

COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION OF
THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT (2015-2018)**

SEVENTH SPECIAL REPORT

OF THE

PARLIAMENTARY SECTORAL COMMITTEE

ON

SOCIAL SERVICES

VISIT TO REGION NO. 2 POMEROON-SUPENAAM

FROM MAY 17TH – 19TH, 2017

**PRESENTED TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMITTEE**

ON MARCH 15, 2018

Purpose of the visit

2. The purpose of the visit was to examine/observe the operational procedures of the above **institutions** which members of the public were exposed to, as they sought to access education, health care and other services. The observations also focused on the circumstances and available facilities under which they are found.

The Visit

Wednesday, 17th May, 2017:

3. The delegation departed the Parliament Office, at 8.20 a.m. on Wednesday, 17th May, 2017, and arrived at the State House, Anna Regina, Region No. 2 Pomeroon-Supenaam at 2.50 p.m.

Thursday, 18th May, 2017:

4. The delegation visited the Suddie Hospital in Region No. 2 and was received by Ms. Shelly Ambrose, Administrator, Mr. Rupert Hopkinson, Regional Executive Officer (REO), Dr. Khilauti Das, Medical Superintendent and other Officials of the hospital.

5. After reciprocal introduction, the Chairperson of the Committee, Dr. Vindhya Persaud, introduced the Members of the Committee and explained the origin of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Social Services and its purpose. Dr. Persaud informed the officials that prior to this visit the Committee had completed four other visits which included: the New Amsterdam Hospital, Diamond Diagnostic Centre, Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation and Linden Hospital in keeping with the Committee's mandate. The Chairperson stated that aside from assessment, the Committee was there to gain insight into the functioning of the Hospitals with an aim to ensure that there was improvement in services provided. She further stated that the Committee was not there to criticize the staff's performance but merely to learn about the constraints and challenges they faced, when exercising their duties, as this will inform the Committee's recommendations for improved health care services at the Hospitals.

Meeting with Officials of the Hospital

6. The Committee interacted with the official from the hospital and was informed that there was a shortage of drugs in the Region. Mr. Sukdeo Singh, Pharmacist attached to the Region (with responsibility for Charity, Suddie and all the Health Centres) noted that the facility supplies drugs and medical supplies to all Health Centres within the Region. He stated that on a monthly basis drugs have been requested and that a Combined Requisition of Issue Vouchers (CRIVs) is sent to the Materials Management Unit (MMU) for supplies. Mr. Sukdeo reported that for 2017 drugs ordered in January were only delivered in March. He thereafter submitted a list of drugs that are in short supply to the Committee. He further stated that regular follow-up calls to the MMU did not always yield favourable results. He informed the delegation that every Wednesday the facility would have Heads of Department meetings and these issues would be discussed.

7. The Committee advised that the facility should continue to write and request for drugs as customary.

Tour

The delegation toured the following departments;

The Bond

8. The delegation interacted with Ms. Sushma Adams, Pharmacist who raised concerns of the shortage of drugs, medical supplies and the malfunctioning of an air conditioning unit. Ms. Adams also, highlighted the issue of calls to MMU which do not always yield favourable results.

9. The Committee observed that there was a small amount of drugs stored in the Bond. Electric wires were exposed and there was wood ants nest on the walls.

Committee's Recommendation

- In an effort to eliminate blame, all calls to MMU should be documented, inclusive of the time, date, subject discussed and name of person spoken to.

Family Health Department

10. The Government Medical Officer (GMO), Dr. Suresh Seurattan, informed the delegation that patients were seen from Moruca and other riverine areas. In addition, the department housed Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) treatment site within the Region, thus everyone goes there. He stated that there was adequate amount of Anti-Retrovirals (ARVs) in stock.

Committee's Recommendation

- All Doctors should be trained in MIAI and MICI so that all hospitals within the Region can offer VCT.

Laboratory

11. Ms. Showana Spencer, Medical Technologist, informed the delegation that there is one Medical Technologist and eight Medical Laboratory Technicians (MLTs) at the facility. She noted that the Laboratory was not performing at its optimum, primarily because of shortages of staff, as well as equipment. Ms. Spencer further stated that since June 2015 the Haematology Machine was inoperative and therefore manual testing is presently done. However, the Hospital had requested another machine in the 2017 budget but was uncertain of any approval.

12. The Committee was further informed that the Bio Chemistry Machine continues to be problematic since 2015 and as such no chemistry testing could be done. It was explained that Cardiac Enzymes are being done privately since December 2015 and that the non-existence of essential test at the facility was a disservice to the public.

Committee's Recommendations

- The Laboratory should have an additional staff of five (5) Medical Technologists and fifteen (15) Medical Laboratory Technicians.
- The facility should procure an Analyser Machine, Bio Chemistry Machine and three (3) Microscopes.

Pharmacy

13. During the tour of the Pharmacy Mr. Sukdeo Singh, a Pharmacist informed the delegation that the department has a staff of seven. He pointed out that Pharmacists do not work weekends, but there are two (2) Pharmacy Assistants, who are paid to work weekends. He informed the delegation that there were anomalies in the system, where Officers were not properly compensated for some tasks performed. Mr. Singh said that although he is doing the work as the regional pharmacist, he does not have any document that authorises him to do so. As such he is fearful that he could subsequently be in trouble for performing tasks he is not authorised to. However, someone has to do it and he, being the most senior pharmacist, is doing the job. He requested the committee's input to sort it out.

14. The Committee observed that the department was small and need to be painted and there was a limited amount of drugs which would only last for one week.

15. The Pharmacist indicated that some of the critical drugs that were in short supply from January 2017 to present were: Metformin, Nitroglycerin (GTN), Isodine, Injectable maxolon, Hydrocortisone and Oxytocin.

