

Fourth Annual Report of the



Period
June 2013 to June 2014
Presented to
The Speaker
of
The National Assembly
October 2015

1. ACRONYMNS

CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CISOCA	Centre for Investigation of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPAP	Country Planning Action Plan
DV	Domestic Violence
GO	Governmental Organisations
GTUC	Guyana Trade Union Congress
GPF	Guyana Police Force
HFLE	Health and Family Life Education
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HPV	Human Papilloma Virus
IWD	International Women's Day
IPC	Indigenous People's Commission
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MoLHSSS	Ministry of Labour, Human Services & Social Security
NDS	National Development Strategy
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NIS	National Insurance Scheme
PAHO	Pan American Health Organisation
PSC	Private Sector Commission
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
HRC	Human Rights Commission
RCC	Right's of the Child Commission
SASOD	Society against Sexual and Other Discrimination
UNAIDS	United Nations AIDS
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nation Population Fund United Nations Children's Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
W&GEC	Women & Gender Equality Commission

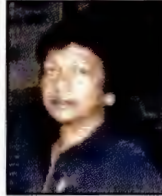
2. **DECLARATION**

This is the Fourth Periodic Report to the National Assembly on the status of the work of the Women and Gender Equality Commission, pursuant to the requirements of Resolution No. 86 which was passed in the National Assembly on Thursday, 21st May, 2009.

3. **MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION**

Members of the Commission consist of sixteen (16) persons who were sworn in on 27th August, 2009 by H.E. President Bharrat Jagdeo.

Women's Progressive Organisation



Indranie Chandarpal
Chairperson

National Congress of Women



Cheryl Sampson Deputy
Chairperson

Women in Voluntary work



Magda Pollard



Vanda Radzik



Shalimar Ali-Hack

TUC- Women Advisory Council



Karen Vansluytman-Corbin

Labour Union



Gillian Burton

Labour Union



Gaietrie Baron

Regional Women's Affairs' Committees



Ernestine Barker Logan
Regions 10, 3 & 4



Nandranie Coonjah
Region 2, 5 & 6



Bebbi Haleima Khan
Region 7, 8, 9 & 1

Professional



Debra Henry

**Culture/
Ethnic**



Nicole Cole

**Culture/
Ethnic**



Peter Persaud

Private Sector



Renata Chuck-A-Sang

Women's Affairs Bureau



Hymattie Lagan

Representatives from other Rights Commissions



Sandra Hooper
Rights of the Child Commission



Doreen Jacobis
Indigenous Peoples Commission

Full Time Staff



Diana Swan-Lawrence
Chief Executive Officer



Maria Raghbir
Administrative Assistant

The Chief Executive Officer and Administrative Assistant assumed duty on 15th October and 1st November, 2010, respectively.

4. STATUTORY MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION FOR THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW

The Commission agreed to convene statutory meetings on the last Wednesday of every month. During the period of reporting, the Commission convened twelve (12) statutory meetings. The table below details the dates of the meetings for the period under review.

NO.	Date
38 th	31 st July 2013
39 th	28 th August 2013
40 th	25 th September 2013
41 st	30 th October 2013
42 nd	27 th November 2013
43 rd	18 th December 2013
44 th	29 th January 2014
45 th	26 th February 2014
46 th	26 th March 2014
47 th	30 th April 2014
48 th	28 th May 2014
49 th	25 th June 2014

5. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In keeping with the objectives and functions, the W&GEC accomplished more than 70% of the goals targeted. Some of these activities are listed below.

- “Access to Justice” The Commission observed International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25th November, 2013 and the related Human Rights period up to December 10 by visiting over 45 schools where Commissioners interacted with the children and presented the poster captioned "Family Violence leads to Despair, Destruction and

Death". This programme will continue throughout the year where posters will be displayed.

- The Commission also erected four Billboards to commemorate International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women with the caption "Family Violence Leads to Despair, Destruction & Death": at Demerara Harbour Bridge and the Kitty Byways in Region Four (4), Parika in Region 3 and New Amsterdam (Public Hospital Compound) in Region 6.
- The "Access to Justice" programme provided a unique opportunity for the Commission to hear from the many stake holders and citizens about their concerns about the gaps in the system and the challenges they face in accessing justice in accordance with their rights as enshrined in the Constitution; and to receive and record their recommendations. These have informed the Commission's Platform for Action for 2014 as well as the four Thematic Areas of our Five Year Strategic Plan.
- The Commission has discussed key concerns with a number of persons in leadership positions and put forward recommendations and proposals for action and positive change. We have held meetings with His Excellency The President of Guyana, the Honourable Minister of Legal Affairs and Attorney General, the Honourable Minister of Human Services and Social Security, the Honourable Chancellor of the Judiciary, Magistrates, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Guyana and the CARICOM Gender Desk Specialist.
- On **International Women's Day 2014** the Commission interacted with a number of stakeholders at its Public Forum on '**Inspiring Change**' at Carifesta Sports Complex, Carifesta Avenue. The Key note speakers were the Honourable Justice Roxane George and UNICEF's Resident Representative The Hon. Mme. Marianne Flach.
- The Commission continued its **yearly exhibition to celebrate Women's History Month** at the Parliament Building under the Theme: Women of Character.
- **Negative Portrayal of Women in Music & in the Media:** Additionally, the Commission highlighted and condemned issues related to the negative images and portrayal of women in the media, the promotion of popular songs and celebrities who condone violence and abuse and denigrate sexuality and human rights as well as the lewd behaviour of some revellers at Mashramani.
- **Noise Nuisance:** The Commission also consider Noise Nuisance a social and health hazard and the general lack of necessary action by the relevant authorities and its ongoing promulgation way unacceptable. This matter is engaging the Parliamentary Committee on Social Sector.
- **Project proposals in three main areas to the USAID for support;** Training Women for Leadership, Training for Local Government Elections and a Policy on Sexual Harassment.

6. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Financial Department of the Ministry of Finance supported the management of the Commission's finances and administration.

The Commission is grateful to the international organisations, government and non-governmental organisations, faith based organisations, women and youth organisations as well as the other sister Commissions for their support during the period under review.

A vehicle was assigned to all four Commissions on 3rd March, 2014 and some necessary capital items were purchased.

7. **CONSTRAINTS**

Constraints continue to be financial, logistical and administrative.

The W&GEC needs the support staff in the areas of investigation of complaints, logistics and research in order to be more effective.

The Commission looks forward to all possible assistance from Government as well as donor agencies in the execution of its mandates.

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS TO PARLIAMENT**

1. Resuscitate the Gender Desk at Caricom to ensure that all member states access the technical assistance needed to fully implement CEDAW and the other treaties our Governments have sign on to.
2. Gender Sensitivity Training should be mandatory for all judicial, protective services, health and social services personnel especially those who interact with the public as part of their job.
3. Ensure there are active Gender Focal Points in each Government Ministry and organization. Their purpose is to ensure that gender is mainstreamed into Government programmes and policies and that a gender lens is used when any programmes or policy is initiated and carried out. A structured reporting mechanism should be in place to monitor progress and this should involve the Women and Gender Equality Commission.
4. The Ministry of Public Service to ensure that Gender Sensitivity Training and Gender Mainstreaming techniques are made available to Public Service Employees.

5. For all contracted employees of the Government of Guyana, Maternity leave should not be a factor in determining eligibility for gratuity for contracted employees of the Government of Guyana.
6. Gender Training to be included in the Health and Family Life Education Curriculum.
7. Government to consider the Establishment of a national Gender Advisory Committee
8. Increase penalties for breaches of Protection Orders.
Government to consider the provision for Paternity leave to assist women where there has been an addition to the family by birth or adoption.
9. The State and National Institutions need to ensure that the Prevention of Discrimination Act and the Constitutional provisions on non-discrimination and equality are enforced. There is an urgent need for a Sexual Harassment Act.
10. Resuscitation of the Gender and Development Centre at the University of Guyana.
11. There is a need for a Work Place Policy on Flexible Working Hours for women who are the caregivers.

9. MAJOR ACTIVITIES FOR THE REPORTED PERIOD JULY 2013 TO JUNE 2014

DATE	ACTIVITIES
July 2013	• Presentation of the 3 rd Annual Report to Parliament
August 2013	• Access to Justice outreaches in the regions
September 2013	• 'Access to Justice' outreaches in the regions.
October 2013	• Showcasing of the Commission's booth at the National Exhibition
NOVEMBER 1 st to 30th, 2013	• Visits to schools and NGOs • Erection of Billboards at 4 strategic locations • Distribution of posters To commemorate the Elimination of Violence Against Women
DECEMBER 2013	• Visits to schools and NGOs • Meetings with donor agencies
JANUARY	Continuation of posters distribution and talks at schools
January to November, 2014	- University of Guyana - Cyril Potter College of Education - Government Technical Institute - New Opportunity Corps

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Amsterdam Technical Institute - Essequibo Technical Institute - Linden Technical Institute - Upper Corentyne Technical Institute - Board of Industrial Training - Guyana Industrial Training Centre - Carnegie School of Home Economics - UNESCO - Allied Arts Unit - NCERD - Critchlow Labour College - National Library - Agricola PIC - David Rose Handicapped School - Durban Backlands PIC - Kingston PIC - Sophia PIC - Ministry of Health - All Health Centres and Hospitals - Ministry of Home Affairs. - All Police Stations - Other institutions
7 th January	Administrative and Oversight Committee Meeting of the W&GEC
9 th January	Work Plan Committee Meeting of W&GEC
15 th January	Meeting with Mr. Harlequin and Ms. Mentore, media specialists, to update DVDs of Commission's Activities
19 th January	Meeting with Dr. Sita Roth, Learning Channel
27 th January	Meeting of the Work Plan Committee
29 th January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Meeting • Presentation on CEDAW • Meeting with the Media • Press Release • Sub Committee Meeting • Meeting with Police Commissioner and Human Services Minister to discuss quality of investigations of DV matters
FEBRUARY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting to discuss "Know your Rights Booklets" • Managing of Website • Production of DVD on Commission's Activities • Meeting with Minister of Human Services and Social Security for C.I.S.O.C.A. – Chairperson and Commissioner Shalimar Ali-Hack <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with the Legal Fraternity-re "Access to Justice recommendations" • Collaboration with Legal Fraternity - re "Access to Justice recommendations".
13 th February	• Meeting with Vice Chancellor - University of Guyana

