



Rights of the
Child Commission

ANNUAL REPORT
JANUARY - DECEMBER
2016

LIST OF ACRONYMNS

AA	-	Administrative Assistant
ERC	-	Ethnic Relations Commission
IO	-	Investigative Officer
IPC	-	Indigenous Peoples' Commission
MHSS	-	Ministry of Human Services and Social Security
RCC	-	Rights of the Child Commission
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund
UN	-	United Nations
W&GEC	-	Women & Gender Equality Commission

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INTRODUCTION

Chairperson's Remarks

The year 2016 has been a very successful year for the RCC. This is so as the year has afforded the Commission the opportunity to sustain its exhaustive work programme pursuant to the materialization of the spirit and intendment of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Such work programme has entailed a close collaboration with all State and Non State actors and stakeholders whose mandate include promoting, enlivening and safeguarding the rights and interests of Guyana's children.

Of particular noteworthiness in this regard would be the commencement of the RCC's engagement of the Guyana Police Force. This engagement contemplates a lasting partnership between the RCC and the GPF aimed at strengthening the work of the police vis-a-vis the protection of Guyana's children. This engagement has seen much fruition on 2016.

Also of noteworthiness in 2016 has been the consolidation and expansion of the RCC's work in hinterland communities. This engagement has seen the establishment of working relationships with all stakeholders of such communities. The forging of these partnerships is premised on the philosophical conviction that all the children of Guyana are entitled to their inalienable human rights.

The RCC in 2016 has also sought to sustain its engagement with the Ministry of Education pursuant to ensuring that the quality of education offered to the Guyanese child is in keeping with the necessary standards capable of empowering the moulding of a knowledge economy and society.

I call on all Guyanese to continue to work in unison with the Commissioners and staff of the Rights of the Child Commission towards the protection, education and empowerment of Guyana's children.

Aleema Nasir

Chairperson

Rights of the Child Commission

following persons served on the Rights of the Child Commission

Representatives of Religion



Aleema Nasir– Chairperson, RCC

Ms. Nasir is a formally qualified and trained counselor and social worker of many years' experience. She is the current President of the women's Organisation of the Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana (C.I.O.G.), (NACOSA) and a member of the Central Executive of the Central Islamic organization (CIOG). She serves as the main counselor for CIOG.

(Rev) Colleen Clarke-Anthony, Deputy Superintendent and Pastor of the Guyana Missionary Baptist Church, currently employed as Senior Probation and Social Services Officer at the Ministry of Labour Human Services and Social Security, License Marriage Officer.

Rev Clarke-Anthony is a graduate of the Wesleyan Bible College (Bachelors Degree in Christian Ministry), graduate of the University of Guyana (B.Sc.SocialWork)



Sarojanie Rambaran – Member

Mrs. Rambaran represents the Hindu religion. She is a counselor and educator of many years' experience. She is also a member of the Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sabha and has served for many



Colleen Anthony – Member

years as a member of Mahela Mandele, its women's arm.

Representatives of women



Rosemary Benjamin-Noble – Deputy Chairperson

Mrs. Benjamin – Noble is a West – Indian trained Attorney – at – Law and has worked for many years on women's and children's issues primarily through her membership of the Guyana Association of Women Lawyers and association with other women's organisations. She holds a Master's Degree in International Education. She also served several years ago as the co – ordinator of the Children's Bills Project (in collaboration with MLHSS) which resulted in five new pieces of children's legislation.



Sandra Hooper – Member

Mrs. Hooper is a formally qualified social worker of over forty years' experience. She worked as a Government Youth Officer for sixteen years, followed by seventeen years as Director of the Municipal Daycare Service. She has held principal positions in various social organizations and in the Anglican community serves on the Diocesan Council and chairs the Family Life Commission. Mrs. Hooper was also a member for several years of the precursor to the RCC i.e. the National Commission on the Rights of the Child - Presidential commission (now defunct).

Representatives of service



Yvonne Fox - Member

Mrs. Fox is a trained educator, having been a teacher and later principal for many years. A graduate of the George Meany Labour College, USA, Mrs. Fox also has given yeoman service representing the Guyana Teacher's Union (GTU) including as President of its women's arm. Throughout the years Mrs. Fox served as Co – ordinator of the Teachers upgrading classes in the Georgetown District for years, and is a former Vice – Chairperson of the Legal Aid Clinic of Guyana. She is a member of the Education sub – committee of the Rights of the Child Commission and was

honored by the Women and Gender Equality Commission in August, 2011.

