waves subsidiary) (103.1 FM)	NCN (Channel 11)	Safe TV News (Channel 2)	Department of Public Information (DPI)	Newsroom
	Kaieteur News	Hot FM (98.1)	Radio Guyana International (RGI) (89.5 FM)		CNS (Channel 6)	NCN	Demerara Waves
	Catholic Standard		NTN Radio (89.1 FM)		WRHM News (Channel 7)		News Source
	Guyana Times		Mix FM (90.1 FM)		Channel 9 News		INEWS
	Village Voice		Real FM (93.1 FM)		Little Rock TV Station (LRTVS) Newswatch (Channel 10 - Berbice)		Guyana Standard
	New Nation		Boom FM (94.1FM)		Evening News (Channel 28)		Village Voice
	Weekend Mirror		Hot FM (94.1 FM)		News Update (Channel 65)		Oil Now
			Freedom Radio (91.1 FM)		Nightly News (Channel 67)		Guyana Daily News
					NTN News (Channel 69)		
					MBC Channel 93		

Access, Stakeholder Engagement & Non-Censorship

Since 2020, the Government has reinstated free and unfettered access to the media, with weekly press conferences hosted by the Vice President, periodic press conferences by the President and unrestricted access and engagements of all members of Cabinet for the media, at all public events and appearances.

The sittings of Parliament and the hearings of the Public Accounts Committee are also live-streamed.

More than a dozen social commentators and government critics operate daily talk shows across multiple broadcast social media platforms, with no interference from Government.

International Compliance and Ranking:

In 2021, the Government signed onto the Global Media Freedom Coalition, with strict adherence to the principles of freedoms and protection of all personnel across the Fourth Estate. Through dedicated compliance and shared management across the spectrum, Guyana successfully moved up 17 places in 2022 World Press Freedom index to 34, from among 180 countries. The nation was ranked 51st in 2021.

Diversity, Capacity Building Facilitation and Equal Empowerment:

The state media apparatus, encompassing TV, Radio and Press boasts diversity across its workforce, with more than 70% Afro-Guyanese.

A Media and Communication Academy was established by the government's Department of Public Affairs in 2022, in partnership with the world's largest online learning platform COURSERA, for free access to world-class industry education and certification for the full Guyanese media fraternity. Media practitioners are also benefiting from direct university admission international scholarships, through the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL)

To date, of the more than 300 media practitioners who have registered with the Media and Communications Academy, more than 60% are Afro-Guyanese. Of the total registrants, 173 have completed at least one international course.

In addition to engaging practicing media professionals, the Academy has also trained more than 150 youth who are interested in starting a media career and are drawn from across the country through an open invitation process. To date, more than 50% have received internship placements across the state and private media, of which about 40% are Afro-Guyanese.

Guyana is a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. The attainment of national unity is a fundamental objective of the Government of Guyana. In this regard, all and any form of racism and divisive postures are eschewed both as a matter of policy and law. From the legal perspective, any form of hate speech, including, the incitement of racial hostility, is prohibited by the Constitution and is expressly excluded from the constitutional right to freedom of expression. In addition, there are multiple pieces of legislation which criminalise, with condign penalties, all or any form of racism and race-hate. These include the Criminal Law Offences Act which contains numerous race-hate offences, the Racial Hostility Act, the Cybercrime Act, the Broadcast Authority Act, and the Summary Jurisdiction Offences Act.

Perhaps it is important to record our Government's continuous struggle to address racist and racial outpourings on social media platforms, including those from Afro-Guyanese, in particular, who operate from North America. These utterances, similar to the reckless assemblage of allegations and narratives which constitute this very Report, have inspired fringe elements within

our society to openly incite race wars. Only recently, one political leader was charged with exciting racial hostility for a speech he made at a public meeting, in which his racial rhetoric included a call for the Armed Forces of the State to turn their guns against the Government of Guyana.

Pg 5 - 'It happens to Afro-Guyanese women, who endure a life more exposed to the risk of domestic violence or sexual abuses than other Guyanese women do.'

Untrue. There is no evidence to this effect.

Guyana is developing more expansive laws which will protect all Guyanese, offering wider umbrella of protection to family members. The government is in the final stage of drafting a new domestic violence legislation, which will cater to newer forms of violence and further protect and respond to the societal ill of domestic violence affecting Guyanese families.

We continue to fight against gender-based violence and we have since expanded our 914 hotline which now has 14 trained operators and a referral system which includes working closely with the Guyana Police Force. The Ministry has also employed 16 survivor advocates who are based across the country and function as the interlink mechanism between the survivor and all support services. This means that survivors will have someone to support them from the time the complaint is made to the closure of the case. We also launched the Community Advocates' Network (CAN), which will allow for advocates in communities nationwide towards ensuring that we eradicate gender-based violence. We did not stop there; we also launched a free app called iMatter which will allow persons to access information on all of the services of the Ministry, as well as a panic button which immediately connects you to 914.

Further, the COPSQUAD2000 initiative, a collaborative programme between the MHSSS and the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Guyana Police Force was launched to identify special officers in every station, who will be held accountable and who are specially trained to investigate and respond to domestic violence. 1000 were trained since the launch of the programme.

A MoU was signed between the Guyana Bar Association and the Ministry towards the provision of assistance to 500 gender-based violence survivors and will provide free access to legal services.

This government's policies are not and have never been developed to benefit or target one ethnicity or gender.

Pg 5 - "Rastafari Afro descendants are particularly exposed to poverty, illiteracy and disease... due to belonging to a religious and cultural minority."

Untrue. There is no evidence to support this allegation.

In the 1970s – 90s this was very true but not now, in 2023.

Guyana is one of the few countries in this region that children are free to wear their religious clothes to school, and practice their religious and cultural beliefs. No child can be stopped from going to school in their cultural wear, including with Rastafarian dreadlocks or a hijab.

Pg. 5 - “Racism is embedded in the judicial criminal system and in the behaviour of law enforcement officials. Here again, the lack of data make it hard to describe precisely the interaction between the afro Guyanese and the national criminal system. There is lack of public recordsIt is beyond doubt that the people of African descent disproportionately encounter the judicial system and are subject to unequal treatment.”

Untrue.

The allegation that Afro-Guyanese are being specifically profiled and targeted in the Guyanese “criminal system” is yet another fabrication of a jaundiced rhetoric to conductively fit into a politically driven racist narrative.

Almost 90% of the Guyana Police Force consists of Afro-Guyanese, including the Commissioner of Police, and most of the top echelon of the Force.

The Judiciary of Guyana is headed by an Afro-Guyanese female holding the post of Chancellor. The second most important post in the Judiciary is that of the Chief Justice. This post is also held by an Afro-Guyanese. In the Magistracy, nearly 70% are Afro-Guyanese, including the Chief Magistrate, Principal Magistrates, and Senior Magistrates. The Registrar of the Supreme Court, and the Accounting Officer of the entire Judiciary, inclusive of the Magistracy, are Afro-Guyanese. In a system that is so ethnically constituted, it is incredulous for one to contend that there can be discrimination against, and racial profiling of, Afro-Guyanese.

The authors of the Joint Communication appear to have simply cherry-picked a few cases involving Afro-Guyanese to conveniently support the narrative that is being peddled.

With equal force, it can be pointed out that between 2015 to 2019 when a perceived Afro-Guyanese political party held the reins of Government, 41 persons, including over 30 Afro-Guyanese died at the hands of the Police Force or in police custody. In many of these cases, police officers were charged and placed before the courts based on the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), a constitutionally independent organ. Coincidentally, the person who held the post then continues to do so, to date.

Pg. 5 - People of african descent are often arrested by police and detained beyond the constitutional limit of 72 hours. ..exposed to police brutality and abuse of force to procure confessions.

Untrue.

It is unconstitutional to hold anyone for more than 72 hours without charging, putting on bail and or approaching the Magistrate to justify an extension of time.

Any such violation can be reported to the Police Complaints Authority, and or the Office of Professional Responsibility/Guyana Police Force or an approach to the court.

Guyana is a democratic country governed by the rule of law and a written Constitution, which is supreme. This Constitution guarantees to every citizen all the internationally recognised basic human and inalienable rights and freedoms. These include the right to life, and protection against discrimination on the grounds of, inter alia, race, ethnicity, gender, class, and political associations, the right to counsel and to retain an Attorney-at-Law of one's choice, the presumption of innocence, protection against cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. There is a large body of criminal laws in Guyana against brutality and violence of any type.

It is now the Standard Operating Procedure for suspects', defendants', and accused persons' interviews with the Guyana Police Force, and in particular, caution statements, to be videotaped. The Police Complaints Authority Act establishes a Police Complaints Authority to which members of the public can complain against police brutality and other infractions by the Guyana Police Force.