Triage Area of Accident & Emergency Room (A&E)

16. Dr. Khitanti Das, Medical Superintendent informed the delegation that the Triage and Nurses' areas are very small with no Cardiac Monitors. She noted that only two patients can be triaged at the same time and patients with wheelchairs or stretchers accessing the unit are

placed in the A&E room for their triage to be done. Dr. Das further informed the delegation that some trauma patients were sent to GPHC due to lack of all the requisite equipment.

Observation Unit

17. The delegation interacted with Doctors attached to the Unit and was informed that the Unit has a five bed capacity and caters for chronic patients. It was noted that while there is a portable ECG machine, the Hospital was not designed to accommodate the necessary equipment and machines.

18. The Committee was further informed that there is a small Emergency Unit where surgeries are done but the Operating Theatre did not function for approximately a year. It was noted that the Hospital has several patients accessing medical treatment with various complaint but the majority would have to be transferred to the West Demerara Hospital.

19. The Committee was also informed that the situation at the Unit was compounded by a shortage of staff, shortage of drugs (nifedipine, Vitamin B, nitroglycerin (GTN), cardiac enzymes test, hydrocortisone), no otoscope, faulty backup generator and a non-functioning Cardiac unit.

20. Members of the Committee enquired if there is a Disaster Management Plan and whether Doctors are trained in Disaster Management and Emergency Medicine? The response was in the negative.

21. The delegation observed that wires were exposed which could be disastrous especially with the use of oxygen in the Unit.

22. Dr. Daniels, one of the doctors attached to the department voiced her concern about the number of requests that were made to improve the department in the last two years but were futile.

Committee's Recommendations

- The Unit should be equipped with Cardiac Monitors and beds;
- The Unit should have a Tracheostomy equipment;
- The Triage and Accident and Emergency Units should be updated;
- There should be a written Disaster Management Plan;
- Staff should be trained in Disaster Management and Emergency Medicine;
- Doctors in the department should speak with the Pharmacist and make a list of emergency drugs and submit same to the REO; and
- The Hospital should request for the following machines be purchased: monitors, ventilators, defibrillators, otoscopes and ECG machines.

Intensive Care Unit (ICU)

23. The delegation interacted with Nurse Domingo during its tour of the Intensive Care Unit and was informed that the Unit has two (2) Monitors, a Ventilator and a Defibrillator which were not functioning properly. She noted that no Iodine was available, therefore, no dressing was done and that was compounded by the shortage of Antibiotics, Midazolam, Ranitidine, Maxolon and Hydralazine. She also informed the delegation that there were six (6) deaths for the year due to Lupus, Embolism, and Bronchopneumonia.

24. The Gynaecologist attached to the Hospital informed the Committee that there is only one Gynaecologist in the Region and she has to deal with referrals from all the health facilities, hence, the work can be very overwhelming. Members were also informed that the Neonatal Unit had no Ventilator or Incubators and the rooms do not have central oxygen or any machine to do aspirations.

Committee's Recommendations

- The Hospital should have the requisite drugs and medical supplies made available to the Unit;

- The Hospital should procure Ventilators, Incubators, Defibrillators and Monitors for the Unit; and
- The Hospital should employ another gynaecologist.

Operating Theatre

25. The delegation interacted with an Anaesthetist Nurse who stated that the department has a Cuban Anaesthesiologist, who was on vacation. Members were told that at present there are only three (3) Anaesthetist Nurses and there was no senior person to ask for guidance or advice, if a challenge arose. She further stated that the Theatre was challenged for resources such as syringes, drainage bags, vaporiser, adequate lighting, scavenger system, sterilisation unit, and anaesthesia machine. The anaesthesia machine in use was borrowed from the Mahaica Hospital. She noted that the facility also has no Recovery Room, Emergency Exit or functional operating bed. This situation, along with the shortage of drugs and Nurses, has influenced the transfer of emergency patients to GPHC.

Committee's Recommendations

- The Hospital should immediately refurbish the Operating Theatre (replace the old operating beds and lights, repaint the Theatre, and include a Recovery Room);
- The Hospital should procure the necessary emergency drugs for the department;
- The Hospital should employ another Anaesthesiologist and additional Nurses; and
- The Hospital should procure or repair where possible all machines listed as critical to the Unit.

Maternity Ward

26. The Committee during its tour of the Maternity Ward interacted with the Matron and Nurses. It was stated that the Ward was staffed with seventy (70) Nurses and ten (10) Nurse Aides. However, there is a need for an additional twenty-five (25) Nurses and eight (8) Midwives to meet the full complement. The Committee was also told that the Ward has a 21 bed capacity but additional beds were needed, since, patients outnumber and sometimes

challenge bed capacity. The Committee was further informed that the Ward suffers as a result of shortage of blood, drugs, portable blood pressure apparatus, fetal monitor, a doctor and entrenched absenteeism.

Committee's Recommendations

- The department should be extended to accommodate a larger bed capacity.
- The Hospital should purchase at least two fetal monitors for the department.
- The Hospital should be provided with the necessary supply of blood and essential drugs to ensure the efficient management of the department.

Orthopaedic Room

27. During the tour Members observed that the room was very small, overcrowded and there was need for a washroom facility. A rotating table as well as instruments and materials were needed for surgery.

Filing Room (Births and Deaths)

28. The Committee observed that the room was in a deplorable state. There were holes in the roof and it was termite infested. The air conditioning unit was not working and there was no paper shredder machine.

Committee's Recommendations

- A paper shredder should be purchased for the department.
- The roof and AC unit should be repaired immediately and the area should be fumigated regularly.

X-Ray Department

29. The Committee interacted with Radiologist/Multipurpose Technician, Andrey Jeffery and staff during its visit and was informed that the portable KV was not working in the current X-ray machine. In addition, the room was small and inadequate. There was need for a floater table to facilitate patients and a colour-o-meter.