26 th February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Meeting- Capacity Building - Mr. B. Pollard, S.C. and Attorney - at - Law to educate Commissioners on constitutional mandate and international convention. • Press Conference • Press Release • Sub Committee Meetings
MARCH 1 st to 31 st	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibition on outstanding women
7th March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders' Conference with GOs, NGOs, Civil society etc • Collaboration with UG for the launch of the prize to student
28 th March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Meeting Press Conference • Sub Committee Meetings
APRIL	
1 st to 15 th April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with RWACs in various regions. Collaborate with USAID , WAB and GWLI for leadership training for women
30 th April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Meeting - Capacity Building with Ms. Cheryl Herbert , Gender Desk Specialist , CARICOM • Meeting with the Media • Press Release • Sub Committee Meetings
MAY	
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roundtable to discuss issues on "Women in the Trade Union" on Labour Day
28 th May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Meeting • Meeting with the Media • Press Release • Sub-Committee Meetings
JUNE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of Roundtable discussion.
25 th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Meeting • Meeting with the Media • Press Release • Media Monitoring Committee • Sub Committee Meetings • Monthly viewpoint

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ACTIVITIES FOR REPORTING PERIOD (JULY 2013 TO
JUNE 2014)**

**International Day of Violence Against Women visits continued at schools and other NGOs
from November, 2013 to June 2014.**

Recommendations

- More counsellors in schools across Guyana
- Establishment of Community Counselling services in pilot areas
- Special counselling for males either in schools or in the community
- Guidance and Counselling should be a subject in the school curriculum
- Advocate for a special Forum on “Youths Against Domestic Violence”
- Domestic Violence to be included in the Health and Family Life Education Curriculum
- Teachers need to be trained to recognise the signs of violence against children.
- Closer collaboration with schools and NGOs working on domestic violence.
- Legal Aid Centres are required to provide assistance along with Police in ensuring that victims get justice.

Issues

- The issue of Noise Nuisance and Loud Music was again reiterated at the forum as a matter of concern.
- Some fathers who are required by law to pay child support will often prefer to go and sit in jail ignoring the impact that it would have on his family.
- Many parents do not want their children to be corrected by the teachers and some tend to behave very aggressively thus forcing teachers to take a hands off attitude.
- The children are the product of the society in which they are raised. The challenges for the young people today are tremendous. Technology which is supposed to help society is abused. There was the recent case where a young girl who photographed herself in the washroom and sent it around on the social network.
- Children are raped, some contract HIV, parents must accept their responsibilities and become more involved in their children’s lives. In the quest for material things people very often have skewed priorities.
- With Rights come responsibilities and parents must accept their responsibilities and accept their roles.
- As a parent you have to be alert. It is very important for parents to understand that both boys and girls are being raped. Drugs are destroying families. Mothers are allowing their male lovers to abuse their children.
- Some Coast Guards dumped a young man alive into the sea for money. People who should be serving and protecting the public allow themselves to become greedy and corrupt.

**Recommendations from Meeting with Mr. Bradbury of the
International Republican Institute (IRI) held on Thursday 12th December, 2013**

- Training for women leaders through RWACs
- Training for women leaders for local government elections
- Public Service Announcements for the Commission
- Training for each organisation represented on the Commission
- The need for more persons to be involved in community development
- Training for women who are interested in representation and leadership on issues affecting other women
- Institutionalisation of a women's caucus in the National Assembly
- Commission should compile a list of persons who are best qualified to be trained as trainers not necessarily in the area of politics. The end result is to develop a cadre of women leaders/trainers.
- Training curriculum should have information on how to engage governments because training women will make for better families and communities
- The IRI/ USAID will support the institutionalisation of a women's caucus in the National Assembly
- The IRI/ USAID will support the collaboration of various stakeholders such as the Guyana Association of Women Lawyers and the RWACS, to do public service announcements.

**Recommendations from Meeting with Ms. Cheryl Herbert, Gender Desk Specialist,
CARICOM on Monday 9th December, 2013**

- CARICOM should play a role in building partnerships to advance the plan for gender equality
- CARICOM should coordinate all the best practices in CARICOM member states in an effort to support gender equality, e.g. Guyana's legislation and policies, C.I.S.O.C.A., Jamaica.
- Support gender mainstreaming in schools to benefit future leaders.
- CARICOM should take the lead on compiling a Status Report on Women in the Caribbean.
- The Commission should focus on Millennium Development Goals, Beijing Platform other UN related activities to consider what is the value added and where there should be co-ordination amongst women's organisations.
- CARICOM should consider funding a platform for Post-Beijing discussions.
- In an effort at mainstreaming CARICOM should provide technical assistance to all member states.
- CARICOM should assist in the establishment of a Gender Advisory Committee

**Recommendations from Commissioners visit to the East La Penitence Female Lock-up
on November, 2013**

- The Commission should liaise with counselling groups to counsel prisoners on a regular basis.

**Recommendations from Meeting of representatives of the Women & Gender Equality
Commission and the Honourable Anil Nandlall, Attorney-General and Minister of Legal
Affairs on 13th November, 2013.**

- Revamp the Jury System to Trials by Judges only for sexual offences and murder cases with high-powered rifles.
- The need for an agreement with Brazil Government to hand over escapees
- Court sittings to be held more frequently
- Increased fines for breach of protection orders made under the Domestic Violence Act.
- Increase Penalties for breaches of Protection Orders
- Increase the number of judges to be increased.
- Increase benefits to attract Magistrates and Judges, and further create a code of conduct for Magistrates.
- Once music is played it should be controlled and played at a certain decibel and the offence should be created to reflect this.

**Recommendations from the Conference in Observance of International Women's Day
7th March, 2014**

- A data base of skill sets to advance the cause of women's access to justice, where there should be information on how many psychologists and social workers are needed.
- Trained personnel would be necessary for rape crisis centres to be established throughout the country;
- The need for forensic interviewers for interviewing victims of rape, especially child victims.
- Scale up the training of more women in the law enforcement agencies, more particularly the Guyana Police Force. These women must be trained not only in policing but in gender sensitive policing.
- The need for integrated and gender sensitivity training for health care professionals.
- The expansion of formal legal aid services, more trained and sensitized community based groups, especially women's groups, so that they can provide basic advice to empower women.
- Provision for paternity leave to assist women where there has been addition to the family by birth or adoption.
- More work to ensure that the Prevention of Discrimination Act and the Constitutional provisions on non-discrimination and equality are enforced.
- The need for women to access affordable housing.

- National institutions should be at the forefront of providing the moral compass of the nation as regards to respect for women.
- The Commission should provide a moral compass so that the media, especially our national media entities, must not portray women as objects of disrespect whether it is in the music that is played, the photographs that are portrayed or the comments and programmes that are aired.
- The need for the Commission to be aware that while empowering women regarding their rights is important, equally, for women to understand their responsibilities, including the responsibility of respecting themselves, and the need to be responsible in accessing the justice system.
- Women should not use the justice system to deny their husbands or male partners access to and involvement in the lives of their children.
- There is need to educate women about their responsibilities as parents and guardians in accessing the justice system.
- There is need to have a proactive such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic; that engages the private sector in actively addressing gender based and interpersonal violence.
 - The justice system to be responsive to the changing environment and the new norms that are necessary for ensuring that the challenges women face in accessing justice are minimised.
 - The need to nurture boys and young men while promoting activities in schools and communities that foster healthy lifestyles and behavior to support the development of boys into men who respect themselves, and treat women and all humanity with respect.

Recommendations from the Sixth Meeting of the Directors/ Coordinators of Women's /Gender Bureaux, Bridgetown, Barbados, May 6-7, 2014 Commissioners Sandra Hooper and Kay Lagan represented the Commission

- A GENDER DESK to be established at CARICOM Secretariat
- There must be on line connection with all Bureaus to facilitate sharing of ideas/ information.
- Countries must establish Bureaus for implementation of Policies.
- Policies and Protocol for Bureaus must be similar at Regional level
- Networking with Civil Society Organisations to promote greater participation/ involvement in programmes
- Youth should be encouraged to be actively involved in leadership roles including at Parliamentary Level
- Assessment of the impact of Climate change on marginalized groups to be done.
- Positing of the Bureau will be strategic -Gender Focal Point /Gender mainstreaming In line Ministry.(Do not understand)
- There must be capacity building for Bureaus
- Financial commitment must be made by Government for the operations of the Bureaus.
- Previous assessment made by the Commonwealth Secretariat - identified how gender equality was being mainstreamed and Policy incoherence in how the Governments responded to gender issues, can guide future actions.
- SIDS 2015 to be integrated into the Regional document at the CARICOM meeting and used as a resource document.
- Support the model for CARICOM Population Based Prevalence Survey on Gender Based Violence
- Remit and authority of Gender /W omen Machinery be pursued by all territories

- Identify and increase funding of national Women Machinery /Mechanisms
- Increase the capacity of relevant Institution for data collection
- Promotion of Labor Rights and free movement with all workers under the Treaty of Chagaramas.
- Establish Local COHSOD Committees with key Stakeholders for Common vision / objectives /Gender sensitive policy in territories.
- Resuscitate Networking of Women' organizations/groups
- Strengthen National Gender machinery
- Gender must be incorporated into HFLE
- Temporary special measures that advance Women's leadership
- Use of Social Media for public education.
- Differential impact of climate change on labour

Recommendations on meeting held Wednesday 9th July, 2014 at the CUSO's Office.