Ms. Yvonne Fox received the Guyana Teacher's Union "Jean Persico Award" in 1990 and the "Presidential Award" in 1992.



Kaloutie (Pamela)Nauth – Member

Ms. Nauth is a professional social worker and court – appointed mediator. She is the current President of the Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association (GRPA) and Director of Help and Shelter Inc.

Pamela Nauth is a Professional Social Worker /Counsellor and Consultant.

Ms. Nauth is one of the founding members of the Mediation Institute of Guyana and served in the capacity as Company Secretary and Vice – President for the past three terms.

Commissioner of the National Commission of the Family and Past Secretary of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Advisory Board.

Rich in her experience she has been devoting her time in promoting the development and capacity

Representatives of youth



Marissa Massiah– member

Ms. Massiah is an undergraduate in International Relations, and is currently reading for a Masters Degree in Project Management. She is a certified Community Facilitator. Her work experience includes servicing as Volunteer Relations Co – ordinator with Habitat for Humanity in Guyana (Poverty Housing Reduction).

Marissa Massiah has worked and volunteered with various youth groups and initiatives nationally and regionally.



Suelle Findlay – Williams – Member

Suelle Findlay-Williams is the Youth Representative on the Rights of the Child Commission. She enjoys working with young people and believes that every child and youth deserves to be loved, respected and accepted. At every opportunity, Mrs. Williams encourages young people to adopt principles that will help them to live a pure, loving and industrious life. Suelle Williams holds a Bachelors of Science Degree in Public Communication from the University of Guyana and is currently reading for a Master Degree in Public Administration. She has also had training in Cognitive Behavioural Intervention for Trauma in Schools, Suicide Prevention, and School Health Programmes.

Representatives of Human services



Kwame McCoy – Member

Mr. McCoy is one of two nominated representatives of the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security. He is formally trained in public communications and has served in several capacities related to public relations within the state and government structure within the past fifteen years.

Representatives of other (related) interests



Hyacinth (Cynthia) Massay - Member

Ms Massay has worked in the area of disability for almost four decades and as former Director of Rehabilitation Services in the Ministry of Health was responsible for the development of Guyana's first National Policy for Persons with Disability which was laid in Parliament in 1997.

She is a member of the Board of the Step by Step model school for children with autism and the board of the recently formed Guyana Epilepsy Foundation

Ex – officio Commissioners



Nicole Cole – Rep. of the Women & Gender Equality Commission (WG&EC)

I am a graduate of the University of Guyana-Class of 2007 (BSc Credit) I am a clinically trained Social Work Practitioner who is officially gazetted; Ms. Cole is currently enrolled @ Stanford University completing a Course in International Women's Health and Human Rights, she is also a student of the Confucius Institute-University of Guyana and the Venezuelan Institute of Culture and Cooperation.



Marco De Souza – Rep. of the Indigenous Peoples' Commission (IPA)

Mr. DeSouza is an active leader and counselor in the Moruca community. He has served for several years as toshau (leader) of the Moruca Amerindian Village Council.



Mr. Amarnauth Panday BA,MA

Chief Executive Officer/Secretary

Amarnauth Panday, CEO of the Rights of the Child Commission, has a Bachelors Degree in History and English from the University of Guyana, a Masters Degree in Human Resource Management from the University of the West Indies and has also served in the Guyana Defence Force.

UNICEF Conference on the Role of Business in safeguarding Child Rights

In the first quarter of 2016, the RCC partnered with the United Nations Child's Fund UNICEF in the hosting of a conference examining the role of the Business Community in safeguarding children rights as enshrined in the CRC.

This conference paid particular attention to the role of the extractive sector in establishing an industrial culture marked by the requisite social responsibility that includes the best interest of Guyana's children.

Some of the important observations of this Conference included inter alia:

1. The socio economic condition of many hinterland communities rendered children and youth vulnerable to premature entrapment in the mining sector;
2. Much more attention needs to be paid to education in these communities and;
3. There is the need for a much more concerted and collaborative approach to dealing with this issue.

