



ANNUAL REPORT  
2008

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In accordance with Article 212D of the Constitution of Guyana the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) continued its work in the year 2008 in the following main areas:

- a. Public Education and Awareness
- b. Conflict Resolution/Transformation
- c. Investigative
- d. Administrative and Finance

### **Public Education and Awareness**

The Commission held annual Constituency Meetings with representatives of the seven (7) Constituencies and other stakeholders to report on its 2007 programme of activities and to garner feedback aimed at further enhancing its work.

Two meetings of the Multi Stakeholder Forum (MSF) National Conversation Working Group were facilitated by the Commission during the reporting period; and the group apart from addressing the issue of “a type of governance that would ensure ethnic security,” benefited from presentations by officials from the Ministries of Labour, Local Government and Culture, Youth and Sport.

The Commission visited the ten (10) Administrative Regions and held meetings with Regional Executive, religious leaders and other stakeholders. During those visits, the Commission also conducted for the first time Youth Workshops engaging young people in discussion of interest to them, held film festivals in schools and took complaints from residents.

### **Conflict Resolution/Transformation**

In the aftermath of the massacres in Lusignan and Bartica early 2008, the ERC with support from other stakeholders held meetings in the two communities and nearby villages to offer moral support and assist the residents to deal with their concerns and fears.

By mid 2008 the Commission with funding from United Nation Development Programme held a number of Inter/Intra Community Dialogue meetings in Bartica and its neighbouring communities, as well as communities on the East Coast of Demerara. Approximately one thousand, four hundred and twenty-one (1,421) persons participated and benefited from the project.

In November, 2008 the ERC held a Religious Leaders' Conference aimed at engaging religious leaders in discussion to propagate their faith in a responsible manner under the theme "Propagating faith in a multi-cultural, multi-religious society".

The intention of the Conference was to forge among the religious leaders a closer understanding, tolerance and respect for the various religions/cultures. Three hundred and eighty-six (386) representatives of the Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Bahai and other religious faiths participated.

A Religious Broadcasters' Workshop under the theme "Encourage and create respect for religious, culture and other forms of diversity in a plural society" was held in December, 2008 to sensitise religious broadcasters of the need to exercise understanding, tolerance and respect for other religions in their programmes. The workshop was attended by seventy-six (76) religious broadcasters, television hosts and television owners from the Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Bahai and other religious faiths.

### **Investigative**

During the period under review, the ERC received eighty (80) complaints. Fifty-nine (59) of those complaints were investigated and concluded.

In keeping with one of its functions, the Commission held a meeting with representatives of the various ethnic groups in Guyana to plan for a national Ethnic Based Conversation. Among the suggestions made by the representatives was that the ERC should first consult with each ethnic group before holding a national conversation. As a consequence, consultations were held with representatives of the Amerindian, Chinese and East Indian Communities. Reports of those consultations were presented to the National Assembly.

### **Administrative and Finance**

#### **Administrative**

The ERC continues to be housed in the BIDCO building, 66 Peter Rose and Anira Streets, Queenstown, Georgetown. The Commission is staffed by a total of twenty persons who have been employed on a month to month basis since August 2007.

#### **Finance**

The ERC had budgeted to receive one hundred and four million, four hundred and seventy-three thousand (\$104,473,000) dollars under current expenditure, and five million, seven hundred and forty thousand (\$5,740,000) dollars for capital expenditure.

The Commission received from the Ministry of Finance a total of seventy-seven million, two hundred and fifty-nine thousand (\$77,259,000) dollars for current expenditure. Two

million, one hundred and forty thousand (\$2,140,000) dollars was approved for capital expenditure. However, the ERC expended only one million, eight hundred and eighty-seven thousand (\$1,887,000) dollars as it was decided that computers would not be purchased in 2008.

# **ETHNIC RELATIONS COMMISSION**

## **FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

### **GENERAL**

The Ethnic Relations Commission organized and executed its work programme for the year 2008 in accordance with its functions as set out in Article 212 D of the Constitution of Guyana.

The aim of this report is to highlight the activities of the Commission between January and December, 2008.

### **ERC STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING**

The Commission met with senior staff members in January, 2008 to review its performance and to develop and agree on a programme of activities for the year. Reports of activities for the previous year and projections for 2008 were presented to the Commission on:

- a. General Administration
- b. Logistics and Operations
- c. Finance
- d. Complaints/Investigation
- e. Public Education

The Commission then determined its priorities and agreed on the following:

- a. Organising an Ethnic Based Conversation
- b. An audit of the City of Georgetown based on a request from the Deputy Mayor
- c. Submission of the African Guyanese Consultation Report to the National Assembly
- d. Workshop with Religious Broadcasters
- e. Conference of Religious Leaders
- f. Inter/Intra Community Dialogue
- g. Constituency Meetings
- h. Regional Visits
- i. Youth Workshops

## **DEATH OF COMMISSIONER SHAHABUDIN MC DOOM AND THE APPOINTMENT OF MR. SHAFEEK KHAN AS COMMISSIONER**

The Commission suffered the loss of Mr. Shahabudin Mc Doom, the Commissioner who represented the Muslim Community on the ERC. Mr. Mc Doom passed away in London on March 8, 2008 after a brief illness. As a consequence, the Commission elevated Mr. Shafeek Khan, Alternate Commissioner to the position of Commissioner and a formal advisory was sent to the Muslim Community.

## **RESIGNATION: COMMISSIONERS**

Mr. Andrew Garnett, the Commissioner representing the Labour Constituency on the ERC, tendered his resignation effective from June 30, 2008. Mr. Carvil Duncan, the Alternate Commissioner, was appointed to fill the vacant position with effect from July 1, 2008.

At the end of August, 2008 Reverend Roy Thakurdya, the Alternate Commissioner representing the Christian Constituency, migrated to Canada.

Then on September 19, 2008 Commissioner Shafeek Khan tendered his resignation as Commissioner representing the Muslim Community on the ERC, due to ill health.

These developments have led to a significant reduction in the size of the Commission with just four (4) Commissioners representing

- a. The Christian Constituency
- b. The Labour Constituency
- c. The Private Sector Constituency
- d. The Women's Constituency

There is no active representation on the ERC for the Hindu, Muslim and Youth Constituencies, nor are there Alternate Commissioners for those listed above.

## **MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION**

During the reporting period, the Commission held fifteen (15) Statutory Meetings and over thirty (30) special meetings to discuss its plans and agree on action to be taken regarding its work programme and other business.

## **PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS**

### **2008 CONSTITUENCY MEETINGS**

The ERC hosted its Annual Constituency Meetings with the seven (7) Constituencies and other Stakeholders between March 26 and April 8, 2008. The purpose of the meetings

was to report on the Commission's work programme for 2007 and solicit feedback, comments and suggestions for the ERC's programme of activities for 2008.

A full report of the Constituency Meetings is attached at **Appendix 1**

## **MEETINGS OF THE MSF NATIONAL CONVERSATION WORKING GROUP**

The Working Group established to ensure the implementation of recommendations for regional and national development suggested through the Multi-Stakeholder process, met on March 4, 2008. Discussion centered on:

- a. Local Government Reform
- b. The proposal for a Public Education Programme to inform citizens how to participate effectively in the Local Government Systems.
- c. Need for the functioning of the Constitutional Reform Committee (CRC) of Parliament
- d. Inter-Party discourse between the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) and People's National Congress/Reform (PNC/R)
- e. A system of governance to ensure ethnic security in Guyana
- f. In light of the crime situation, Crime Law and Order
- g. Areas that should be lobbied for necessary changes.

The Group met again on October 9, 2008 and benefited from presentations by Officers of the Ministries of Labour, Local Government and Culture, Youth and Sport. After a general discussion, members of the Group suggested the following recommendations for action:

### **GAP/ROAR**

- A broader approach is needed to tackle the issue of lack of job opportunities since adults are also suffering
- The National Development Strategy has components on which areas need to be developed. Development needs to be approached from a national level
- Communities need to lobby for implementation of projects in their area
- The Working Group can play a role in charting the course to reach national consensus on where Guyana is headed in terms of solving the ills of society
- The Working Group can put pressure on government and agencies to get things done.



## **PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS/REFORM (PNC/R)**

- It has to be decided what kind of economy is needed
- Since Guyana is still a primary producer economy, determining what kind of economy is needed would allow us to know what kind of curriculum is required from primary to university level
- A structured policy with a common objective as it relates to youth strategy

## **PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY/CIVIC (PPP/C)**

- Strengthen current structures in place for youth programmes
- Increase budgetary allocation to the Youth Ministry
- Make the youth programme more accessible to youths in various communities
- The profile of the youth programme needs to be intensely promoted for public awareness
- Source new partners for widening sponsorship
- Ministry needs to look at the delivery of the programme - Trainers should be in touch with daily realities of life

Funding for the development of youth programmes is available from

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- The profile of the youth programme needs to be intensely promoted for public awareness
- Source new partners for widening sponsorship
- Ministry needs to look at the delivery of the programme - Trainers should be in touch with daily realities of life
- Funding for the development of youth programmes is available from international NGOs through local NGOs

## **TRADES UNION**

- Would like the Working Group to come up with a solution for the subvention issue affecting the Critchlow Labour College (CLC)

## **CULTURAL BASED ORGANIZATION**

- CDCs have to become more effective
- Crime and politics affecting development at the community and regional levels
- Youths should be involved in religious programmes, conflict ameliorated programmes and skills training.
- Youths are picked up daily by the police
- Corruption exists in the Police Force and judicial system

## **RELIGIOUS BODY (HINDU)**

- Youths are unwilling to work even though there are job opportunities available to them
- Churches cannot help youths if they do not care about helping themselves
- Youths have to have some self-dignity

- Career guidance will assist in training youths to develop their potential

## **REGIONAL CONCERNS:**

The following concerns were noted from presentations made by representatives of the undermentioned Administrative Regions:-

### **REGION # 1**

- The community is worse off with the trade in illicit drugs (marijuana and cocaine)
- Gold is used to attract girls into prostitution
- Rampant sale of arms and ammunition
- The ERC was asked to assist in pushing the cash-crop agriculture base set up at Port Kaituma to alleviate the drug trade

### **REGION # 2**

- Too many youths are left out of youth organizations
- More industrial factories are needed for the creation of job opportunities
- Adults should encourage youths to focus on the positive aspects of life

### **REGION # 3**

- Farmers need to be certified to gain better access to market opportunity
- The regional authority needs to set up a data-base to register all unemployed youths, vacancies and employment opportunities
- Consideration should be given to have multi-grade schools in the riverain communities where one teacher teaches several classes - schools need one teacher per class
- Teachers in the riverain communities need to be paid better salaries and schools adequately staffed.

### **REGION #5**

- Called for the recruitment office in the region to work full-time instead of part-time
- The religious groups should be more involved in youth activities
- More cottage industries to be set up in order to provide jobs opportunities
- The need for bank loans for farmers on a moratorium basis so that they can increase their production levels
- Proper supervision for the allocation of government contract; regional authority needs to be more involved in the proper execution of projects

- Schools' curriculum to cater for career guidance

## **REGION # 6**

- The Community Center in Region 6 is always locked - residents have no access
- Concerned about the ERC's muscle at the governmental level

## **REGION # 7**

- Need for additional funding for youth programmes
- Access to more opportunities for youths within the hinterland communities
- More consideration for self-development should be given to youths from the hinterland communities
- Increased access to youth programmes that will create new opportunities and forge alliances with new partners
- Seeking employment with the private sector
- Youth Ministry needs to work along with youths to become aware of challenges they face
- More accountability needed for grants and loans received from NGOs
- Noted that the CDCs play a vital role in the communities, but that several of them have become defunct due to the lack of officials. CDCs have more access to funds available from funding agencies than the NDCs.

## **REGION # 8**

- The need to know what skills are most needed in the region in order to conduct skills training for youths in the community.
- Lack of reading skills is hampering the development of youths in the community

## **REGIONAL VISITS**

As part of the Commission's annual programme of activities the Chairman, Commissioners and staff visited the ten (10) Administrative Regions over the period May 19 to December 18, 2008.

Set out below is the general programme for the visits:

- a. Meeting with the Regional Administration
- b. Meeting with representatives of religious bodies, the private sector, labour, youth and women
- c. Meeting with residents

- d. Youth Workshop
- e. Film Festival in schools
- f. Taking complaints from residents

Approximately eleven thousand (11,000) children from one hundred and twenty-one (121) schools throughout Guyana benefited from the Film Festival sessions conducted by officers of the Public Education and Awareness Unit.

## **YOUTH WORKSHOPS**

The Youth Workshop is a new initiative through which the Commission engaged young people to sensitize them of the need for tolerance and respect for all races and to have them discuss how they can contribute meaningfully to racial harmony in Guyana.

The Workshops held in the ten (10) Administrative Regions throughout 2008 were also designed to mobilize youth from various areas in the Regions, to encourage among them free and frank discussion and provide them with the opportunity to share their views on the Guyana they desire.

The process utilized was the viewing of special video clips portraying conflict/conflict resolution. Participants also viewed a similar video titled "GUYANA" which was produced by the late Commissioner Shahabudin Mc Doom. After viewing the films, they were encouraged to identify the themes and messages and share any experiences that they could associate with the films.

**In terms of the Guyana they desired, listed below are some of the common views shared by the young people:**

1. Co-operative
2. Peaceful
3. God fearing
4. Harmonious
5. Loving
6. Violence-free
7. Wealthy
8. United
9. Healthy
10. Race free

**With respect to obstacles facing them, the youths listed below some of their views:**

1. The government, politicians and religious leaders were blamed for not living up to their offices and for not fulfilling promises
2. They called for the creation of job opportunities for youth
3. They called on leaders to preach peace instead of segregation
4. Identified poor working conditions
5. Racism/ethnic conflict
6. Teenage Pregnancy
7. Domestic violence
8. Brain and skills drain due to migration
9. Lack of co-operation and understanding among Guyanese
10. Criminal activities
11. Lack of family values
12. Need for equal opportunities
13. Abuse of alcohol
14. Lack of youth activities
15. Corruption in the Police Force
16. Lack of education among citizens
17. Police lacks the right approach to situations

**Listed below are some of their recommendations for a better Guyana**

1. There must be respect for all ethnic groups
2. Need to improve literacy
3. Need for equal opportunity and justice for all
4. Stop fighting and unite for a better Guyana
5. Reintroduction of religious education in schools
6. Children must not only be aware of their rights but also their responsibilities
7. Foreign investors should do more for the country
8. Need to eradicate crime in order to have a Guyana we desire
9. Educate the nation through dialogue, workshops, media etc.

10. Proudly display our diverse culture always and not only at specific times
11. Guyanese must work together
12. Stop racism in schools
13. Promotion of games and events involving a wide cross section of people to encourage peace
14. Open multi-disciplinary training centres across the country

The Youth Workshop attracted approximately four hundred and sixty-six (466) young people from the Administrative Regions visited. A breakdown of participants by Region is shown below –

REGION	VENUE	NO. OF PARTICIPANTS
1	L&D Resort, Kumaka	52
2	Anna Regina Multilateral School	50
3	Aracari Resort	37
5	Bush Lot Secondary	17
7	Bartica Community Centre	48
8	Paramakatoi Community Centre	49
9	The Amerindian Hostel, Lethem	48
10	Barrow's Lounge, Linden	165
<b>Total</b>		<b>466</b>

## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION/TRANSFORMATION**

### **SUPPORT TO RESIDENTS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE MASSACRES IN LUSIGNAN AND BARTICA.**

The massacres in Lusignan, East Coast Demerara on 26<sup>th</sup> January, and Bartica on 17th February, 2008 led the ERC to intervene prematurely in those communities with the Inter/Intra Community Dialogue that was aimed at having communities interface with each other in an environment that was free from fear, intimidation and animosity.