The Constitution establishes several Constitutional Commissions which are empowered to hear and determine complaints from different segments of our population. Such Commissions include the Indigenous People Commission, the Rights of the Child Commission, and the Women and Gender Equality Commission. Significantly, and more on point, Guyana is one of the few countries in the world whose Constitution establishes an Ethnic Relations Commission that is fully empowered, inter alia, to hear and investigate complaints of ethnic/ racial discrimination. Importantly, all these Commissions are appointed through a multi-partisan parliamentary process and are not chosen unilaterally by the Government.

Pg. 5 - They are often required to pay exaggerated amounts of bail, as the Guyanese system does not provide for objective rules for the granting of bails and the final decision eventually depends on the subjectivity of the judges”

The issue of Bail has been remedied by the enactment of the Bail Act 2023.

However, it is indeed shocking that the Joint Communication would refer to the “the final decision eventually depends on the subjectivity of the judge”, this statement is indeed offensive to the Guyanese judiciary and is certainly unfounded.

The Criminal Justice System has been strengthened with the passage of the Bail Act (Act 21 of 2022). This Act was passed in the National Assembly on November 7, 2022 and assented to 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.

A major development provided by this Act is the provision for police bail. Section 4 establishes that in circumstances where a person is arrested without a warrant, and it is not practicable to bring them before a magistrate within 24 hours, the Police Officer shall examine the case and (a) if the offence is not punishable by imprisonment, shall grant the person bail with every convenient speed, and (b) if the offence is punishable by imprisonment may, unless the offence is a serious one, grant bail as soon as practicable.

Pg. 5 - “Besides being racially biased the criminal system is also being instrumentalised to pursue political opponents and those who are deemed to not be supportive of the government primarily- if not exclusively- afro Guyanese”

Untrue.

The Government rejects this unsubstantiated allegation, which by inference offends the entire justice system of Guyana.

Persons have been charged with attempting to rig the March 2020 general and regional elections and are before the courts. So are a number of former ministers for corruption and unlawful sale of state assets investigated by the Serious Organized Crime Unit (SOCU) of the Guyana Police Force.

The allegation that Afro-Guyanese are being specifically profiled and targeted in the Guyanese “criminal system” is yet another fabrication of jaundiced rhetoric to conductively fit into the narrative.

Almost 90% of the Guyana Police Force consists of Afro-Guyanese, including the Commissioner of Police, and most of the top echelon of the Force.

AGAIN, The Judiciary of Guyana is headed by an Afro-Guyanese female holding the post of Chancellor. The second most important post in the Judiciary is that of the Chief Justice. This post is also held by an Afro-Guyanese. In the Magistracy, nearly 70% are Afro-Guyanese, including the Chief Magistrate, Principal Magistrates, and Senior Magistrates. The Registrar of the Supreme Court, and the Accounting Officer of the entire Judiciary, inclusive of the Magistracy, are Afro-Guyanese. In a system that is so ethnically constituted, it is incredulous for one to contend that there can be discrimination against, and racial profiling of, Afro-Guyanese.

It appears that the Joint Communication was based on cherry-picking a few cases involving Afro-Guyanese to conveniently support the narrative that is being peddled.

With equal force, it can be pointed out that between 2015 to 2019 when a perceived Afro-Guyanese political party held the reign of Government, 41 persons, including over 30 Afro-Guyanese died at the hands of the Police Force or in police custody. In many of these cases, police officers were charged and placed before the courts based on the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), a constitutionally independent organ. Coincidentally, the person who held the post then continues to do so, to date.

Pg. 6 - Case of Shawnette Bollers

The use of the Shawnette Bollers case presents a classic example of cherry-picking a single case to support a narrative of institutional racism. This case involves a private citizen and a member of the Guyana Police Force, engaged in an altercation. It is the very DPP who reviewed the file and rendered the advice. This matter is still before the criminal courts. The Defendant pleaded not guilty to the allegations. The trial has not yet commenced but this Report has already found him guilty. Most importantly, this matter has **nothing** to do with the Government or the State. This is the flagrant prejudice and naked bias which have toxified this entire Report.

Pg. 6 - Case of police shooting of Orin Boston

Indeed, the Orin Boston matter, as in every case of excessive use of force, is highly regrettable. At this juncture, it is apposite that it be emphasised that the Government of Guyana is not denying that there may be incidents of the excess use of force by members of the Guyana Police Force. Of course, like in every other country of the world, these incidents occur, and are contrary to the standard operating procedures of the Police Force. However, the Government forcefully abjures any contention, expressly or by implication, that the Government or the State is executing, or is part or conscious of, any policy anywhere in the State apparatus, which discriminates against any ethnic group in Guyana or profiles any such group.

In Orin Boston's case, the file was reviewed by the independent Police Complaints Authority and then transmitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions with recommendations for the advice of that Office. The DPP advised that the police officer implicated be charged with manslaughter. Police Constable #23382 Peters was charged with manslaughter as advised by the Director of Public Prosecutions. The preliminary inquiry was held at the Anna Regina Magistrate's Court. The same is completed. Police Constable #23382 Peters was committed to stand trial in the High Court for the said offence

Additionally, the Attorney General acting on behalf of the State, negotiated a compensation package with lawyers representing the deceased family. For whatever it is worth, the police officer implicated is an Afro-Guyanese.

Pg 6 “Allegation that the government has started obstructing the work of human rights defenders engaged in the promotion of human rights of people of African descent. This is the case of the IPADA-G...There has been unreasonable delay in the disbursement of the subvention to which IPADA-G was eligible”

Untrue.

This is answered in greater detail in **Part V**.

Pg, 7 - “The working group has raised concerns about the lack of data disaggregated by race and ethnicity which conceal the structural discrimination and inequalities faced by Guyanese of Afro descent”

In a multi ethnic nation where everyone is a minority, it has never been the practice to collect ethnic data, nor does the constitution or any law make provisions for such. This is an issue for national consultation during the Constitutional Reform process which will begin this year. Guyana has stated this in its reports to UN UPR, UN CROC, and the UN CERD.

However, the Special Branch Procedures will note that there has been an improvement in data collection by the state.

Part V

Pg. 7 - “The government has not implemented the recommendations that the Working Group of Experts of People of African Descent issued in 2018”. (pages 7- 11 of the Joint Communication)

This report was not made public by the former government nor did the present Government through its Permanent Mission in Geneva or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation receive any reminders from the Working Group of Experts of People of African Descent since it came to office on August 2, 2020.

Noteworthy is that very few of the recommendations of the Working Group appeared on the List of Issues Prior to Reporting which Guyana received and was asked to report on to Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Further Concerns

Pg. 7 - “To undertake impact oriented activities in the framework of the International Decade for People of African Descent and bridge the gaps between policies and practices, namely the IDPAD-GY was unable to function due to the suspension of public funding.” (para 42)

Untrue.

The Report is not only inaccurate in its narrative but has drawn numerous conclusions, adverse to the Government, without hearing a word from the Government. This unfair, capricious and unreasonable approach adopted by the Special Procedures, which also tramples upon the rules of natural justice and which permeates the entirety of this Report, must be strenuously repudiated and condemned.

First, it is the same Government today, as in 2013 that voted in support of a resolution to celebrate the International Decade for People of African Descent (“the International Decade”). However, the PPP/C left Government in 2015 and did not return to Government until August 2020. During this period, the PNC/APNU/AFC Government of the day took a decision to make a monetary contribution annually to organisations representing Afro-Guyanese throughout Guyana, as part of commemorating the International Decade. Upon this Government’s return in August 2020, it continued to allocate in the national budget and disburse to IDPAD-G Inc. a similar sum of money as was disbursed by the previous government in observance of the International Decade. This Government did the same for the financial year 2021. Again, a similar budgetary allocation was made for the financial year 2022.

However, during 2022, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport under whose budget these monies were appropriated and disbursed, received numerous complaints regarding IDPAD-G Inc. from over 30 of the 60 organisations that originally formed the Assembly. In the main, the

complaint was that a few persons, without informing the larger body, incorporated a private limited liability company with the name IDPAD-G Inc. and was receiving the government subventions directly. They complained that this limited liability company hijacked the organisation, and that the beneficiary organisations were largely excluded from the decision-making process, nor were they benefitting financially or at all from these subventions being provided to IDPADA-G by the Government. Moreover, the leadership of this miniaturized IDPAD-G Inc. was engaging in political activities against the Government and was utilizing the subvention for the same.