- Collaboration with CUSO in line with the Strategic Plan for the next 3 years.
- The need for a professional Researcher
- The filling of the vacancy at the CARICOM Gender Desk with a full time staff.
- The need for more collaboration with the NGO Community (e.g. establishment of similar NGOs such as CATCH-A-FYAH in Barbados) to promote greater networking opportunities for women and youths.
- The need for Work Place Rights Policy on Sexual Harassment
- The possibility of CUSO's support to train the UG students following the work shop on Gender Training at York University in partnership with Guyana and Suriname.
- Linkages with the Volunteer Support Platform (VSP) - Promoting Volunteerism for Community Development Partnership with the Gender Advisor of CUSO
- Support for the Commission through e-volunteering (allows for experts to share expertise and mentor various groups without a physical presence.



From left Commissioners Logan, Cole and Vanslytman-Corbin at GUYEXPO 2013

GUYEXPO - 2013

On October 3-6, 2013 the Women and Gender Equality Commission hosted a booth at the GuyExpo 2013 under the Theme "Advancing Productivity through innovation, modernisation and expansion. The activity has become an annual feature of the Commission.

Meeting with Mr. Bradbury of the International Republican Institute (IRI) held on Thursday 12th December, 2013 at 10.00 hrs

Present were Mr. Bradbury and Julie Sookram of USAID, Chairperson, CEO and Commissioners Cole and Radzik from W&GEC.

The International Republican Institute (IRI) is a non-profit, nonpartisan organization whose mission is to advance democracy worldwide. Headquartered in Washington D.C., IRI established a local office in Guyana in June, 2013. IRI-Guyana is also the implementing organization of the Leadership and Democracy (LEAD) Program that is funded by USAID.

COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Training for women leaders through RWACs
2. Training for women leaders for local government elections
3. Public Service Announcements for the Commission
4. Training for each organisation represented on the Commission
5. The need for more persons to be involved in community development
6. Training for Commissioners
7. Training for women who are interested in representation and leadership on issues affecting other women
8. Institutionalisation of a women's caucus in the National Assembly

IRI'S RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Commission should compile a list of persons who are best qualified to be trained as trainers not necessarily in the area of politics. The end result is to develop a cadre of women leaders/trainers.
2. Training curriculum should have information on how to engage governments because training women will make for better families and communities
3. The IRI/ USAID will support the institutionalisation of a women's caucus in the National Assembly
4. The IRI/ USAID will support the collaboration of various stakeholders such as the Guyana Association of Women Lawyers and the RWACS, to do public service announcements.

Following the meeting the IRI-Guyana developed a tentative outline (see below) for a Women's Leadership Capacity Building project to incorporate the WGEC expressed requirements.

Political and Civic Training for Women (Training of Trainers)

Objectives:

- i) To provide training of trainers for WGEC in order to increase the number of female candidates to compete for elections at the national and local level;
- ii) To assist trainers in developing programs and activities designed to increase the level of

women's interest and participation in political activities - including running for elected office;

IRI can further achieve these objectives by:

- i). Educating women through workshops to promote women's interest in political participation and direct involvement as candidates in the political process;
- ii). Building capacity of women community leaders from various fields who wish to seek elected office through various trainings and seminars;
- iii). Provide skills and professional enhancement programs for women who are currently public office holders and improve their capacity to govern effectively and responsibly.

Implementation:

In order to achieve the training of trainers for professional development skills-building and political capacity building workshops, IRI-Guyana will avail itself of local professional trainers who know local political processes and legal requirements. IRI-Guyana will also provide expertise offered by IRI's Women's Democracy Network (WDN) in Washington, D.C. The WDN is a global initiative of IRI that is focused on increasing women's political participation, leadership and election to public office worldwide. WDN achieves its goals by connecting women to their best resources: themselves. WDN programming utilizes the best practices of women who have successfully overcome barriers to achieve positions of leadership to assist women struggling to realize similar goals.

Together, these two resources will be able to equip interested Guyanese women with the necessary tools to participate in the political process - both at the national level and in preparation for future local government elections. To do so, various educational and instructive techniques will be employed along with specific seminars, workshops, and trainings on topics such as: "Democracy 101"; competing for political party nominations; political campaigning; effective campaign management; developing communications strategies; and political fundraising.

It is envisaged that implementation would be carried out in two phases:

Phase 1: Training of Trainers by IRI's Women's Democracy Network (WDN).

The trainings will accommodate between 25-30 women. These participants will be selected from the WGEC, Women Affairs Bureau, Civil Society Organisations, Trade Unions and individuals. In addition to capacity building trainings and seminars, women who wish to do so may join and become members of the WDN network.

In addition to the trainings and wealth of information and assistance that the WDN provides, Guyanese women participating in this project may also have an opportunity to directly benefit from the following WDN resources and activities:

Annual Conferences: WDN holds two annual conferences: an International Women's Day Conference in Washington, D.C. and a European Union Study Tour for its most active members to meet with U.S. and European policy makers and public officials to learn new skills and share best practices.

Mentorship Program: The WDN mentorship program helps aspiring women leaders learn from the experiences of senior practitioners in politics, civil society, and government. The program facilitates mentorship pairs where a mentor provides regular guidance to their mentee partner who possesses less experience in a shared professional field.

Phase 2: Trainers Deliver Nationwide Trainings

After Phase 1, the trained trainers would replicate trainings to participating women in various Regions of Guyana. Each training session would target between 25 - 30 participants and the trainings would be funded, monitored, and evaluated by IRI. Trainers would also be provided with an honorarium and other financial, technical, and logistical support to successfully implement trainings.

Phase 3: IRI-WDN-WGEC Follow-up Seminars

Upon completion of the training phase, it is envisaged that IRI-Guyana, in consultation with WDN and WGEC, would host a series of follow-up workshops and seminars to provide continuing professional capacity development and additional sources of information and expert guidance with women who have participated in the training process. The subject matter and experts conducting these seminars will add to the information received from the trainings and likely focus on topics that will add to the training curriculum.

IRI -Guyana, WDN, and WGEC Partnership

IRI and WDN can collaborate with WGEC to ensure the successful implementation of the project by undertaking to provide technical and logistical support and combining areas of expertise and local knowledge.

IRI-Guyana and WDN would consult with the WGEC to determine ideal participants for the Trainings of Trainers workshops. IRI-Guyana and WDN would conduct the final screening of the selected participants.

In addition, with respect to participants' identification and mobilization, as WGEC is a national constitutional body in scope, it would be an ideal partner for IRI-Guyana and WDN throughout the project, especially as WGEC would be best suited to identify communities for the trainings and with the selection process and mobilization of participants.



From left Commissioner Vanslytman-Corbin, Chuck-A-Sang and Ms. Cheryl Hebert

Meeting with Ms. Cheryl Herbert, Gender Desk Specialist, CARICOM on Monday 9th December, 2013 at 15.00 hrs

Present were Chairperson, CEO and Commissioner Cole of W&GEC and Ms. Cheryl Herbert from CARICOM.

WGEC's Recommendations

- CARICOM should play a role in building partnerships to advance the plan for gender equality
- CARICOM should coordinate all the best practices in CARICOM member states on efforts to support gender equality, e.g. Guyana's legislation and policies, C.I.S.O.C.A., Jamaica.
- Support gender mainstreaming in schools to benefit the future leaders
- CARICOM should take the lead on compiling a Status Report on Women.
- Ms. Herbert will be invited to speak to the Commission on areas of expertise for capacity building, e.g. Canada model for social work can be examined.

Ms. Herbert's recommendations

- The Commission should focus on Millennium Development Goals, Beijing Platform and other UN related activities to consider what is the value added and where there should be co-ordination amongst women's organisations.
- CARICOM should consider funding a platform for Post-Beijing discussions.
- In an effort at mainstreaming CARICOM should provide technical assistance to all member states.
- CARICOM should assist in the establishment of a Gender Advisory Committee



Report on Commissioners visit to the East La Penitence Female Lock-up

Commissioners who visited the lock-ups in November, 2013 were:-

- Gillian Burton
- Karen VanSluytman-Corbin
- Gaitree Baron

Commissioners were met by female police Inspector Small who welcomed them and introduced them to the other officers present. At the time of the visit, six (6) prisoners were preparing to be transported to the New Amsterdam Prison. These women were either placed on remand until February, 2014 or sentenced to serve time of not less than three (3) years for offenses ranging from possession of narcotics to robbery under arms.

Commissioners were then taken on a walk- through of the lock ups by Inspector Small where they had a first - hand look at the conditions under which the prisoners existed. At the time of the walk through, there were five (5) prisoners, two (2) Venezuelans, whose offence was being in the country without legal documentation and three Guyanese for offences such as simple larceny, robbery and assault. They indicated to the prisoners that they were representatives from the W&GEC to have a first- hand look at the conditions under which they were held in custody. They said that they asked their names and the reasons for them being there.

Observations:

The general condition of the lock ups could be considered relatively clean. There was a sanitary block with several toilets and bathrooms with running water. At the time of the visit, the toilets and bathrooms were clean.

Except for one cell, the other cells had mattresses without covers and sheets. Commissioners enquired as to the reasons for this and were told by the Inspector that consideration was given to the prisoner's safety hence the absence of the sheets and covers since those prisoners who might be depressed may become suicidal and use the sheets or covers to hang themselves. The same goes for the absence of fans in the cells since we observed the place was very hot.

A concern for the Commissioners was the poor lighting. The only lighting provided was in the passage way, the cells were all dark. They shared the concern that this will not encourage reading and was told those who wanted to read did so in the passage way.