Between January and February, 2008 the Commission conducted meetings in nine (9) communities on the East Coast of Demerara namely, La Bonne Intention, Chateau Margot, Annandale, Beterverwagting, Enterprise, Lusignan, Buxton, Friendship and Mon repos. Meetings were also held with students in a number of schools that are in close proximity to Lusignan, including the Life Spring Ministries Primary School, Institution of Business Education and Urmilla Primary School. The purpose of those meetings was to help the students to address their fears and concerns and to offer them moral support in the aftermath of the tragedy in Lusignan.

The ERC had two interventions in Bartica, Region 7 immediately following the massacre in that community.

With a delegation which included Commissioner L. John P. Willems, Hindu Priest Shri Prakash Gossai and members of the Inter-Religious Organisation, Rev. Ronald Mc Garrell and Mr. Roshan Khan, the Chairman of the ERC visited Bartica to give moral support to grieving families and offer words of comfort to the grief stricken community.

A live call-in television programme and community meeting were also held giving residents the opportunity to air their views on the incident that had taken place and to consider future security of the community.

While the Commission continued its work on the East Coast of Demerara, a team comprising Commissioner Willems, the Chief Executive Officer, two Investigative Officer and Programme Officer paid a follow-up visit to Bartica and its neighbouring communities to conduct peace discussions with students and residents. Meetings were held at:

- Bartica Secondary School
- Bartica Annex
- St. Anthony Secondary School
- St. John the Baptist Primary School
- Two Miles Primary School
- Bartica Community

- Karrau
- Dog Point
- Agatash
- Goshen

A live call in television programme was also hosted by the team and the entire interaction provided opportunities for residents to express their views and concerns particularly as they relate to ethnic security.

## **INTER/INTRA COMMUNITY DIALOGUE**

The Inter/Intra Community Dialogue was launched on June 16, 2008 with funding provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

### **The main objectives of the Dialogue were:**

- ❖ To encourage the understanding, acceptance and tolerance of the diversities among the ethnic groups through dialogue in a harmonious and safe environment.
- ❖ To forge solidarity among the ethnic groups particularly between the African and East Indians in affected areas
- ❖ To create a sense of ethnic security among the ethnic groups by examining stereotypical perceptions
- ❖ To harness recommendations and suggestions for policy and behavioral changes for the fostering of harmonious relationships among the ethnic groups.

### **Common Recommendations Identified from the Inter/Intra Community Dialogue/Meetings**

- ❖ There must be equal access/opportunities to resources
- ❖ Guyanese must educate themselves on each other's culture and religious beliefs/practices
- ❖ The fear/mistrust/stereotypical perceptions must be eradicated in homes, places of worship and schools; the media to lend support in this area
- ❖ The need for integration in communities
- ❖ We have to co-operate as Guyanese to promote a Guyana that we all desire



- ❖ Politicians must keep “their word/promises”
- ❖ Remove the “Indo” and “Afro” when identifying the two major ethnic groups
- ❖ Politicians should set examples regarding racial issues; they contribute to the division among the people
- ❖ The people must put all prejudices aside and start living peacefully together
- ❖ People must learn to let go
- ❖ The use of racist language must cease
- ❖ Build trust, love and respect for each other

Two hundred and eighty-eight (288) residents from Bartica and its neighbouring communities participated in the Inter/Intra Dialogue, while one thousand, one hundred and thirty-three (1,133) persons from twenty-six (26) villages along the East Coast Demerara benefited from discussions in the Inter/Intra Community Dialogue.

**A full report of the Inter/Intra Community Dialogue was submitted to the National Assembly on 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2009.**

## **RELIGIOUS LEADERS' CONFERENCE**

Article 212D (f) of the Constitution states that the ERC is mandated to **establish and create respect for religious, cultural and other forms of diversity in a plural society.**

The Conference of Religious Leaders was proposed in accordance with this mandate and formed part of ERC's proactive work to promote harmony and good relations within the society. The Conference was therefore used to engage religious leaders in a discussion to propagate their faith in a responsible manner. Further, it served to engage stakeholders from all religious persuasions to discuss and examine the theme: ***“Propagating Faith in a multi-cultural, multi-religious society.”***

The Conference of Religious Leaders targeted all religious groups, Inter-Religious Organisations, umbrella organisations, religious denominations and faith-based groups.

It was envisaged that this Conference would forge among Religious Leaders a closer understanding, while developing tolerance and respect for the various religions/cultures that constitute the Guyanese society.

Three hundred and eighty-six (386) persons from the Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Bahai and other faiths participated in the Conference. The opening Ceremony was attended by His Excellency the President Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, Ministers of the Government, Members of Parliament, representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, His Worship the Mayor, Deputy Mayor of Georgetown and the Regional Chairman of Region 4.

Following the official opening ceremony, participants engaged in discussions under four key sub-themes

- a. **What is working for us in our society**
- b. **Some examples of obstacles, areas of conflict and sensitivities**
- c. **Ingredients for a continued and healthy interfaith dialogue**
- d. **What participants left the conference with**

Participants also examined a case study which was aimed at allowing them to utilize skills of negotiating to resolve a potential conflict.

Though it was not a direct objective, many of the views put forward by participants were in the form of recommendations and these are outlined in the final report which will be issued under separate cover and placed on the **ERC's Website** [www.ethnicrelations.org.gy](http://www.ethnicrelations.org.gy).

## **RELIGIOUS BROADCASTERS' WORKSHOP**

The Religious Broadcasters' Workshop was the final major activity for the Ethnic Relations Commission in 2008. This workshop was held under the theme "*Encourage and create respect for religious, cultural and other forms of diversity in a plural society*" on December 2, 2008 at the Umana Yana, Kingston, Georgetown. It was attended by seventy six (76) Religious Broadcasters, television hosts and television owners from the Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Bahai' and other religious communities.

The purpose of the Religious Broadcasters' Workshop was to sensitise Religious Broadcasters of the need to exercise understanding, tolerance and respect for other religion in their programming.

To achieve the desired outcomes and objectives agreed upon, two (2) team meetings were held on November 27 and December 1, 2008 respectively. The team comprised of ERC Chairman Bishop Juan A. Edghill, Commissioner L. John P. Willems, Ms. Christine King, Chief Executive Officer, other staff members of the ERC, and Facilitators Ms. Rajkumarie Singh, Rev. Ronald Mc Garrell, Pandit Chrishna Persaud, Ms. Beverly Chan, Ms. Daune Pratt, Mr. Abbas Mancey, Mr. Imran Mohamed, and Mr. Kwame Gilbert. The pre-workshop activities helped to provide a brief overview of the workshop purpose and objectives; brainstorm stakeholder group(s) attending the workshop; and gather input around specific topics/themes for inquiry during the workshop itself.

These information gathering and planning efforts made possible the design of a workshop agenda, facilitation plan and participants' handout.

After a brief opening ceremony at which the Chairman of the Advisory Committee,

Mr. Pat Dial delivered a presentation on the regulations relative to television license and programming, participants were placed in four (4) groups that were each managed by two (2) trained facilitators. The first session focused on the following questions

- a. **What do you value as a Broadcaster?**
- b. **What are your expectation(s) for the day?**

Participants were further led through a session that asked two (2) specific questions

- a. **What is working for us?**
- b. **What can be done differently/what do you hope for?**

The afternoon's activities sought to further deepen the discussion in keeping with the workshop's theme. To achieve this, participants were given a typical case study to examine, discuss and resolve. At the end of the exercise participants were asked to present five (5) principles or standards that they agreed on for future broadcasting.

**The report of the Religious Broadcasters' Workshop will also be submitted to the National Assembly.**

## **INVESTIGATIVE**

### **COMPLAINTS**

Between January 1 and December 31, 2008 the Investigative Unit received eighty (80) complaints during the Commission's Regional Visits, Inter/Intra Community Dialogue as well as from persons visiting the offices of the ERC. Of those complaints, fifty-nine (59) matters were investigated and completed.

The Unit is continuing follow-up work on the remaining twenty-one (21) cases for 2008 and fourteen (14) for 2007 which require further evidence. A matrix of complaints received is at **Appendix 2**.

Complaints to the Commission which attracted public attention were:

- a. **Mr. Rudolph Adams against the Guyana Forestry Commission**
- b. **Ms. Charmaine DeMendonca against Dr. Kishore Persaud of the GPHC**
- c. **The Indian Arrival Committee (IAC) against Stabroek News.**

The complaints at a. and b. are still under investigation and the IAC complaint was dealt with and closed. The decision of the ERC in this case is at **Appendix 3**.

## MEETINGS/CONSULTATIONS WITH ETHNIC-BASED GROUPS

One of the functions of the Ethnic Relations Commission as outlined in Article 212 D of the Constitution of Guyana is to “Foster a sense of security among all ethnic groups by encouraging and promoting the understanding, acceptance and tolerance of diversity in all aspects of material life, and promoting full participation by all ethnic groups in the social, economic, cultural and political life of the people”

Based on complaints received by the Commission and in keeping with the above mandate, the Commission invited the Ethnic-Based groups to plan for a national Ethnic-Based Conversation. Initially, the ERC had intended to target the two main ethnic groups – Indo-Guyanese and African Guyanese. It was however felt that the other ethnic groups should be included with a view to lessening racial animosity and bolstering faith in the institutions tasked with governing the nation.

The Commission organized the first meeting in January 2008 which was attended by representatives of the Guyanese Organisation of Indigenous Peoples, Indian Arrival Committee, The Amerindian Action Movement of Guyana, Kingdom of Manumitted African, Amerindian Peoples Association and the Guyana Rastafarian Council. At that meeting representatives were given a concept paper for examination and discussion. There were varying views on the organisation of the ethnic-based conversation, and since time was of essence, the Commission agreed with the suggestion to consult separately with each ethnic group before hosting a national conversation.

As the Commission had already met with the African Guyanese Community in November 2007, advertisements were published in the media for consultations with representatives of the Indo Guyanese, Amerindians, Chinese, Portuguese and mixed race groups. Responses were received from:

- **The Amerindian Community**
- **The Chinese Community**
- **The East Indian Community**

The Commission met with representatives of the Amerindian Community on July 8, 2008 who highlighted the following concerns:

- a. **Illegal Mining in Amerindian Communities**
- b. **High incidence of robbery in Amerindian Communities**
- c. **Prostitution**
- d. **Selling of alcohol in mining camps**
- e. **Use of illicit drugs**
- f. **Danger to aquatic life**

- g. **Grant of Mining Concessions by Guyana Geology and Mines Commission without consultation with Village Captains**
- h. **Amerindian Right to Land titles**
- i. **Mercury pollution creating a health hazard for Amerindians**
- j. **Guns in the Wai Wai area**
- k. **The low quality of education offered in Amerindian communities when compared with that offered to coastlanders**
- l. **Potable water for Amerindian communities**
- m. **Exploitation of Amerindian women and girls**

Representatives of the East Indian Community met with the Commission on July 10, 2008 to share their concerns. However, there was a request that there should be no written or audio recording of the meeting, thus no report was reproduced on that Consultation.

Members of the Chinese Community met with the ERC on July 17, 2008. With them was a representative from the Chinese Embassy. The Chinese raised the following issues:

- a. Problems of the language barrier between locals and Chinese immigrants
- b. That Chinese immigrants are targeted because of the language barrier
- c. Security especially for Chinese immigrants
- d. Robberies committed on Chinese businesses
- e. Problems encountered by Chinese immigrants with the Immigration Department

There was no response from the Portuguese and Mixed race groups.

**Reports of Consultations with representatives of the Amerindian and Chinese Communities were compiled and presented to the National Assembly on November 26, 2008.**

**The report of the African Community Consultation which was held in November, 2007 was submitted to the National Assembly on March 27, 2008.**

#### **ERC REPORTS SUBMITTED TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

The ERC has since its establishment submitted the following reports to the National Assembly:

- 1. **First Annual Report – 2004**

2. **Second Annual Report – 2005**
3. **Third Annual Report – 2006**
4. **Fourth Annual Report – 2007**
5. **Multi-Stakeholder (MSF) National Conversation Report**
6. **An Investigation and Review of Employment Practices in the Public and Private Sectors in Region Four, Guyana**
7. **Research into Public Procurement in Guyana with Special Regard to Openness and Fairness**
8. **Report on Research on the Award of Academic Scholarships in Guyana**
9. **Study to Assess whether there is any Discrimination in the Award and Distribution of Economic Opportunities in Guyana**
10. **A Study of Land Distribution in Guyana: Assessment of Existing Practices**
11. **Public Consultations on the Perceived Needs of the African Guyanese Community**
12. **Public Consultation on the Perceived Needs of the Amerindian Community**
13. **Public Consultation on the Perceived Needs of the Chinese Community**

#### **MEETINGS WITH THE DONOR COMMUNITY**

The Ethnic Relations Commission met with representatives of the donor community during the reporting period for possible collaboration with respect to specific activities of the Commission. They were –

- a. **DFID** - Preparatory work relative to Local Government Elections
- b. **UNDP** - Inter/Intra Community Dialogue Project

#### **COURTESY CALL**

Commissioners of the ERC and the CEO/Secretary met with the **United Nations Expert on Minority Issues, Ms. Gay McDougal** on 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2008. Discussion focused on the role/functions and work of the ERC.

#### **ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE**

##### **ACCOMMODATION**

The Ethnic Relations Commission is housed in the BIDCO building situated at 66 Peter Rose and Anira Streets, Queenstown, Georgetown.

Minor maintenance and refurbishment to the offices were done by the Commission during the reporting period. This was to provide for staff and Commissioners a conducive work environment.

## STAFFING

At the beginning of the year, the ERC was staffed by the following -

- Chief Executive Officer
- Administrative Officer
- Acting Finance Officer
- Public Relations Officer
- Senior Programme Officer
- Senior Accounts Clerk
- Two Programme Officers
- Three Investigative Officers
- Accounts Clerk
- Two Administrative Assistants
- Computer Operator
- Computer Operator/Filing Clerk
- Receptionist
- Office Assistant
- Cleaner/Maid
- Driver

However, by mid June, 2008 there were changes in the Commission with vacancies created by the departure of the Public Relations Officer and Driver.

The vacant positions were filled in September, 2008 and by the close of the year the staffing of the Commission comprised

- Chief Executive Officer
- Administrative Officer
- Finance Officer
- Senior Programme Officer
- Senior Investigative Officer
- Senior Accounts Clerk
- Four Programme Officers
- Two Investigative Officers
- Two Administrative Assistants
- Computer Operator
- Receptionist
- Office Assistant
- Cleaner/Maid
- Driver

## STAFF TRAINING

Ten (10) staff members benefitted from training provided by USAID/RTI in May, 2008. The areas covered were:

- a. Preparation of Project Proposals
- b. Report Writing

## TRANSPORT

The Commission has in its possession one **Toyota Carina AT212 motor car** and one **Toyota Hilux 4 Runner** purchased in 2004 and 2005 respectively. These refurbished vehicles have provided (with regular maintenance) a fairly satisfactory service to the work of the Commission. The Commission also has a serviceable a **125cc motor scooter** which was purchased in 2005 to be used by the Office Assistant for official duties.