As a result, the Minister requested the audited financial statements of the IDPAD-G Inc. Only then it was learnt that IDPADA-G was indeed converted to a limited liability company of which a few persons appointed themselves as Directors. An examination of the audited financial statements established that over 70% of the subventions from 2018 onwards were used for the payment of wages and salaries; refreshments, rent and other administrative expenses of IDPAD-G Inc., and that a very paltry sum was spent on any programme designed to benefit the ultimate beneficiaries. Many of the organizations that originally comprised the IDPAD-G never knew or benefitted from these monies for the betterment of people of African descent.³⁵

In those circumstances, the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, who has financial responsibility under the law not only to account for moneys appropriated to his Ministry but also to account for how such moneys are disbursed, took a choice to suspend disbursement to IDPADA-G, after \$60M of the budgeted \$100M was already disbursed to IDPADA-G Inc. for the year 2022. The Minister then publicly announced that he will launch an investigation. As a result, IDPADA-G Inc. instituted legal proceedings against the Minister and the Government for the outstanding sums of money. These proceedings are pending.

It is important to note that for the year 2023, the Government of Guyana has budgeted the same sum for observance of the activities associated with the International Decade, and is on public record as reiterating its commitment to this cause until the end of the International Decade. However, due to the rampant allegations of misuse of the subvention, the Government has decided to disburse the subvention to the original 60-odd Afro-Guyanese organisations that originally formed IDPADA-G. However, IDPADA-G has opposed this mechanism completely, and has actively encouraged groups to not submit proposals and to not accept any money from the Government, unless it was being disbursed through the Assembly.

From 2018 to 2022 IDPAD-GY received the following subventions form the government annual budgets:

³⁵ Refer to Appendix 4 Ras Kafra's Letter to Editor

IPADA-GY Allocations

YEAR	ALLOCATION	DESCRIPTION
2022	100M	Full disbursement
2021	100M	Full Disbursement
2020	32.267M	First tranche
2020	67.733M	Second tranche
2019	100M	Full Disbursement
2018	68.438M	First tranche

A total of over \$468.438 Million was received before the suspension.

Guyana Reparations Committee

This body was established by President Donald Ramator in 2014. Dr. Frank Anthony (then Minister of Culture), and Dr. James Rose (University of Guyana historian), who recommended Eric Phillips to be the Chair of the Guyana Reparations Committee. Dr. Rose worked with Eric Phillips and African organisations to select other Committee members.

Dr. Frank Anthony and Eric Phillips represented Guyana at the first meeting in Saint Vincent, chaired by Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, to establish the CARICOM Prime Ministerial Subcommittee on Reparations, the CARICOM Reparations Commission comprised of Heads of the 13 CARICOM National Committees, the 10-CARICOM Point Plan for reparatory Justice for Native genocide and African slavery.

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. 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 the aforementioned crimes and their descendants have a legal right to reparatory justice.

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.

Sir Hilary Beckles was elected as Chair of the CARICOM Reparations Commission. Two Vice Chairs, Jamaica and St. Vincent were elected. Eric Phillips was elected a vice chair in 2020 and re-elected in 2022.

Guyana's National Committee was established in January 2014 with 12 members and a budget of G\$5M. There was representation from the Amerindian Peoples Association in the form of Jean LaRose and Mr. Butters of the UG Amerindian Research Institute. This subvention, under the Ministry of Culture was subsequently raised to G\$10M.

In Saint Vincent, the Ministers and heads of National Committees under the guidance of the PM Subcommittee established an operational plan that had Terms of Reference for each national committee. All national committees work under these guidelines and all national programs have to be in alignment with CARICOM's goals.

Guyana is the most successful of the 13 national reparations committees. It is the only committee that from day 1, invited the Public to be at all meetings. This was opposed by several Committee members who wanted it to be a special privilege. This single decision has made the Guyana Committee the most dynamic, most inclusive and most active.

Guyana is the only committee that has TV programs, has 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 program that has touched 90 villages, and is regarded as the best National Committee in the region. The Committee holds weekly meetings which means that in one year, the Guyana Reparations Committee meets more than all other national committees.

The Guyana Reparations Committee operates out of the Museum of African Heritage. The Director of the Museum is a member of the Guyana Reparations Committee. All proposals are managed by the Director – she then sends them to the Director of Culture and then to the Minister or Permanent Secretary

The annual budget is built using the Ministry of Finance Theory of Change methodology.

- 2018 - 10 M First Budget
- 2019 - 10M
- 2020 - 4,591M
- 2021 - 10 M
- 2022 - 10 M
- 2022 - 5,409M

The Chair of the Guyana Reparations Committee interfaces with the President of Guyana and also 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

Para. 44 - No action has been taken to Constitute a Human Rights Commission

The appointment of the Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission is one mired in the political gridlock of the Constitution.

The HRC acts as the secretariat for the core functions of the four rights commissions- Ethnic Relations Commission, the Women and Gender Equality Commission, the Rights of the Child Commission and the Indigenous Peoples Commission.

The Secretariat functions, and proposes and receives its annual budgets approved by the National Assembly as do the four aforementioned rights commissions.

When the Chairperson of the HRC is appointed the Chairpersons of each of the 4 commissions mentioned will form the Human Rights Commission.

Para. 45 - No action has been taken to strengthen the function of the Office of the Ombudsman

The Office of the Ombudsman is a constitutional body and provided for in statute, the Ombudsman Act Cap 19:04 of the Laws of Guyana

The Ombudsman was appointed in 2020 and has been re-appointed until 2024. The office proposes and receives its annual budget approved by the National Assembly. The annual reports for 2019 and 2020 were tabled in the National Assembly on December 13, 2021. In his 2020 report, the Ombudsman reported that his office received 64 complaints in state agencies and 24 were pending.

Para. 46 - No action taken towards the collection, Compilation, analysis and dissemination and publication of reliable statistical data and no measures put in place to regularly assess who are victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance

Untrue.

This response by the Government provides data and measures that have been put in place to assess equitable access to goods and services and demonstrate the existence and functioning of domestic remedies, as well as indicate mechanisms developed to assess gaps and to identify where there are inequalities, all forms of discrimination including racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance.

The annual reports of the four constitutional rights commissions to the National Assembly have reported on complaints and measures taken in accordance with their mandates.

Para. 49 - No action taken to Honour the victims of past tragedies

Untrue

The PPP/C parliamentary opposition brought a motion to debate and adopt the findings and recommendations in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry (2014-2016) into the assassination of Dr Walter Rodney in 2016 in the National Assembly – This was defeated by the then Government. The motion was brought back in the 12th Parliament in 2021 by the new Government and was debated and passed. The findings and recommendations were approved in Resolution No. 23 of 2021, August 9, 2021. **(see Appendix 5)**

The Attorney General made a statement to National Assembly on June 10, 2021 detailing Government's commitments to honour Dr. W. Rodney. **(see Appendix 6)**

Books written by Dr. Walter Rodney are currently being printed to be distributed to all primary and secondary schools in Guyana.

The slave trade as the most inhumane act in the history of mankind is taught from Grade 2 to Grade 11 in all school

The allegations of state extra-judicial killings during the crime wave of 2003-2008 which was increased numerically by the opposition PNC/APNU after 2008 was finally put to rest with the independent review of the claims of 400 Afro-Guyanese who were killed in that period by the Stabroek News, a privately owned independent media house, which was published in 2015. **(see Appendix 7)**

Para. 48 - No Resources have been provided for celebration of Emancipation Month, funding withheld from ACDA

This accusation concerning lack of support and resources for Afro-Guy groups and heritage is **Untrue.**

Emancipation of enslaved Africans in British Guyana marked a significant milestone in Guyanese History. Emancipation Day is one of the oldest holidays observed in Guyana, first celebrated on August 1, 1834, to celebrate the resilience of the enslaved people who were united through their struggles to end slavery and who have stood up for their freedom in spite of the consequences. Today, the celebration of Emancipation is embraced by all ethnic groups and cultures across the Guyanese society, and there are activities throughout the month of August to celebrate African culture and the contributions of Afro-descendants to Guyana's development.

Successive governments since Guyana gained her independence have supported the celebration of Emancipation Day. Emancipation Day is a national public holiday.

A major support towards the celebration of Emancipation Day activities is through the provision of financial grants to Afro-Guyanese Cultural Groups across the country for the hosting of cultural activities within their communities during the Emancipation month of August.

Please see Data on the Distribution of Emancipation Grants to Afro- Guyanese Cultural Groups during the period 2015 – 2022:

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Amount	\$11,960,000	\$13,945,000	\$16,675,000	\$17,770,000	26,830,000	\$8,376,500	\$12,000,000	\$15,000,000
No. of Groups	70	71	82	90	105	21	44	56

This initiative continues to date and is managed by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. The grants are distributed based on requests received from the groups who are required to have a detailed proposal outlining the details of the activity for which it is being requested. A Notable deduction can be seen in 2020, only as a result of reduced activities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Para. 49 - Create memorials to celebrate people of African descent and victims of historic tragedies. Measures that aim to put an end to the long-lasting consequences of the above-mentioned past legacies and at guaranteeing non-recurrence, including measures to address systemic racism and racial discrimination, special measures, and development policies and programmes, among others.

Memorials have been built, are acknowledged and maintained by the state. Some of these memorials and monuments are among Guyana's most popular landmarks and tourist attractions.

