

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 65 Review Theme Report
Questionnaire

Submission by the Co-operative Republic of Guyana

1. What measures have been taken to strengthen normative, legal and policy frameworks for the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

The Government of Guyana remains committed to advancing the agenda for achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls through strengthened policies, programmes and practices.

The implementation of Guyana's National Gender Equality & Social Inclusion Policy, which is under continuous review, is a priority for the Government of Guyana in line with its strategic objective to promote Guyana's development by improving the capacities and opportunities for diverse groups of women, men, girls, boys and other vulnerable groups based on the framework set out in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets.

The first phase of the implementation process focuses on five key elements:

- Country Gender Assessment
- Establish Structural linkages, Lobbying and Advocacy
- Capacity building for institutions and individuals
- Public Education and Outreach
- Monitoring and Evaluation

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

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

The second phase will focus on:

- Participation and Representation: effective participation and representation in institutions.
- Entrepreneurial Education, Training and Skills Development. Cooperatives, Rural enterprises, Internships and Science and Technology
- Review and Reform legislation to eliminate discriminatory laws and regulations and include new legislation to punish hate crimes;
- Monitoring and Evaluation.

2. What actions and investments have been made for financing gender equality and the empowerment of women?

The Women and Gender Equality Commission (WGEC) is one of the 5 Constitutional Rights Commissions provided for under the Constitution of Guyana. Since its establishment, the Commission receives an annual subvention from the National Treasury. The subvention for 2019 increased by almost 50% to improve programming in comparison to the previous years.

The Commission's mandate is to receive complaints and reports on issues affecting both women and men with regard to gender inequality and discrimination. The Commission also examines policies and programmes that affect discrimination against women.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, significant sections of the female working population are now unemployed or are receiving reduced pay, including single parents. Many women-owned small businesses are no longer operational and women in the private care industry have lost their jobs because they can no longer work at the homes of their employers due to fear of COVID-19 transmission.

In response, the Government of Guyana will embark on several projects to guarantee sustained economic independence and empowerment of women throughout Guyana. Women affected by the pandemic, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable women will be the primary beneficiaries. The objective is to have income generating activities for vulnerable women in all the communities in Guyana.

With the goal of making women self-sufficient over a sustained period, the Government will soon fund projects for small cottage industries led by women so that they can secure their livelihoods.

3. What steps have been taken to bolster women's leadership and women's full and equal participation in decision-making in all areas of sustainable development?

Guyana continues to make progress on the status of women in public life and has been maintaining steady ratings with regard to representation of women in Parliament. Since the amendment of the electoral laws, the proportion of women in Parliament has increased in each consecutive Parliament. In the 12th Parliament 35% of seats are held by women.

The Government of Guyana commitment to ensure that women are given the necessary wherewithal to take on leadership roles has manifested itself mainly through the training programmes of the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute (GWLI) and the Gender Affairs Bureau.

The programmes cater for Women leaders involved in community work throughout the country with participants enhancing their leadership skills in preparation for participation in the Local and Regional Government System. Most of the participants are already serving members of both Regional and Neighborhood Democratic Councils. The programmes comprise courses in leadership, organizational skills for development, laws of local government, gender and local Government, local government promoting gender equality, local development through women's

eyes, understanding gender, gender mainstreaming, planning and budgeting, team building for success.

For the reporting period, the Gender Affairs Bureau (GAB) conducted a number of seminars in 8 of the 10 administrative regions in Guyana for members of the Regional Gender Affairs Committee and other stakeholders in the Regions. The focus of these seminars is improved knowledge and awareness in *gender* concepts, equality and stereotype while simultaneously building the capacity of persons at national, regional and local levels to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate policies and programmes with a gender focus.

There was also In-House Training of the Inter-Ministry Gender Focal Points (IMC) on Gender Planning & Mainstreaming and the various Articles of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

In the reporting period, the Gender Affairs Bureau in collaboration with the Women and Gender Equality Commission (WGEC) and UNESCO held a series of community outreaches, workshops, roundtables on gender equality and women's empowerment. These activities were aimed at increasing female leadership by promoting women's empowerment in national development and democratic participation at the highest levels of decision-making in the government, private sector and communities.

The Training targeted a cadre of fifty (50) leaders from the Indigenous (Amerindian) Communities in the Hinterland Regions of Guyana, one hundred (100) leaders of the local and regional government, twenty-five (25) female Parliamentarians and twenty (20) Permanent Secretaries from government ministries.

In the hinterland regions, another cadre of forty (40) leaders each from non-government organisations, civil society organisations, religious organisations, youths and other gender advocates in the nine other administrative regions of Guyana benefited from training of trainers to help to deliver the community based training workshops and outreaches to enhance women's leadership and gender equality to the highest level.