Committee's Recommendations

- The Hospital should procure a portable x-ray machine, a colour-o-meter and a floater table.
- The Hospital should consider relocating or expanding the department.
- The Hospital should procure two dental chairs and equipment.

Dental Department

30. The Committee was informed by the Dentex that approximately 500 patients were seen per week by the Unit, but the Dental Chair was not serviceable.

Committee's Recommendation

- The Hospital should procure two (2) dental chairs or dental furniture and equipment.

Blood Bank

31. The delegation interacted with staff and was informed that there was need for a refrigerator to store blood supplies.

Committee's Recommendations

- The Hospital should secure a portable Reclining Phlebotomy Chair; and
- A refrigerator should be purchased for the department.

Meeting with Doctors and Matron in the Boardroom

32. The Committee engaged Doctors attached to the Hospital and discussed challenges they faced in the course of their duties. The Paediatrician informed the delegation that while he encountered many patients on daily basis, the shortages of drugs and equipment worked against the best interest of infant care. Doctors attached to the Internal Medicine Department indicated that the ECG machine had no paper nor strips for Random Blood Sugar (RBS) testing.

Challenges reported by Doctors

- There was a lack of Specialists and Consultants at the facility;
- Presently there is no Orthopaedic Surgeon;
- Insufficient money paid for Government Medical Officers (GMOs) and Nurses whenever they are required to conduct transfers to Georgetown (Doctors' travel duty which includes accompanying patients to Georgetown is often affected by inadequate funding);
- The restroom for the GMO had no AC unit or fan; and
- The room for the Doctors on call was small with inadequate beds and washroom facility; Male and female doctors shared the room.

33. The Matron informed the Committee that nurses would request to work particular shifts and if disallowed they absent themselves from work. The same obtained if there was a misunderstanding on the job among nurses. She indicated that warning letters were issued to those tardy and delinquent nurses. Those letters were copied to the Ministry of Public Health and Department of Public Service. She reported that the Ministry had written those nurses, stating that disciplinary actions would be taken if such behaviours continued.

34. Mr. Hopkinson, REO, indicated that the issues raised were never brought to his attention. He stated that he would look into the matter and have them resolved. He further noted that while the Committee raised the issue of monies being allocated to purchase drugs and medical supplies, it was the Ministry that did most of the procuring, since the region only

had two millions dollars to use as emergency fund. The Committee, however, opined that that amount was insufficient.

35. During the interaction, the Doctors expressed interest in being trained in the following areas:

- Emergency and Gynaecology and Obstetrics
- Disaster Management and General Surgery
- Internal Medicine
- Paediatrics
- Oncology
- General Surgery

Committee's Observations

- The Triage, A&E and Observation Units were not conveniently located;
- The Emergency Unit was viewed as a ward rather than a unit;
- One portable ECG Machine, defibrillator and monitor were insufficient equipment for the entire hospital;
- Most equipment and machines in the Hospital are not functioning properly;
- There were no platelet and plasma at the Hospital;
- An amount of two million dollars allotted to the Region for the procurement of emergency medications, appears to be inadequate;
- Some departments were not staffed with supervisors to facilitate proper reporting;
- The imprest amount granted to the facility is inadequate; this affects travel duties of doctors and nurses;
- Doctors were unable to accurately diagnose patients due to the lack of the requisite machines;
- All critical patients were transferred to Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC);
- Approximately 10-12 patients were transferred weekly to GPHC and West Demerara Hospital; and

- 35 GMOs are attached to the Hospital and Health Centres and vacancies for 33 Nurses exist.

Committee's Recommendations

- All calls to the Material Management Unit should be documented in an effort to eliminate blame;
- All departments should have a Head of Department as per establishment for staff;
- The Hospital should implement Protocols;
- The REO should write the Ministry of Finance requesting an increase in the Region's imprest for the Hospitals;
- The entire facility should be rehabilitated and repainted;
- The rooms for the GMOs should be equipped with AC unit;
- All doctors should be adequately trained;
- The Region should solicit a motivational speaker to inspire the staff to always give their best;
- There should be approximately 25% increase in the staff complement with regard to Nurses and Midwives; and
- The Hospital should have Emergency Exits in each department.

36. The delegation in its closing remarks recognised the efforts of the staff at the Suddie Hospital and salutes their enthusiasm and resourcefulness and encouraged the staff to give of their best in spite of the challenges faced.

Visit to the Amerindian Hostel in Suddie

37. The delegation was received by Ms. Katijha Paton, Caretaker. The Chairperson of the Committee, Dr. Vindhya Persaud, introduced the Members of the Committee and explained the purpose of the visit by Committee. Thereafter, Ms. Paton informed the delegation that she was the only staff employed at the hostel for the last five (5) years. She stated that during her tenure, no one from the RDC Works Committee had visited the facility. She stated that the facility was equipped with 10 rooms and 14 beds and approximately 12-14 persons would occupy the rooms on a weekly basis.

38. The delegation was further informed that there were instances where approximately 50 persons would have occupied the facility; most of whom were pregnant. A Member enquired about the supply of food at the Hostel. Ms. Paton stated that the Ministry of Public Health provides meals for maternity patients, while other patients provide for themselves.

39. The Committee advised that the following measures be addressed:

- Access to potable water;
- Landfill and Drainage;
- Washroom facilities;
- Plumbing and electrical works; and
- Purchase of utensils, a cooking stove and a refrigerator

40. The REO stated that those issues were not brought to his attention. As a result, a Coordinator has been assigned to deal with such issues. He indicated that a stove will be purchased as soon as possible. He further related that there is a problem with Heads of Department not writing and submitting reports. He requested a list of all materials and supplies needed on a monthly basis.

General Observations

- The building was not properly maintained;
- Inferior construction works done on the washroom facilities;
- There were evidence of water leakage in the Caretaker's apartment;
- The mattresses were not suitable for use;
- There were no light bulbs or lighting in the upper flat of the building;
- The yard and its environs were poorly maintained;
- There was a bathroom made of zinc in the yard; and
- The electric fans were not working.