## FINANCE

The Ethnic Relations Commission's budgetary estimate for 2008 was one hundred and ten million, seven hundred and forty-six thousand (**\$110,746,000**) dollars, of which five million, seven hundred and forty thousand (**\$5,740,000**) dollars were for capital expenditure and one hundred and four million, four hundred and seventy-three thousand (**\$104,473,000**) dollars for current expenditure. The National Assembly in its annual budget approved seventy-two million, one hundred and forty thousand (**\$72,140,000**) dollars with two million, one hundred and forty thousand (**\$2,140,000**) dollars for capital expenditure and seventy million (**\$70,000,000**) dollars for current expenditure. Below is a breakdown of the current expenditure:

### CURRENT EXPENDITURE 2008

DESCRIPTION	PROPOSED	REVISED	ACTUAL	% ACHIEVED
Employment Cost	\$38,638	\$39,897	\$36,465	91%
Other Charges	\$ 31,362	\$37,362	\$ 40,794	109%
<b>Total</b>	<b>70,000</b>	<b>77,259</b>	<b>77,259</b>	<b>100%</b>

A comparison of current expenditure for 2007 over 2008 is shown below:

DESCRIPTION	2007	2008	% INCREASE
Employment Cost	\$35,937	\$36,465	1% increase
Other Charges	\$33,186	\$40,794	23% increase
<b>Total</b>	<b>69,123</b>	<b>77,259</b>	<b>12% increase</b>



The 2008 expenditure shows an increase of 12% over that of 2007. In terms of employment costs, there were resignations from staff, and although some of the positions were filled, this did not impact on the 5% increase in salary; payments to those persons eligible were based on the December, 2007 salary.

Other Charges increased with the level of activity of the Commission throughout the year, as well as the steep increase in fuel costs resulting in increases in electricity and other charges.

In October, 2008 the Commission requested a supplementary provision of six million and fifty-two thousand, nine hundred and thirty-two (\$6,052,932,000) dollars to facilitate the Religious Leaders' Conference and Religious Broadcasters' Workshop; six million dollars (\$6,000,000) was approved. The ERC also received one million, two hundred and fifty-nine thousand and eighteen (\$1,259,018) dollars to cover the five (5%) percent payout on salaries retroactive to the period January 2008 – May, 2008.

#### **CAPITAL EXPENDITURE 2008**

Two million, one hundred and forty thousand (\$2,140,000) dollars was approved for capital expenditure but the ERC capital budget was revised downward to one million, eight hundred and eighty-seven thousand (\$1,887,000) dollars.

#### **DONOR FUNDING**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) funded the Inter/Intra Community Dialogue to the tune of two million, four hundred and one thousand (\$2,401,000) dollars. Six hundred and seventy-one thousand and twenty-six (\$671,026) dollars was provided by the Commission to cover the full cost of the project.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- a. That the Motion for the reconstitution of the Ethnic Relations Commission be reviewed with a view to the appointment of members of the Commission.
- b. The naming of representatives and establishment of the other Rights Commissions under Act 5 of 2001.
- c. The constitution and activation of the Ethnic Relations Commission Tribunal.
- d. That the Ethnic Relations Commission be empowered to subpoena witnesses and documents.
- e. That members of the National Assembly having received annual and other special reports will table motions for debate and specific action.

## CONCLUSION

The year under review begun as a challenge to the Ethnic Relations Commission with the massacres in Lusignan and Bartica. As a consequence of those incidents, the Commission launched a successful programme aimed at facilitating residents in both communities to share among themselves and with other residents their views and concerns on the issue of ethnic relations particularly between African and Indian Guyanese.

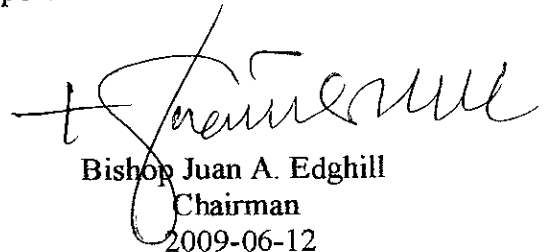
Apart from the Inter/Intra Community Dialogue, the Commission introduced for the first time, Youth Workshops as part of its programme for Regional visits, to encourage the participation of young people in discussing matters of national concern. Attendance and participation were encouraging and thus it is the intention of the Commission to continue this exercise.

The activities held for the Religious Community provided Religious Leaders and Broadcasters with the kind of information that would allow for greater understanding, tolerance and respect for the various religions in Guyana. It is envisaged that the experiences and lessons learnt by the religious representatives will be shared with their respective groups thereby contributing to the resolution of some of the problems encountered in our society.

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Your Honour,

In accordance with Article 212E (1) of the Constitution of Guyana, the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) hereby submit its fifth Annual Report.



Bishop Juan A. Edghill  
Chairman  
2009-06-12

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**ETHNIC RELATIONS COMMISSION CONSTITUENCY MEETINGS 2008  
ERC BOARDROOM – MARCH 26-APRIL 8, 2008**

Christian	Wednesday, March 26	16:00 hours
Muslim	Thursday March 27	16:00 hours
Labour	Friday March 28	15:00 hours
IRO	Monday, March 31	16:00 hours
Private Sector	Wednesday April 2	16:00 hours
Hindu	Thursday, April 3	13:00 hours
Women	Friday April 4	15:00 hours
Rastafarians African Based. Other Ethnic-Based Organisations and NGO's	Monday April 7	16:00 hours
Youth	Tuesday April 8	16:00 hours

## **Christian Constituency**

- **Interested in finding solutions to bridge the ethnic divide that exists in Guyana...**

Representatives from Christian denominations listed on the Parliamentary list of entities which are to be consulted to elect members to serve on the ERC and other Christian bodies the Commission had developed partnerships with over the last five years, met at the ERC's Secretariat on March 26, 2008 as part of its Annual Constituency Meetings. The aim of the meeting was for the Christian Constituency to review the work the Commission executed over the past year and to offer suggestions on how the ERC can enhance its role to promote good relations among the citizenry.

Reporting briefly on the work the Commission conducted in 2007, Chairman of the ERC Bishop Juan A. Edghill informed the representatives of the following activities:

1. The presentation of the five research reports on equitable distribution of resources to the Speaker of the National Assembly.
2. The 2007 Regional Visits
3. The African Guyanese Consultation and the presentation of the report to the Speaker of the National Assembly
4. The Commission's Public Education and Awareness activities.

Outlining the Commission's priorities for the year 2008, the Chairman informed the Christian representatives about the Commission's plan to conduct a Religious Broadcasters' Consultation, an Inter/Intra Community Dialogue and an Ethnic Based Conversation.

The Chairman told the representatives that ERC will be hosting the Religious Broadcasters' Consultation to encourage respect for Guyana's religious plurality among the producers of religious television programmes on the state and private media. Regarding the conceptualization of the Religious Broadcasters' Consultation, the ERC Chairman stated that a survey of the electronic media would determine that there is a proliferation of religious programmes, and sometimes the content is not always conducive to maintaining religious tolerance in the society.

He added that in some cases, religious broadcasters go beyond propagating their faith to demonizing other religious beliefs. The Chairman noted that the ERC would therefore be taking a proactive step to forge a commitment among religious broadcasters to propagate their faith without offending others, in the interest of harmony and good relations in the society.

Bishop Edghill told the Christian Constituency that the Inter/Intra Community Meetings is aimed at providing the opportunity for racially exclusive communities and those which are mixed to interface with each other.

He also informed them of the Commission's plan to monitor the imminent Local Government Election to ensure that race is not factored into Political Parties campaigns, the continuation of its Regional Visits and Public Education and Awareness programmes. The representatives were

then given the opportunity to comment on the work of the Commission and its priorities for 2008.

Chairman of the Guyana Council of Churches, Rev. Alphonso Porter observed that the work the ERC has done over the past four years should be celebrated. The Commission, he said, has been carrying out its mandate with regard to the investigation of complaints, conflict resolution, education and awareness and research, in a commendable manner.

Nevertheless, the Chairman of the Guyana Council of Churches inquired whether the Commission encountered any challenges in the execution of its mandate, specifically the difficulties it may have encountered as it traversed the country. In addition, he inquired about the other areas the Commission needed to cover apart from those the Chairman highlighted in highlight in his presentation.

Responding to the latter, ERC Chairman stated that from the time the ERC started its work, the initial focus was investigation of complaints, conflict resolution, education and awareness and research. He noted that very soon, the Commission will begin to focus on review of legislation that has implications for ethnic relations. One of those has to do with the treating of public holidays, he noted, adding that it is felt that other religious holidays are not given the same respect as Good Friday and other Christian holidays, so it was one area the ERC needs to explore.

Regarding the question on challenges the ERC may have encountered, its Chairman stated that the Commission's capacity to deal with complaints of racial discrimination has been limited because it does not have the power to subpoena. He noted that for the past four years, the Commission has recommended in its Annual Report that that omission from Article 212 (D) of the Constitution be included so that the Commission can perform this aspect of its mandate more effectively.

The Christian constituency indicated to the Commission that is was interested in finding solutions to bridge the ethnic divide that exists in Guyana, knowing that they have tremendous influence over a large percentage of Guyanese.

This consultation with the Christian community was the first in a series of Annual Constituency Meetings from March 26 to April 7, 2008.

## Muslim Constituency

- **Affirmative action should be taken to foster religious understanding and remove suspicion about the various forms of religious practices that exist in Guyana - Muslim**

The Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) conducted the second in series of meetings with its constituencies and civil society partners on March 27, 2008. The Commission met at its Peter Rose and Anira Streets location with the Muslim Constituency, including organisations on the Parliamentary list and other Muslim groups the ERC has collaborated with over the past five years.

At the meeting, the representatives were presented with a document detailing the work the Commission executed from 2007 to present and its projections for the remainder of this year. The Chairman highlighted the ERC's intention to host a Religious Broadcaster's Consultation to bring about a sense of religious tolerance on the air waves.

This proposal was commended by the Muslim representatives who felt that affirmative action should be taken to foster religious understanding and remove suspicions about the various forms of religious practices that exist in Guyana, which in many instances, stem from the lack of knowledge.

Speaking at the meeting, Private Sector Constituency representative on the Commission, Mr. John L. P. Willems, called for the cross fertilization of cultures, which he said is necessary to dispel suspicion and bring about a sense of ethnic harmony in a multicultural society such as ours. Emphasizing the need to explore the richness of our multicultural diversity, Commissioner Willems said that the depth of the various cultural traditions which exist in Guyana has been obscured by the preoccupation with one's own culture. The Private Sector Commissioner noted that there is some inevitable 'mixing' in business transactions and other spheres, but generally Guyanese seldom get an opportunity to really understand the intricate details of each other's culture. He urged the Muslim leaders to use the television medium for this sort of cross fertilization.

The meeting heard the Muslim representatives expressing dissatisfaction with the insensitivity of some employers who are reluctant to grant Muslim employees time off to pray on Fridays. Chairman of the ERC, Bishop Juan Edghill, noted that this concern was raised during the 2007 Constituency meeting, and the Commission mediate in a few complaints of this nature that were brought to its attention, adding that they were dealt with amicably. The Chairman stated however, that there is need for the exercising of greater religious sensitivity towards Muslims and other religious practices.

The issue of plurality of marriages, as part of the Muslim culture, was brought to the fore by representatives who felt that there is a need for the practice to be institutionalized. The ERC head advised the Muslims leaders present at the meeting to petition their elected representatives in the

National Assembly, as a collective body for there to be further debate and discussion on this issue.

In addition, concerns were expressed about stringent measures taken by law enforcement and social services official against *Nikka* marriages performed for female Muslims just under the age of consent. The representatives noted that the Muslim culture permits a girl's parent to give consent for her marriage in preservation of dignity and religious sanctity. However, if a marriage performed in such circumstance is drawn to the attention of the law enforcement officials, the parents can be charged. The representatives felt that this law should be reviewed.

Further, the Muslim representatives requested that ERC lobbies the Guyana Prison Service to make provision for their followers to wear three-quarter pants as against the knee length stipulation of the prison uniform for inmates whose terms of imprisonment have been confirmed. At the end of the meeting, the Chairman thanked the representatives for their continued support to work of the Commission and noted that the ERC remained committed to its work to promote harmony and good relations in Guyana.



## **Labour Constituency**

- **Representatives of the Labour Constituency encouraged the ERC to continue its Public Education and Awareness programmes in schools and work places**

Claims of discrimination should be examined thoroughly to determine their validity so that those claims are not based on mere perceptions, which can stimulate ethnic insecurity in the society. This was the advice of the Ethnic Relations Commission's (ERC) Chairman, Bishop Juan Edghill, to member of its Labour Constituency, on Friday March 31, 2008.

During the period March 26 to April 8, 2008, the ERC met with its seven constituencies: Labour, Private Sector, Youth, Women and the three main religions, to apprise them of its work over the past year, and to harness their suggestions for the enhancing of ERC's role in improving harmony and good relations in Guyana.

In his address to the Labour Constituency, the ERC head stated that the Commission receives complaints of ethnic discrimination in the workplace and deals with them expeditiously. He added that those complaints are not widespread but are limited to a few State and Private Sector agencies.

Referring to complaints of ethnic discrimination, the Chairman told the Labour Union representatives that persons should not conclude that they were denied an opportunity because they are of a particular ethnic group. Conversely he said, a person should not be perceived that he or she should automatically be granted an opportunity or service because of his or her racial background. That opportunity must be based on "objective criteria" and specific policy guidelines, the ERC head stated.

Bishop Edghill told the representatives that the researches the ERC commissioned in 2007 conducted on employment practices and economic opportunities did not find any instance of institutionalized racism or ethnic discrimination. However, he said that it was evident from the research that in some cases, officials used their 'discretionary powers' to favour one group as opposed to another and the ERC will take the necessary steps to ensure that those individuals receive "stiff sanctions." The Labour Constituency was encouraged by the Chairman to use the research reports as a basis for discussion on equal opportunities in the workplace.

The Constituency encouraged the Commission to continue its Public Education and Awareness programmes in schools and work places, which is essential to creating ethnic harmony in those spheres.

## **Inter-Religious Organisation**

- **Guyanese should think for themselves rather than having people doing the thinking for them - IRO**

### **Arising out of the meeting with the IRO the following discussion/suggestions were tabled:-**

- ✓ The Commission should intensify its work routine in the various communities
- ✓ People should move away from race politics.
- ✓ It was said that there is a perception by “Indo Guyanese” that if an “Afro Guyanese” gets into government, the “Indo Guyanese” would feel left out and vice versa, but this can be addressed either politically or electorally.
- ✓ Peoples’ problems are based on their wants rather than their needs.
- ✓ It was suggested that the ERC should be consistent in its operations, at the same time try to avoid biasness.
- ✓ The view was expressed that people should respect and acknowledge each other’s identity.
- ✓ Resolve our differences whether culturally or politically through dialogue.
- ✓ Respect our individual differences, this might not be easy, but we have to try as Guyanese.
- ✓ Provide a system of governance that promote ethnic security, whether it is shared governance or inclusive governance.
- ✓ Citizens must participate in all the religious functions in Guyana. For example, all Guyanese should celebrate with the Hindus, Muslims, and Christians as they observe their religious holidays.
- ✓ Re-introduce religious education in the school curriculum.
- ✓ To have unity and cohesion, we have to start with the individual.

- ✓ It was suggested that the ERC should promote debates in Secondary Schools relative to race relations.
- ✓ There are a lot of differences in the workplaces; the ERC was encouraged to facilitate programmes that can deal with these issues within the working environment.
- ✓ To bridge the gap in society we need to educate the people; we should not allow the political parties to manipulate us.
- ✓ Guyanese should think for themselves rather than having people doing the thinking for them.
- ✓ Guyanese must stop blaming each other and learn to work together as one people.