Leadership oriented workshop at the University of Guyana Berbice Campus

In the first quarter of 2016, the RCC conducted a Leadership and Child Rights Workshop with the UA or Academic staffers of the University of Guyana Berbice Campus focusing on the role of the University in providing leadership for child rights in Region 6.

Such engagement also marked the commencement of a relationship with the University intended to manifest in other areas relating to the rights and interests of Guyana's children.

The objective is a sustained engagement with the University to enhance and further build on the partnership. A youth empowerment workshop was imminent with the students of the campus also on the theme of leadership for Child Rights.

Launch of the JC Chandisingh Secondary Book Club

The RCC on January 21 2016 facilitated and supported the launch of the JC Chandisingh Secondary School's book club. The initiative is part of a menu of measures being promoted in the schools of region 3 and 6 intended to activate and enliven an education system that has for some time lacked inspiration.

Moreover, such initiatives, are significant corollaries to the capacity building training conducted with the teachers, as well as, the leadership building engagement with the students.

The book club launch featured a motivational address and readings with the Minister of Natural Resources, the Hon Raphael Trotman. In the address and readings, the Minister, related to the children, some aspects of his early lifestyle that could be deemed indisciplined and indifferent to study and cited the impact of reading in stimulating and harnessing change as part of his personal development. Such messaging is intended to inspire and bequeath to Guyana's children an appreciation of the salience of reading.

Community Development Workshop in Yarakita, Region 1.

The RCC in the first quarter of 2016, conducted a community development workshop in Yarakita, Region 1. Yarakita, located in the Mabaruma sub region of the Barima Waini administrative region, had been the subject of a formal complaint to the investigative department of the Commission.

The journey to Yarakita was thus intended to 1. ascertain the veracity of the complaint, 2. brief the community of the role and function of the Commission

along with its investigative purview and 3. share with the village, ideas and concepts, relevant to the goals of community development and empowerment.

In this workshop, villagers for the first time, would have been exposed to such concepts as the CRC, other paradigms of human rights, as well as , theories and models of community leadership and development.

The workshop/meeting was conducted with the village which included the participation of the teachers, medical personnel, police, village council and Toshao. The villagers proved very receptive to the message of the Commission. Important next steps include the consolidation of the relationship with the village and also to seek to engage adjacent communities in the sub region.

Youth Parliament held by the Parliament Office with RCC support.

In the first quarter of 2016, the RCC partnered with the Parliament Office to conduct the second Youth Parliament in observance of Commonwealth Day.

Several facets of the Youth Parliament which were specific contributions and interventions of the RCC significantly augmented the inclusiveness and general quality of the initiative. Such included:

1. The Participation of the NOC.
2. The Participation of the Harold B. Davis Special School attached to the Ptolemy Reid Rehab Centre.
3. The Procurement of books on leadership as gifts to the youth parliamentarians effected in collaboration with the Office of Prime Minister.

The role of the RCC has been instrumental in the training of the youth parliamentarians in the areas of the CRC, leadership, youth policy and the history of the Commonwealth.

Workshops at Crane & Patentia Primary Schools, Region 3.

The RCC, in the second quarter of 2016, conducted capacity building workshops with the teachers of the Crane and Patentia Primary Schools.

These engagements are products of a specific accord brokered with the Ministry of Education that allows the Commission to specifically engage the education system in regions 3 and 6 advancing the spirit and intent of the CRC.

Engagements at the Sophia Juvenile Holding Centre.

The RCC, in 2016, sustained its engagement with the children resident at the Sophia Juvenile Holding Centre. This engagement took the form of regular personal development and leadership sessions with the children.

This engagement commenced in 2015 with the Commission seeking to engage the Centre with a view of articulating and advancing the best interests of the children who would be resident there.

Review of meeting with first lady

In the first quarter of 2016, the Commissioners met with the First Lady Mrs. Sandra Granger. Commissioners afterwards indicated that they thought the meeting went very well and that the first lady appeared committed to assisting with advancing the cause of the RCC.

The First lady, at that meeting, did commit to assist the Commission with its work in the interest of Guyana's children.

Work of Investigative Sub Committee

In the second quarter of 2016, the Investigative sub committee of the Commission visited the below listed children's Homes in the exercise and discharge of its monitoring role and function. Moreover, the RCC has established a working relationship with the Child Care and Protection Agency aimed at ensuring diagnosed breaches at respective Homes are reported and remedied promptly.