Committee's Recommendations

- The Hostel should have a budget to maintain the facility.

- There should be a Management Committee to manage the facility.
- The Hostel should hire another Caretaker and have them trained.
- The Hostel should procure light bulbs, mattresses, a washing machine, a washing sink, a stove, a refrigerator and cooking utensils.
- The Hostel should build a shed for lines to hang clothes and restore water access and washroom facilities urgently.
- The Caretaker should keep records in a ledger of all issues reported and what action would have been taken or not taken.
- There should be regular meetings between the REO and all RDC Programme Heads so issues can be raised and dealt with urgently.
- The REO should implement a policy that the Works Committee of the Region should make frequent visits to the facility and identify the challenges faced by the staff. Thereafter, a written report should be submitted to the relevant authority for action, if not, sanctions will be taken.
- There should be proper drainage and filling/concrete compound to avoid water lodging.
- All requests for food, equipment and repairs should be submitted to the relevant authorities and copied to the REO.

41. The Committee thanked Ms. Paton for her efforts and saluted her enthusiasm and resourcefulness.

Rehabilitation Department in Suddie

42. Ms. Ena Datson, the Rehabilitation Assistant informed the delegation that the Hospital Administration has a major problem in granting her time off to attend meetings. She also noted that there was a shortage of equipment, cupboards, washing sinks, gas stove and bottle, water dispenser, benches, fans and book cupboards. Ms Datson further stated that the Occupational Therapy room is not equipped with the relevant materials and equipment and the Speech room has no air conditioning unit.

43. The delegation thanked the staff and indicated that the issues would be brought to the attention of the relevant authority.

Visit to the Police Station in Suddie

44. The delegation was received by the Officer-in-charge, Sergeant Moore. The Chairperson of the Committee, Dr. Vindhya Persaud, introduced the Members of the Committee and explained the origin of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Social Services and its purpose. Sergeant Moore, thanked the Committee for the visit and thereafter the following discussions ensued on the following issues:-

Domestic Violence

45. During the interactions, the delegation enquired what occurs when women came to make domestic violence reports. Sgt. Moore stated that there was no specific room for domestic violence victims. However, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) or Operations Room were used to take the report. He further noted that there was no special unit to handle cases of domestic violence and child abuse; nevertheless the Anna Regina Police Station has such a unit.

46. The Committee enquired whether ranks were trained specifically to deal with those cases. Sgt. Moore responded in the negative and explained that during officers initial training they were exposed to deal with cases of such. He further explained that such cases are rare.

47. A Member enquired about temporary holdings for female and was informed that the Aurora Police Station was used for that purpose.

Sexual offences

48. Members were informed that Officers at Anna Regina were trained specifically to deal with sexual offences and in the event of such case the Officers will be informed to take the report.

Robbery

49. The Committee was told that the station has been equipped with sufficient police ranks/man power, as well as a car to respond swiftly to situations. It was also stated that there has been support/backup from Headquarters, Anna Regina. Sgt. Moore also informed the Committee that there have been only a few cases of robbery (armed) within the area, and most cases are break and enter/simple larceny.

River Accidents

50. The Committee was informed that river accidents mainly occur in the Pomeroon River and investigation would be conducted by Charity and other Stations.

Cells

51. The Committee was told that the station has two holding cells that could accommodate 12 persons. The cells house inmates who are detained for 72 hours only and family members would provide meals; in their absence, the Police would provide.

52. The Committee was also informed that Juveniles between the ages of 12-16 years old would be detained at Charity Police Station and those below the age of 12 years old are placed in the custody of their parents/guardians.

Suicide Hotline

53. The Committee was informed that Region No. 2 has the highest suicide rate within the country. The delegation enquired about the Suicide hotline numbers. Sgt. Moore told the Committee that officers are trained in that area during their stint at the Police Training School. He further noted that calls are not frequently made to the hotline numbers despite informing the community of those numbers.

Cop and Faith Network

54. Commander Steven Mansell informed the Committee that the Cop and Faith Network was launched in 2011. He stated that every station has a list of Cop and Faith (Religious leaders) that are active in the network and that at present Christian leaders are the only names on the list. He posited that the system is working well.

55. It was also reported that the drug abuse and alcohol programme which target schools is very active in the region. The Commander noted that mostly Grade 7 students were targeted to get the message out. He related that Station Sergeants are responsible for identifying the schools to be visited, and this is done once per week.

Barrack Quarters

56. The Committee observed that the mattresses and closets in the Barrack rooms need replacing, the roof and windows need repairs, there was no proper washroom facility or running water and the kitchen had no furnishings or running water.

Committee's Recommendations

- The Police should request new furniture, including chairs and a desk, for the Enquiry Area.
- Billboards depicting suicide should be created and erected around the Region and the hotline number placed on the television.

- The Station should have monthly community meetings to sensitise the public of the law and where victims could go to report cases of suicide, sexual offences, domestic violence and occupational health and safety.
- There should be continuous training for officers in areas of suicide, domestic violence and road safety.
- Police Officers should coordinate with the religious community to have a representative on the list of Cop and Faith.
- A trestle should be built to accommodate overhead water tanks in order to have access to running water in the Station.
- The Barrack Quarters should be refurbished to cater for modern living conditions.

57. The Committee thanked Commander Mansell, Sgt. Moore and other Officers for their efforts and commended them for their hard work.

National Insurance Scheme (NIS) Branch

58. The Committee visited the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) Branch in Anna Regina and was welcomed by Ms. Roxanne Hart, Office Manager and Ms. Diane Baxter, Public Relations Officer. Ms. Hart expressed appreciation for the visit and indicated that the visit should serve to influence improvement in services at the office.