At the end of the visit which lasted for about forty-five (45) minutes, Inspector Small thanked the commission for visiting and requested that the Commissioners encourage other women's groups to visit to speak with the prisoners and to offer counseling. She asked that the commission source some mattresses as donations for the lock-ups because they were in dire need.

Commissioners took the opportunity to extend condolences on behalf of the Commission to Inspector Small and her colleagues on the death of the two police men who lost their lives during the shooting on Middle Street.

Recommendations

The Commissioners recommended that the Commission liaise with counselling groups to counsel prisoners on a regular basis.

Meeting of representatives of the Women & Gender Equality Commission and the Honourable Anil Nandlall, Attorney-General and Minister of Legal Affairs

on 13th November, 2013.

At a meeting held on the 13th November, 2013, representatives of the Commission shared recommendations with the Attorney-General which they would like to have raised in Parliament and elsewhere.

The Commission noted that with their launching of the “Access to Justice” project, they listened to both genders about their views on accessing justice. The Commission reported that in most regions, people are having difficulty accessing justice. The following issues were considered in detail:

1. Jury System
2. Issues with Region #9
3. Protection Orders
4. Shortage of Personnel in the Judiciary
5. Noise Nuisance
6. Backlog of Sexual Offences Cases

ISSUES

1. Jury System

The Commission collectively suggested getting rid of the Jury system. The Chairperson made the point that the selection of jurors leaves *'much to be desired'* and noted that we are *'scraping the barrel'* in selecting jurors. The DPP held the view that we need to improve the quality of jurors particularly in sexual offences matters. She noted statistics from 2011 to 2013 saw many 'not guilty' verdicts. The DPP suggested that given the prevailing circumstances it would be better to have a judge trial only for sexual offences. Although she noted that there may be issues with the judges, she seemed confident that the Appellate Court will deal adequately with judges' decisions. The suggestion was also made that the same should apply to murder cases that involved the use firearms such as high powered rifles.

1.1 Recommendation by Commission

Revamp the Jury System to Trials by Judges only for sexual offences and murder cases with high powered rifles.

1.2 Response by Attorney-General on this Issue

The Attorney-General remarked that this recommendation of removing the jury system would be rejected by Parliament. Alternatively, he suggested the need to increase and widen the jury pool, noting that this jury selection method is outdated. This results in the same persons being selected for jury duty regularly.

The Attorney-General noted that if there was a difference in the Parliamentary matrix greater co-operation would afford him the opportunity to pass a Jury Act creating stricter guidelines and direction on jury trials.

2. Issues with Region 9

- i) The DPP noted that persons in Region #9 who commit criminal acts in Guyana would often flee over the border to Brazil. The commission suggested that the Governments of Brazil and Guyana should sign rendition/agreement that would allow the Brazilian Police to hand such persons back to the Guyana Government upon request by the police.
- ii) Another issue was that Magistrate's Court is not held frequently in Region #9. The Commission hopes that the Court built since October last, would be up and running in the near future.
- iii) A further challenge with Region #9 includes crimes committed there which are not being properly investigated. An example was given included an alleged murder case where the person was buried without a post mortem. The Commission noted it is only on rare occasion that a doctor would go down there to conduct such an examination.

2.1 Recommendation

Suggestions were made as follows:

- a) Guyana should have an agreement with Brazil Government to hand over escapees
- b) More Court sittings to be frequently held on the first sub-issue the Attorney-General noted that there was the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty between Brazil and Guyana. He further indicated his willingness to co-operate with Brazil on this matter and consider whether a Memorandum of Understanding can be worked out between Guyana and Brazil.

On the second sub-issue, he suggested that the Chancellor can resolve this issue by an administrative order.

3. Protection Orders

The Commission suggested increasing the fines for breach of protection orders made under the **Domestic Violence Act**. The Commission had a further issue with women who allow their counterparts to breach the orders. They suggested that mechanisms be put in place to guard against such who abuse of the system.

3.1 Recommendation

Increase Penalties for breaches of Protection Orders

3.2 Response by Attorney-General

Parliament may agree to review fines and penalties in a generic way. However, the Attorney-General stated that no matter how many laws are passed and it would not mitigate the fact that a lot of social work needs to be done.

4. Shortage of Personnel in the Judiciary

The Commission stated that it is difficult to keep magistrates because of the lack of remuneration. They suggested other means to encourage Magistrates to come on board. The commission would also like the number of judges to be increased.

Another issue that arose is the conduct of Magistrates regarding their unexplainable behaviour on the bench and the unstructured sentencing techniques utilized. The question was then posited, "Is there a code of Conduct for Magistrates?"

4.1 Recommendation

Increase benefits to attract Magistrates and Judges, and further create a code of conduct for Magistrates.

4.2 Response by the Attorney-General

The Attorney-General noted that there is hardly any space available for more judges and magistrates. He said that the introduction of new Georgetown Magistrates building would be welcome in determining the way forward. He also noted that the new Family Court will ease the civil case load in the High Courts and deal with all family related matters, such as custody, guardianship, divorce, adoption.

He further noted that there is sentencing guidelines which were prepared under the Justice Reform System. He said that what is needed is better awareness of these guidelines. Its usage should assist in the sentencing structure.

5. Noise Nuisance

The Commission suggested that the noise level should be determined on a decibel level instead of person's discretion being used to judge what is noise. The DPP particularly raised concern about noise made by Hire Cars and Private Cars. Discos and Bars should operate in an enclosed environment so that their businesses would not annoy the neighbours. The DPP remarked that she receives a lot of written complaints about business places in Region #4.

5.1 Recommendation

Once music is played it should be controlled and played at a certain decibel and the offence should be created to reflect this.

6. Backlog of Sexual Offence Cases

The chairperson noted that sexual offence matters take a long time to be completed. The reasons being murders are given priority, and lack of witnesses and judges to do trials for offences under the Sexual Offences Act.

6.1 Response by the Attorney-General

The Attorney-General noted that the introduction of the new High Court Rules should speed up this process. He stated that it should be in place as early as January 2014.

7. **Other Remarks by the Commission**

They Commission commended Region #6 for its interaction with the Commission when they met with the people there. They commended persons in charge for allowing dialogue on important matters.

Additionally, the Commission offers its support to the Attorney-General to assist in lobbying for any Bill being prepared regarding all matters mentioned. They firmly alluded to the fact that Parliament placed them in this Commission, and they would willingly meet with the various opposition parties to lobby for a particular matter.

8. **Conclusion**

The Attorney-General remarked that none of the issues raised were new to him, however the way forward requires the input of various agencies and no single ministry can deal with all the issues,



A section of the audience at the Conference

THE WOMEN & GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION'S CONFERENCE
IN OBSERVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
7th March, 2014



From left to right at the head table Chairperson Indra Chandarpal, UNICEF Representative Marianne Flach, Deputy Chairperson Cherly Sampson and Commissioner Vanda Radzick

On 7th March, 2014 the Women and Gender Equality hosted a conference under the Theme: "Inspiring Change" in commemoration of International Women's Day at the Carifesta Sports Complex. A total of eight seven (87) persons attended including the Honourable Prime Minister of Guyana, Mr. Samuel Hinds. Fifty (50) organisations were represented, including UNICEF, UNDP, Embassies of Brazil, Suriname, Russia and Mexico, CARICOM,UG, Ministry of Tourism, Citizens Against Rape, Women's Work Committee-Methodist Church of Guyana, Inter-American Institution for Cooperation, ERC, HRC, RCC,GTUC/ WAC, WAB, GRPA, Salvation Army, Bahai Faith, GRC, Guyana Postal and Telegraph Workers Union, MLHSS, Women's Federation for World Peace, Guyana Faith & HIV Coalition, GWLI, EWSG, WAD, NCW,WAC,WFWP, PTWU, Community based Rehabilitation Programme, Jah Works, IRO, WPO, 9 Moons, Nyahbinghi, Sparklingsun Support Group, GRC,NCN, Kaieteur News, Stabroek News, Newsupdate, Guyanatimes, Prime News, GBTV, Parliament Office.



*Mr. Samuel Hinds, Prime Minister of Guyana, third from left at extreme left is
Ms. Cheryl Sampson, Deputy Chairperson of W&GEC*

The Conference was co- chaired by Deputy Chairperson Cheryl Sampson and Commissioner Vanda Radzik.

The Honourable Madame Justice, Roxane George, Puisne Judge gave one of the key note addresses on the ‘Challenges Facing Women in Accessing Justice’. She remarked that justice means different things to different people and often it depended on whether you are on the side of the victim, or the perpetrator, or trying to balance the rights of both. She elaborated that women are both victims and accused within the justice system and especially where a woman is an accused, the issue often arises - how should she be treated? Are issues of her status as a victim of violence herself to be considered in the case against her; should there be leniency because she is a woman or should she be seen as a perpetrator of violence who must bear the full brunt of the punishment provided for in the law?



Justice George remarked that access to justice has many possibilities ranging from a need for counselling services, or a need for simple advice so that informed decisions can be made, to requiring legal representation in a court of law. The wide range of family matters such as property rights, custody and maintenance of children as well as divorce and separation are all justice issues that impact women's lives on a daily basis. She said that with increasing economic development, many women must have access to proper legal knowledge and representation in relation to the economic and business ventures they are engaged in, whether by themselves or in partnership with others. And of course there are the pervasive threats to women's integrity because of gender based violence and sexual harassment as well as discrimination in the workplace which are all crucial justice issues of concern to women.

Justice George quoted the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, in a message in the UN Women Report 'In Pursuit of Justice: Progress of the World's Women 2011 - 2012' where he said: "Justice is central to the effort to help women become equal partners in decision-making and development. Without justice, women are disenfranchised, disempowered and denied their rightful place. But with sound legal and justice systems, women can flourish and contribute to the advancement of society as a whole, including by helping to improve those very same systems for future generations - daughters and sons alike."