1. Drop in Centre for Street Children
2. Joshua Children's Centre
3. Hope Children's Centre
4. Mahaica Children's Home

Workshop and Engagement at the Bartica Secondary School, Region 7.

In second quarter of 2016, the RCC conducted a youth empowerment and capacity building workshop with the students of the Bartica Secondary School, Region 7.

This workshop was conducted at the invitation and entreaty of Minister Raphael Trotman who in a previous engagement in the Community identified the necessity for such engagement.

The RCC also met with Regional Educational Officer and senior teachers of the school. At this meeting, a number of areas of concern were identified. Such include, inter alia:

1. The absence of sufficient parental care and supervision as parents are invariably involved in mining and other activities which require their absence from the homes
2. child poverty
3. The need for additional resources for the dorms
4. The need for guidance counsellors in the schools
5. The need for additional education resources for the Bartica Secondary School and other schools of the region.

Art Expression and Capacity Building Workshops at the St. Ignatius Secondary School, Region 9.

During the secondary quarter of 2016, The RCC conducted an Art expression workshop with the students of the St. Ignatius Secondary School, Region 9. Such art expression initiative was intended to empower the children of Guyana with the skills and capacity to express themselves in alternative avenues. The initiative is premised, fundamentally, on article 12 and other participation oriented articles of the CRC.

Such Art Expression initiative is expected to culminate in a national exhibition of art produced by the children of Guyana representative of each administrative region.

During this engagement, the RCC also conducted a capacity building workshop with the teachers of the school. The workshop was a manifestation of one of the regular interventions by the Commission, emphasizing the salience of professionalism and establishing and adhering to the best interests of the child. The teaching staff did prove very receptive and the discussion engendered constituted a deep examination of education issues in hinterland communities, in this case, central, northern and southern Rupununi.

Also on this engagement, the RCC also met with the head teacher of the St. Ignatius Secondary School along with the Deputy Mayor and Town Clerk of the Lethem Municipality.

The discussion yielded the following diagnosis and partial prognosis:

1. The prevalence of poverty in Lethem, as a component of central Rupununi, is still widespread.

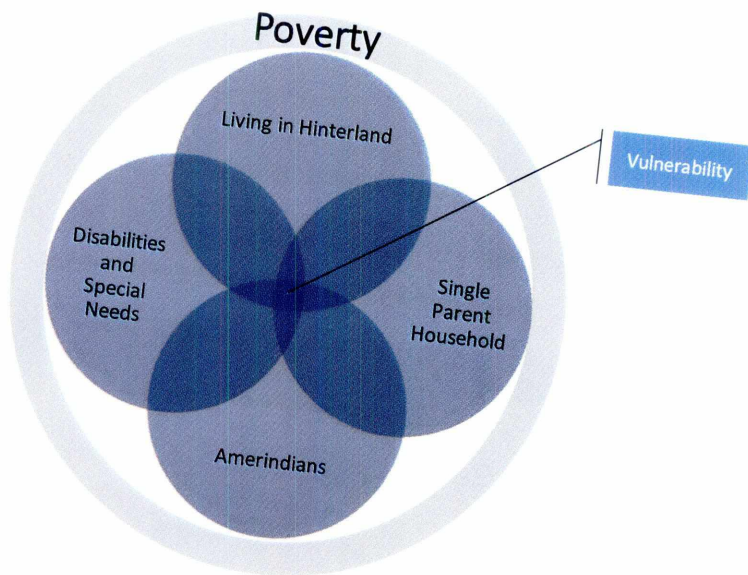
2. There is the need for more youth empowerment initiatives and infrastructure in Lethem.
3. There is an urgent need to address indigenous issues in Central Rupununi.
4. There is the need for a half way house facility that would constitute a safe space for children who have been abused in one way or another.

Launch of the Sitan into the condition of women and children in Guyana.

During the second quarter of 2016, the RCC partnered with the UNICEF to launch the Situation Analysis into the condition of women and children conducted by UNICEF, through the Ministry of Social Protection. There were two manifestations of the launching: 1. with the children oriented agencies, institutions and other stakeholders who had participated and presented evidence to the consultant Mr. Marcio Carvalho, and 2. with Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and other Heads of Agencies and Commissions.