59. Thereafter, the Chairperson of the Committee, Dr. Vindhya Persaud introduced the Members of the Committee and explained the origin of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Social Services and its purpose. Dr. Persaud stated that the Committee was there to gain insight into the functioning of the NIS in the Region with an aim to ensuring there is improvement in services rendered. The Chairperson further stated that the Committee was not there to criticize the staff's performance but to learn about the constraints and challenges they faced, in carrying out their duties. Hence, this would aid to inform the Committee's recommendations for improved services at the NIS in the region.

Briefing with Office Manager and Staff

60. Ms. Hart informed the Committee that the NIS Branch has a staff complement of four (4) staff - three acting and one temporary staff. She noted that there was a vacancy for a supervisory position which was not filled, despite it being advertised. Interviews were held. Ms. Hart told the delegation that the Branch is faced with a gamut of problems such as financial constraints, no vehicle for the Staff in the execution of their duties especially in the riverine areas. In addition, staff would have to use their personal vehicles to travel around the Region to conduct their duties. She further noted that the Office had requested for a vehicle but was told to use taxis in the interim. Ms Hart explained that there was an area vehicle but sometimes it was not available when requested.

61. Ms. Hart informed the delegation that a shed was budgeted for in 2015 and 2016, but it was not approved. She noted that the shed would have provided shelter for pensioners on pension days. She stated that the pensioners would arrive early on pension days and the Office would have provided tea. However, resources at the Office are limited and as such services are unable to be rendered to the pensioners. The Manager further informed the delegation that the compound floods whenever it rains.

62. The staff raised concerns of security for the staff as well as for the building. The delegation was informed that the Branch had been robbed previously; hence, there is a need for the cashier's cage to be properly secured with steel grills.

63. Ms. Hart informed the delegation that pensioners with vouchers valued more than \$100,000 are encouraged to go to the banks, unless for those who have to submit their life certificates every six months, in an effort to reduce cash transactions over certain limit at the Office.

64. The Committee enquired on whether there was a policy in place to deal with persons whose contributions could not be found, which would consequently reflect inadequate

contributions. Ms. Hart explained that persons would have to provide evidence that they had been working outside of Guyana, of which the matter is sent to the Appellate Tribunal. She also stated that the digitalisation of records was on-going and with regard to the contributions online, if the employer did not remit the contributions, NIS would not have it. However, if the employer does remit; it probably has a query. In addition the Manager explained that there were many cases where the employer submitted their forms and there were no NIS numbers for that ministry/agency/organisation. She also mentioned that delinquent employers would be brought before the courts for non-payment. Persons are required to use their own vehicles to conduct their duties; sometimes in rough terrain. They are not reimbursed for repairs or damages to personal vehicles.

Committee's Observations:

- The staff was compassionate towards the public;
- The building and compound were well kept;
- NIS as a whole need to be revamped;
- The Claims forms require space for the diagnosis; confidentiality should be promoted at NIS;
- The Survivor's Pension Fund is the second largest pension claimed from the Agency; and
- There was no Suggestion Box.

Committee's Recommendations

- All NIS Branches should place a suggestion box in a convenient location within the facility for the public to access.
- Penalties should be brought against employers who do not submit their employees contributions
- The Branch should acquire a vehicle to assist in the workload.
- Field Officers (Inspectors) and Managers should be given duty free concessions due to their job descriptions.
- A shed should be built to accommodate pensioners.
- All NIS Branches should be supplied with tea supplies for pensioners during pension week.

- The branch should write to the relevant authorities (REO/hospitals) to have the Government Medical Officers (GMOs) go at a specific time to provide Life certificates to pensioners.
- The shortage of staff should be addressed.
- The Branch should install grills for the windows on the lower flat and have the cashier area properly secured.
- The Branch should be given five new modern computers.
- There should be proper drainage and the compound should be sandfilled to avoid flooding
- The NIS drug list should be revised to include herbal medications
- Compensation should be given to additional categories of employees of NIS for duty free vehicles
- Vehicles should be provided for duties
- The NIS Law (Chapter 36:01) should be amended to better reflect outlying communities (for example Moruca and Orealla).

64. In concluding the delegation thanked Ms. Roxanne Hart and Staff for their efforts and salutes their enthusiasm.

Friday, 19th May, 2017:

Charity District Hospital

65. On Friday 19th May, 2017 the Committee visited the following institutions: Charity District Hospital, Charity Health Centre, Charity Secondary School and the Charity Dorm.

Tour

66. The delegation was given a guided tour by Mr. Omkar Persaud and Dr. Shazeda Basir, Assistant Hospital Administrators who informed the delegation that the Hospital has been under construction.

Accident and Emergency (A & E) Unit

67. The Committee was informed by Mr. Persaud that the newly built area that was identified for the Accident and Emergency (A & E) Unit was designed by the Regional

Health Officer and the Engineer attached to the region. He noted that the Hospital at present has eleven (11) beds and would be expecting an additional five (5) beds.

Committee's Recommendations

- The Administrator of the hospital should invite Doctor Bux who has several years of experience and is knowledgeable in Accident and Emergency (A & E) to assist in the setting up of the Unit.
- The Accident and Emergency Unit should have air condition units.
- The Hospital should change the louver windows to accommodate the AC units.
- The Hospital Administration should install oxygen, monitors, and suction on the walls for each bed.
- The Hospital should have adequate **lights** and lighting.
- The Committee advised Dr. Shazeda Basir that the hospital should also include a few cots for babies and the Assistant Administrator should pay a visit to the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) to have a firsthand look at the design and functions of the A & E Unit with the aim of making recommendations. The Committee further advised the Assistant Administrator to make contact with Major Craig for assistance in training staff in the area of Disaster Management.
- The Committee observed that the new building was very hot and advised the Hospital Administrator to install air conditioning units in the building.

Discussion with Ward Sister.