The 1763 monument



The 1763 monument is located in the Square of the Revolution in the centre of the capital city of Georgetown. The monument, which is 15-feet tall and weighs two and a half tons, is a tribute to the slave revolt which started on February 23, 1763 in the then Dutch colony of Berbice. The uprising was organized to protest the inhuman treatment of the enslaved people by the colonial masters. This revolt lasted for one year and in fact was the first slave revolution in this hemisphere with its own governing body in one part of the country. It was brutally smashed by the Dutch colonizers. The 1763 monument commemorates Cuffy, a former “house slave” who joined the revolt and became its leader until his eventual defeat by his appointed deputy. The year-long fight for liberation was dismantled with violence and public hanging of the leaders by troops from the neighbouring French and British colonies who came to the aid of the Dutch colonizers. Despite the defeat, the monument stands as a memorial to Cuffy and the larger fight against colonialism and plantation slavery. The monument was unveiled on May 23, 1976 as part of Guyana’s tenth independence celebration.

Damon's Monument



Damon's Monument, located at Anna Regina on the Essequibo Coast, was erected as a tribute to the resistance against the apprenticeship system, which followed the abolition of plantation slavery. Despite the Emancipation Act coming into effect on August 1, 1834, the enslaved people were forced to return to the plantations under the Apprenticeship Act. The Apprenticeship Act required the former enslaved people to work for six years in the field and four years as house slaves, under the same harsh conditions for very little pay.

The newly freed labourers went on strike against the new system, declaring that they were free and would only work for half a day. The protesting group assembled in the yard of a church on the Essequibo Coast (the Trinity Church at La Belle Alliance). Damon, who was their leader, along with several others were tried and found guilty of inciting a rebellion. Damon was later executed by hanging on October 13, 1834. This monument was constructed in honour of the fallen hero, Damon, and was unveiled on July 31, 1983, to mark the 150th anniversary of Emancipation.

The Emancipation Monument



The Emancipation Monument, located at Beterverwagting on the East Coast of Demerara, was built as a memorial to the 62 former enslaved Africans who bought the Village in 1840 for \$22,000. The monument consists of a broken chain attached to a hand that's holding a book. The book represents the physical book that was signed by the former-slaves who purchased the village. The broken chains represent the enslaved Africans finally being set free and utilising their meagre earnings from the period of apprenticeship to purchase and establish villages. The foundation for the monument was laid in 1995 and the monument was completed and unveiled in 1996.

The 1823 Monument



The 1823 monument, located along the Seawall Road, is the most recent monument dedicated to memorialization of the struggle to end plantation slavery in Guyana. The Demerara revolt of August 17, 1823 was the largest slave rebellion in the Western Hemisphere and greatly helped to accelerate the eventual abolition of slavery. It is estimated that 11,000 to 12,000 slaves from about 55 plantations between Liliendaal and Mahaica participated in the revolt. As part of the revolt, the owners, managers, and overseers on thirty-seven plantations, who did not flee to Georgetown were locked up by the slaves, however, there was only two deaths. After the revolt ended, two hundred former enslaved persons were beheaded as a warning to the others to deter further revolts. This monument is a reminder of the sacrifices made by those who continued to fight for the abolition of slavery despite the consequences. The monument was unveiled as part of the commemoration of Emancipation in 2013 as a dedication to the heroes of the Demerara uprising.

Walter Rodney National Archives

Named after the late Dr. Walter Rodney who was Guyana's internationally recognised historian and political leader. The sign bearing the name "Walter Rodney National Archives" was taken down during the previous Government's term of office and the name was reverted to the National Archives. This Government restored Dr. Rodney's name to the Archives in 2021.

The Museum of African Art and Ethnology

The Museum of African Art and Ethnology was founded in 1985 with the purchase of the collection of African Art of Hubert H. Nicholson and Mrs. Desiree Malik. These collections were annotated and accessioned through UNESCO in 1992. The museum was opened in 1994. In 2002, the Museum was renamed the **Museum of African Heritage** in order to open the doors for a wider audience and begin to fully address the African experience in Guyana.

This response by the Government of Guyana has documented constitutional, legislative and administrative measures, and policies and programmes which prohibit all forms of racism and racial discrimination as part of the commitment to build a united "One Guyana".

Para. 50 - No action has been taken to ensure that textbooks and other educational materials reflect historical facts accuratelypromote interracial harmony and respect for traditions and cultures of different ethnic groups living in Guyana.

Untrue.

A new curriculum is being piloted across schools in Guyana which reflects individual racial experiences. These experiences are captured in the social studies curriculum from Grades 1 to 9.

Locally produced textbooks such as New Horizons in Social Studies and Guyana: Our Country Our Home give equal representation to all races.

Para. 59 - Although there may have been plans to expand the teaching of history, the textbooks and other educational materials do not reflect historical facts accurately, hence children of African descent do not build a connection with their past and a sense of cultural identity, and others still cannot appreciate the contribution of the Afro-Guyanese to the culture and development of Guyana.

Guyana is one of the few countries in South America and the Caribbean where students dress in traditional costumes at least 3 times per school year (Mashramani, Independence, Emancipation Culture Day). Schools also actively participate in the celebration of all National Holidays, and the diversity of Guyana's rich culture is celebrated in all public schools.

The Ministry of Education has these events as part of its national calendar of activities annually.

Para. 60 - No action has been taken to revise and develop specific curricula and corresponding teaching materials that respect and recognize history, including the transatlantic trade in Africans

Untrue.

A new curriculum has been completed. It is being pilot in more than 60% of all primary schools nationally. The new curriculum will be piloted in all secondary schools in 2024

All nationally owned textbooks are being reviewed and three titles have been completed.

All nationally owned textbooks and foreign textbooks are being reviewed by a multi-racial, multi-religious panel to ensure that they meet the requirement of presenting accurate historical facts.

Para. 61 - Although limited action has been taken towards the establishment of vocational schools across the country, in the

areas predominantly inhabited by the Afro-Guyanese community, such as Linden, no action has been taken to establish a university-level education and other educational institutions, such as the School of Nursing, have been closed down.

Untrue.

Please see facts provided regarding the allegation of the closure of the Charles Roza School of Nursing in an earlier section of this document.

Each administrative region, except Region 8, has a technical vocational training centre.

Each administrative region also has a branch of the teachers' training college.

Further, the GOAL scholarship programme is not limited by location. Students can access scholarships from any location or administrative region.

The University of Guyana online programmes also allow for students to access their classes anywhere in the country thereby saving money and time travelling to and from the university.

Para. 52 - No action has been taken to develop a national plan against racial discrimination in way recommended

Firstly, the Government of Guyana wishes to make it abundantly clear that there is no existing policy, procedure or practice which propagates the institutionalization of racism or racial discrimination in Guyana,

Article 149 (1) and (2) of the Constitution prohibits any form of discrimination, including on basis of race.

The Government policy of inclusive governance in keeping with the article 13 of the Guyana Constitution and its human rights provisions coupled with domestic remedy through the four constitutional rights commissions- the Ethnic Relations Commission, the Women and Gender Equality Commission, the Rights of the Child Commission, and the Indigenous Peoples Commission and the Public/Police and Judicial Service Commissions, the Public Service Appellate Tribunal (PSAT) as well as recourse to the courts all the way to Guyana's apex court, the Caribbean Court of Justice form a framework of prevention and protection against racial discrimination.

However, recognizing that there are ethnic insecurities, the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance (MPAG) will be holding a National Stakeholders Forum on ethnic insecurities and Race in Guyana in 2023.

Furthermore, a constructive dialogue has begun between the Government, through the MPAG, with several African Guyanese groups on creating a conduit to enhance the development of harmonious relations and advancing the development of Guyanese with all ethnic groups in particular Afro- Guyanese. **(see Appendix 8 letter to President)**

Para. 53 - No action has been taken towards the reform of the state judicial system to ensure a fair trial without undue delays

Untrue.

Major improvements to Guyana's administration of justice have been evolving through loan support from the IDB from 2006 to the present. The 2016 loan of US\$8 Million project, under the Criminal Justice System (SCJS) Programme, seeks to address overcrowding in prisons by reducing the use of pre-trial detentions, lengthy periods for trials and court delays and increasing the use of alternative sentencing, among other measures. The programme is designed to complement a previously approved citizen security programme targeting high crime neighborhoods.

During the mid-year review of the SCJS, August 25, 2021, Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, Hon. Mohabir Anil Nandlall S.C. M.P., stated that *"There are certain initiatives that are coming out of this project that are going to be transformational...(which) will permanently change the landscape of our legal sector."*

The review noted that there was some headway in accomplishing the objectives of encouraging alternative sentencing although reducing the use of pretrial detention (remand) still seems to be an uphill task.