## **Private Sector Constituency**

- **Voiced their support for the ERC to continue its Research Programme**

### **Opening Remarks:**

The Private Sector Constituency meeting was chaired by Commissioner L. John P. Willems who briefly reviewed the 2007 ERC's Report.

The meeting was informed of the absence of Bishop Juan Edghill, the ERC's Chairman who was out of the jurisdiction. Commissioner Willems in his opening remarks pointed out that although the ERC was being subjected to criticisms, it should stay free from political disputes and focus on its mandate until such time that Parliament determines otherwise. He charged the Private Sector with discharging its responsibilities in a responsible and unbiased manner. In concluding his brief remarks he invited participants to make their submissions / recommendations.

### **Discussion / Recommendations:**

The following suggestions were submitted for consideration:-

- a. It was suggested that Civil Society and other Government bodies move away from past incidents and focus more on getting the work done, with a view of moving the Country forward.
- b. Participants lauded the way the ERC was pursuing its investigation into complaints of discrimination and advocated that the evidence must be brought to the forefront to expose individuals / Agencies practicing discrimination. The notion of getting Agencies to implement the recommendations was to be considered.
- c. Commissioner Duncan suggested that the dialogue process on cultural and other issues was critical at the community level. He made reference to the Trinidad model and suggested that Public Education Programmes on those issues be considered.
- d. Representatives of the Private Sector voiced their support for the ERC to continue with its Research Programmes.
- e. Discussions were centered on resuscitating some of the old cultural practices, the role of the ERC in fostering cohesion and a sense of identity. It was suggested that educational programmes be fashioned to reach people at the lower strata of society through symposiums and home meetings. The UN, the Government and Civil Society should be approached for assistance on these programmes.
- f. The concerns expressed by the African Guyanese of marginalization and discrimination were briefly discussed. Participants were informed by the Chair that research was done in five (5) areas which were very objective and balanced and not what was perceived. It was recommended that summaries of such reports be made available to the libraries of schools for future reference.

- g. A comment was raised with respect to the Lusignan massacre of January 2009, where the Private Sector body expressed satisfaction that that incident did not escalate into racial tensions. It felt that the work done by Institutions and Civil Society should be recognised. The ERC was asked to continue with its Public Awareness Programmes in an effort to educate the public.

**Questions:**

Questions to be considered were asked by the participants;

- (i) How do Agencies respond to complaints of discrimination?
- (ii) Do you see ERC being given more scope?
- (iii) How effective is the ERC if the 2006 recommendations were implemented?
- (iv) Do we need to see if ethnic problems arise outside of election time?
- (v) Does the ERC have plans to educate young voters for the next election?

**Closing Remarks:**

The Acting Chairman thanked all for their participation and contribution towards the successful conduct of the Constituency meeting. He made the point that the power to subpoena witnesses was being pursued by the substantive Chairman Bishop Juan Edghill, after which the meeting came to a close at 18:00 hours.

## Hindu Constituency

- **Group asked ERC to examine the disparity in employment practices with a view to having mechanisms put in place to deal with such discriminatory issues**

## OPENING REMARKS

The meeting commenced at 13:00 hours with a one minute silence of reflection being observed, after which the Chairperson, Commissioner Roy Thakurdyal welcomed all. Participants were informed of the absence of the substantive Chairman of the ERC and of the seven constituencies that constitute the Commission. The present state of the Commission was highlighted as it relates to the composition of Commissioners. Mr. Thakurdyal also made reference to the five (5) reports that were recently submitted to Parliament by the ERC.

It was recognised that there were no representatives from the Hindu Constituency on the Commission. The meeting was informed that the Hindu representative Pandit Ramkissoon Maharaj, was hospitalized in the UK, while Mr. Radha K. Sharma, Substitute Commissioner had resigned. With questions raised on immediate replacements, Commissioner Duncan indicated that procedural approaches do not allow the Commission to appoint Commissioners. A recommendation was made for mechanisms to be put in place to address the immediate replacement of Commissioners from the Hindu Religion.

Commissioner Thakurdyal briefly reviewed the ERC's 2007 Report, after which participants were asked to make their submissions/recommendations as they see fit.

### Discussion/Recommendation

The following recommendation/suggestions were submitted for consideration:-

- a. With respect to employment practices in Guyana, the group advocated that Hindus were twice discriminated, once as a Hindu, the other as an East Indian. With a perception that Hindus were not getting justice in Guyana, they are asking the ERC to examine this disparity in employment practices with a view to have mechanisms put in place to deal with such discriminatory issues.
- b. The body feels that Hindu Religious Symbols, "Jhandi Flags erected at river edges and "Murtis" placed in Mandirs were being destroyed and were not respected. In a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society such as Guyana, they are recommending that the public be sensitized through Religious educational programmes with a view to have them preserved.
- c. A suggestion was made with respect to the transferring of Police ranks of East Indian origin, where transfers contribute to the disintegration of the family and infidelity. The

Commissioners opined that transfers were imminent in the interest of National Security. The CEO suggested that issues of this nature should be referred to the respect Agencies.

- d. The group examined a perception by the Afro Guyanese Community that they are marginalized by the Government the Hindu community leaders are of the opinion that Hindus are worst off. It was suggested that they speak as a body with one voice on how they are marginalized.
- e. Comments were made that the Guyana Police Force was plagued with racism. It was recommended that mechanisms be put in place to address this issue.
- f. In the Hindu culture it was said that the Hindu woman loved to be adorned with jewellery. In today's' environment, Hindu women are afraid to uphold that part of their culture.
- g. Concerns were raised with respect to Inter Faith services in State Institutions where services were dominated by mainly Christian Priests. Particular reference was made to the Joint Services. The Constituency is of the view that the reciting of Hindu and Muslim prayers at these functions is a mere cosmetic approach which needs to be examined by the ERC.
- h. With the streets becoming very dangerous, some of the old Hindu cultures have changed. A recommendation was made for an educational programme sensitising people on these changes to be considered. It was felt that institutions like the ERC can bridge these gaps.
- i. A recommendation was made for all Guyanese to work together. In doing so, the "blaming process approach" as practiced by individuals and Institutions has to be changed.
- j. Hindus identified themselves through the wearing of "Rakshas" and "Chandans," a coloured string tied around the wrist of the hand. The body is concerned that this practice has been opposed in schools especially QC and Saints, where Hindu students were asked to remove these symbols during classes. Some teachers have associated these symbols with the devil. It was recommended that educational programmes be initiated in schools to change this perception.
- k. The home series Test matches between the West Indies and Sri Lanka in the Caribbean commenced with the opening match being played at the Providence Stadium on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2008, which was identified as "Phagwah Day," a Hindu holiday. Members of the constituency were of the opinion that this violated the rights of the Hindu religion, in that Test matches were never scheduled to play on other religious holidays. The Commissioners' view was that the issue should have been challenged long before the start of the Test match and that the body should have spoken with one voice.
- l. References were made to the Army's Chaplain who was paid a salary. The view expressed was that Christians have complete monopoly of time and opportunity to administer religious activities in Institutions such as the GDF and the GPF. A

recommendation was made for the ERC to give guidance on its mandate to allow other religious bodies to have equal time and opportunity to participate.

- m. A recommendation was made for the ERC to pursue community dialogue with a view to fostering cohesion and respect among the different ethnic groups, cultures and religions.
- n. It was recommended that the ERC should make available the movie "Just a Little Red Dot," to be shown in schools, since it portrays a very important message of respect and understanding.
- o. On the issue of racism, it was suggested that religious groups should pursue an initiative of meeting, pronouncing and submitting recommendations to Parliament through their respective constituencies, in an effort to minimize its escalation.
- p. A proposal was made to broaden the representative field for the appointment of Commissioners to the ERC and to allow for replacements in the absence of those appointed.

#### Closing remarks

In his closing remarks, Commissioner Thakurdyal expressed thanks to all for their meaningful participation and suggested that the ERC in 2008 should strive to bring all religious denominations together for a better Guyana.



## Women's Constituency

- **Commissioner Sampson briefs representatives of the Women's Constituency on ERC Work Programme for 2007**

### Opening remarks

In his opening remarks Commissioner L. John P. Willems, Chairman (Ag) welcomed those present and invited representatives to join in observing a silent reflection. Commissioner Willems told the gathering that the ERC was happy to meet with the Women's Constituency and informed them of the absence of the substantive Chairman who was out of the jurisdiction. Commissioner Cheryl Sampson was then asked to chair the meeting.

Commissioner Cheryl Sampson after introducing herself, Commissioners and staff asked the invitees to state their names and the organizations/groups they represented.. She then went on to explain the aim of the meeting which was for them to have an understanding of the work of the Commission from 2007 to the present time and to give their individual feedback which can enhance the Commission's work for 2008. Commissioner Sampson also spoke about the seven constituencies and highlighted the Commission's functions which are set out in Article 212D of the Constitution of Guyana.

She said that despite the fact that the Commission was not reconstituted, it continues to do its work in accordance with its mandate. She touched briefly on the following as was outlined in the report which was distributed to the attendees:

1. Toshaos' meeting - The infiltration of strange persons in the Amerindian Communities and other concerns.
2. Education & Public Awareness - (a) Conducting Film Festivals in schools with the young people.  
(b) Debating & Essay Competitions working along with Ministry of Education.  
(c) Female Windball Cricket Competition
3. Legal & Investigative Unit - Status of Complaints
4. Strategic Planning for ERC - 2008
5. Plans for Local Government Elections

6. Lusignan Massacre - Inter/Intra meetings were held in several villages with children, parents, teachers and the Community.
7. Bartica Massacre - Live Television programme, meetings in Bartica and neighbouring communities
8. Dialogue with the African Guyanese group
9. Religious broadcasters' consultations
10. Meetings with Christian, Hindu and Muslim organizations
11. Regional visits – meetings with the Regional Administration and other stakeholders as well as residents in the communities.

Commissioner Sampson also reported on the research done on employment practices, economic opportunities, academic scholarships, tendering and procurement and land distribution and advised that they were submitted to the National Assembly.

### **Contribution of Participants:**

During the discussion, a participant responding to the report of the Toshao's meeting, observed that Amerindians were inter marrying for years and that it was nothing new for strangers to visit their villages.

Another participant said that she would like the ERC to prevent the teaching of various religions in the public schools. She felt that it was offensive to indoctrinate children through a religion other than their own.

Commissioner Garnett in response to the request, stated that persons should be able to propagate their own faith. He added that it is not the role of the ERC to convert anyone to any religion.

It was mentioned, that there was an increase in the mixed race group in Guyana and it was suggested that the ERC considers this development in its programmes. It was also mentioned that there should be programmes that are inclusive of African and Indian Guyanese.

A representative speaking on the on research reports, enquired if any discrimination was proven, and what were the responses from Parliament.

Commissioner Sampson informed the audience that the ERC could not demand responses from Parliament but would have to wait for the reports to be tabled for discussion.

## Youth Constituency

- **ERC engages the Youth Constituency to report on its Work Programme for 2007**

The Meeting was called to order by Rev. Roy Thakurdial who explained the absence of Bishop Juan Edghill, Chairman of the ERC and appointment of Mr. John Willems to act as Chairman ERC.

Rev. Roy Thakurdial asked each person to introduce themselves and then went on to give a brief historical background of ERC and the annual constituency meetings. He explained that because of the interim position of the ERC a replacement could not be made for Dr. Frank Anthony, Minister of Culture Youth and Sport.

He then read the booklet “**An Update on the Work of the 2007 to Present**” and asked participants to follow in their copies. On completion of this activity Rev. Thakurdial encouraged the group to make their recommendations/views/suggestions which can enhance the work of the Commission for 2008.

A participant enquired about a research document after its gets to Parliament. He made mention of the Multi-Stake holder project.

**The CEO, ERC**, informed the group that a copy of each research was placed on ERC website so that persons could peruse and do their lobbying. She mentioned also, that a working group which was established after the National Conversation meets quarterly to address the recommendations of the MSF.

A participant enquired about the findings of Employment Practices Research, as she noted that there was nothing in the news stating the ERC is taking action against anyone or organization. “What enforcement ERC has and what does it do”, she asked.

**Commissioner Sampson** explained that the Employment Practices Research was done in Region # 4 and no discrimination was actually found.

**The CEO, ERC** also explained that it was a preliminary research that can be further developed.

Another participant sought clarity on whether the ERC is controlled by the Government. He opined “if the final decision lies in the Government’s hands, then what are we really doing”.

**Rev. Roy Thakurdial** explained that the ERC does not have the power to subpoena witnesses or demand from any organization their documents.

**Commissioner Garnett** also made it clear that the ERC does not prosecute, but after investigations and findings, matters are referred to the relevant authorities for necessary action.

It was suggested that ERC uses its influence to recommend a standardised employment form to be used nationally which would cater for information on ethnicity, age, gender, etc.

**Commissioner Garnett** said it is a worthy contribution, but that the ERC will have to obtain legal advice on the suggestion.

A participant said that there was a major problem of racial insecurity among youths. He mentioned that this stems from the wrong perception, propaganda, school of thought, mindset, expectation and perceived hostility. He asked how we perception, fact or fiction could be dealt with.

**Commissioner Garnett** in response stated that ERC has to separate fact from fiction, treat with the mindset and deal with hardcore cases of discrimination.

It was reported by a representative that there is a deficiency as it relates to Community High Schools. He said that there is a decline in performance and suggested that an improved system should be put in place by the Ministry of Education.

He suggested that the ERC should assist in ensuring that the undermentioned areas are addressed:

- Plumbing, carpentry and other skills in schools; that they become part of the curriculum
- Lack of equipment in schools
- Lack of teachers in schools

**Commissioner Sampson** agreed with the suggestion. She made mention of:

- The Policy of Education implemented in 1970 to assist low achievers.
- Multilateral schools - equipment no longer exist.
- Looking into the matter of re-implementing the Education Policy.
- The National Service and its benefits.

Another participant requested a meeting with the representative of the MSF Working Group (who was present) to report to members of the Youth Constituency.