Justice George mentioned that Guyana has a number of laws that provide a good basis for the advancement of women's human rights issues. She opined that the legislative underpinnings and foundation would be of no moment if there constantly remain issues regarding the proper implementation of the laws - these issues revolve around a lack of

knowledge by women of their rights, the lack of facilities to provide for more widespread legal aid, and the lack of personnel to address the concerns of women. Therefore, an important corollary to women accessing justice is the need for support services and mechanisms to assist them.

Justice George urged that what is needed is a data base of skill sets that are required to advance the cause of women's access to justice. There should be information on how many psychologists and social workers are needed; how many trained personnel would be necessary for rape crisis centres to be established throughout the country; what are our needs in terms of forensic interviewers for interviewing victims of rape, especially child victims. Importantly, we have to scale up the training of more women in the law enforcement agencies, more particularly the Guyana Police Force. These women must be trained not only in policing but in gender sensitive policing. She shared that the UN Women Report 'In Pursuit of Justice' notes that "data show that there is a positive correlation between the presence of women police officers and reporting of sexual assault."

Justice George further noted that there should be a one - stop shop where persons can access a number of services at one place. There is also an initiative that has been started to have such facilities for child victims of abuse. In order to increase the numbers of women who are victims of all forms of violence to feel confident in the administration of justice system, it will be necessary to have such one stop places so that women can tell their story, be medically examined, and counselled so there is less need to repeat the circumstances of the incident. These will encourage women to engage the justice system. It will also help to reduce the numbers of women who abandon the system because of frustration at the number of steps that have to be taken to access justice. She stated that her understanding is that several countries have had success in training health workers to provide integrated services which include psychosocial support and referrals for women in cases of sexual violence. As such another area for intervention is that of integrated and gender sensitivity training for our health care professionals.

Justice George was convinced that a major challenge still remains women's access to legal aid. She was adamant that while we may tend to associate legal aid as assisting women who lack resources, many women who appear to have resources at their disposal do not in fact have such resources because their husbands and partners exert such control over their finances and what they do, that they do not have the financial ability or the opportunity to or are too timid to seek redress to enforce their rights. She emphasised that women of our rural and hinterland communities are at a particular disadvantage because of inadequate provision of legal services in their communities and in terms of a lack of access to organisations that can support them. She mentioned that having been engaged in a trial in which there has been need for translation of Amerindian languages, this is another area which can pose a challenge in relation to indigenous women accessing justice.

Justice George appealed for the expansion of formal legal aid services, more trained and sensitized community based groups, especially women's groups, so that they can provide basic advice to empower women. She explained that in this regard, the Commission can foster alternative dispute resolution initiatives in communities so that persons take ownership in solving their domestic problems themselves rather than engaging the court with its attendant adversarial system and delays.

Justice George informed the participants that at a Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers Conference she was made aware of mobile courts with integrated services which included legal aid and social services e.g. in Mexico large buses or boats are utilized as a means of bringing justice closer to people. She said that we have an example of our capacity to have such a mobile justice vessel in a recently commissioned mobile police station to which as a start maybe could be added a court.

Justice George insisted that the training of judicial and other frontline officers about issues of gender and how they impact on the adjudication process must be actively pursued. She made the participants aware that there needs to be a greater appreciation of the value of women's child-bearing, child rearing and caring work. She quipped that as an international woman's rights advocate has pointed out - there is a reason why childbirth is called labour. She reminded the participants that a number of judicial organizations regionally and internationally are committed to building an understanding of gender equality but nationally, we need to do much more in this regard.

Justice George reminded the participants of the UN Women Report which notes that "systematic tracking of judicial decision-making is needed at the national level to provide accountability to women seeking justice and to enable civil society and governments to monitor the performance of the courts on women's rights." She said that it has been known that where judicial officers have been exposed to gender training that there is a marked shift in the way in which cases are adjudicated on. She reiterated that the Commission has a specific mandate in terms of monitoring the implementation of laws including monitoring how entities such as the courts respond to women and gender issues. She said that the Commission can do much to change the culture of justice service providers as regards gender equality so that discriminatory attitudes of these providers including the judiciary, lawyers, the police, social service officers, court staff, and health care workers are not barriers to women's access to justice. She insisted that the Commission must strive to make the "justice chain gender-responsive" and can do so by initiating continuous gender sensitivity training with these key service providers.

Justice George elaborated that while we advocate for women to be employed without discrimination, the fact remains that women's care-giving work means that they are often at a disadvantage. A lack of adequate day care or child care services means that many women lose out on promotion or are at a disadvantage when compared to others who do not have children or an elderly parent or relative to care for. According to her there are women who are still discriminated against in terms of financial benefits when they go on maternity leave, where the same does not apply to their male colleagues. There is still no provision for paternity leave - even if limited in its scope - to assist women where there has been an addition to the family by a birth or adoption. We have to do more work to ensure that the Prevention of Discrimination Act and the Constitutional provisions on non-discrimination and equality are enforced.

Justice George pointed out that another major challenge for women in terms of accessing justice is a lack of affordable housing. Many women want out of violent home environments but face tremendous difficulties in accessing accommodation outside of their matrimonial homes. She stated that there were many women who have been desperate for even a one bedroom apartment to rent at an affordable rate for themselves and children. She commended the home for the destitute at Onverwagt, but added that this was inadequate since there is desperate need for apartment blocks that can be rented to persons seeking refuge from violent homes. She lamented that it is easier said than

done, but in the absence of such governmental housing, many women will continue to be at this disadvantage in enforcing their right to be free from violence.

Justice George made it clear that hand in hand with a responsive justice system is the need for an environment that fosters respect for women. She emphasised that our national institutions, in particular, must be at the forefront of providing the moral compass of the nation as regards to respect for women. She stressed that media, especially our national media entities, must not portray women as objects of disrespect whether it is in the music that is played, the photographs that are portrayed or the comments and programmes that are aired. She called on the Women and Gender Equality Commission to provide such a moral compass. She cautioned that while empowering women regarding their rights is important, equally, women must also understand their responsibilities, including the responsibility of respecting themselves, and the need to be responsible in accessing the justice system. She said that she and other judges have discerned some amount of 'push back' from some women who use the justice system and all means possible e.g. to deny their husbands or male partners access to and involvement in the lives of their children. Thus, while we hear the cry of female single-parenthood, there are many fathers who want to play meaningful roles in their children's lives but who have to access the justice system to enforce their rights and the rights of the children to have their parent in their lives. Much has to be done to also educate women about their responsibilities as women, as parents and guardians and in accessing the justice system.

Justice George made the participants aware that the Strategic Plan of the Women and Gender Equality Commission speaks to a more proactive response on the part of the Commission to the many issues confronting women in accessing justice. She concluded her presentation by stressing that there is much work to be done with the help of all minds and hands to have a response as proactive as that in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic; a response that engages the private sector in actively addressing gender based and interpersonal violence. Justice George ended her presentation by appealing to the justice system to be responsive to the changing environment in which we live and the new norms that are necessary for ensuring that the challenges women face in accessing justice are minimised. She encouraged the Women and Gender Equality Commission to inspire change and called on everyone present to commit to inspiring change for the benefit of all and more especially women and girls.

Ms. Marianne Flach, UNICEF Resident Representative also gave the other keynote address on behalf of the UN Resident Coordinator. In her opening remarks she acknowledged that there was progress made for women's rights, women's empowerment and gender equality, but there was much more work to be done as women and girls faced new and more complex challenges. She added that the United Nations in Guyana played a significant role in supporting efforts to change the lives of women and girls for the better. She encouraged that as we work to inspire change, we should also work to ensure that that change is sustainable.



Ms. Flach asked several rhetorical questions in relation to how we guide our young girls, how we keep them motivated and in school, how we make them understand that enjoying the things of childhood and adolescence, and preparing themselves for the future are of primary importance to fulfilling their potential as they become women. She stated that issues such as teen pregnancy, violence and abuse, rob girls of their childhood, and often perpetuate cycles of poverty and abuse. She opined that keeping girls in school longer, with quality education is a means of empowering young women to play their full role in society and build stronger families and communities. She remarked that that participants should also consider how to inspire change in boys and young men, and how to break the cycle of violence and abuse. She opined that by nurturing boys and young men and promoting activities in schools and communities that foster healthy lifestyles, and behavior to support the development of boys into men who respect themselves, and treat women and all humanity with respect.

She reiterated that to inspire change, there was need to change the way persons think at all levels, and design innovative ways of addressing the challenges that face women and girls in today's society.

Ms. Flach congratulated the Government of Guyana for the progress made since the issuance of the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, for example, the appointment of the Ombudsman and steps at the Parliamentary level to ensure public participation on the issue of the abolishment of corporal punishment. She held that there was need to maintain the momentum and accelerate efforts in all areas (health, education, protection) to achieve "substantive equality of men and women" as outlined in the CEDAW concluding observations. She added that International Women's Day is a day to everyone should

recommit to working harder for gender equality, together with women, men, and all stakeholders at all levels. She concluded her message by stating that by empowering women and girls and supporting their full participation, everyone can overcome challenges and find lasting solutions to many of the problems such as poverty, inequality, violence against women in Guyana and worldwide. She closed by sharing the message by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, in which he highlights the importance of achieving equality for women and girls:

Secretary-General's Message for 2014

This International Women's Day, we are highlighting the importance of achieving equality for women and girls not simply because it is a matter of fairness and fundamental human rights, but because progress in so many other areas depends on it.

Countries with more gender equality have better economic growth. Companies with more women leaders perform better. Peace agreements that include women are more durable. Parliaments with more women enact more legislation on key social issues such as health, education, anti-discrimination and child support.

The evidence is clear: equality for women means progress for all.

This simple truth must be central as we work to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals by next year's deadline and craft an agenda for the years beyond 2015.

Important gains have been made in access to primary education for girls and political representation by women. But progress remains far too slow and uneven.