Among the achievements is the establishment of a legal aid clinic in January 2020 for pre-trial prisoners. The first first-ever integrated case management system was also implemented. This includes mapping of and training of organizations providing services related to legal aid services.

Some 140 persons were also trained as certified restorative justice practitioners and another 50 senior justice practitioners trained in leadership development. Meanwhile, work is ongoing to develop a cadre of specially trained probation officers.

Another key deliverable of the SCJS project is the appointment and strengthening of the newly appointed Law Reform Commission.

The Restorative Justice Act has been enacted and standards, guidelines and rules of procedure for the implementation of restorative justice in Guyana have been developed.

Recognising that a major factor contributing to the overcrowding in prison in Guyana is the flawed nature of the country's bail system, under the SCJS, a Bail Act was passed in the National Assembly Bill which will ensure greater consistency in the granting of bail, with specific guidelines for Magistrates and Judges when granting bail.

The introduction of the Supreme Court of Guyana Civil Procedure Rules (CPR) 2016 has assisted in reducing the backlog of civil cases in the judicial system by half. In 2020 UNDP conducted a Needs Assessment of the justice system in the Caribbean, and that report found that, in Guyana, the backlog of civil cases was reduced from 6000 to 250. The overriding objective of the CPR is to enable the Court to deal with cases justly and expeditiously.

As a result of COVID-19 and concern that the ongoing pandemic might exacerbate the backlog of cases in the judicial system, and, to restore and increase access to justice, the GoG in December 2020 converted retrofitted containers at the Lusignan Prison barracks into 14 courtrooms that are being used to enable virtual hearings of cases. This innovation has accelerated both hearings and trials and has allowed for the effective administration of justice. This new model has also allowed the judiciary to revisit policies of imprisonment and in some cases reduced bail, and, prioritise hearing those cases where the defendants were in custody for long periods. This innovation has greatly improved access to justice by improving the speed and efficiency with which criminal cases involving persons in pre-trial detention are heard and dispensed with.

Notably, new Practice Directions were developed to maintain the full functions of the courts as far as possible, during the Covid 19 pandemic. To this end, hearing of both civil and criminal cases continued throughout the pandemic, wherein hearing of urgent matters by a judge in chambers was conducted via telephone conference or electronic means, and where an in-person hearing was necessary, the use of social distancing restrictions was strictly employed. This allowed for the courts to uphold citizens' right to a fair trial within a reasonable time.

In particular, a number of constitutional cases were heard with haste, and live streams by media outlets were permitted, thereby upholding the right to a public trial, as provided for in article 144(9) of Guyana's Constitution. This was of particular importance during the especially litigious 5-month period following the March 2, 2020, elections.

The primary channel through which legal aid services is provided in Guyana is the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic, a Non-Governmental Organization, supported by a financial subvention annually by the government.

Para. 54 - Racial profiling has not yet been prohibited by law and no complaint mechanism has been put into place

The Constitution in Article 149 prohibits any form of discrimination including discrimination on basis of race. Racial profiling, were it to take place, would be a violation of the Constitution and any person could approach the court on a constitutional motion. There has been no such case.

There is no racial profiling policy and the Special procedures must be cognizant that complaints mechanisms exist - the Police Complaints Authority, the Office of the Responsibility/Guyana Police Force and the Ethnic Relations Commission and the Courts. No case has ever been brought thus far.

Guyana is a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. The attainment of national unity is a fundamental objective of the Government of Guyana. In this regard, all and any form of racism and divisive postures are eschewed both as a matter of policy and law. From the legal perspective, any form of hate speech, including, the incitement of racial hostility, is prohibited by the Constitution and is expressly excluded from the constitutional right to freedom of expression. In addition, there are multiple pieces of legislation which criminalise, with condign penalties, all

or any form of racism and race-hate. These include the Criminal Law Offences Act which contains numerous race-hate offences, the Racial Hostility Act, the Cybercrime Act, the Broadcast Authority Act, and the Summary Jurisdiction Offences Act.

Para. 55 - No action has been taken to ensure that all prisons should be administered in accordance with state international human rights obligations.... Prisons that are not fit for human habitation. Such as Lusignan Prison, have not yet been closed and replaced with facilities that meet international standards.

Untrue that no action has been taken.

The GoG has taken seriously the observations of the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent which condemned the Lusignan Prison during its visit to Guyana in October 2017. In December 2020, work began on the present buildings to reduce crowding and improve conditions and in early 2021 a contract was signed for the construction of a new facility at the Lusignan Prison.

Construction of additional facilities at the Mazaruni Prison is expected to conclude this year. These improvements will further aid in reducing overcrowding and strengthen the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders. The re-location and construction a new women's prison is also on the programme for modernization of the prison infrastructure.

The Prison Visiting Committees have all been appointed and are functioning; these are made up of civilians who reside near the prisons and whose mandate is to oversight the running of the prisons and ensure the welfare of the inmates.

The focus in prisons now is on providing access to academic and skills training programmes and opportunities on release to avoid a life of crime.

The Prison Parole Board was reconstituted in November 2020 to review and approve applications made by inmates for early release from prison. Parole is another means of addressing overcrowding in the prison system.

The courts as guardians of the constitution ensure that there is compliance with fundamental rights principles. The Judges in this period have released remand prisoners after undue delays in cases being heard by tardy prosecutors and defense lawyers

Para. 56 - 'No action has been taken to investigate all allegations of reprisals...persons interacting with the Working Group during its visit are not subjected to any harm, threat, harassment or punishment

The present Government is unaware of who the Working Group met in 2017 and, is further unaware of any claims at that time or since of any allegations of reprisals, etc.

Para. 58 - No action has been taken to guarantee that prompt and impartial inquiries are conducted in extrajudicial killings by the police

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As a result of major disturbances in Administrative Region #10 in July 2012 which resulted in 3 protestors being shot, a Commission of Inquiry was appointed by the President which included 3 Caribbean well known jurists and 2 Guyanese jurists. The COI was held over a 6-month period, and although the COI could not conclude that it was the police who shot the protestors, it recommended to the Government that compensation be provided for those who were shot as well as those who suffered losses to themselves or their properties in the violence that followed. Compensation was given to the families of the victims in accordance with the monetary compensation proposed by the COI. Further the COI recommended amendments to police protocols with regard to public order and safety.

The government implemented the COI's recommendations of compensation and the GPF have reviewed their protocols on the use of force

Furthermore, the families of the 2012 disturbances also approached the courts and the court ordered further compensation from the state.

With regard to compensation for victims of police excess and torture, the High Court Judge on June 27, 2011 used international human rights law and "exemplary damages for breach of constitutional rights" and "compensatory damages" to award monetary compensation for Twyon Thomas, the Indo-Guyanese victim. Between 2011-2014, there were 3 cases of torture of persons in pre-trial detention (police lockups) which have led to Boards of Inquiry, complaints to the Police Complaints Authority and to criminal charges being laid against the accused officers.

There have been no extra judicial killings reference vigilante groups etc. except the first and only case of a police killing (Boston) since this Government took office.

Para. 57 - No measure has been taken to ensure that juvenile detention centres adhere to international human rights standards and implement programmes for the rehabilitation of children, nor to independently monitor and inspect the facilities in which children and young adults are placed, to ensure that standards of treatment and care are maintained.'

To enhance the quality of care being provided in children's homes across the country, the Children's Visiting Committee was re-constituted in 2021. The Committee is tasked with visiting all of the established children's homes and institutions that provide residential childcare for orphans and vulnerable children to ensure that such homes, whether being run by the State or

privately, are strictly compliant with the standards and guidelines that are set out for them, and to further examine how the Ministry can lend support.

The Ministry of Home Affairs-Juvenile Justice Department (MOHA-JJD) signed a Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic (GLAC) and a non-Governmental organization, Blossom Inc., to help juveniles who come into contact with the law in 2021. The MoU allows for Forensic Interviews and gathering of information about incidents of alleged sexual or child abuse in a manner that will yield information from the juvenile and stand up to scrutiny in court. It will also provide a combination of behavioural and family therapy for juveniles who are in contact or conflict with the law and who have symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, behavioural problems and other difficulties related to traumatic life experiences.

The Juvenile Justice Committee, made up of civilians, inspect and monitor the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Act 2018 and juveniles' welfare at police stations, the Juvenile Holding Centre and the juvenile detention centre at the New Opportunity Corps.

The Juvenile Holding Centre assists with rehabilitation and reintegration and has a programme of activities in counseling, education, spirituality, sports etc. These programmes are conducted by staff and in collaboration with partners. Additionally, all juveniles remanded to this centre are being offered legal representation free of cost by the Guyana Legal Aid Department via a partnership with the United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF). Further, a psycho-educational assessment is done on all juveniles housed at the facility so they can be placed in and at the right level of training.

Para 61 - No University level type institutions have been set up in areas such as Linden....The nursing school in this area has been closed down

University students can access the University of Guyana online. As the University acquires more professors and high-level lecturers, it shall be able to expand its physical locations to other regions.