The CEO of the RCC had been a member of the steering committee overseeing the work of the consultant conducting the sitan and had enabled the consultant to engage a wide cross section of stakeholders, inclusive of the commissioners of the RCC, in conducting the requisite research.

An important diagnosis of the sitan is its establishment of categories of vulnerable Guyanese children. See diagram below. Such conclusion vindicates the recent work of the Commission in hinterland communities and with such institutions as the Ptolemy Reid Rehab Centre, the Red Cross Convalescent Home and other children's Homes in Regions 4 and 6, the NOC and Sophia Holding Centre.



Source: 2016 Guyana Situation Analysis of Children and Women.

12. Workshop with the doctors and nurses of the New Amsterdam Public Hospital

In the second quarter of 2016, the RCC conducted a capacity building engagement with the doctors and nurses of the New Amsterdam Public Hospital, Region 6. This engagement is a feature of the RCC's partnership with the Ministry of Health pursuant to the establishment and enlivening of Article 24 of the CRC which enshrines the right of the child to the best health care possible.

The findings of these engagements with Guyana's health sector will be shared with the hierarchy of the Ministry of Health as the discussions engendered provided a menu of tangible initiatives that could be effected to improve and consolidate the delivery of quality health care to Guyana's children.

13. Meeting with Minister Valerie Garrido Lowe.

In the second quarter of 2016, the RCC met with Junior Minister of Indigenous Peoples Affairs, Ms. Valerie Garrido Lowe, to discuss, principally, the RCC's participation in the National Toshaos Conference which was slated for July of 2016. The RCC, at that meeting, had conveyed to the Minister that a significant component of the RCC's work programme entailed engaging directly the many Amerindian villages spread across all ten administrative regions of Guyana.

The Commission, moreover, at that meeting, expressed the view that the engagement with the National Toshaos Council was critical to establishing that vital channel of communication with the respective villages and Toshaos.

The Minister proved very receptive to such entreaty and committed to identifying a number of technical officers, within the Ministry, who would work closely with the RCC to facilitate this project.

14. Engagement at Anna Regina Secondary School and meeting with the Regional Chairman of Region 2

In the second quarter of 2016, the RCC conducted a youth empowerment session with the students of the Anna Regina Secondary School. This session was one of the regular engagements with the children of Guyana aimed at the education and empowerment of Guyana's children and youth.

On this engagement in Region 2, the RCC also met and deliberated with Chairman of the RDC Mr. Devanand Ramdatt.

A summation of the points discussed included, inter alia:

Possible Areas for RCC Support

1. Development of a Strategic Economic Plan for the Region.
2. Visits to the different communities to identify their problems.
3. Sensitisation/training sessions within the nine Amerindian communities.
4. Sensitisation/training sessions for the Police.

Child Rights and Independence workshop

The RCC in May, 2016 conducted its inaugural Child Rights and Independence Workshop in observance of the 50th anniversary of Guyana's independence. This workshop saw the attendance and participation of ten Georgetown Secondary schools.

The workshop included an examination of the history of Guyana's independence struggle linked to a theme of human and child rights.

The deliberations produced a comprehensive diagnosis of the legacies of colonialism with a prognosis that if Guyana is to truly achieve meaningful independence, she will have to find meaningful and lasting solutions to the legacies of colonialism.

Review of Community Engagement in Kabakaburie, Region 2.

The RCC, in the second quarter of 2016, conducted its regular Community Building Workshop in the Amerindian Community of Kabakaburie, Region 2. The Kabakaburi engagement represented the second of the nine indigenous communities in region 2 engaged.

17. Engagement with the Commissioner of Police & with Assistant Commissioner & Force Training Officer, Mr. Paul Williams.

In the second quarter of 2016, the RCC engaged the Guyana Police Force pursuant to the strengthening of the professional culture of the Police vis- a- vis the protection and empowerment of Guyana's children. This engagement yielded the following results:

Important Decisions.