A baby girl born today will still face inequality and discrimination, no matter where her mother lives. We have a common obligation to ensure her right to live free from the violence that affects one in three women globally; to earn equal pay for equal work; to be free of the discrimination that prevents her from participating in the economy; to have an equal say in the decisions that affect her life; and to decide if and when she will have children, and how many she will have.

I have a message for every girl born today, and to every woman and girl on the planet: Realizing human rights and equality is not a dream, it is a duty of governments, the United Nations and every human being.

I also have a message for my fellow men and boys: play your part. All of us benefit when women and girls - your mothers, sisters, friends and colleagues can reach their full potential.

Together, let us work for women's rights, empowerment and gender equality as we strive to eliminate poverty and promote sustainable development. Equality for women is progress for all!

Ban Ki-moon

There were **four break-out working groups from the four (4) Thematic Areas of the Strategic Plan.**

- (a) The Group on *Women and Economic Empowerment* was led by Commissioner Ernestine Barker with six group members. The following recommendations were listed:



Commissioner Ernestine Logan partly hidden doing group work with participants

1. WOMEN NEED TO EMANCIPATE THEIR MINDS FROM TRADITIONAL AND SOCIAL NORMS THROUGH EDUCATION.
2. SENSITIZE THROUGH GENDER FREE TRAINING, BILLBOARDS AND SOCIAL MEDIA e.g. FACEBOOK, BLOGGING etc
3. INTRODUCING TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL SKILLS e.g. CONSTRUCTION, MASONRY. CARPENTRY, PLUMBING etc. INTO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION.
4. CREATING SHORT DRAMATIZED MESSAGES USING THE TELEVISION AND RADIO SYSTEM TO INFORM THE WIDER PUBLIC AND THE LEARNING CHANNEL TO INFORM THE CHILDREN.
5. INTRODUCE SHORT MESSAGES THAT CAN BE USED BY RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND N.G.O.s.
6. COLLABORATE WITH OTHER AGENCIES, ESPECIALLY THOSE THAT TRAVERSE THE HARD TO REACH AREAS.

(b) „ *Women, leadership and governance*” led by Commissioner Vansluytman-Corbin summarized the discussion as follows:



A section of the participants doing group work with Commissioner Corbin in the background

Areas that could be addressed by the WGEC:

1. **Challenge:** Women are woefully under-represented on state boards and executive boards of corporations, banks and other private sector entities compared to their participation at lower levels in these organisations. Inherent in this situation is the low level of representation on women's rights and other gender equality issues. In general, few women serve as directors or CEOs in the private and religious sectors.

Suggestion: Advocacy in both public and private sector for equal representation of women on all state boards and corporations. The ceiling of 50/50 is desirable and the floor of one-third is a good starting point.

2. **Challenge:** Even though some women leaders are elected to positions of influence, they are often not knowledgeable about women's rights and/or don't have the skills to detect and address discrimination against women.

Suggestion: Support and endorse specialized gender awareness and women's rights training for women leaders to help them function effectively as women's advocates on commissions and boards of state and private corporations.

3. **Challenge:** While Guyana has exemplary legislation with respect to the rights of women and girls, these rights are not fully realised due to ineffective implementation rendering the benefits to women and girls as limited. Women also observed that leadership training opportunities were more often granted to men than woman in the workplace.

Suggestion: Advocacy and awareness of laws to correct discrimination in leadership and remove barriers to professional training. Alternatively women need mechanisms that enable them to access training for **leadership positions** within the workplace -resources, time-off, staff rotation, grants and scholarships. It is also important that woman have access to information about their entitlements and professional development opportunities. These should be well publicized within organisations.

4. **Challenge:** Limited civic education about the rights of women and girls is a growing concern. Citizens do not know their rights and some duty bearers like the police and magistrates fail to adequately interpret the laws in favour of citizens. On the other hand, citizens who know their rights have also developed apathy towards the justice system due to impunity.

Suggestion: Continue and accelerate training of targeted men and women's groups and individuals throughout the country. This could be done in collaboration with selected Ministries, local government authorities and the private sector.

5. **Challenge:** The limited number of women leaders in the formal sector is a culturally embedded issue endorsed by the faith-based community that has access to a wide cross section of the population. Even when women's leadership training programs are conducted at the community level, partners or parents have curtailed women's attendance and full participation.

Suggestion: Outreach education programs to the religious community and faith-based organisations should deal with issue of women's rights and discrimination under strategic themes that empower women without raising a red flag to spouses who may not recognize and/or endorse women's equality.

6. **Challenge:** How to maximize the expertise of the WGEC in terms of fulfilling its mandate to women across the whole country.

Suggestion: Each Commissioner should be assigned to a specific Region to collaborate with regional Women's Affairs Committees, NGOs, CBOs and women's group to ensure that local communities have the requisite tools to address issues related to women and girls.

Areas that could be addressed by women's groups:

7. **Challenge:** Recognition of the fundamental rights of women and girls is low in most communities. There is widespread gender discrimination from the home, to the school, to the community and religious organisations. Patriarchy is continuously enforced by males in authority, alongside steady but slow growth in women's upward mobility. While most women are involved in community development, they are often not elected or recognized as leaders.

Suggestion: Women's groups could create social capital and change the social problems highlighted through alliances at the community level as seen with the Guyana Women Miners Organisation (GWMO). We could mobilise, equip and share with other women the tools of leadership and take actions to redeem their communities from some of the social problems.

Further, the work of community groups must be complimented by the WGEC. The commission is well placed to provide information, education and communication materials and training for grassroots women.

Organisational and Institutional Strengthening was led by Commissioner Vanda Radzik and other group members , including the Chairperson Mrs. Indra Chandarpal.



Chairperson, Indra Chandarpal and Commissioner Vanda Radzik with participants doing group work

The following issues were highlighted and recommendations made.

Sub- Committee to develop:

- a) Model Legislation-resolving complaints
- b) Model Policies

W&GEC - Strategic Plan to focus on

- (a) Capacity Building
- (b) Strengthening Policy

Re- structuring Gaps

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sub Committee• Education• Legal• Mediation | Budgeting/ Finance
Lack of Resources
Sexual Harassment |
|---|--|

Evaluation:

- a) A Gender Expert
- b) Advocacy

5 years Strategic Plan:

- Revisit the five - year action plan being implemented for women through WAB- updated and enforced
- GWLI- Certificate Programme e.g. - Review Elementary, Intermediate, Advance
- Promote much more progress with Micro- projects.
- Campaign-Arts-Culture-Popular Language, Education, Media
- University of Guyana collaboration
- In School Summer Programme- Professional Development
- Gender Studies Unit
- IDCE collaboration

Other initiatives

- (a) Initiative ILO - to bring together the GE Machineries
- (b) Capacity Building
- (c) Strengthening Gender Progress
- (d) Policy review
- (e) Re-positioning -The Commission to include Sub Committees e.g. Education, Legal, Mediation
- (f) Sexual Harassment
 - highlighted - Training provided in specific areas
 - Complaints Process
 - Mediation progress
 - Module of programming and Human

Rights Recommended that the 4 Thematic

Areas be used for

- Support from family - recognise where the man won't change and find a safe area/place.
 - Educate women to be strong- mentally & physically fight back.
 - Learn your partners' background before intimate relationship.
 - Teach sons how to express self and be tolerant
 - Educate on the cons of extra marital affairs/infidelity
 - Family Education on violence and its effects
 - Family Counselling
 - Sharing responsibilities equally in the home
 - Proper communication
 - Respecting Self
 - Parenting Education
 - Educate students on the historical, cultural and religious contribution to violence in schools and homes
 - Corporal punishment- should be admonished in public places.
 - Educate the relevant stakeholders on the other measures to replace corporal punishment.
 - Better collaboration - between Parents and Teachers.
 - Compilation of register of male sex offenders
 - More parenting sessions
- (c) *Gender Based Violence* was led by Commissioner Nicole Cole with several group members.



A section of the participants doing group work with Commissioner Cole in the background

Background /Summary

Gender Based Violence comes along way from our history, is found in our culture and it all stems from our religious books. Today we allow ourselves to be demoralized with the things we encourage, our lack of respect for ourselves and this comes from lack of education of self, family and parenting. Additionally many of our leaders are not setting example, morally and in other ways. Therefore, we need to be re-educated in how to inculcate good family values and morals in the society. We need to interact with the family more to empower the mother and father with such education so they can in turn teach their children to be strong mentally and physically to stand up for themselves, to develop self confidence.

Recommendations:

- Re-introduce the old way of knowing the person and their family background before marriage.
- Educate the youths on parenting and family life/shared responsibility and even communication.
- There needs to be more access to psychological assistance.
- For those persons that are already in a violent relationship, there needs to be a ready availability of a comfort area or a safe place.
- Relevant counselling sessions
- Education on self reliance.
- The needs for a compilation of a register of both male and female sex offenders.
- Corporal punishment in schools be removed by the education of parents on parenting.
- Teachers need to be given a more in depth course on child psychology and dealing with troubled children. (We cannot just say no corporal punishment and not have any alternative means of dealing with such).
- Parents should work with each other and also with the teachers to get better children.
- There should be a review of our religious books to correct some of the wrongs that they have contributed to in relation to patriarchy.

Exhibition at the Parliament Building to honour Outstanding Women
March 5th-31st 2014.



From left to right Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly, Ms. Hermina Gilgeous, Ms. Cheryl Sampson, Deputy Chairperson, Chairperson Indra Chandarlal and honourees.

In observance of Women's History Month 2014, the Women and Gender Equality Commission hosted an exhibition at the Parliament Building under the Theme 'Women of Character'. Twelve outstanding women were honoured among them were six Guyanese namely, Justice Desiree Bernard, Ms. Magda Pollard, Ms. Marilyn Dewar, Ms. Diane Mc Turk, Sis Noel Mendes, Ms. Lila Kisoon and Ms. June Ramsammy (posthumously), the other international women honoured were Alice Munro, TawakkolAbdul-Salam Karman, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Rigoberta Menchu.