The Government has already debunked earlier in this document the allegation that the Charles Roza School of Nursing was closed. The Government finds it odd that this section of the Joint Communication refers to implementation of the Working Group report of 2018, but the allegation made in the same document is that this was done in 2022 by the PPP/C Government. These are clear incongruences which prove to be alarming.

Para. 62 - No adequate resources have been invested in sporting activities and programmes for people of African descent. Teams travelling abroad have to seek private sponsorship.

Untrue.

The Government of Guyana has been spending money on sports grounds across the country including a massive infrastructure sports facility project in Linden.

Further works include:

- 21 community grounds outfitted with lights since 2020 and upgrades to several grounds and provision of recreational/ sports facilities in several communities.
- Inter-Guiana Games returned after five years
- Works commenced on Region 2 stadium at Anna Regina
- Guyana Prize for Literature restored and relaunched with newer categories, features
- 1700 youth complete 'Teach Them Young' swimming programme
- National Sports Commission launches new rugby sport academy
- Table Tennis Academy launched
- Young Guyanese benefit from \$1M cultural/creative industries grant

The Government does in fact provide subventions to the sports federations through the National Sports Commission. However, these bodies are independent and may also raise and receive local and overseas private sponsorship as well from their regional or international bodies. This has been the operating mechanism of these federations for decades.

In response to the allegations of bias meted out to Afro Guyanese athletes in the Joint Communication, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport vehemently dispels these claims. In contrast to the misguided allegations, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport and the National Sports Commission under the PPP/C government, have always been a beacon of support for national associations, regardless of race, religion or creed. It was only through the present government that there was the creation of Core Sport initiative. This facilitated the inaugural National Sports Academy which has a primary objective, inter alia, of providing for a gender equity nursery in all of the 12 core sport disciplines.

The twelve (12) core sports were identified to receive extraordinary developmental programmes and funding through National Academies, infrastructural development, travel, tournament and equipment grants. The National Academies have been outfitted with coaches, technical staff and access to facilities which are being funded by the government of Guyana.

The twelve core sports are;

- 1.Cricket
- 2.Football
- 3.Rugby
- 4.TableTennis
- 5.Hockey
- 6.Badminton
- 7.Tennis
- 8.Volleyball
- 9.Athletics

10.Basketball

11.Swimming

12.Squash

Noteworthy and of ultimate importance, it must be highlighted that eight (8) of the twelve (12) core sports (football, rugby, table tennis, tennis, volleyball, athletics, basketball, swimming) are populated primarily by Afro Guyanese. The leadership and bodies of the remaining four (4) core sports (cricket, hockey, badminton, squash) are comprised of diverse ethnicities.

Para. 62 - It has been reported that sport teams travelling abroad for sport competition have to seek support from local Guyanese residents for food and accommodation. Furthermore, they are not accompanied by qualified medical experts in the case of injuries.

Since then, there were three (3) highlighted complaints. Those disgruntlements came from boxer Kevin Allicock, who represented Guyana at the 2022 South American Games, and the Track and Field teams which participated at the 2022 and 2023 CRIFTA games in Jamaica and Bahamas respectively.

In order to denounce further allegations of the Ministry's inadequate support to Afro Guyanese athletes, the 2022 South American Games fell under the sole purview of the Guyana Olympic Association which operated in isolation and was responsible for its planning and coordinating. In addition, the Athletic Association of Guyana, which administers a 98% Afro Guyanese sport discipline, received all funds that were requisitioned from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport through the National Sports Commission for the 2022 & 2023 CARIFTA games.

To further assist in dispelling claims that African Guyanese dominated sport disciplines have not been afforded adequate resources, it must be noted that the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, under the PPP/C administration has progressively budgeted the largest disbursements to the sport sector in the history of Guyana. In addition, Region 10, a predominantly Afro-Guyanese region has been afforded two multi-purpose sports facilities, the largest per capita of any region in the country.

It must not go unpronounced that the Government of Guyana has expended approximately thirteen million dollars (13M) to facilitate the safe return of our 2023 CARIFTA games team to Guyana after allegations of administrative malpractices within the Athletic Association of Guyana required our intervention.

As a consequence of the allegations of administrative lapses, the president of the Athletic Association of Guyana, Mr. Aubrey Hutson was recently removed unanimously by a No Confidence motion by members of his executive. As illustrated by the provided pie chart, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport and Government of Guyana has been an unflinching

supporter of sport in the Afro-Guyanese communities while not neglecting other ethnicities throughout the length and breadth of Guyana.

Support Given to Sports by Ethnicity – 2023		
Indo Guyanese	Afro Guyanese	Other Guyanese
\$4,832,678.00	\$43,284,858.00	\$3,850,000.00

Support Given to Sports by Ethnicity – 2023		
Indo Guyanese	Afro Guyanese	Other Guyanese
\$10,064,519.00	\$48,673,417.00	\$3,115,159.00

Through the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, the Government of Guyana has injected \$1,550,177,217 from 2021 to 2023 into several Afro-Guyanese communities. This is in keeping with its Manifesto promise to ensure each region has a premiere multipurpose sports facility to cater to multiple events. These facilities will contribute to the growth of surrounding communities providing entrepreneurial opportunities for residents due to increase in need for sporting equipment, food, accommodation, and transportation services.

2021	Region	Investment - GYD
Completion of Synthetic Track in Region 10		
Procurement of Synthetic Materials	10	127,000,000
Asphalting of Long Jump Pit	10	8,000,000
2022		
Construction of Pavilion	10	123,169,070
Multi-Purpose Sports Facilities		
Ground Preparation – Mackenzie	10	201,894,000
Procurement and Installations of Lights – Mackenzie	10	366,367,239
Rehabilitation of Andrew Six Head Lewis Gym – Albouystown	4	7,450,640
2023		

Construction of Grass mound and Stands - Mackenzie	10	181,296,268
Construction of Multi-Purpose Hall	7	87,000,000
Procurement of Lights – Bayrock Athletic Track	10	298,000,000
Construction of Stands – Bayrock Athletic Track	10	150,000,000
TOTAL		\$1,550,177,217

Para. 63 - No action taken to ensure the full implementation of the right to adequate housing

The Government outrightly rejects this allegation. This document has gone to great lengths to present information and data on the national housing programme which directly involves providing land and/or houses in new safe and clean communities for thousands of families across the country, without prejudice or discrimination.

Para 65-No dedicated development fund has been allocated for persons of African descent who have been left behind.

There is no dedicated development fund for Afro-Guyanese, however the Poverty reduction strategy and social safety net programmes reach out to, target and include anyone who have been left behind, regardless of race.

Para 66 - ‘No action has been taken to implement Afro Guyanese women are more exposed to gender based violence and sexual exploitation than other Guyanese women. The same is true for Afro Guyanese of the LGBTQI+ community who are marginalised and face discrimination.

Data on victims of domestic and sexual violence shows no ethnic disparity. All women of all colours, classes, geographic locations are victims. With regards to women who are murdered by partners or former partners, the majority are Indo-Guyanese.

Members of the LGBTQI+ community do face prejudices and biases mainly due to religion, but are not discriminated against or prevented from getting jobs or services in the government.

The Government is unfamiliar with cases of specific targeting or discrimination against Afro Guyanese members of the LGBTQI+ community.

Para. 67 - No action has been taken to implement policies that accelerate the decentralization of power and access to resources, or to increase accessibility of affordable loans for entrepreneurs by people of African descent. On the contrary, central ministries seek to establish a direct client relationship with local communities and act in a discriminatory manner.'

As it clearly laid out in the earlier sections of this document, the Ministries of health, education, human services and social security have all decentralised their services.

The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security commenced in 2020 the decentralization of its services. The practice in the previous administration was that people would come to the central office in Georgetown to seek assistance. One such example is the Ministry's Difficult Circumstances Unit. In this department, more than 65% of persons benefitting were residing in Region 4. The Ministry has embarked on country-wide outreaches to provide access to these services to persons in every region of the country. These outreaches are advertised publicly and all are invited to benefit from same. Further, a matrix is now used to determine the amount of assistance provided to persons seeking help. This matrix takes into considerations such as income level, employment status, and number of dependents.

Further the Government focuses on the empowerment of women across Guyana. One of the Ministry's programmes is the Women's Innovation and Investment Network. To date, WIIN has trained over 6000 women across Guyana in various disciplines. The programme is publicly advertised and is available to all Guyanese in all 10 administrative regions. Further, the Ministry offers training in business, which has benefited over 700 persons to date, of which 50% have completed their business plans and have received empowerment grants.

Para 67 - Some steps have been taken to address sexual harassment in the labour environment, not enough has been done and some misconducts have been covered up by government officials.

The Prevention of Discrimination Act is currently under review vis a vis worksite discrimination against LGBTQI+ and disabled persons as well as to strengthen the sections dealing with sexual and other forms of harassment.