70. During the tour of the Hospital, the delegation met with the Ward Sister Ms. Dame Hercules who informed the delegation that the Hospital was short of staff. She stated that the Hospital has six (6) General Medical Officers (GMO) with no specialist doctor and was coping with the shortage of drugs for the past three (3) months. Ms. Hercules noted that the Charity Hospital catered for patients from Regions Nos. 1 and 2, hence, the need for a Pharmacist and a Laboratory Assistant to be on call since persons seeking medical attention came from far flung areas and sometimes had to return without medication or cannot benefit from lab test which could be costly in these circumstances. Ms. Hercules stated that the Charity District Hospital receives supply of drugs from the Suddie Hospital. In the event that the drugs were not available at Suddie Hospital then Charity Hospital would have a shortage.

She further stated that doctors and nurses would ask patients' relatives to purchase drugs that were not in stock at the Hospital

71. Ms. Hercules explained to the delegation that Suddie Hospital is the region's referral hospital and Charity Hospital would do referrals about three (3) times per day. She noted that most of the referrals are fractures and complicated pregnancies but due to the ongoing construction at the hospital, most patients have been referred to Suddie Hospital. Ms. Hercules told the Committee that the Hospital has one (1) Ambulance, which was used to transport patients who were usually accompanied by a nurse and in complicated cases, a doctor.

72. During the interaction, a member of the Committee enquired from Dr. Basir if she was interested in training and in what area. In response, Dr. Basir stated that she would like to specialize in Dermatology, and her colleagues were interested in Psychology and Pediatrics.

73. The delegation enquired about the existence of a theatre at the Hospital and was told by the Assistant Administrator that the theatre was dispersed and the equipment was sent to the Suddie Hospital. He further stated that he was informed by the Regional Health Officer (RHO) that the region only had one theatre team.

74. The Committee advised the Assistant Administrator to have a meeting with the RHO and team with a view of making space available so that the theatre's function could be returned to the Charity Hospital and arrange for the theatre team to work at the Charity Hospital once a week.

Committee's Recommendations

- The Hospital should have specialist doctors and nurses to aid in specialised areas.
- The Hospital should have an orthopedic doctor which would help to avoid referrals.
- The Hospital should have an Intensive Care Unit.
- The Hospital Administration should install suction next to the babies' beds
- The Hospital should have an electrocardiogram (ECG) machine and an incubator
- The theatre should be restored at the Charity Hospital

Dental Unit

75. The delegation was informed by Dentist Dr. Harripersaud that the dental room was under construction and basic extraction was conducted in another room. However, he noted that all complicated cases would be referred to Suddie Hospital. Dr. Harripersaud further stated that he was informed by the Suddie Hospital Administrator, Ms. Ambrose, that a dental chair and a sterilizer hand equipment were purchased for the department which would be handed over on completion of the dental room. The Committee enquired whether the Dentist or the Assistant Administrator had seen the items that were purchased but was told by the Assistant Administrator that he had only seen the sterilizer and equipment.

76. The Committee told the Assistant Administrator that they were informed by staff at the Suddie Hospital that no monies were spent on furniture and equipment and therefore it was uncertain if the dental chair was purchased. The Committee advised the Assistant Administrator to re-budget for the items that were not received even though they were budgeted for. The Committee further advised that the REO (ag), the RHO, the Suddie Hospital Administrator and the Charity Hospital Administrator should collaborate and do a needs assessment to rectify the situation with hospitals in Region No. 2.

Recommendations

- The Suddie and Charity Hospitals should have in-house personnel to serve in various departments/units (eg. stores, maintenance etc)
- Administrators should make follow-up checks and record all items sent by the RHO.

Maternity Ward

77. Ms. Hercules, Ward Sister, informed the Committee that the Maternity Ward was operating with a shortage of midwives to the extent that midwives were on call. She noted that the delivery room has two (2) beds and an air conditioning unit. The delegation was shown a newly built room that was identified as the delivery room. The Committee observed that the room had three (3) delivery beds, three (3) beds (cots) and was very hot with no air conditioning unit.

Committee's Recommendations

- The Hospital should have four (4) additional midwives attached to the Maternity Ward.
- Air conditioning units should be installed in the new delivery room before it becomes operational.

X-Ray Department

78. Mr. Yagesh Rabbylall, X-ray Technician, informed the Committee that all the equipment was in working condition but the department needs renovation. The Assistant Administrator immediately told the Committee that the entire hospital would be renovated in phases.

79. The Committee enquired whether the Hospital had a generator and was informed by the Assistant Administrator in the affirmative but stated that the generator was very old; hence there was need for frequent maintenance. Mr. Persaud explained that the generator did not have the capacity to generate the amount of electricity to power the hospital, especially when the x-ray machine was in use. He noted that the Suddie Hospital had the same problem and the REO had budgeted for a new generator but to date the situation remained the same. The Committee was also informed that the Hospital functions without a Handyman and the Porters performed the duties of Handymen.

80. The Committee advised the Hospital Administrator to purchase a portable x-ray machine which would be energy efficient. Automatic switch should be used whenever there were power outages from GPL.

Recommendations

- The Hospital Administration should purchase a portable generator as a backup.
- The Hospital Administration should recruit handymen and train them in basic skills.
- The Hospital should have trained maintenance technicians.

Laboratory Department

81. The Committee was informed by the Head of the Department, Ms. Raziefa Haniff, that the Lab has four (4) Technicians and one (1) Medical Technologist (the lab supervisor).

The Lab can only perform manual testing. She noted that the Lab has two (2) refrigerators but only one was in serviceable condition. Ms. Raziefa Haniff stated that the Lab is small and suggested that the Lab could be housed in the building that was donated for Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT), because it was only in use twice per month.