The Honourable Madam Justice Desiree Bernard is the recipient of the *Order of Roraima* of Guyana - the second highest national award. Her nine other Awards include the *Medal of Service* from the Caribbean Women's Association and the 2005 *CARICOM Triennial Award for Women*. She has served as a member of the Guyana judiciary for 33 years and retired in March, 2014. She has left behind a reputation of judicial excellence and integrity and a legacy as a dedicated and tireless worker on women's rights and gender equality. She will continue functioning as a judge on the Inter-American Administrative Tribunal, a post she was appointed to in February 2011, and plans to work on compiling her speeches into a book.

Ms. Diane McTurk has received worldwide acclaim for her extraordinary work over the years with injured and orphaned Giant River Otters, one of the world's (and Guyana's) most endangered wildlife species. By necessity, Diane became a world expert on their care and rehabilitation. She has raised over 50 orphaned otter cubs, returning most of them to the wild for a chance at freedom. Ms McTurk stands as an example to women everywhere with her legacy of courage, innovation and resilience as a pioneer rancher, conservationist and eco-tourism leader in her beloved Karanambu on the Rupununi River.

Ms. Lyla Kissoon was awarded the Golden Arrow of Achievement on February 23rd 1988 by President Hoyte and she also served as an advisor to him during his Presidency. She was also honoured by the Women's Affairs Bureau in Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security for outstanding contribution to women's development, peace and equality.

She sees the problem which affects Guyanese women as being the fact that they are a minority in decision-making bodies. She would like to see more women involved in business and become successful. She feels that if opportunities were made available to women, they would certainly be successful.

Her advice to young women and girls, especially those with an interest in business is to be honest with themselves even when circumstances are challenging.

Sister Mary Noel Menezes, is first and foremost a member of the Religious Order of the Sisters of Mercy (RSM). She is a prominent Caribbean Historian and Educator, achieving the highest academic distinction and serving as a role model for women pursuing academic careers. A renowned researcher, she developed a course and guide in epistemological research for UG. Of pre-eminent importance has been her charitable work, especially her dedication to the St John's Boscoe Orphanage for Boys in Plaisance on the lower East Coast of Guyana. She was honoured by the Government of Guyana in 1982 with the Golden Arrow of Achievement award.

Magda Louis Muriel Pollard is recognised both nationally and internationally for her firm commitment to women's rights and the rights of the girl child. She was awarded the Fourth CARICOM Triennial Award for her contribution to the Caribbean Women's Movement in 1993, and the Special Award from the Caribbean Association of Home Economists in 1995. In 1996, a National Guyana Honour - the Arrow of Achievement (AA) was conferred on her. She is a strong advocate of the Human Rights Charter of the United Nations and the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) both of which Guyana has signed and enshrined. She therefore urges our Parliamentarians to investigate, educate and support vulnerable groups and to legislate accordingly. Since the CEDAW is the key instrument from which the Women & Gender Equality Commission draws its mandate, Ms. Pollard reminds Parliament that the Commission is required to address the current status of women in Guyana and to play a role in reporting on CEDAW country compliance.

Ms. Marilyn Dewar, whose passion is music, is one of Guyana's most talented daughters in this field. Ms. Dewar's musical abilities are multifaceted: she plays the piano, cello, organ, violin, recorder, and she sings as well and is arguably the most sought after music teacher in Guyana. She has excelled in attaining the highest grades in her music certificates and diplomas through the prestigious Royal School of Music and Trinity Music College. Marilyn has been instrumental (together with others) in resuscitating the Guyana Music Festival.

Mrs. June Ramsammy, (deceased), was the Human Resources Executive of Banks D.I.H Limited, D'Aguiar's Industries & Holdings. She started out on a teaching career but changed from being a Second Year Teacher in a Primary School to Secretarial Studies, after the sudden demise of her mentor. Upon completing secretarial studies and somewhat uncertain about the career she still wanted, she proceeded to undergo formal training in Personnel Management and Industrial Relations, graduating with a Diploma. She was first attached to the former Guyana Graphic Limited as Personnel/Training Executive and at that time was the only female Executive on the Board of Management of the Newspapers. The Guyana Graphic Limited was a subsidiary of the Thomson Newspapers Group with Head Offices in Canada. She later moved to the

position of Human Resources Executive, looking after a staff of 1,500 regular employees. Being quite a stalwart of gender equity, but holding very different views from the "fanatic female activists," she had however strongly disagreed with a report that women will have to wait for about 450 years to attain equality with men in decision-making positions. She was certain that with serious determination by women, 450 years may be easily revised downwards.

Women from around the world

Arundhati Roy FROM INDIA is a novelist, writer and political activist. Her novel "The God of Small Things" won the Booker Prize in 1997.

Alice Ann Munro is from CANADA

Munro's highly acclaimed first collection of stories, *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968), won the Governor General's Award, Canada's highest literary prize.

Tawakkol Abdel-Salam Karman - a Yemeni journalist, politician.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a writer from Nigeria. She has been called "the most prominent" of a "procession of critically acclaimed young anglophone authors [that] is succeeding in attracting a new generation of readers to African literature.

Menchu Tum (born 9 January 1959) is an indigenous Guatemalan woman, of the K'iche' ethnic group. Menchu has dedicated her life to publicizing the plight of Guatemala's indigenous peoples during and after the Guatemalan Civil War (1960-1996).

The Commission is committed to making this an annual feature and also proposes to expand this to the National Library and other places of interest.

Meeting with Mr. Brynmor Pollard, S. C. - Attorney at Law on the Constitution on 26th February, 2014

Mr. Pollard commenced his presentation by making mention of the Official Gazette which he said listed so many cases for hearing, especially sexual offence cases that one wondered if the justice system could cope with the magnitude of cases. He said that when one looked at the 250 cases still to be tried at the Demerara Assizes, a number of those cases involved carnal knowledge and gender - based violence. He said it was imperative that we ask ourselves about the effectiveness in the justice system. He added that obviously a number of those cases will not be tried and a number of witnesses will not appear in court, so it seemed as though the justice system was not functioning. He opined that the recommendation for 20 judges at the High Court does not answer the question of how many cases will be tried.

He reflected on his days as a prosecutor where judges worked way 'after hours' and Saturdays to get matters addressed. He reminisced that in his day there were only 5 judges now there were going to be 20.

He stressed that in light of the foregoing the Commission needed to analyse what was happening in society. He concluded that there was certainly a breakdown in society.

The Chairperson asked Mr. Pollard to tell the Commission about the effectiveness of the

Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences Acts. She also asked for his views on the impact of cultural imperialism specifically trafficking in drugs and in persons on society, and the question of absentee witnesses in certain cases. She asked for his views on abolishing the jury system to let only the judge preside.

Mr. Pollard opined that there was need for stronger legal minds, so that judges were wise enough to intervene when the cases were not going according to law. He said that the matter of witnesses not turning up only happens in this jurisdiction.

The Chairperson said that in all countries even the USA there were social problems of race and class which fostered criminal activities. She also decried the changes in society due to modernization where before parents were allowed to discipline the child with the rod and now, it was regarded as child abuse.

Mr. Pollard continued that the international conventions that the country signed on to gave the police powers to prosecute persons who abused their children. Mr. Pollard also pointed out that there were no male prosecutors in the DPP's office, only females, and elaborated that the presumption was that the female prosecutors were weak and therefore they were usually a 'target' for the defence.

Commissioner Cole said that the recommendation from Justice Desiree Bernard that the compliment of judges be increased because the present number was totally inadequate was seen as a positive move to finish the backlog of cases.

Mr. Pollard said that the number of judges does not determine the magnitude of work done but rather the effective supervision of the judges.

Commissioner Hooper enquired if the judges have a time frame within which to complete work. Mr. Pollard responded that there was no time frame for the judges. He said that judges usually operated by a strict work ethic.

Commissioner Corbin asked if the senior judges could make recommendations to have the former system of stringent work ethic be brought back in the present justice system.

Commissioner Pollard lamented that there were so few women in the Bar because many of them were 'inhouse' lawyers or legal counsel.

Commissioner Coonjah explained that when juries were finished with their assigned tasks, they were no longer needed to be around the courts; however many lawyers wanted to prolong cases because they benefitted.

Mr. Pollard responded that the legal system did have a code of conduct when Commissioner Khan commented that there should be one.

Commissioner Persaud opined that the answer is not in the number of judges but the ethics of the judges.

The Chairperson said that the murder cases took precedence over other cases and that resulted in the backlog of other cases. Mr. Pollard responded that murder cases no longer took precedence over other cases, this only happened when persons were sentenced to hanging but not since Guyana ratified the international convention for no more hangings.

Commissioner Cole opined that there was need for more security in prisons and trained police

officers to address the issue of gender - based violence.

Commissioner Pollard reminded the Commission that many police officers were trained in Canada, including the late Assistant Commissioner Derick Josiah.

Mr. Pollard concluded the interaction by making mention of the Sexual Offences Act in Canada which he said was good. He elaborated that even if a complaint was made time and time again a complainant could not withdraw from the case in Canada. He ended by saying that once a person gave a statement in Canada they cannot renege on it like in Guyana when persons do not want to continue with the case.

Meeting with Madame Claire L'Heureux-Dube on 28th March, 2014

Commissioner Vanda Radzik initiated the meeting with Madame Claire L'Heureux-Dube on 28th March, 2014. Several Commissioners and the CEO were in attendance.