The Chief Labour Officer, Ministry of Labour, reported that the Ministry had received one (1) report of 'sexual harassment on the job' in 2021 and there were no reported cases of discrimination against persons in the LGBTQI community.

Para. 68 - High cost of living and medication prevents people from African descent from accessing appropriate health care.

Totally untrue.

Free Public health facilities are available across the country, people can choose to go to private hospitals where they see fit, however even some medical procedures at private hospitals are funded by Government – this includes access to dialysis, specialized cardiac surgery, and InVitro-Fertilization.

Para. 70 - Mental Health treatment and facilities remain inadequate

This is true but this is not due to ethnic bias, but limited skilled professionals. However, a lot of efforts are being placed with the introduction of more trained professionals in this field, outreach programmes, improved education strategies and new services.

Para. 71 - Programmes aimed at preventing and treating substance abuse are not efficient in reaching their goal ... HIV/Aids care.

The establishment of a Ministry of Health Mental Health Programme, the training and employment of qualified

psychologists and psychiatrists in the health system and the support of the Salvation Army and Phoenix Recovery Project (a local CSO) in the areas of treatment and detox centres demonstrate an improvement although much has to be done. Alcoholism is the most pervasive form of addiction.

In Guyana, over 94% of the persons living with HIV know their status, while only 78% are on treatment with antiretroviral, and an estimated 30% are virally suppressed. Guyana has made great strides in its HIV/AIDS response over the past four decades. It is the first Caribbean country to reach the 90% target of persons living in Guyana that knows their HIV status and continues to maintain this achievement currently at 94%.

In 2022 there was a 63% increase in HIV testing compared to 2021 with over 35,818 people being tested. Most were females at 66%, ages 25-49, afro Guyanese, then Mixed race and Indo Guyanese. From these people tested, there were 615 new cases with the majority from ages 20-49. At the end of 2022, 6,448 were on anti-retroviral treatment.

The data for the 2023 first quarter is still preliminary with a total of 5721 tests being completed. The trend remains the same with more females being tested and Afro-Guyanese, Mixed race, and Indo-Guyanese are the races seeking testing. There are 178 new cases for 2023 from the age of 20-49. At the end of the first quarter of 2023, 6,454 were on anti-retroviral treatment.

Please see data below:

Total number of initially diagnosed cases for 2020 by sex:

Year	Male	Female	Total
2020	160	133	293

Source: Ministry of Health 2023

Number of persons currently enrolled in HIV treatment (ART) at the year

Desegregations	2020	2021	2022	2023*
Male 0-14	62	46	37	36
Male 15+	2466	2698	2893	2890
Female 0-14	33	34	36	34
Female 15+	3048	3295	3482	3486
TOTAL Males	2528	2744	2930	2926
TOTAL Females	3081	3329	3518	3520
TOTAL Children (0-14 years)	95	80	73	70
TOTAL Adults (15+ years)	5514	5993	6375	6384
TOTAL (ON ART)	5609	6073	6448	6454

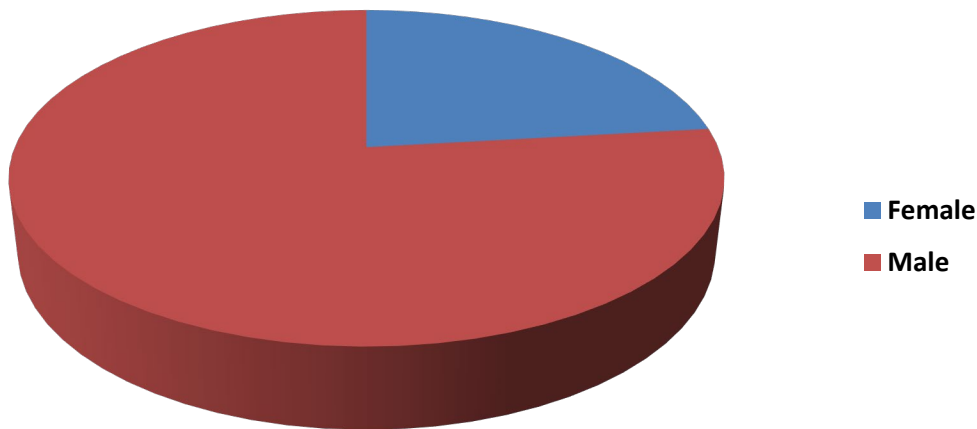
*2023 (at the end of March 2023)

Guyana will continue to exert funds, medicine, treatment and educational awareness programmes to reduce the level of spread of HIV/Aids in the society.

Para. 69 - Although some programmes aimed at reducing the suicide rate have been implemented, the figures remain high.

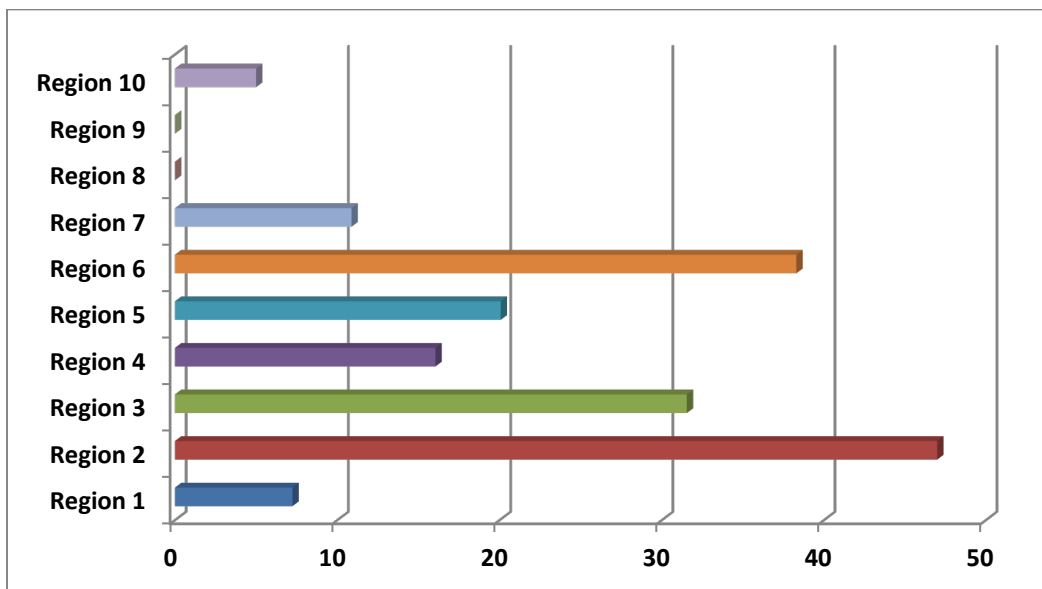
In the year 2022 for the period January 1 to December 31, there were a total of 164 suicides deaths at a rate 21.96 per 100,000 of the population (746,955 via 2012 Census Data). Further breakdown of the information can be seen below:

Gender Chart



Ethnicity: East Indians were most prevalent with 51% (84 deaths) of the total deaths, followed by Amerindians (35 deaths), African (23 deaths), Others (13 deaths) & Mixed Race (9 deaths).

Age Range: Males & Females between the age range of 60-64 years had the highest rate of death for the period registering 12 deaths @ a rate of 55.78 per 100,000 of the population (21,513 via 2012 census data). Followed by 65-69 years with 7 deaths @ rate of 50.60 per 100,000 of the population (13,835), 20-24 years with 26 deaths @ a rate of 41.09 per 100,000 of the population (63,282) & 25-29 years with 20 deaths @ a rate of 38.42 per 100,000 of the population (52,061).



To effect changed approach to mental health in schools, a counseling officer is placed in each school. Each Department of Education has a cohort of Welfare and Guidance and Counselling Officers who provide support to students and teachers

Ministry of Health Mental Health Programme, employment of more trained psychologists and psychiatrists in the health system and the use of the Suicide Hotline by the MHSSS offers an

improvement on how suicide is being addressed. These efforts will continue extensively to ensure that suicide rates can be reduced across all demographics.

Para. 72 - No resources allocated to the Women and Gender Equality Commission in order to strengthen its accessibility

Totally untrue.

The Women and Gender Equality Commission, a constitutional body, makes and proposes its annual budget which is approved by the National Assembly, which they manage without interference. Annually they submit their reports to the National Assembly for adoption and like all other appropriations are made public.

The Women's and Gender Equality Commission has received the following subsidies and contributions from central government for the year 2021 to 2023:

- 2020 Expenditure: 39.6M
- 2021 Expenditure: \$39.1M
- 2022 Expenditure: 37.4M
- 2023 Budget: 48.5M

The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security has a representative as one of the Commissioners and works closely with the agency towards the promotion of gender mainstreaming, empowerment of women, and the elimination of gender-based violence. The Commission is also a key partner of the GY\$1 billion UN Spotlight Programme, for which the Ministry of Human Services is the principal Government partner.