1. Training will be provided to constables, supervisors, and officers at a common forum at a later date. This will be done at the Police officer training centre. Such training will commence with the hinterland Police who will be brought to Georgetown for training
2. Training will also be provided for Police prosecutors at a later date. To become a prosecutor, these persons undergo a 6-8 weeks training course in collaboration with the DPP Chamber. They can then go on to do a one year course at the University of Guyana which is done in collaboration with the DPP Chamber.
3. There will be ongoing follow up and feedback on the persons who undergo the RCC training – in order to gauge whether they are applying the knowledge gained to their work situations

Objectives

1. To orient and train Police officers and ranks with the message and methodology of the UNCRC -underscoring the salience of the best interest of the child
2. Helping the Police to establish a firm understanding of their role in adhering to the best interest of the child
3. Establish and sustain a viable channel of communication with the Police in the respective Regions and Divisions. Such channel of communication with the station sergeants in every Division will aid the investigative arm of the Commission in better monitoring complaints and other cases relating to the protection rights of children in the respective Divisions
4. Connecting other vital community stakeholders with the Police and establishing a working relationship and channel of communication between such partners

1st Public Consultation on the draft Juvenile Justice Bill.

In the second quarter of 2016, the RCC participated in the first public consultation on the Draft Juvenile Justice Bill held in Georgetown on April 27, 2016. Several commissioners, inclusive of the Deputy Chairperson, and the IO, also attended and participated in the deliberations.

The deliberations involved a feature presentation by the Minister of Public Security, the Hon Khemraj Ramjattan, and a presentation by the consultants Ms Emily Dodson and Mrs. Simone Morris Ramlall on the anatomy of the Draft Bill.

The Juvenile Justice Bill is intended to review and revise several features in the dispensation of juvenile justice in Guyana with a view to facilitate the prevalence of a judicial framework benevolent to the rights and interests of Guyana's children.

Engagement with the NTC

In the last quarter of 2016, the RCC engaged the Toshaos of Guyana at a special workshop included in their National Toshaos Conference meeting.

Minister Garrido Lowe was very instrumental in the materialization of this workshop as she saw its relevance to the capacity building of indigenous communities vis –a –vis the protection, education and empowerment of children.

The discussions engendered with the Toshaos constituted an invaluable and significant briefing of the RCC and other relevant stakeholders, inclusive of the Ministry, on the prevalence of health and other issues in Amerindian communities.

Engagement in Paramakatoi

In the last quarter of 2016, the RCC conducted its regular community Community Development Session in Paramakatoi, Region 8.

This engagement represented the continuous thrust of the Commission to better safeguard the rights of Guyana's indigenous children.

Reports and Recommendations (Schools)

Crane Primary

Recommendations relating to the abolition of childhood poverty

Component 1: (material poverty) A number of children from under-privileged backgrounds come to school without a snack. The government should provide milk and biscuits to all children attending the school and not only those from selected grades. The community should host more feeding programmes for these students – the church provides a meal twice per month and the children look forward to these. Other churches, businesses, and individuals should provide breakfast to these children – many of them come to school hungry and cannot concentrate on their school work. In the case of under-privileged children, food hampers should be given to them to assist in their preparation of lunch boxes for their children.

Component 2: (Opportunities for Human Development) The children in the community need to have more recreational activities – they need a recreation centre. With regard to health, the community needs potable water – those who can afford to, buy water.

Component 3: (Family and Community Stability)The question is what is missing within the family structure that causes a child to come to school without proper shoes, clothes, and food? There should be persons within the community who could target parents who need to be educated on how to care for and protect their children. Some parents neglect their children while they glamorize themselves with the latest hairdo and outfits. Organizations and community members should contribute to the survival of needy children - teachers can assist in identifying these students.

Component 4: (Partnership rights) There need to be sports clubs within the West Coast area – there are grounds but no actual facilities. The Girl Guides Association exists within the community, however parents are not interested in their children joining.

Patentia Primary School

Recommendations relating to the abolition of childhood poverty

Component 1:

- Hot meals should be re-introduced into schools to deal with situations of hunger. Persons within the community who are better off, should also contribute to the well-being of the children. The parent-teacher association could also assist in providing nutritional support for the students

Component 2:

- There are no recreational facilities within the community – children copy what their parents do e.g. drink, smoke. The children are very talented and they need an avenue/facilities to hone these skills

Component 3:

- Many of the children within the community live with their grandparents. These caregivers need assistance from members of the community in partnering with them to provide support for the children
- The RCC should conduct home visits and also host forums for parents to sensitize them regarding the needs of their children
- The RCC or relevant authorities should lobby with employers to release parents at least once a term to attend parent-teacher sessions

Component 4:

- A Social Worker is needed in the school to follow up on cases of child abuse. Children may be more open to speaking with the Social Worker rather than their parents or teachers
- The school once had a “Tell box” in which children dropped anonymous messages on issues that affected them. However when follow up was done with the parents, they took great offence at being approached
- Follow up on reported cases of abuse should be accelerated – it takes too long

(Indigenous Communities) Engagement in Waramadong, Region 7.