82. The Committee was told by Technicians that outreach areas conduct malaria smear which were sent to Charity Hospital for quality checks. However, they noted that the Acne Health Centre and Friendship Health Centre have microscopes but no personnel to carry out the functions. They further explained that the technician attached to Suddie Hospital retired and the Hospital was unable to offer microscopic testing. The lone Technician from the Charity Hospital was tasked with the responsibility of malaria, microscopic and quality control testing for the entire Region 2.

83. The Committee advised that the RHO and the REO should seek permission from the owner of the VCT building and move the Lab to that building since it is more spacious.

Committee's recommendations

- The Hospital Administration should purchase a portable biochemistry machine and three (3) microscopes to aid the Technicians in performing their duties.
- The Lab should have a blood bank refrigerator to store blood in the event of emergencies.
- The Region should have two (2) microscopes one at Suddie and the other at the Charity Hospital.

Pharmacy Department

84. The Committee interacted with the two (2) Assistant Pharmacists and was informed that the department consists of three (3) staff. The Committee was also informed that the region has two Pharmacists both reside at the Suddie Hospital.

85. The staff informed the delegation that there was a shortage of drugs; hence, patients were given a two week supply. However, if a patient lived in far-flung area, their location was taken into consideration and the patient would be given one (1) month supply. The staff noted that the Pharmacy usually ordered their monthly supply from Suddie Hospital. The

Committee enquired about patients who were suffering from chronic illnesses and was told by Dr. Basir that those patients report that they normally use home remedies (especially those in the riverine areas).

86. The Committee advised that the REO should grant release to one person annually to study Pharmacy which would benefit the region in the long term.

The delegation also received a list of drugs that were not available at the Hospital.

Recommendation

- The Region should grant release to one staff annually to study Pharmacy

Bond

87. The Assistant Pharmacist informed the Committee that the bond was without oral rehydration salt (ORS) for the past two weeks.

88. The Committee observed that the shelves hardly had any drugs and the supply could only last for two (2) weeks.

89. The Committee advised the REO (ag) that the Hospital should never be without oral rehydration salt since it aids in saving the lives of children.

Recommendation

90. The Region should purchase oral rehydration salt medication for the Hospital.

Charity Health Centre

91. The Committee was welcomed by Ms. Layne (supervisor) and staff. The Chairperson introduced members of the Committee and stated the purpose of the visit. She noted that the other members were engaged in other activities and two had returned to Georgetown.

92. Ms. Layne informed the Committee that the Centre was about three (3) years old but due to poor construction work, there were broken tiles on the floor. She stated that the Centre had no seating accommodation for patients and sometimes had three (3) clinics on the same day. She further explained that the Centre has two (2) refrigerators but only one was serviceable, hence, if it becomes malfunctioned at the weekend, the government could lose

millions of dollars. She informed the Committee that there was an outboard engine which the Centre had procured for the last two (2) years but the Centre did not have a boat.

93. The Committee observed that the exit door was nailed up and flammable items were not properly stocked in the room.

94. The Committee advised the REO (ag) and the Assistant Administrator to acquire a boat so that the engine could be used and the exit-door should be repaired urgently.

Committee's recommendations

- The Centre should ensure all flammable items be packed in a safe place.
- The Administration should repair the refrigerator and service same monthly.
- The Centre should acquire a boat to facilitate the use of the engine.
- The floor of the Center should be rehabilitated

Vaccination Room

95. The Committee was informed by Ms. Natasha Layne that the Centre has its full quota of vaccines except for yellow fever. However, she informed that the yellow fever vaccines for babies were available.

Committee's recommendations

- Yellow fever vaccines for adult should be purchased urgently.

Audiology Room

96. The Audiologist, Ms. Armatie Ramatohal, attached to the health centre informed the Committee that the Audiology room was very noisy. She also stated that audiology was performed for both children and adults.

97. The Committee advised the Assistant Administrator to change the windows of the room to accommodate an air conditioning unit and the Hospital administration should recommend that a shed with seating capacity should be built to accommodate patients.

The Committee applauded the Audiologist and encouraged her to keep up the good work.

Committee's recommendations

- All audiology rooms should be sound proof, air conditioned and equipped with a computer
- The Hospital should have a Diagnostic Audiometer.
- The ventilation and changing of windows of the room should be addressed
- A shed with seating capacity should be built

98. The Assistant Administrator and staff thanked the Committee for the visit.

Charity Secondary School

99. The delegation was warmly received by the Headteacher and some of the grade seven students of the school. Thereafter, the Chairperson introduced members of the Committee and informed the students and teachers of the purpose of visit. The Chairperson said that the Committee was there to have firsthand information on how the school was functioning and what the Committee could recommend in order to improve the conditions at the school.

A member of the Committee informed students that an old student of the school, Ms. Nichola Melville has a master's degree in nursing and is a lecturer at the University of Guyana. She noted that good students came from Charity Secondary and wished them well in their examinations.

Visit to the Grade 7 Classrooms

100. The delegation visited several classrooms and interacted with students. The Chairperson encouraged students to read ahead and study to perform well. Members of the Committee raised concerns about the danger of the use of alcohol and illicit drugs by school children which could have adverse effect on their wellbeing. The school children were warned to stay away from such practice.

101. The Headteacher informed the Committee that a businessman in the community was selling alcohol to school children in uniforms and even though the matter was reported to the relevant authorities, to date no action was taken.

102. The Committee advised students to report any form of abuse to the relevant authorities or their teachers. The Headteacher was encouraged to have parents involved in tree planting to beautify the school environs.

The Committee extended an invitation to students and teachers to visit the Parliament Office.

Meeting with Teachers of the School

103. The Headteacher informed the Committee that the school has the capacity for six hundred (600) students and houses seven hundred and eighty (780) students; hence, there was need for a bigger school. She further explained that whenever it rained heavily, it was difficult to walk in the school yard, especially at the back, since, there was no drainage. She emphasised the need for staff replacement whenever a teacher proceeds on leave. She further stated that maintenance was a major issue at the school especially in areas of electrical and plumbing.