Discussion also centered on:

- What is ERC doing to re-affirm its creditability and weight?
- Would like to see ERC doing more.
- Lobbying for a Regional/Caribbean programmes
- More creativity in dealing with Ethnic Relations.
- ERC needs to work closely with NGOs
- Tangible benefits for Youths
- Motivation
- Making use of Local Leaders

## COMPLAINTS MATRIX 2008

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
1.	06-02-06	Godfrey Stoll	Charity Essequibo Coast, Region # 2	Complained against the NDC Chairman at Charity, Mr. A. Khan of discrimination.	The matter is not within ERC's mandate.	Closed on 12-03-08
2.	06-11-06	Brendel Crawford	Samatta Point, Grove EBD	Computation of Pension and Gratuity. Special concession to be granted to her to have an additional sum of \$3,806 with interest to be added to her pension and \$38,772 to be added to her gratuity.	Complaint forwarded to Guyana Forestry Commission. A response was received in 2006, stating that her request was not granted. There were still some areas to be cleared up and several reminders were sent so as to bring this matter to a close. Subsequently on July 11, 2008 a meeting was held with Mr. Bipcharran of GFC, Ms. Crawford and ERC Snr. Investigative Officer and it was made clear that the decision taken earlier by the GFC remains.	Ms. Crawford was written by the ERC and advised to seek legal advice.  File closed in July 2008
3.	22-11-06	Everall Franklin	176 Charlotte Street, Lacytown, Georgetown (Franklin -Singh Disposal Services)	He complained that GPL had failed to pay for work completed since February 2006 and had engaged other persons to do the job he was contracted to do.	Mr. Dindyal, CEO of GPL was written. He replied stating that Mr. Franklin was claiming payments exceeding the value of the contract. Further investigations were to be done.	Commissioner Duncan to follow up and report.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
4.	23-11-06	Alvin Johnson	13 Old Road East Bank Essequibo	He complained of racial discrimination by the Teacher Service Commission.	The matter was addressed by the Teaching Service Commission	File closed on 09-04-08
5.	14-07-06	Nurses, Fort Wellington Hospital  3 Sources  1. Nurses 2. Protestors 3. Joseph Edwards	Fort Wellington Hospital, West Coast Berbice	Complained of alleged racial discrimination against Afro Guyanese Nurses and patients by Sister Shirley Jagmohan of the Fort Wellington Hospital	The REO, Region # 5 was written for advice on the matter. No reply was received.	Decision of the Commission to be made.
6.	27-02-06	Rita Roopnarine	Block 19 Line Path "D" Lot 433, Corriverton, Corentyne, Berbice	She complained that her son Kaleshwar Roopnarine, age 22 years was killed on March 6, 2005 on the No. 19 Highway. He was thrown out of the car and no action was taken. She alleged racial discrimination.	Her complaint falls outside the Commission's mandate. It was sent to the Police Complaints Authority for attention and response.	A reply was received stating that the Authority is still awaiting a response from the Police. No response to date.
7.	12-02-07	Ras Ian	Guyana Rastafarian Council, Lot 129 Orange Walk, Bourda	Complained that on 03-01-07, members of the City Constabulary discriminated against members of the Rastafarian Sector at the Merriman's Mall, Georgetown.	Acknowledged. Statement taken and the Town Clerk was written for comments. Response received. A round table meeting was held with the ERC, Town Clerk and Ras Ian on 18-09-08. Town Clerk promised to send a written apology to the complainant.	A response was received from the Town Clerk, but the matter is still pending.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
8.	23-03-07	Perry Birbal	Lot 9 Melville Wakenaam, Essequibo Coast	Complained of racial discrimination in the distribution of flood relief.	No empirical evidence was found to suggest discrimination as alleged by him.	He was informed by way of letter. Matter closed on 04-01-08
9.	23-03-07	Gita Narine	Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, Water and Cornhill Streets, Georgetown.	She requested that the ERC intervenes in a matter of transfer for her, due to domestic problems.	A letter was sent to the Minister but there has been no response to date.	Matter still pending.
10.	28-03-07	Manuel Sammy	Diamond, East Bank Demerara.	Complained of wrongful dismissal by GPL on the grounds of racial discrimination.	Complaint acknowledged. GPL was written. A reply was received. Mr. Sammy was written on June 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2007 to verify some allegations. A reply was received from him.	Matter still pending. File sent to Legal Officer on 09-12-08 for advice.
11.	03-04-07	Maureen Ann Bynoe	Kildonan Village, Corentyne Berbice	Complained that she was racially discriminated by the Education Administration of Region # 6. She applied for the position of Education Officer Region # 6 but was offered the post in Region 2.	Her complaint was acknowledged. It was sent to the Ministry of Education; Teaching Service Commission and the Chairman Region # 6 for comments.	A round table discussion was held on 21-05-08 in the Board Room of the RDC, Berbice, Region 6, with ERC, Regional Chairman, REDO, and Ms. Bynoe. The Regional Chairman was to submit a report within two weeks. This was done and he was requested to clarify some issues. To pursue further investigations.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
12.	11-04-07	Gaytree Goolsarran	79 "A" Jasmine Avenue, Eccles East Bank Demerara	Complained of discrimination by the police when she went to take the Theoretical Driver's Licence Examination	The matter was referred to the Legal Consultants and the Commissioner of Police. The Consultants advised that the allegation was malicious, baseless and unfounded. Efforts were made to contact her to attend an interview with Chairman of the ERC. However, she later submitted a written letter requesting no further action in the matter.	File closed.
13.	23-04-07	Ganesh Persaud	Lot 3 Perth, Essequibo Coast	He complained about one Ajodhia Persaud, Supervisor of the Mahaicony Rice Mill situated at Schoonard Essequibo Coast and who has a purchasing centre. He was giving him short weight for rice and when he complained, he was discriminated against.	Complaint acknowledged. Mr.Alli Baksh the Chairman of Region # 2 was written for comments.	Decision taken by Commission to send file to the Lawyer for advice. Still pending.
14.	03-05-07	Edward Laud	Katoonaili Primary School, Region # 9	Complained about discrimination by the Regional Chairman, Region # 9 in awarding a contract to build the Primary School.	Letter acknowledged. Complaint sent to Regional Chairman for comments.	Information received that complainant left the country, hence the matter was closed.
15.	17-07-07	Juliet Patterson	Lot 48 Stanleytown, New Amsterdam	Complained about deductions from salary paid to NIS and no benefits.	Complaint was acknowledged. Letter sent to General Manager, NIS, for attention and comments.	NIS responded. The matter has been resolved. Closed in August 2008.



NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
16.	25-09-07	Cyril Walker	301 Church Street, South Cummingsburg.	Complained that Dr. N. Gopaul, made inflammatory remarks at a general meeting of N.B.S held at the Le Meridian Pegasus Hotel on 08-09- 07	Letter acknowledged. Dr. N. Gopaul was written on the allegation.	Despite several reminders sent, there was no response from Dr. Gopaul.
17.	11-10-07	Mortimer Mingo	Regional Chairman Region # 10	Complained that the REO Mr. Henry Rodney was employing persons to work in the Region without consulting him.	Investigations were carried out by the Investigative Officer. Report submitted.	Mr. Mingo requested no further action in writing. Case closed in 2008.
18.	11-10-07	George Marshall	Kara-Kara, Linden.	He complained that residents of Amelia's Ward were not receiving titles for their lands; also the Kara- Kara creek was blocked and needed clearing.	Letter acknowledged. His complaint was forwarded to the Minister of Housing and Water for action to be taken and to advise ERC on the outcome.	A response was received. Complainant written Matter closed in 2008.
19.	11-10-07	George Wright	213 New Jersey Hill, Wismar.	Complained that he went to the Ministry of Housing and Water for land to build a house but received no response. He wants the ERC to assist him.	Letter acknowledged. His complaint was forwarded to Minister Harrynarine Nawbatt for his attention.	Response received that the Ministry of Housing was processing applications up to 2004. Complainant was advised to continue making checks with the Ministry. File closed in March 2008.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
20.	11-10-07	Vibert Sullivan	28 D <sup>o</sup> Anjue Alley, Christianburg, Linden.	Complained that he was given a piece of land at Linden and the # was 3319. He marked the land with pickets and sometime after, he observed that the pickets were removed. He is not aware of what happened and claims that he reported the matter to ex-Minister of Housing Mr. Shaik Baksh, who promised to look into it.	Letter acknowledged. Complaint referred to Minister of Housing and Water.	Response received. Complainant was written accordingly. File closed in July 2008.
21.	17-10-07	Seventh Day Adventist Students	University of Guyana	Complained of religious discrimination. They are final year students. Their request to attend lectures on Fridays was not approved. They cannot attend on Saturday due to their Sabbath.	The lecturer, Mr. Olato Sam was contacted by the Investigative Officer and he informed her that the University of Guyana has rules and regulations and there is nothing he could do. The Vice Chancellor was subsequently written.	A response was received from UG and the group was written. File closed in May 2008.
22.	18-10-07	Rudolph Adams	81 Mocha Village, EBD.	Complained of discrimination and dismissal from the Guyana Forestry Commission.	Complaint acknowledged. Matter investigated and report submitted.	A round table discussion was held with ERC and Forestry Commission. A decision to be made. The file sent to Legal Officer on 09-12-08 for advice.
23.	12-10-07	Molly Shakespeare	36 Miles Ituni, Upper Demerara River	Complained that her daughter Cleary Allcock, age 12 years was refused admission to the Linden Foundation Secondary School dormitory by the school's authority. She claims that her daughter was discriminated against.	Complaint acknowledged. A letter was sent to REDO Region # 10 for attention and to advise the ERC.	A response was received. File closed on 27-11-08.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
24.	12-10-07	Ian Mc. Donald	River Road Ituni	Complained of discrimination against his daughter Keon Mc Donald age 13yrs who was refused accommodation in the school's dormitory at Linden.	The complaint was forwarded to REDO, Region # 10. A response was received. As a result, Mr. Mc Donald was written and asked to comment on the response.	He has not yet responded.
25.	18-10-07	Patrick De Castro	Vryheid's Lust, South East Coast Demerara	Complained of racial discrimination by Dexter Austin, who erected a shack in front of his house. Austin claimed that he was given permission by Nella Wills, Michelle Ramhdehol and nurse Melville, who are all neighbours of De Castro.	Complaint acknowledged. This complaint falls outside the ERC's mandate. However, a letter was sent to the Regional Chairman, Region # 4 for his attention and to advise ERC on the action taken.	The Regional Chairman, Region # 4 responded.  Matter closed.
26.	18-10-07	Ossie Melville	23 First Avenue, Bartica.	Complained of discrimination against him by his neighbour, Mr. Dashraj, a J.P. who prevented him from carrying on activities at his business premises.	Complaint acknowledged. The complaint is not within the mandate of the Commission. Complainant was advised.	The file was closed in 2008.
27.	22-10-07	Karl Amsterdam	165 Paradise Housing Scheme	Complained of discrimination. He had applied for seven hundred (700) acres of land situated on the right bank of the Canje River at Kuri Savannah and had not received a response.	Complaint acknowledged. Investigations were conducted. The report submitted. He has to keep checking with GO-Invest for his approval. He was written and advised accordingly.	File closed January 2008.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
28.	25-10-07	Fu Chang Li	Culvert City , Rupununi	Came to Guyana in 1997 to work at Moco- Moco Hydro project, Region # 8. He married a Guyanese woman in 2002 and settled in Lethem; they have two sons. He later applied for Citizenship / Naturalization in 2003 to the Ministry of Home Affairs and has not received a response. He is asking the ERC to intervene on his behalf.	Complaint acknowledged. Investigations carried out and a report was submitted. Further enquiries were made with the Ministry of Home Affairs and he was advised to make contact with the Naturalization Department of the Ministry.	He was written accordingly. File closed in 2008.
29.	25-10-07	Jagdesch Harrypaul	Culvert City, Rupununi	He complained of discrimination. He had leased a track of land from Ministry of Agriculture in 1996 and has not received his land title. Requested help from ERC.	Complaint acknowledged. Report submitted. He later requested no further action in the matter. He was advised to submit same in writing, but has not done so.	The file is closed.
30.	31-10-07	Mary Jones	Lot 33, Fourth Avenue, Bartica	Complained of discrimination meted out to her Afro-Guyanese children by Jasmattie Das, PPP Councillor in Bartica and also Mr. Winston Miller of Lot 8, 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue Bartica, who uses the T.T.S. Channel 5 Station.	Complaint acknowledged. Letters were sent to the persons mentioned for comments. Responses received from Minister of Human Services & Mr. Mohammed Yusuf Ghanie (T.T.S Channel 5)	She was written and informed that the circumstances did not establish an issue of racial discrimination. Closed in 2008.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
31.	31-10-07	Caesar Perreira	Agatash Village, Left Bank of Essequibo River	Complained of verbal and physical abuses and damage to property by the Mc Intyres, Simmons and Fernandes families of Bartica, also Ms. Lucille Primus, the Village Chairman. This has been occurring for years and there is no peace. Needs ERC to help.	Complaint acknowledged. The Regional Administration was written and asked to comment.	During the ERC's visit to Region # 7 in September 2008, Commissioner J. Willems met with Ms. Linda Griffith, wife of Cesar Perreira, who informed him that the matter was resolved. Perreira was written accordingly. Matter closed.
32.	14-11-07	Mervyn Wray	Lot 1860/61 North Ruimveldt	Complained of discrimination by the Government resulting in the closure of his bag factory project.	A round table meeting was held by ERC and the Wrays, where a decision was taken that ERC write the Head, Presidential Secretariat to facilitate a dialogue with Mr. Wray.	This was done. File was closed in 2008.
33.	15-11-07	Ruby Dopwell	General Secretary of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, 26 Princess Street Wortmanville	On 9 <sup>th</sup> July, 1977 she applied on behalf of the Church to the Ministry of Housing for a piece of land to build a Cathedral for church members ( 25). Two sites were proposed (a) East to west on Hadfield Street on Mandela Avenue (b) next to the School by YWCA on Croal Street.	Complaint acknowledged. A letter was sent to the Ministry of Housing and Mr. Andrew Bishop of the Lands and Surveys Department for comments. The Minister replied stating that the land does not fall under the jurisdiction of Central Housing Authority.	She was written accordingly. File closed, 2008.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
34.	16-11-07	Adrian Junior Elgin	Lot 41 Mandela Avenue, East Ruinveldt.	Complained that he applied to rent a booth at the Guyana Post Office Complex, East Le Penitence/ Mandela Avenue to sell fruit juices and beverages. He is a Faithist. He completed all documentation but could not get a response from Ms. Ferguson of the Post Office. Need ERC to help.	The matter was investigated. Report submitted. The Postmaster General was written on the complaint.	He was given a space to erect a booth. He later submitted a statement requesting no further action. Closed on 4-11-08.
35.	16-11-07	Ralph Peters	192 Lance Gibbs Street Queenstown.	He was employed by the National Enhancement Committee to beautify the city of Georgetown for Cricket World Cup 2007. His payment was \$30,000. He received an advance of \$7,000 leaving a balance of \$23,000. He had a difficulty collecting his \$23,000, hence his complaint.	Complaint acknowledged. Investigations were carried out which revealed that he was paid \$23,000 on 8 <sup>th</sup> November, 2007 before he made his complaint on 16 <sup>th</sup> November, 2007.	Closed in 2008.
36.	21-11-07	Herbert Edwards	21 Campbleville Housing Scheme. Member of the Maha Kalahan Shakti Devi Mandir affiliated with the IRO of Guyana.	He complained that the UNDP allowed persons to use his design to produce his peace buttons.	Acknowledged. He was written and informed that his complaint does not fall within the mandate of the Commission.	Closed in 2008.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
37.	22-11-07	Paramlall Goberdhan	Walton Hall Essequibo Coast	He wrote a letter to Dr. Roger Luncheon copied to ERC complaining against the Ministry of Education. He was awarded a contract for rehabilitation works to be done on EIT Board. He purchased materials for the project on 28-07-07 valued \$3,200,000. The Ministry subsequently informed him that the works would be re-tendered by the Region No. 2 Administration. He is seeking compensation of \$500,000.	Complaint acknowledged. A letter was sent to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education. A reply was received stating that the project is awaiting budgetary provision.	Closed in 2008.
38.	23-11-07	Randolph Harlequin	c/o 99 East La Penitence, Georgetown	Complained about Police harassment in Berbice, the pirating of his property, rights as a recording artiste, the occupation of his land by some East Indian residents in Berbice and compensation for injuries from an assault by Mr. Sundar.	Complaint acknowledged. Report submitted. Investigations revealed that his complaint does not have any merit.	He was written accordingly. File closed in 2008.
39.	27-11-07	Mohan Ramsundar	22 Side Line Dam Chateau Margot ECD	Complained of fraudulent practices by some workers attached to GPL.	Complaint acknowledged.	No discrimination was proven. He was written accordingly. Matter closed in 2008.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
40.	27-11-07	Winston Baird	40 Eccles EBD	Complained of racial discrimination. He applied to DOCOL at Eccles for permission to sell cooking gas and Mr. Bridgemohan, the area representative did not approve his application.	Complaint acknowledged. Investigation was done. Report submitted. Further investigations were done and a report was submitted for a decision.	Mr. Baird was written on 3-11-08 informing him that his matter did not fall within the mandate of the Commission, hence the matter was closed on 4-11-08.
41.	27-11-07	Oswald James	Friendship Village EBD.	Complaint made against the NDC & Councillors about the drainage situation in his area but no action has been taken.	Complaint acknowledged. Report submitted. His complaint does not fall under the ERC's mandate, hence it was forwarded to Regional Chairman # 4.	File closed in 2008.
42.	27-11-07	Dwarkanauth	37 Busby Dam, Craig EBD	He complained against Woman Police Constable Melville attached to Grove Police Station. She takes \$5,000 to settle matters when the Policing Group of Craig/Garden of Eden arrests Indo- Guyanese and take them to the Station; she would also use remarks such as 'when all you fight I do not have a problem because I will be richer.'	This complaint was sent to the Police Complaints Authority for action to be taken.	Further information from Dwarkanauth was forwarded to the Commissioner of Police as requested. Still pending.
43.	28-11-07	Norman Cox	White Water Village, Barima / Waini. NWD Region #1	Complained of discrimination by I.P.E.D in that the Institution failed to provide loan services to his community.	Complaint acknowledged. The Commission wrote the Credit Manager, IPED on 17-12-07 for attention and advise.	A reply was received which was copied to Mr. Cox. Closed 27-11-08.



NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
44.	28-11-07	Dexter King	Mabaruma North West District, Region # 1.	Alleged discrimination by the Police at Mabaruma. He complained about noise nuisance, Police harassment and the refusal of the Police to accept his complaints.	Complaint acknowledged. Investigations were done and no discrimination was proven. He was written accordingly.	Closed in 2008.
45.	28-11-07	Deyaram Chowtie	Yarakita Mabaruma, North West District. Region # 1.	Alleged racial discrimination by the Land and Surveys Department, Region # 1. Claimed he bought a track of leased land in Yarakita which the Lands and Surveys Department failed to transfer to him.	Complaint acknowledged. Report submitted. The Regional Chairman, Region # 1 was written to for his comments and advice. No response was received to date.	Matter still pending.
46.	29-11-07	Wilma Das	Matthews Ridge , Heaven Hill, North West District, Region # 1.	Complained of racial discrimination by the NIS. Due to the death of her son, Mr. Mc Turk, a former Post Master, (The NIS has offered the family \$15,000.00. Ms. Das wants to know about the remainder of his benefits.	Complaint acknowledged. The Commission wrote Ms. Doreen Nelson, Credit Manager of NIS to have the issue examined and to advise on the matter. A reply was received which stated that full funeral benefits of \$15,565 will be paid.	A copy of the response and the claim for survivors' benefit Form was forwarded to Ms. Das. File closed in 2008.
47.	29-11-07	Aurealin David	Matthews Ridge , Heaven Hill, North West District, Region # 1.	Ms. David has alleged that monies generated from fund- raising activities by the nursery school in Matthews Ridge were not properly accounted for by the teacher who was entrusted with it.	Complaint acknowledged. Mr. Fermin Singh, Regional Chairman, Region # 1 was written to on 14-12-07, with a view to examining the issues raised and advise on action taken.	Regional Chairman has not responded. The Commission instructed that Region # 1 matters that were pending since 2007 be closed.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
48.	29-11-07	Nalini Delon	Arakaka, North West District, Region # 1.	She complained that the communication system in Arakaka was down for the past six (6) months, (radio sets and telephones). She also complained of the shortage of medical personnel at the Health Centre	Complaint acknowledged. Mr. Fermin Singh, Regional Chairman, Region # 1, was written to on 14-12-07, with a view to examining the issues raised and to advise on action taken.	No response from Regional Chairman.
49.	29-11-07	Mavis James	Matthews Ridge , Heaven Hill, North West District, Region # 1.	She complained of discrimination by GUYWA.	Complaint acknowledged. The Regional Chairman, Region # 1, was written to with a view to examining the issue and to advise the Commission on action taken.	No response from Regional Chairman
50.	29-11-07	Wesley Albert for Melanie Albert.	Port Kaituma. North West District, Region #1.	He complained of racial discrimination against his wife by the Ministry of Education. She was previously admitted to the Teacher's In-Service Training programme in Port Kaituma but was forced to withdraw from the programme because of her poor CXC grades.	Complaint acknowledged. Mr. Albert was to submit an authorization from his wife empowering him to act on her behalf.	No response received.
51.	29-11-07	Nichola Higgins	Fitzburg, Port Kaituma. North West District, Region #1.	Complained about poor supervision in the female dormitory at Port Kaituma Secondary School in Region # 1.	Complaint acknowledged. Report submitted. Mr. Fermin Singh, Regional Chairman, Region # 1 was written to for his comments on the matter.	No response from Regional Chairman.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
52.	29-11-07	Lloyd Gonsalves	One Mile, Port Kaituma. North West District, Region #1.	Complained of racial discrimination by one Mr. Li, an employee of the Jai Ling Logging Company in Port Kaituma, who is prospecting for land to construct a Saw Milling Complex in the Orinoco Area, where he is farming.	Acknowledged. Report submitted. His complaint did not fall within the mandate of ERC, hence no further action was taken in the matter.	He was written accordingly. File closed in 2008.
53.	29-11-07	George Matthews	One Mile, Port Kaituma. North West District, Region #1.	Complained of racial discrimination by one Mr. Li, an employee of the Jai Ling Logging Company in Port Kaituma, who is prospecting for land to construct a Saw Milling Complex in the Orinoco Area, where he is farming.	Complaint acknowledged. Report submitted. Complaint does not fall within the mandate of ERC.	He was written and advised to follow up his complaint with the Prime Minister and the Regional Chairman, Region # 1. File closed in May 2008.
54.	29-11-07	Leroy Bumbury	One Mile, Port Kaituma. North West District, Region #1.	Complained of racial discrimination by the Jai Ling Logging Company. He alleged that he witnessed a Chinese man assaulting an Amerindian worker. He reported the matter to the Police, but was dismissed by the company and not paid.	Complaint acknowledged. Report submitted.	A waiting response from the Ministry of Labour. Still pending.
55.	13-12-07	Neville Budhu called 'Civic'	Lalli Dam, Tushen West Coast Demerara	Complained of racial discrimination by Ministry of Housing, who removed 75 Afro Guyanese from off lands at Ogle, East Coast.	He had promised to take an investigator to see the place and meet with persons concerned. He never did and despite several reminders, he never responded.	File closed on 09-07-08

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
56.	20-01-08	Ruhullah Ali	Canefield Settlement, East Canje, Berbice	He is the Overseer attached to the RDC in New Amsterdam Region # 6. He was asked by Mr. Desmond Kissoon, REO, to produce a report on Capital works done by the Region 6 Administration in 2007 for a Regional meeting which he failed to do. He subsequently alleged that he was discriminated by Mr. Kissoon because of his religious conviction	Complaint acknowledged and report investigated. A round Table discussion was held on 21-05-08 in the Board Room of the RDC in New Amsterdam which included Mr. Ali, Regional Personnel and Chairman, ERC. Mr. Ali was told to apply in writing for time-off to attend to his religious activity which he did not do.	Mr. Ali was subsequently given permission by the Administration to have time-off on Fridays. A copy of the letter was sent to the ERC for information. The matter was closed on 04-11-08.
57.	24-01-08	Robert Edghill	74 Lowton Street South Patterson Turkeyen	Alleged racial discrimination by R.Bassoo & Sons Company to adequately compensate him for injuries he sustained in March 2007 while he was employed by the Company.	Complaint investigated. Letter sent to complainant advising him that since his complaint is engaging the attention of the High Court ERC would be unable to proceed with the matter.	File closed in 2008.
58.	29-01-08	Urmilla Persaud	Urmilla's Institute, Lot 40 Mon Repos South ECD	Complainant alleged Police harassment and firing of tear smoke in the direction of her school which caused undue discomfort to Teachers, Students and Parents.	The matter was investigated and a report submitted. The Police subsequently apologized to Ms. Persaud, Teachers, Students and Parents. Letter sent to complainant requesting confirmation of the Police apology.	Ms. Persaud wrote requesting no further action. Matter closed on 24-10-08.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
59.	07-02-08	Mohammed Khan	Lot 42 Cotton Field, Essequibo Coast	Complained that his neighbour plays loud music and throws objects into his yard, much to his annoyance. He made several complaints to the Suddie Police Station after which investigations were carried out.	The complaint was investigated. Report submitted. Complainant was informed that his complaint does not fall under the mandate of the ERC and he was advised to pursue his matter with the Police.	File closed in May 2008
60.	11-02-08	Neaz Subhan	c/o GINA Homestretch Avenue, Durban Backlands G/Town	He alleged that media houses, CNS Channel 6 and HBTV Channel 9 were broadcasting programmes with racial overtones during the post Lusignan massacre of January 2008.	Several requests were made via telephone and in writing for him to make the tapes available to support his allegation. A letter was also sent on July 3, 2008 for him to respond to ERC within 7 days, failing which this matter would be closed.	Since there was no response the matter was closed. He was informed of this on 10-11-08.
61.	21-02-08	Gangadai Shewram	Lot 141 Triumph Village ECD	She alleged that the area in which she resides has no street lights.	Complaint acknowledged. Mr. Corlette, Regional Chairman Region # 4 was written for a response.	It was the Commission's decision that her matter does not fall under the mandate of the ERC, hence it was closed on 10-11-08.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
62.	12-02-08	Residents of Grass Field, Lusignan, ECD <i>viz</i> Arjune Ramgobin Maharafin Anganu Nandinee Deokanan Audrey Ganesh Dhanwantie Maniram	Lusignan, ECD	After the Lusignan massacre of January 2008, residents of the Grass Field Area in Lusignan complained of no electricity in the area. They claimed that it was dangerous for them. The area was in darkness and street lights were needed.	The Guyana Power & Light Company was written in relation to the complaint.	A response was received stating that the area mentioned would receive Power in October 2008. They were all accordingly advised in writing. File closed in May 2008.
63.	14-02-08	Hadery Stephens	Middle Walk Dam, Buxton ECD	She alleged that she was denied the opportunity to enter into a hire purchase agreement with Singer Company because she resides in Buxton.	Complaint acknowledged. Report investigated. A Round Table meeting was arranged for June 2008, but because the ERC's Chairman was out of the country, the meeting was not convened. New arrangements are to be put in place for another meeting.	She submitted a letter requesting no further action, hence the matter was closed on 24-10-08.
64.	14-02-08	Paulette Thomas	Lot 149 Belfield Housing Scheme ECD	She alleged that she applied to the Ministry of Housing for a house lot in 2002 and was allocated a plot in Parafait Harmony on the W B D in 2008. She did not accept the land at that time, because she preferred a plot on the E C D close to where she resides at Belfield, ECD.	The complaint was investigated. In April 2008, she gave a written statement stating that she would accept the allocation offered at Parafait Harmony.	File closed in May 2008

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
65.	14-02-08	Dionne Johnson	Lot 16 Vigilance North ECD	Alleged that racial remarks were used to herself and other staff at Chicoramas Petrol Station on the ECD by Ms. Bibi Baksh.	A request was made for two of the employees who were employed at the said Petrol Station to visit the ERC to give statements, so that the matter could be investigated.	Ms. Johnson requested no further action by letter. Matter closed on 24-10-08.
66.	14-02-08	Edgar Benjamin	Section "C" Lot 96 Buxton Middle Walk ECD	Complainant alleged that he was denied access to his farm lands at Buxton Backdam, ECD by the Joint Services during their operations in the month of February 2008.	Statements were taken and a report submitted. A report was sent to the Minister of Agriculture, who responded. Mr. Benjamin was subsequently informed via a letter which he accepted.	File closed in May 2008
67.	14-02-08	Compton Glenn	Lot 66 Company Road Buxton ECD	Complainant alleged that he was denied access to his farm lands at Buxton Backdam, ECD by the Joint Services during their operations in the month of February 2008.	Statements were taken and a report submitted. A report was sent to the Ministry of Agriculture, who responded. Mr. Glenn was informed via a letter which he accepted.	File closed in May 2008
68.	15-02-08	Sheldon Campbell	Lot 56 Friendship Buxton ECD	Alleged that he was wrongfully arrested by the Joint Services and placed before the Court in February 2008.	Complainant was informed that as a result of his complaint being before the Sparendam Magistrates' Court, the ERC cannot address the matter.	File closed in May 2008.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
69.	15-02-08	Jehu Freeman	Lot 87 Webster Avenue Buxton ECD	Complainant alleged that he was wrongfully arrested by the Joint Services in Buxton, ECD in February 2008	Complainant was informed that his complaint should be referred to the Guyana Human Rights Association and /or the Police Complaints Authority since it does not fall under the ERC's mandate.	File closed in April 2008.
70.	19-02-08	Vibert Hyles	Lot 74 Company Road Buxton ECD	Complainant alleged that the Joint Services destroyed his farm lands at Buxton Backdam, ECD during their operations in February 2008	Statements were taken and a report submitted. The report was sent to the Minister of Agriculture who responded. Mr. Hyles was informed via a letter	File closed in May 2008
71.	19-02-08	Chandradeo Mahadeo	Lot 18 Lusignan East ECD	Complainant alleged that in 2002 he applied for a firearm licence but has not received a response from the Guyana Police Force to date.	Complainant was advised in writing to reapply with the relevant documents to the Divisional Commander "C" Division, Cove & John, ECD	File closed in May 2008.
72.	19-02-08	Bibi Baksh	Lot 88 Lusignan ECD	Complainant alleged that during the post Lusignan massacre period of 2008, she received a disturbing letter from a male of African descent residing in Nevis, West Indies.	Complainant was advised that her complaint does not fall under the ERC's mandate	File closed in June 2008.



NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
73.	20-02-08	Janet Blackman	Lot 36 Paradise ECD	Complainant alleged discrimination by the Ministry of Education in that in December 2007, she was promoted to Deputy Headmistress and was to be placed at BV Community High School. She celebrated with a grand party, but later learnt that her name was withdrawn from the promotion list. She also alleged that during the period January – August 2005 she acted as Headmistress at Annandale Primary School and to date was not paid her acting allowances.	The Ministry of Education was written and the report was forwarded to the Teaching Service Commission and the REO Region # 4 for a response. The complainant was informed in writing of the response by the Teaching Service Commission a copy of which she also received. She was told that her complaint does not fall within the ERC's mandate.	File closed in June 2008.
74.	20-02-08	Deomattie	Lot 127 Lusignan ECD	She alleged discrimination by GPL Inc. who failed to provide a supply of domestic electricity to her residence.	Complaint acknowledged. Complainant was advised that her matter does not fall under the ERC's mandate and that she should pursue the issue with GPL.	File closed in June 2008.
75.	20-02-08	Fahad Ahmad	Lot 698 Block 8, Mon Repos ECD	He alleged that the community in which he resides has no street lights and that residents are fearful to walk the streets at nights since the Lusignan massacre of January 2008.	Complaint acknowledged. Report submitted. Mr. Corlette, Regional Chairman, Region # 4 was written for his attention and advice.	Matter closed on 04-11-08.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
76.	20-02-08	Fitzroy Miller	Lot 146 Wilkin Street, Friendship Village ECD	Complainant alleged that he was denied access to his farm lands at Buxton Backdam, ECD by the Joint Services during their operations in the month of February 2008.	Statements were taken and a report submitted. The report was sent to the Ministry of Agriculture and a response received. Mr. Miller was informed via a letter which he accepted.	File closed in May 2008
77.	21-02-08	Sunita Singh	Lot 112, Block "CC" Mon Repos ECD	She is a Teacher at BV Community High School. On 22-02-08 she made recommendations for remedial teachers and Councillors to work along with those teachers and students who were still traumatized from the Lusignan massacre of January 2008.	Complaint acknowledged, Letter sent to Ministry of Education for their attention and advice.	File closed in July 2008.
78.	21-02-08	Ameela Shivdas	Lot 82, Mon Repos, ECD	Complainant alleged that during the post Lusignan massacre period of 2008, she lost confidence in the Security Forces and that the crime situation was not only politically motivated, but also had racial implications.	Matter was investigated and a report submitted. A letter was sent to Mr. Clement Corlette, Regional Chairman, Region # 4, for his attention and advice in March 2008. No reply was received to date.	File closed in July 2008.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
79.	22-02-08	Abiola Francis	Three Friends, Upper Demerara River.	In a letter dated January 2008 she alleged that the Guyana Forestry Commission was riddled with corruption, racism, victimization and outright disregard for rules and regulations and that Management was now controlled by 5 persons who lacked Forestry experience, viz. Mr. James Singh Mr. Tasreef Khan Mr. Edward Goberdhan Mr. Pradeepa Bolanath Mr. Dhanraj Bipcharran	Complaint Acknowledged. Investigations carried out and the complainant written to. No response received to date, complainant remains anonymous.	File closed in June 2008.
80.	28-02-08	Kuntee Udan	Success Railway Embankment ECD	She alleged that residents of Success village, ECD were fearful of walking the streets at nights because of the Lusignan massacre of January 27, 2008.	Complaint acknowledged. Matter investigated. Complainant was advised to make a report to the NDC within her community, since her complaint does not fall within the ERC's mandate.	File closed in May 2008.
81.	28-02-08	Indranie Deonarine	Lot 10, 8 <sup>th</sup> Street Success, ECD	Complainant alleged that persons in her community are fearful to walk the streets at nights because of the absence of street lights. She also alleged that the stairways at Chateau Margot Primary School were deteriorating and is a health hazard to students' during the rainy seasons.	Complaint acknowledged. Matter investigated. Report prepared. Complainant was written to on 09-05-08 and advised that her matter does not fall under the ERC's mandate and that she should make a complaint to the Ministry of Education thru' the Regional Education Officer.	File closed in May 2008.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
82.	28-02-08	Leila Mahabal	Lot 246 Success Housing Scheme ECD	Complainant alleged that Scrutineers who were employed by the PPP/C Government in conducting House to House registration only received \$16,000. as salary instead of the \$25,000 they were promised.	Complaint acknowledged. Report investigated. Information received that the matter was settled in Court and all Scrutineers were paid. Complainant was informed that this complaint does not fall under the ERC's mandate.	File closed in May 2008.
83.	28-02-08	Nirmala Ramnarain	Lot 1 Chateau Margot ECD	Complainant alleged that there is need for a proper drainage system in her community.	Complaint acknowledged. Report submitted. Complainant was informed that her complaint does not fall under the ERC's mandate and that she should pursue her matter with the Neighbourhood Democratic Council in her area.	File closed in May 2008.
84.	02-03-08	African Guyanese Consultation	c/o Reverend Reuben Gilbert Lot 2477 North Ruimveldt, Greater Georgetown	The group complained of the failure of NCN Network to air African Cultural Programmes on the Television Station. This complaint was made at the African Guyanese Consultation held in the ERC's Board Room in November 2007.	Letter sent to General Manager of NCN who responded stating that African Cultural and musical programmes were given air space free of cost and in a timely manner. Letter was sent to Rev. Reuben Gilbert informing him of the response from the Manager of NCN.	File closed in May 2008.

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85.	04-03-08	Desiree Haimchand	Lot 51 Vryheid's Lust ECD	Complainant alleged that the proceeds of a Bar-B-Que held at LBI Primary School on 19-01-08, was embezzled by the PTA President, one Mr. Dorjoedan Budhram who resides at Stratsphey ECD.	Complaint acknowledged and investigated. Complainant was informed that this matter does not fall under the ERC's mandate; however she was advised to report the matter to the Guyana Police Force who exercises jurisdiction over such matters.	File closed in May 2008.
86.	06-03-08	Denis Jaikaran	Takuba Lodge Compound, Essequibo Coast	Complainant reported that as the Regional Education Officer of Region # 2, he was wrongfully transferred to Region # 3 to take up a similar position, which he did not take up. He later applied for the post of Principal for the Essequibo Technical Institute, which was advertised. His application was not approved.	He subsequently sent a letter to ERC stating that his matter was resolved and he no longer wanted the Commission to pursue it.	File closed in May 2008.
87.	14-03-08	Michael Harris	Lot 50 Friendship Village, ECD	He was previously employed by Region # 4 Sea Defence Project as an Accounts Clerk, Grade 11. He alleged that between September to October 2002, he performed duties as Pay Master and was not paid his acting allowances. He feels he was discriminated against by the Regional Administration.	Complaint acknowledged. Efforts to locate him in the Community proved futile, neither no telephone numbers were available.	File closed in July 2008.

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88.	07-03-08	Mr. I. H. Roberts	4 Miles, Port Kaituma, Region # 1	Complained that he should have been re-appointed as Captain for Port Kaituma Community but was denied that position by the CDC Chairman	Complaint Acknowledged. Investigations were done. Report submitted. His matter does not fall within the mandate of ERC.	Closed 2008
89.	14-03-08	Courtney Frank	Lot 486 Kiskadee Drive North East La Penitance	He is attached to the Civil Aviation Authority at the Cheddi Jagan International Airport and alleged that the Authority refused to pay him his travelling and Transport allowances for the year 2008. He feels he was discriminated against.	Complaint acknowledged. He discussed his matter with the Minister of Works and was waiting a response from him. Because of that, he had asked ERC to put a hold on his complaint. After waiting for some time, and not receiving a response from him, ERC contacted him on his present position. He subsequently sent a letter to the ERC stating that his matter had been resolved.	The file was closed in July 2008.
90.	28-03-08	Charmain DeMendonca	Lot 313 William Street, Kitty, Greater Georgetown	Complainant alleged that discriminatory remarks were used against her by Dr. Kishore Persaud of the GPHC when she visited that Institution for medical attention on 26-03-08. She said she felt discriminated against and hurt.	Complaint acknowledged. Investigations were done and statements taken. Report submitted.	File sent to Legal Officer on 9-12-08 for advice.
91.	28-03-08	Edward Skeete	Lot 25 Third Avenue, Bartica	He complained that SIMAP failed to reimburse him outstanding balance of payment amounted to \$70,650. for work done at Kurutuku Teachers Training College in Region # 8 during June 2006.	Complainant was informed that his complaint does not fall under the ERC's mandate, but he can pursue his matter with the Ministry of Finance.	File closed in May 2008.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
92.	03-04-08	Ashton Simon	Lot 57 West Meten – Meer- Zorg, WCD	Mr. Simon complained that he was discriminated by a GRA Clerk, one Ms. Alicea Bagot when he went to register for his TIN No. at the GPO Building.	Complaint acknowledged. Matter investigated. The GRA Head, Mr. K Sattaur was written and a response was forwarded to the ERC. Ms. Bagot subsequently sent a letter of apology to Mr. Simon. The ERC has written him for a response on his acknowledgement.	He responded accepting the apology. File closed on 11-08-08.
93.	05-04-08	Mr. Evan Radhay Persaud Misra Executive Member, Indian Arrival Committee	c/o Maraj Building "Third Floor Room 14" 185 Charlotte & King Streets, Lacytown, Georgetown	Complainant alleged that State media NCN Channel 11 Television Programme lacked content pertaining to East Indian Culture and History.	Complaint acknowledged. Report investigated. The Management of NCN Channel 11 was written with respect to the complaint. Management responded that the complaint is a perception based on an analysis done on programme contents aired by the Station. The complainant was informed of NCN's response.	File closed in June 2008.
94.	28-04-08	M.S.Aleem	c/o Anna Regina Masjid Essequibo Coast	He alleged that the Islamic culture was misrepresented with distortion during one of the IAC Melas held at Anna Regina on April 27, 2008.	Complaint acknowledged and investigated. Mr. Raymond Azeez, one of the Executive members of the IAC was contacted. He promised to recommend to the IAC that programmes of a similar nature be adjusted in the future. Complainant was informed of IAC's response by letter.	File closed in June 2008.

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95.	10-06-08	Haitram Persaud	Lot 26 Fernandes Street, Enterprise ECD	He alleged that he was wrongfully dismissed by the Guyana Sugar Corporation in 1992 and 2007 and discriminated against by his former supervisor one Mr. Gheer.	Complaint acknowledged and matter investigated. He was advised that his matter does not fall under the ERC's mandate and that he should seek legal advice and /or pursue his matter with the Ministry of Labour.	File closed in July 2008.
96.	19-05-08	George Berkley	Lot 22 Castello Housing Scheme, West La Penitence Georgetown	He complained that he was victimized by his former Landlord, Mr. Ottis Khan and discriminated against by the Mayor & City Council.	Complaint acknowledged. Investigations were carried out and a Round Table discussion was held with Mr. Floyd Patterson, Mr. Ottis Khan, ERC, Mr. Robert Williams and representatives from the City Engineers Department. He was advised to make a check with the City Engineers Department for a letter which he received. He was subsequently relocated to another area.	A progress report was done which confirmed that he was relocated and there were no further incidents. File closed in June 2008.
97	20-05-08	Franklin Baker	No. 19 Village Corentyne, Berbice	Complained that he was discriminated against by one Mr. Seepersaud of No. 19 Village Council who prevented him from performing duties as a Foreman on the No. 19 Sea Defence Project and that the Regional Chairman and REO transferred him to Cumberland Sea Defence Project as an Assistant Foreman	Complaint acknowledged. Report submitted to ERC for a decision.	Decision taken by ERC that the matter does not fall under ERC's mandate. He was written accordingly, after which the matter was closed on 4-11-08.



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98.	21-05-08	Milton Taylor	Martin Luther Scheme, New Amsterdam, Berbice	Alleged discrimination by the NIS in that he was not paid a 10% disability benefit awarded to him by the NIS Medical Board for an injury he sustained on the job while an employee of Bermine.	Complaint acknowledged and the matter was investigated. NIS was written A response was received which stated that the Board's decision was final. Complainant was so advised.	File closed in June 2008.
99.	21-05-08	Carmen Cush	Lot 1 Sheet Anchor Village, East Canje Berbice	She alleged that in 1995 she applied for a house lot through the Region # 6 Housing Institution. Thirteen years later she claimed that she is still awaiting an allocation. She feels she is discriminated against by Ms. Ravena Shivrattan, the present Housing Officer.	Complaint acknowledged. Investigations were carried out. The Minister of Housing was written for a response.	Response received and Ms. Cush was written accordingly. File subsequently closed on 27-10-08.
100.	21-05-08	Nazeer Ali Khan	Lot East Canefield, East Canje, Berbice	He alleged that Mr. Araf Alli Jaafar, the Imam of a Sunnatal Masjid at Canefield, East Canje, Berbice discriminated against him because of his religion .He said he voiced his opinion in a disagreement between members in the Masjid on May 18, 2008 but was accused by the Imam of being a non-Muslim.	Complaint acknowledged. Complainant was advised that his complaint does not fall under the mandate of the ERC and that the complaint would be referred to the CIOG. Commissioner Shafeek was given all the information for him to deal with the matter.	
101.	21-05-08	Sandra Sandy	Angoy's Avenue, New Amsterdam, Berbice	Complainant alleged that she was not paid for work done during the holidays while working with BRANS Security Service.	Complaint acknowledged. The report was investigated. BRANS Security Service was written. No response received to date.	File on hold until a response is received. A follow up letter to be sent to BRANS Security Service.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
102.	21-05-08	Ramesh Chandra	Lot 180 Section "A" New Street, Cumberland, East Canje Berbice.	He was a licensed fire arm holder of a single barrel Stevens shotgun # HB 150813 licensed # 71292 dated 23-08-88. He said his license was revoked after thieves entered his home and stole his fire arm on 21-10-97.	Complaint acknowledged and matter investigated. Mr. Chandra was advised to re-apply with his relevant documents to the Commissioner of Police for a firearm licence since his matter does not fall under the mandate of the ERC.	File closed in 2008
103.	25-06-08	George Wright	Lot 213 New Jersey Hill, Wismar, Linden	He alleged that he previously worked with GUYMINE and contributed to a Pension Plan the Company initiated with the Hand-In-Hand Insurance Inc After he retired in 2003, he approached the Company for his benefits but was told that he already uplifted his benefits, which he denied. He felt that he was discriminated against.	The complaint was acknowledged and investigated. Mr. Wright was informed that the matter does not fall under the ERC's mandate and that he should pursue his case with the Police.	File closed in July 2008.
104.	10-06-08	Bramdeow Singh aka Rudolph Singh	Plantation Brahn, West Coast Berbice	He complained that the Drainage and Irrigation System in Chester/ Kingeley areas has been neglected by the MMA/ADA Administration resulting in farmers being unable to cultivate the lands.	Complaint acknowledged and matter investigated. Report submitted. Decision taken by the Commission to send a copy of the report to the Minister of Agriculture for his attention.	That was done. File closed.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
105.	25-06-08	Theresa Miller	'D' 6 Nari Compound, Mon Repos ECD	Ms. Miller alleged that after working for several years with NARI as an Administrative Assistant she was discriminated against by Dr. Oudho Homenauth the Institute's Director.	Complaint acknowledged and a report submitted. Dr. O. Homenauth was written and a response was received in which he stated that he was awaiting the Browman's Report. His response was acknowledged.	Pending the response from NARI on the Browman's report.
106.	18-06-08	Shane Calistro	Matthews Ridge, North West District, Barima/Waini, Region # 1	He was previously employed as a Security Officer with Strata Gold Company in Barima/Waini, Region # 1. He alleged that between September - November 2007, he was abused and discriminated against by Mr. Cleveland Schultz, Chief Security Officer at he Company who forced him to resign the job in November 2008	Complaint acknowledged. Report submitted. Region # 1 Chairman written to address report.	No response from Regional Chairman. File closed on 27-11-08.
107.	01-07-08	Indian Arrival Committee	c/o Room 14 Maraj Building Lot 185 Charlotte & King Streets, Lacytown	The IAC complained against the Stabroek News Editorial Cartoon of Friday July 4, 2004 which portrayed an old East Indian woman as belonging to a past era historically. and is interpreted to mean that Indo-Guyanese is a backward ethnic group.	The complaint was investigated. A Round Table discussion was convened with officials of the IAC, ERC and Stabroek News in the ERC's Board Room. On Friday July 4, 2008. All parties were summoned to another meeting where the Chairman, ERC outlined the Commission's findings. conclusion and recommendations and gave the representatives of IAC and Stabroek News a copy each of its decision.	Both parties were to submit their feedback. Closed in 2008.