In the second quarter of 2016, the RCC conducted a capacity building workshop in Waramadong, Upper Mazaruni, Region 7. The following are significant results of the deliberations:

1. *Adequate livelihood:*

- a. Subsistence farming, mining, logging, fishing, and hunting are the main sources of livelihood in Waramadong. The Ministry of Agriculture should assist farmers in finding markets for their produce. Some go to Kamarang to sell their produce but this does not provide enough of a market. Of concern is that the food items for the dorm of the Waramadong secondary school are sent from Georgetown.
- b. The residents surrendered their guns because of the recent amnesty call. However they need these to protect their farms from wild animals and the application process for a new weapon takes a long time.
- c. The Acoushi ants present a major challenge – they continue to destroy the farms.

2. *Human development:*

- a. With regard to education:
 - i. The level of education is not the same as that provided on the coast - even though students are expected to write the same exams. For example, some of the exam questions pertain to aspects of Georgetown, a place that some of the students have never visited.
 - ii. The schools are not properly equipped – school supplies are inadequate, physical facilities are poor, there is no electricity, no laboratory facilities, poor toilet facilities, etc.
 - iii. Equal opportunities for higher study are not provided. There is no form of post-secondary education within the community. Many cannot afford to attend these institutions outside of

Waramadong. The government needs to provide financial assistance to those who have the aptitude and interest in pursuing further education.

- iv. There is no internet access in the community. This impacts students obtaining information, etc.
 - v. Some teachers leave their jobs in the community to do GECOM's work.
 - vi. The use of Akawai language should be allowed in schools – the education needs to be bilingual so as to ensure that everyone understands the course content.
 - vii. There is a high level of non attendance to school. Parents do not see the importance of sending their children to school. There should be welfare officers assigned to the school to address these issues.
 - viii. The school guard has not received his salary for months. This needs to be corrected.
 - ix. Some residents do not have birth certificates. Some go to Venezuela and return with Venezuelan birth certificates – which are difficult to interpret.
- b. With regard to health:
- i. There is only a health post which needs to be upgraded to a health centre – the community now has a physician. A request was made to the authorities in this regard, however no response was received.
 - ii. The health post is not properly equipped and the in-patients are not provided with food. There is no solar system and no outboard motor.
 - iii. There is need for an ATV for staff to reach the community given the distances.
- c. There is no holiday to celebrate Amerindians – Guyana's first people.
- d. Indigenous people have lost some of their home rules. For example, Amerindian culture requires that they be nude underneath when

wearing their indigenous dress. Is this considered to be against the law?

3. *Family and community structure:*

- a. There is need for better parenting skills within the community.
- b. The Child Protection Agency should intervene in the problem situations within the community that relate to families.
- c. There should be family life seminars.

4. *Opportunities for voice:*

- a. The members of the community are not consulted with regard to decisions made by external bodies in relation to events taking place within the community. For example, the involvement of their youths in the Digicell football match and the requirement to play by floodlight in the competitive matches with groups outside of the community that have access to floodlights. The absence of floodlights in their practice sessions puts the community's youths at a disadvantage.
- b. Members of the community have no voice if they are not members of a particular political party. Amerindians are used by the politicians.
- c. In terms of formal decision-making within the Council, there has to be two-thirds majority for matters to be approved. As such, small groups have no voice.
- d. Youths within the community have no opportunity to be involved in political decision-making.

Community Engagement in St Deny's Mission, Tapakuma Lake, Region 2.

In the third quarter of 2016, the RCC conducted a capacity building workshop in the Amerindian community of St Deny's Mission in Region 2.