104. The teachers informed the Committee that there was no privacy when using the washroom since it was located in the Headteacher's office. They further explained that the classrooms have been cramped, which has resulted in teachers having to raise their voice which affect students in nearby class.

105. The Committee was further informed by teachers that grants were given to students of the Home Economics Class to write the Secondary School Certificate Programme (SSCP) practical examinations and not students of the Home Economics Class of the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC). They were of the view that permission should be granted to use the grant for both exams. They further stated that the number of students prepared to write SSCP were thirty-five (35) in number, compare to those who were preparing to write the CSEC (5).

106. The teachers also mentioned that children living in far-flung areas arrived early in the mornings and sometimes had nothing to eat. They suggested that the school be provided with one of the B's (breakfasts) initiatives by His Excellency, President Granger.

107. The Committee was also informed by the Headteacher that students do not attend school regularly and that some children live alone. She stated that these cases were reported to the police. The Welfare Officer informed the Committee that there were seventy-nine (79)

schools with two (2) Welfare Officers and it was challenging to visit some areas (riverine). She also noted that the region has no home for children who were rescued from abuse.

108. The teachers informed the Committee that for the past two (2) terms, they did not receive any school supplies and would have to put their hands in their pockets to buy same. They also mentioned that it was very costly during the period of examination to photocopy past examination papers for students since the school does not have a photocopier machine. However, the Welfare Officer noted that the department of the Ministry of Education in the region has a digital duplicating machine (risograph) and all schools are allowed to use the machine to print copies of past examinations papers.

109. The Teachers also reported that for the past year they did not receive any uniform allowance and were promised duty-free concessions to purchase vehicles.

110. The Committee advised the subject teacher of Home-Economics to write the Head Mistress (HM) requesting that she writes the Regional Education Officer seeking permission to use the grant for both programmes. The Committee also advised the Welfare Officer that Child Protection Agency (CPA) should make providence for children and take them to other areas, if the need arises.

One of the teachers delivered the vote of thanks.

Committee's Recommendations

- The Information Technology (IT) room should have an air conditioning unit.
- The school should have an additional thirty to thirty-five (30-35) new computers and stabilizers.
- All schools should have the services of a Counsellor.
- All schools should benefit from the government's feeding programme.
- The Welfare Officers should lobby for the protection of abused children.
- The Regional Education Officer should have a schedule for cleaning of schools every month (e.g septic tank, weeding, empty bins etc).

- The school should have in-house staff (secretary, typist and accounts clerk) so that teachers can concentrate on their jobs. (teaching).
- The school should have proper drainage system.
- The school should have more teachers.
- The police should investigate reports of persons selling drugs and alcohol to schoolchildren.
- A bus should be assigned to the school for transporting students.
- The school should have separate staff room and washroom facilities for teachers.
- The school should have a parking lot for teachers' vehicle.
- Upgrade of classrooms and provision of essential supplies
- The creation of space to house an additional one hundred and eighty (180) students.

The Dormitory

111. The dormitory is managed by the Headteacher and houses one hundred and two (102) students at present but has a capacity for two hundred (200) children, most of whom are from the Pomeroun. The Headteacher introduced the Members to two (2) Housemothers who took care of the students and a Guidance and Counselling Officer from the UNICEF programme Mr. Reni. She noted that the Officer will be attached to the dormitory for six weeks. Mr. Reni informed Members that he had conducted a needs assessment with students, teachers, and parents and assured the Committee that he would be working assiduously to assist the children. However, the Head Teacher echoed that six (6) weeks was not enough to have a real impact of the needs assessment.

112. The Headteacher further informed the Committee that the children have no locker to store their personal belongings (bags).

113. The Committee observed that the Dormitory had missing windows, cupboard doors were hanging and chairs were broken. The kitchen utensils were under a step exposed and some mattresses needed to be replaced. There were two (2) refrigerators; only one was in serviceable condition. In addition, four (4) washing machines were unserviceable, electrical wires were exposed, and there was no drainage. There was also garbage thrown to the back of the yard.

114. The Committee advised the Technology Teacher that he should use the work (repairs) done by students as a classroom project and give the students grades for it. The Committee further advised the Headteacher to write the relevant authorities about the short tenure of Mr. Reni and the importance of the programme for the children. The REO was asked to give Mr. Reni his full support. The Committee further advised the Headteacher to burn the garbage and make the dorm more livable (children must have a home environment).

115. Three (3) staff Members raised concern about their retirement benefits; they informed the Committee that they were working from 2003 to present as temporary staff. They also explained that they had applied for the permanent positions but was never given the approval and that they are of retirement age and were concerned about their benefits.

116. The Committee pleaded with the REO (ag) to consider the matter urgently and assist the employees.

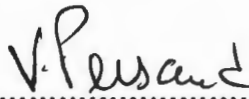
Recommendations

- The Dormitory should have a bedroom and living room space.
- Missing windows should be replaced immediately. (plastic was used instead)
- The Dormitory should seek donation to replace the old mattresses.
- The Dormitory should have a television in the living area.
- The Housemothers should have their own self-contained quarters.
- The kitchen should be renovated with proper equipment.
- The school should build cupboards for storage of personal belongings.
- The school should employ a Plumber to rehabilitate the plumbing at the building.
- The kitchen should have improved ventilation.
- The Region should employ personnel to do maintenance works
- All staff should have lockers to secure their personal belonging.
- There is need for a new refrigerator.

APPROVAL FOR TRANSMITTAL

117. This Seventh Special Report on the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Social Services visit to Region No. 2., Pomeroun - Supernaam, was approved for transmittal to the National Assembly at the 13th statutory meeting which was held on Friday, 26th January, 2018.

118. The Committee accordingly submits its Seventh Special Report to the National Assembly.



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Dr. Vindhya V. Persaud, M.S., M.P.
Chairperson