The Gender Affairs Bureau also conducted Gender Sensitization sessions with other Community Based Organizations. The main objective was to produce a cadre of gender sensitive community leaders who will be able to take decisions and actions in the communities to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment. These awareness and training sessions also enhance capacity to address social issues in the community.

4. What macroeconomic, labour and social policies have been put in place that promote full and productive employment and decent work for women, in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's employment and economic rights and independence?

One of the main pillars of Government programming during the pandemic is to ensure that women have access to resources to boost income generating activities.

With the goal of making women self-sufficient over a sustained period, the Government will soon fund projects for small cottage industries led by women so that they can secure their livelihoods.

Women who have lost their jobs as a result of COVID are currently being assisted with locating new jobs through a recruitment mechanism under the Ministry of Labour.

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, the Ministry of Agriculture's (MOA) Rural Entrepreneurial Agricultural Project (REAP) launched its COVID-19 Relief Kitchen Garden initiative.

The programme aims to ensure food security while assisting women to be self-sufficient, and practice healthier eating during COVID. Seedling plants have been distributed throughout Guyana.

5. *What response and recovery measures to the COVID-19 pandemic have been taken to improve and expand social protection for women (e.g., healthcare coverage, unemployment benefits, paid sick leave, paid parental leave, maternity benefits, pensions, income support such as cash transfers)?*

With the assistance of international partners, the Government of Guyana continues to provide vulnerable women with hampers and dignity care packages.

Thousands of hampers and care packages are being distributed across Guyana to bring immediate relief to women. Vulnerable communities are being especially targeted for relief. In addition, a COVID-19 cash transfer programme is expected to be implemented to bring relief to every household in Guyana.

Vulnerable women and children are the primary beneficiaries of government Public Assistance Programme where a monthly cash disbursement is given to support women and children.

Banks have offered moratorium on mortgage payments, so women who have been impacted by COVID-19 and cannot afford to pay their monthly mortgage payments are offered relief.

Utility companies have also waived all disconnection operations for unpaid bills during the pandemic.

Health coverage, paid sick leave, maternal benefits, pensions within the public sector have not been altered during the pandemic. However, government is currently working with the private sector to address these challenges faced by employers and employees.

6. *What actions have been taken to expand the availability and affordability of care services to address the increase in unpaid care and domestic work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., care subsidies, paid leave)?*

The Government of Guyana plans to implement a Child Care Assistance Programme for essential workers employed in both the public and private sectors. Relief will be offered to frontline workers, especially women, including Health Care professionals, Police Officers, Prison Officers, Fire Service Officers, Security Officers and Army Officers.

7. *What action has been taken to increase resources and support for women's and civil society organizations as they cope with the COVID-19 pandemic?*

During the COVID-19 pandemic, government and civil society organizations have strengthened collaborative efforts to improve the delivery of services for women and girls. Annual subventions are given to numerous civil society organizations and increased subventions are expected for the third quarter of 2020 and in 2021 in order to address the challenges faced by women during the pandemic.

8. *What steps have been taken to improve gender-responsive data collection in the context of follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to track and monitor the gender-specific impacts and response measures to the COVID-19 pandemic*

Guyana Women's Health and Life experiences survey report provided critical data on violence against women and girls. The report provided detailed nationwide information about the prevalence, frequency and types of violence against women, looking at the health outcomes of domestic violence, the factors that may protect or put women at risk of domestic violence and showed coping strategies and services that women use to deal with domestic violence.

The evidence generated facilitated the formulation of Guyana's Country Programme Document for the Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women and girls.

Approximately £4.3mil Euros is expected to be allocated to fund this country programme, and the duration is expected to be 3 years.

The programme has the following 6 pillars:

Pillar 1 will address legislative and policy framework in line with international human rights standards;

Pillar 2 speaks to building national and sub-national systems and institutions to plan, fund and deliver evidence-based programmes that prevent and respond to violence against women and girls;

Pillar 3 is directed at gender inequitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours change at community and individual levels;

Pillar 4 focuses on responsive services for women and girls to use available, accessible, acceptable, and quality essential services including for long term recovery from violence;

Pillar 5 seeks to deliver quality, disaggregated and globally comparable data on different forms of violence against women and girls in line with international standards to inform laws, policies and programmes;

Pillar 6 gives prominence to women's rights groups, autonomous social movements and CSOs, including those representing youth and groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination/marginalization.

Monitoring the gender-specific impacts and response measures to the COVID-19 pandemic will commence shortly.