This workshop was able to facilitate a comprehensive diagnosis of the challenges facing the community. Such included inter alia:

- *Definition 1: (Material Poverty)* Logging and farming are the main sources of income in Tapakuma. Persons doing work in logging however have to wait for extended periods before being paid for their work. With regard to farming, there is no ready market to sell one's produce. The Ministry of Agriculture needs to make a greater effort to assist farmers in finding markets for their produce

- *Definition 2: (Opportunities for Human Development)*
 - There is a shortage of trained teachers in the school in addition to a shortage of teaching materials. The Ministry of Education needs to address these issues. In particular, the funds for teaching materials should be provided directly to the school instead of through the Regional Office where it becomes absorbed in funding other activities
 - There is an absence of educational opportunities within the community. Only those who can afford to, attend the Essequibo Technical Institute. The government should provide scholarships to those in need
 - There is need for a school feeding programme. A recent discussion was held with the Ministry of Social Cohesion and it is hoped that this will bear some fruit
 - The community only has a midwife and a Community Health Worker. The service of a medex is needed, however the community was informed that the population is too small to be assigned one. Regular medical outreaches within the community could assist in filling the gaps in medical services

- *Definition 3: (Family and Community Stability)* The community has a number of single-parents who are in need of help in the form of food and clothing for their children

- *Definition 4: (Partnership Rights)* Open discussion forums between youths, teachers and members of the community would facilitate allowing children to have the opportunity to have their voices heard

Engagement with the National Tashaos Conference

- a) At Kato, pregnant women are encouraged to join the maternal and child health clinic. They are also encouraged to have their babies delivered at the hospital instead of at home. After the baby is born, the mothers are encouraged to follow up on the vaccination of their babies. There is a general

reluctance within the community to go to the health facility and many of the community members tend to treat their sick children at home. Some parents are also not sufficiently interested in the health of their children.

- b) Malaria is rampant in Region 8. There is a shortage of drugs to treat, insufficient bednets and the microscope used to read the malaria smears does not function properly. There is also inadequate transportation to deal with emergencies – the area needs boats with engines. Rapid Diagnostic Test (RDT) kits should also be made available to every community to do mass smearing in order to facilitate timely treatment. The current system introduces delays in diagnosis of malaria. Mining is one of the main causes of bringing about malaria – many miners do not refill the pits after mining, thus creating breeding grounds for the malaria mosquitoes. In the North Rupununi, a number of the malaria cases are brought in from the mining areas. A system should be implemented (possibly through contracts) whereby persons going into and coming out of the mining areas should have a malaria test.
- c) The Community Health Worker does school visits to educate the students and teachers about malnutrition and how to prevent this. The use of sprinkles is being encouraged for persons of all age groups and demonstrations are done on how the sprinkles could be mixed into food to make it more palatable. Malnutrition needs to be tackled from an early age in the homes and parents need to be encouraged to adopt proper dietary practices in the homes.
- d) St. Ignatius has no health centre. The Medex from Lethem educates mothers on the importance of breastfeeding in terms of creating a bond between mother and child and also improving the immunity of the child. It is also more economical. The support of fathers is also needed in the breastfeeding process.

Engagement in St Monica, Pomeroon River, Region 2.

The workshop in St. Monica Pomeroon River, Region 2, represents a continuation of the engagement of each Amerindian Community in the respective regions.

The discussions engendered provided a comprehensive briefing on the substantive issues relating to child poverty in the community:

- a) Within St. Monica, dropouts need to complete both their primary and secondary education. In a number of cases, parents are unable to afford to send their children to school. Instead, young children are kept at home to do work. In other cases, secondary school dropouts are at home with nothing to do. Parents, teachers and guardians need to find ways for them to complete their education. Education is power. Children within the St. Monica community attend secondary school in Charity and Anna Regina. A boat takes the children from St. Monica to school in Charity. Another aspect of concern is that teenagers are producing children. The government needs to implement a training programme for youths to enlighten them regarding their roles as parents.
- b) While it is agreed that teenage mothers should be allowed the opportunity to continue their education, should teenagers be allowed to become pregnant in the first place? A counsellor is needed in schools to provide guidance to teenagers.
- c) Teachers should be role models so that their students could take them seriously and want to emulate them.
- d) Human rights education should be included in the education curriculum. Human beings have the right to a good education and to know their rights at a young age. They also need to know that they should abstain from using drugs and indulging in other harmful practices.