Para. 73 - Little action has been taken on the decriminalisation of marijuana to address the religious and cultural rights of the religious community

The Narcotic and Psychotropic Act was amended in 2022 to allow for non-custodial sentences if one is found with 1-30 grammes of marijuana for personal use. The amendment was reviewed before a parliamentary special select committee before being sent to the National Assembly, and subsequently passed and assented.

Para 74-No action has been taken by political leaders and parties to actively combat racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance and to promote tolerance, solidarity and respect.

The constitution and several statutes already mentioned prohibit racial discrimination, racism and racial hostility and inciting people racially. The issue isn't law. The GOG promotes inclusion and

abhorrence to racial discrimination. The “One Guyana policy” is promoted as means to build national unity and racial harmony.

Para. 76 - The government has not sufficiently engaged civil society organisations to adequately address the concerns faced by people of African descent.

The Government of Guyana has a National Stakeholders Forum through the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance which includes a broad cross section of civil society organizations from religious (all), labour, business, women, Amerindian, youth, special interests, cultural and ethnic organizations. Further, every Ministry has their sector relevant stakeholders from civil society which they engage on national policy and programmes.

The Government’s policy, led by the President M.I. Ali, of visibility and accessibility in every community and engaging with people where ever they live, has made the Government responsive and inclusive for all.

Part VI

(pages 11-13)

The Government of Guyana has provided responses to each allegation submitted in the Joint Communication and has also responded to #1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, and 17 in the body of this response.

With regards to the following,

4. Context of police brutality and other unlawful activities by public authorities

Guyana is a democratic country governed by the rule of law and a written Constitution, which is supreme. This Constitution guarantees to every citizen all the internationally recognised basic human and inalienable rights and freedoms. These include the right to life, and protection against discrimination on the grounds of, inter alia, race, ethnicity, gender, class, and political associations, the right to counsel and to retain an Attorney-at-Law of one's choice, the presumption of innocence, protection against cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. There is a large body of criminal laws in Guyana against brutality and violence of any type.

It is now the Standard Operating Procedure for suspects', defendants', and accused persons' interviews with the Guyana Police Force, and in particular, caution statements, to be videotaped. The Police Complaints Authority Act establishes a Police Complaints Authority to which members of the public can complain against police brutality and other infractions by the Guyana Police Force.

The Constitution establishes several Constitutional Commissions which are empowered to hear and determine complaints from different segments of our population. Such Commissions include the Indigenous People Commission, the Rights of the Child Commission, and the Women and Gender Equality Commission. Significantly, and more on point, Guyana is one of the few countries in the world whose Constitution establishes an Ethnic Relations Commission that is fully empowered, inter alia, to hear and investigate complaints of ethnic/ racial discrimination. Importantly, all these Commissions are appointed through a multi-partisan parliamentary process and are not chosen unilaterally by the Government.

12. Please provide details on concrete measures taken or envisage to ensure that Afro Guyanese belonging to ethnic and/or religious minorities are able to enjoy their right to freedom and belief

With regards to ethnic minorities, the Amerindians, Guyana's first people, have benefitted and will continue to benefit from the updated LCDS which allows for 15% of all proceeds from the country's forest payments directly allocated to Indigenous Guyanese since they are the custodians of the forests. This equates to approximately US\$112 million (GYD\$23.571 billion) from the carbon credit going directly to Amerindian communities under the arrangement.

The Support and Heal Network initiative, a partnership between Ministry of Human Services and Social Security and faith-based leaders to address social issues among vulnerable groups and

communities across Guyana was formalised in 2021. The goal of this initiative is to strengthen interfaith cooperation towards the development of recommendations and strategies to address social inequities and the marginalization of communities. Several of these faith leaders belonging to SAHN reached out to communities affected by violence and offered counseling for family members.

The ERC was sworn in and has the mandate to promote ethnic harmony and security in Guyana. The newly reconstituted commission comprises representatives from religious bodies, the labour movement, private business sector, youth, women, and cultural/ethnic bodies.

13. *‘Please describe how your Excellency’s Government has addressed or envisages to address intersectional forms of discrimination and to provide remedy and additional support to these categories of victims, including members of the LGBTQI+ community, and members of the ethnic and/or religious minorities*

Racist and Hate Violence, online and offline:

Guyana is a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. The attainment of national unity is a fundamental objective of the Government of Guyana. In this regard, all and any form of racism and divisive postures are eschewed both as a matter of policy and law. From the legal perspective, any form of hate speech, including, the incitement of racial hostility, is prohibited by the Constitution and is expressly excluded from the constitutional right to freedom of expression. In addition, there are multiple pieces of legislation which criminalise, with condign penalties, all or any form of racism and race-hate. These include the Criminal Law Offences Act which contains numerous race-hate offences, the Racial Hostility Act, the Cybercrime Act, the Broadcast Authority Act, and the Summary Jurisdiction Offences Act.

Perhaps it is important to record our Government’s continuous struggle to address racist and racial outpourings on social media platforms, including those from Afro-Guyanese, in particular, who operate from North America. These utterances, similar to the reckless assemblage of allegations and narratives which constitute this very Report, have inspired fringe elements within our society to openly incite race wars. Only recently, one political leader was charged with exciting racial hostility for a speech he made at a public meeting, in which his racial rhetoric included a call for the Armed Forces of the State to turn their guns against the Government of Guyana.

The law does not restrict the freedom of expression, association, or peaceful assembly of the LGBTQI+ organizations or any other individual or group. In every month of June, for the last decade, the LGBTQI+ community freely hosts a pride festival, and since 2018 organisations have been hosting a pride parade in the capital. Government Ministers often participate in activities hosted by the LGBTQI+ rights organisations, and in 2022, Guyana Trans United (a local trans-rights CSO) awarded Hon. Dr. Frank Anthony, Minister of Health a plaque in recognition of his contributions to protecting the healthcare right of LGBTQI+ persons in Guyana. Minister Anthony’s wife – Dr. Shanti Singh, who once headed the National Aids Programme Secretariat was also recognized for her contributions to the fight against HIV/AIDs and her dedication to working with the LGBTQI community.

In 2022, the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance joined the LGBTQI+ rights organisations in collaboration with the diplomatic corps in Guyana to hoist the Pride flag to mark the beginning of Pride month.

The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, through the Spotlight programme, donated items to an LGBTQI+ rights CSO, the Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD), to support the operations of SASOD's safe space for the LGBTQI+ community. Further, as part of the 16 Days of Activism activities in 2022, the Ministry hosted a seminar on Gender Based Violence and the LGBTQ+ community addressing issues relating to them, and providing information on how they can access resources available through the Ministry.

Through the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance's National Stakeholders Forum, LGBTQI+ rights organisations are also engaged in stakeholder fora which focus on a wide range of topics – Since 2020, organisations such as the Guyana Rainbow Foundation, EQUAL Guyana, Guyana Trans United, Proud to be Trans and SASOD Guyana have been invited to numerous activities including consultations on the Low Carbon Development Strategy and amendments of the ROPA, for example. These organisations have also formed part of larger groups invited to participate in anti-corruption workshops with civil society which focused on transparency and accountability.

Further, an LGBTQ+ youth led organisation, EQUAL Guyana, was one of the consortium of civil society organisations approved by a two thirds majority of the National Assembly to participate in the nomination of commissioners to the Ethnic Relations Commission – they participated in the nomination process and enjoyed the same voting rights as any other stakeholder.

18 The Government will commence the constitutional reform process in the latter part of 2023 with the Constitution Reform Commission (which is covered by statute) to hold broad ranging inclusive consultations across the country as was done in the 1999-2001 Constitutional reform process. (refer to para. 4 of the WG report)

Conclusion

The Government of Guyana has kept its commitment made in its letter of May 8, 2023 to the Special Procedures Branch to answer each and every allegation that was made in the Joint Communication of March 27, 2023. The Government hopes that the Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups will use the information and data herein to further understand the historical complexities, and present-day challenges and progress which Guyana has made.

Our Government is committed to working together with all of our citizens in order to create an environment where everyone feels valued and respected. This includes taking a firm stance against racism and discrimination in all its forms, and actively working to dismantle systems that perpetuate prejudices and discrimination. Therefore, in no way are Afro-Guyanese being singled-out to be left out of the development and progress taking place in Guyana; this claim is simply not factual.

We remain committed to bridging the divides that exist in all aspects of our citizens' lives and we have been working assiduously, and will continue to do so, with every single Guyanese to ensure that every citizen is included in all development that takes place in our country. Our Government has developed plans, policies and programmes which are already being implemented across all ten administrative regions and there is evidence of the significant positive and beneficial impacts that are being enjoyed by Guyanese of all races, inclusive our Afro-Guyanese brother and sisters.