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
108.	04-07-08	Katari Joseph and Others	Aishalton Village South Rupununi Region # 9	Ms. Joseph and others complained by letter that the women of that community were seeking help from the Prime Minister because the GGMC was opening concessions in their village without their permission from their village council.	The complaint was sent to Lethem and on ERC's Regional Visit was raised but no one seemed to have knowledge of the complaint.	The file was closed on 20-10-08.
109.	06-07-08	Wendy Denny	33 Princess Street Wortmanville Georgetown	Complain of discrimination by GWI. She had written the President of Guyana, the Ministers of Labour, Human Services, Trade Unions and copied to the ERC for information.	The matter was seen as one for the Ministry of Labour.	Filed away on the 19-08-08.
110.	31-07-08	Clinton Mack	Aurora Village Essequibo Coast Region # 2	He complained that he tendered three contracts for works to be done with Region # 2 but was only awarded one which is the lowest bid of two million, four hundred and thirty two thousand three hundred and thirty (\$2,432,330) dollars. He felt that he was discriminated against because he is Afro-Guyanese.	His complaint was acknowledged. Investigations were carried out, which revealed that a tender board meeting was convened after he made a complaint to the PS, Ministry of Local Government. He was subsequently awarded the contracts.	Satisfied with the decision, he submitted a written letter to the ERC requesting no further action.



NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
111.	18-02-08	John Ali	Lot 4 Ankerville Port Mourant Corentyne Berbice	Mr. Ali complained of discrimination by some fanatical Muslims against persons of other religions in Ankerville, Port Mourant.	The complaint was acknowledged. Investigations were carried out and a report submitted. During a Regional visit to Region # 6 on 21-05-08, a Round Table discussion was held in the Board Room of the Regional Democratic Council, in New Amsterdam, which included the Mr. Ali, Regional Chairmen, Regional Personnel, Chairman ERC, Commissioner John Willems and CEO, ERC. Chairman advised that Commissioner Shaffeek Khan looks into the matter.	The CIOG is to be written.
112.	10-10-08	Sheik Sadiq	Lot 29 North East La Penitence, Georgetown	Complained of discrimination by GPL. He stated that he was a Supervisor attached to Guyana Power and Light and that he was on a project; at the conclusion he was dismissed. The matter was before the Minister of Labour and a decision was taken that he should be reinstated but he was not. GPL later appealed the matter.	Matter was investigated. Report submitted. GPL was written and they have responded.	The matter is not within ERC mandate and is considered closed.
113.	20-10-08	Radha Lalchand	Lot 152 "B" Stewartville, WCD	She complained that her neighbour, Mr. Ali constructed a poultry pen south of her premises, thus preventing her from receiving proper ventilation. The Environmental Protection Agency engaged the matter and wrote Mr. Ali advising that he ceases all construction. She feels discriminated against, hence her complaint.	Matter under investigation.	

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
114.	22-9-08	Harry Seymour	Sans Souci, Wakenaam	He complained of being discriminated against by Ms. Trotman, Headmistress of Zeelandia Primary School, in that she prevented him from entering the School to take photographs when it was the School's graduation ceremony.	He was interviewed and he requested no further action and submitted a statement to the effect.	Closed 27-12-08.
115.	8-10-08	Mahendra Wilfred	Hope West, Enmore ECD	He complained that he was discriminated by the Clerk of the Market at Plaisance, ECD He is a vendor and sells in front the gate of the market on Sundays. He was removed by the Clerk and given another spot to vend.	The matter was investigated which revealed that it was a Council's decision to remove vendors from selling in front of the market gate. This affected more than one vendor. This was communicated to him. He was satisfied and requested no further action in writing.	File closed.
116.	11-11-08	Residents of Zeelandia, Wakenaam Region # 3	Zeelandia Primary School	The ERC held a meeting on 6-10-08 at the Zeelandia Primary School where persons at that meeting complained against the Headmistress Yvonne Trotman and Ms. Beverly Munesar, Headmistress of the Nursery School of discriminatory practices.	The matter was investigated. Report submitted to Commission.	To be followed up.
117.	27-11-08	Rafik Kabul	Friendship Village, EBD	Complained of being discriminated against by Mr. Batson and one Philbert Blair of the Friendship Farmers Land Co-op Society at Friendship, EBD.	Letter acknowledged. Complaint under investigation.	

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
118.	26-11-08	Jasmattie Das	Mongrippa Hill, 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue, Bartica	Complained that Ms. Mavis Jones of Bartica was selling items such as stoves etc. that were given to her by Food for the Poor for distribution to the community.	Complaint acknowledged. Complaint under investigation.	
119.	18-11-08	Deo Narine	One Mile, Port Kaituma NWD	Complained against Mr. Johnny Phillips, mixed race, Chairman of the NDC, Port Kaituma. He alleged that most of the building contracts tendered are given to Mr. Phillips. He is also building on Government's reserve.	.Complaint acknowledged. Complaint under investigation.	
120.	18-11-08	Geneve Rodrigues	Canal Bank, Port Kaituma NWD	She is a Councillor in the NDC and complained that Mr. Fidel Morales, male Amerindian, was having sex with his step-daughter, age 13 years. The girl has one child for him and is presently pregnant with another. His father is also practicing the same act with another juvenile. Mr. Albert, the Probation Officer, Nurses, Regional Chairman and the entire community are all aware of what is going on there.	Matter under investigation.	
121.	26-11-08	Patricia Abdullah	Grovesnor Street, Friendship Village, ECD	Complained of wrongful dismissal from U.G without any benefits. She would like the ERC to address the matter. The matter was before the Ombudsman, Ministry of Labour and is presently before the Court since 2001.	This matter does not fall within the mandate of the ERC, hence she will be advised accordingly in writing.	



NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
122.	06-12-08	Sylvie Williams	Paramakatoi Village, North Pakaraimas Region # 8	Complained that she is a Teacher and her spouse is of a different race to which the community is objecting to. He is not allowed to visit her. She is also prevented by the Regional Democratic Council in obtaining more lands in the community. She feels discriminated against, hence her complaint.	To be investigated	
123.	06-12-08	Kingsley Jonas	Paramakatoi Village, North Pakaraimas, Region # 8	He is employed by Two Brothers Mining Co. Complained of discrimination and assault by his employers. Complained against the Taxi drivers at Ogle Aerodrome.	Matter to be investigated	
124.	06-12-08	Maurice Nathan	58 Miles Mabura Road, Upper Demerara River, Region # 10.	He is employed by Two Brothers Mining Co. Complained of discrimination and assault by his employers. Complained against the Taxi drivers at Ogle Aerodrome.	Matter to be investigated	
125.	17-12-08	Gannis Persaud	Columbia Village, Essequibo Coast	Complained that he is the owner of 8.84 acres of transported land in Pln. Taymont Manor, Essequibo Coast and 4 ½ by the canal and the rest people resides. He alleged that he has not received payments from persons residing on the land and is seeking compensation.	Matter to be investigated	

NO.	DATE	COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	NATURE OF COMPLAINT	ACTION TAKEN	REMARKS
126.	17-12-08	Mangree	Lima, Essequibo Coast	Complained that NIS has not paid her any benefits after working for over 27 years.	Matter to be investigated	
127.	06-12-08	Chairman, ERC	66 Peter Rose and Anira Streets. Queenstown	Complained against discriminatory practices by the taxi drivers attached to the Ogle Aerodrome. Two staff members were discriminated against.	Matter was investigated.	Report submitted
128.	17-12-08	Eshwar Lall	Lot 10 Henrietta Village, Essequibo Coast.	Complained of discrimination. He said that He should have been given the post of Headmaster for the Aurora Primary School but was denied and it was given to a junior.	Matter under investigation	
129.	17-12-08	Dolcie George	Bush Lot New Housing Scheme, Essequibo Coast.	Complained about drainage and water in the village.	Matter to be investigated	
130	17-12-08	Bissoon Dyal	Lot 10 Richmond, Housing Scheme, Essequibo Coast.	He retired from the Guyana Rice Board since 1993 and has never received his pension. He is asking ERC to assist him.	Matter to be investigated	
131.	17-12-08	Saywack Baldeo	New Road, Charity Essequibo Coast.	He stated that he was involved in an accident and is finding it difficult to receive benefits from the National Insurance.	Matter to be investigated	

ETHNIC RELATIONS COMMISSION  
GUYANA

Stabroek News Editorial Cartoon, published June 15, 2008

**Decision of the Ethnic Relations Commission in the matter of the complaint raised by the IAC with respect to an editorial cartoon and published by the *Stabroek News*, on June 15, 2008, p.6.**

**The Ethnic Relations Commission acting under Article 212 D of the Constitution of Guyana, considering all the information at its disposal, regarding the said complaint by the IAC, having deliberated on the matter on June 2, 2008, hereby adopts the following conclusions on the matter.**

**1.0 BACKGROUND:**

By correspondence to the ERC dated June 16, 2008, the IAC registered a complaint with the Commission condemning an editorial cartoon in the *Stabroek News* dated June 15, 2008.

1.1 The cartoon visually depicts what appears to be an elderly woman of East Indian extraction, sitting hunch-backed on a stool and wearing an undecorated rumal, traditional accessories and an 'I Love Guyana' badge. She is peeling what seems to be an agricultural product taken from a large wicker basket. A bespectacled man representing the media asks the following:

"How do you feel about a Black man being President..."

After a supposed pause, he continues:

"..er..ahh..of the United States of America..of course!"

The elderly woman responds:

'Oh! The United States!...well...'

**2.0 IAC ISSUES:**

The IAC raises the following five issues with respect to the cartoon:

- 2.1 The old East Indian woman is portrayed as belonging to a past era historically. The IAC interprets this portrayal to mean that Indo-Guyanese are a backward ethnic group.
- 2.2 Since historically Hindu women have worn the rumal, its depiction in the cartoon is interpreted by the IAC to mean that Hindus are a backward group.

- 2.3 The old East Indian woman is drawn wearing an 'I Love Guyana' sticker badge. The IAC interprets this portrayal to mean that Indo-Guyanese are not inherently patriotic.
- 2.4 The old East Indian woman is drawn in the act of peeling something with her hands. The IAC interprets this portrayal to mean that Indo-Guyanese are technologically backward.
- 2.5 The interviewer is shown in an anxious manner to extract a negative answer to his question: 'How do you feel about a BLACK MAN being PRESIDENT?' The IAC interprets this portrayal to mean that Indo-Guyanese are alarmed at the notion of having an Afro-Guyanese as President of Guyana.
- 2.6 Generally, it is the IAC's opinion that the cartoon may be considered racially offensive but denigrating to persons of Indo-Guyanese origin as it can stir up feelings of social hostility against Indo-Guyanese by promoting and perpetrating negative stereotypes of Indo-Guyanese.

### 3.0 **MEDIATION EFFORTS:**

The ERC wrote Guyana Publications Ltd (*Stabroek News*) seeking a response to the IAC complaint, and received a response from the said media house, outlining their position in a letter dated June 20, 2008.

The ERC has held round table discussions with officials of the IAC and the *Stabroek News*, including separate caucuses with each body, in an attempt to mediate on the complaint that is before the Commission. This has been without success.

### 4.0 **ERC FINDINGS:**

The Commission has since deliberated on the issues raised by the complainant taking into consideration the art form of cartoons, particularly editorial cartoons, their use in liberal democratic societies and the right to freedom of expression guaranteed under the Constitution of Guyana. The Commission wishes to advise the following:

- 4.1 That the IAC is correct in that the elderly woman represents an East Indian woman of a past era historically. While there may perhaps be some legitimacy in the argument that is raised here of stereotyping/negative profiling it is important however to note that, generally editorial cartoons are a type of gag cartoon, employing humor, very often with a satirical/ironical content. This genre often employs the use of caricature which is sometimes typified by a grotesque comic representation, exaggerating or distorting perhaps what may seem to be characteristic traits. To infer from the cartoon that the elderly woman is of a backward group, merely because she is portrayed in a historical and traditional mode of attire is assuming a definite intention on the part of the cartoonist which is not substantiated. Therefore, we find the IAC argument on this point cannot be sustained.

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- 4.2 There is nothing to be inferred from the cartoon that suggests that the wearing of a rumal is backward. In fact the rumal is still commonly worn by women in the Indo-Caribbean and there is nothing despicable or degenerate with respect to this attire.
- 4.3 That it cannot be reasonably inferred that the wearing of an 'I love Guyana' badge means that that East Indians are unpatriotic, in fact *prima facie* it seems to expressly state the contrary. However, when one looks at the cartoon in its entirety, it seems that the artist may be employing the use of irony to beg the question as to whether East Indians generally, or East Indians of senior age are patriotic or not in relation to the particular issue he is seeking to raise. If this is indeed the intention of the cartoonist, by itself, and giving due consideration to the usual artistic leverage in a liberal democracy and the genre of cartoon, it does not give rise to the suggestions that there is an intention on the part of the artist or *Stabroek News* to castigate, to demean or necessarily to be racist or to promote or propagate racism. Editorial cartoons are often used to raise for discussion political and moral issues of a society, and whether such issues are legitimate or not, or uncomfortable, by itself, does not promote racism.
- 4.4 The performance of an act of manual labour as opposed to the use of technology is not necessarily an inference that Indo-Guyanese are 'technologically backward.' The act of peeling is one that is common across all cultures and social groups and the Commission is of the opinion that this is a *non sequitor*.
- 4.5 The IAC may be correct in its interpretation of the message of the cartoon in that it seems that the artist is suggesting that Indo-Guyanese would be alarmed at the notion of having an Afro-Guyanese as president. This may be a legitimate concern in that the cartoon may have unfairly typify/brand one ethnic group exclusively as a racist group which perhaps may inherently be an unfair proposition or false premise that needs to be qualified. However, even if this is the issue of the cartoon, however uncomfortable it is to sit with, by itself, is not sufficient to deem it the intention of the cartoonist/*Stabroek News* to label East Indians as racists or to promote racism within the society. Again, an editorial cartoon very often illustrates a point of view on current social and/or political topics, whether taboo or not. The intent is almost always invariably to bring about improvement, whether in the way we think, or act, or speak, as the case may be. Indeed this may be one of the partial truths in this society that is perceived to be driven by ethnic politics, polarities and insecurities (which may not be solely limited to East Indians in Guyana). If the message is a positive one albeit and admittedly in a negative context, in that there is a need to address issues of ethnic insecurities in a broad context, then the editorial cartoon may have scored its due points. It is this latter position that the Commission believes is relevant and may have been the intended message by the cartoonist and by *Stabroek News*.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION:

Conclusively, the cartoon has interestingly brought to the fore a debate that may have a positive impact in the context of race related conversations, debate and dialogue on issues that are topical in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. This debate must take place in a responsible environment having due regard to the ethno-cultural and the ethno-religious sensitivities that exist in Guyana. It also points us to and cautions us on the possible dangers of negative stereotyping and profiling which may be considered prevalent in past and present local theatre, television sitcoms and advertisements.

- 5.1 The ERC has sought to mediate the issue between *Stabroek News* and the IAC, with a view towards achieving common ground, and a way forward. The Commission wishes to express its disappointment in the cavalier and high handed approach taken by *Stabroek News* in its conduct at the said meetings. It is rather unfortunate that a statement by *Stabroek News* clarifying their intention under the subject cartoon was not seen as helpful possibly bridging the divide.
- 5.2 The ERC further expresses its disappointment with the IAC with its *modus operandi*- in dealing with the complaint. The IAC should have firstly registered their concerns with the ERC, as opposed to bringing the matter into the public domain, and give the Commission free and full opportunity to resolve the matter.

## 6.0 RECOMMENDATION:

- 6.1 Freedom of expression is guaranteed by Article 146, (1) of the Guyana Constitution and is one of the celebrated principles of law. This is not an absolute right however and must be practiced in a responsible manner. It is to be noted for instance, that **Article 146 (3)** of the Constitution for instance, provides that : 'freedom of expression in this Article does not relate to hate speeches or other expression, in whatever form, capable of exciting ill-will against any person or class of persons.' It is therefore an important duty of a publisher/media house to exercise good editorial oversight, sensitivity, prudence and judgment when taking publications to press. At the same time the media operative must ensure that there is not undue censorship.