The Honourable Madam Justice Claire L'Heureux-Dube (ret) is a former judge of the Supreme Court of Canada. Her 50-year career in law is notable for her many achievements in family law and human rights issues. She was also the first judge in Canada to invoke the precautionary principle. L'Heureux-Dube was appointed to the Superior Court of Quebec in 1973 and later to the Quebec Court of Appeal in 1979. From 1984 to 1990, she was President of the Quebec Association of Comparative Law. Madame L'Heureux- Dube was Chairman of the Canadian Section of the International Commission of Jurists (1981-1983) and International President of the International Commission of Jurists (1998-2002), based in Geneva. In 1998, she received the Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award from the American Bar Association Commission on Women in the Profession.

Madame L'Heureux-Dube was made a Companion of the Order of Canada in 2003 and a Grand Officer of the National Order of Quebec in 2004

Report and Capacity Building Session on CSW58



The Commission on the Status of Women was established June 21 1946 as a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It is the principal global decision making body dedicated exclusively to gender equality and the advancement of women. Every year, representatives of Member States gather at United Nations Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide. The Commission's aim is to prepare recommendations and reports to the Council on promoting women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields. The Commission also makes recommendations to the Council on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women's rights. This year the 58th such session was held. The themes for this year's session were: **Priority theme:** Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls.

Review theme: Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work (agreed conclusions from the fifty-fifth session) **Emerging issue:** Women's access to productive resources **Guyana** The Guyana delegation comprised four persons who traveled from Guyana, the Honourable Ms. Jennifer Webster, Minister of Human Services and Social Security, Ms Dinte Conway, Special Projects Advisor to the Minister, Ms Velma DaSilva, representing the NGO Rural Women's Network and the Chairperson representing the Women and Gender Equality Commission. Guyana presented the CARICOM Statement at the first session on March 10th. The highlights of which were: CARICOM recognises the critical role of Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in the achievement of Poverty Alleviation, Social Integration and Sustainable Development.

High priority has been accorded to combating gender based discrimination and the empowerment of women at the national, regional and international levels, While significant achievement towards the achievement of the MDGs was recorded, two areas were highlighted by CARICOM. One was education and the other was HIV and AIDS. In Education great gains were made in the enrollment and participation of girls. Girls have surpassed boys at the tertiary levels. There is a disturbing trend of declining participation of boys in education at the secondary and tertiary levels. Unemployment continues to be higher for women than men. The strategy going forward is to involve more women and girls in STEM and ICT programmes. The region experienced the sharpest decline in new HIV infections (42% since 2001) and similar declines in mother to child transmission of HIV infections. The news is also good with infant mortality rates also experiencing steady declines. Challenges include gender based violence, adolescent pregnancies

and the increasing risk of the feminization of poverty because of persistent gender inequalities in employment. **The Agreed Conclusions** The Agreed Conclusions re-affirmed the work that had gone before: The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Optional Protocol, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the international commitments made at various United Nations summits and conferences. CSW58 reaffirmed commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women. For the MDGs to be realized Gender equality and the empowerment of women must be achieved. The role of women as agents of development is vital and necessary if sustainable development is to be accelerated beyond 2015. Para 13 stated the current gender based division of labour must be changed to achieve the full integration of women into the formal economy. Para 14 stated that care work is a critical societal function and must be a shared responsibility. Para 18 stated that overall progress for women and girls remained slow and uneven including on MDG #3 both within and between countries. This is especially acute in poverty stricken areas. Para 19 states that poverty is a real challenge to achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and that the 'feminization of poverty' persists. Para 21 points out that women are still not fully integrated into the formal economy and there remains low proportions of women and unequal participation at all levels of decision making.

Para 27: The Commission is concerned that the indicators to monitor MDG's are not disaggregated by sex, age and other factors and therefore do not provide adequate information about the situation of women and girls throughout their lives. Para 28: The Commission pointed out that the MDG's did not adequately address several issues related to gender equality and the empowerment of women. It states that unless all dimensions of inequality are addressed, gender equality and the empowerment of women and the realization of human rights for women and girls will not be achieved. Para 37: The lack of gender mainstreaming and the integration of a gender perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the MDG's. Para 43 calls for the effective gender-responsive monitoring and for gender equality, the empowerment of women and human rights of women to be a stand-alone goal and to be integrated through targets and indicators in all goals in any new developmental framework. Para 44 calls for a comprehensive national and regional level review of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It also encourages analysis of current challenges to identify opportunities for accelerating actions to achieve gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of human rights of women and girls. The Concluding Comments also called for the full engagement of men and boys as strategic partners and allies in the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls; to take all appropriate measures to adopt and implement national policies to protect and promote the rights of women and girls with disabilities; to make universally available comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care services. **Conclusion** There were many areas covered, critical areas were pointed out but all areas are important.

**SIXTH MEETING OF THE DIRECTORS /COORDINATORS OF WOMEN'S/GENDER
BUREAUX BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS MAY 6-7, 2014**



Commissioner Sandra Hooper



Commissioner Hymawattie Lagan

This meeting of Directors / Coordinators of Women's Gender Bureaux of CARICOM was called five years after the last meeting held in 2009. It was attended by representatives of fourteen of the fifteen CARICOM countries and the three Participating Partners- CARICOM; UN Women and CDB. The response in attendance was definitely a reflection of the CARICOM countries' expression of appreciation for the holding of this meeting.

Representation - Guyana: 1. Ms. Hymawattie Lagan, Coordinator, Women's Affairs Bureau and 2. Ms. Sandra Hooper, Commissioner, Women and Gender Equality Commission.

Programme

The programme for the two days included presentations on various thematic areas that relate to Gender activities in the Region.

Opening Remarks

The representatives of the three Participating Partners gave the opening remarks. Some highlights are as follows:

Dr. Hillary Brown- CARIOM

Dr. Brown expressed her pleasure at the attendance of 14 of the 15 Member States, noting that Haiti and 3 Associate Members were absent. She commended the work of the three participating Partners which provided financial and other support to make this 6th. Meeting possible, after the 5th Meeting of 2009.

She noted that twenty years after the Beijing Plan of Action, the impetus and commitment by Governments remained strong, and it was important to recognize the work done by women. Issues affecting Youths now required some attention- these include -Early school leaving; Adolescence Pregnancy and Levels of earnings with limited education.

This 6th meeting preceded the COSHOD meeting scheduled for Guyana mid May, where the focus will be on Gender and Labour and the outcomes of this 6th meeting will also be considered.

Further she stated that Gender and Economic focus assessment had been done to help guide future actions and we had to be open to new ideas even though human and financial resources might be limited, we still had to stay positive.

Ms. Arab - UN WOMEN

Ms Arab noted the excellent partnership that had resulted in the return of the meeting.

The momentum which started in 1975, was followed by the Beijing Plan of Action where some simple things were not tackled- The definition of Gender and the mark shift, talking about Women /Gender. One of the challenges of Gender was Sexual Rights.

The UN Women was created three years ago due to the problems of inadequate funds for countries to implement the Beijing POA- The UN Women would therefore use funds to advance the efforts

Dr. Barnett- IDB

Dr. Barnett also stated the Bank's appreciation for the strong partnership resulting in this meeting, noting that interagency collaboration was valuable and we all could be energized by it.

At National levels the assessment of the MDG was being done since Data gathering was important to identify Gender gaps - education, Labour, training- which were required to achieve gender equity. Statistics in data gathering included- Gender stereotyping, Mainstreaming Gender, Going forward interconnectedness, interrelated dimensions, status of Gender. The three areas of focus identified-

- Gender priorities located and integrated into activities
- Evidence critical for reframing agenda-data collected
- Institutional mechanisms - indicating the commitment to gender framework and programmes

Broad collaboration would be required for dealing with cross cutting themes such as Gender issues, Economic issues, the recommendations would be far reaching.

The Chairperson noted that the meeting was off to a good start with the strong messages from the three speakers

CHAIRPERSON OF THE MEETING

Dr. Brown, noted that Jamaica was the outgoing Chair of the Meeting and Montserrat was the incoming Chair, with Antigua as the Assistant Chair. Ms Corlette Roberts- Ridsen of Jamaica , chaired the meeting.

The day's agenda which was already behind the scheduled time, would be adjusted as the programme proceeded. Coffee Break was scheduled for 10.30 Hrs; Lunch - 13.00 hrs and Close at 17.00 hrs.

A Working document was circulated to country representatives prior to the meeting and consisted of the Agenda items, the Presentations to be done and the Actions required of the meeting.

The following presentations were done on the first day.

Report of the Fifth Meeting of Directors/Coordinators of the Women's/Gender Affairs Bureaus, 6-7 October 2009,

The report was presented by the CARICOM Representative

Recommendations from the Report which were highlighted for discussions were identified on Page 5 of the Working Document in three Areas

In relation to advancing the issues of women empowerment and gender Equality In relation to HIV/AIDS and development of a gender and Health Profile of the Region In relation to the Social Development and Crime Prevention Action Plan.

It was noted that fourteen Member States were present at that meeting and the issues were discussed under the thematic areas highlighted. The recommendations made were time bound and while some were achieved, some were ongoing.

There was the continuing need to share best practices information and with the support of CANADA- CUSO, statistics would be given in more details.

Some highlights discussed

Gender Policies - UNFPA was the contact and an Annual Meeting of Gender Heads would be held on day three of this Meeting.

UN Women - Gathered as a group in April and that meeting offered opportunities for dialogue and contacts

The need for Annual meetings was reemphasized to help Bureaus to chart their course of Action.

It was also noted that Bureau Heads in the past were able to connect through Yahoo Group Connection and that link could be reestablished.

The CARICOM Officer was thanked for her work, but the need for a WOMEN'S Desk in CARICOM was emphasized.

It was also recommended that the Bureaus should meet just prior to the CARICOM Heads meeting so that recommendations could be sent to that meeting. That Structure should be recommended to the COSHOD meeting.

Gender Equality within the context of the post 2015 and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Agendas

Highlights of the Report:

The MDG will end in 2015. In 2012, the UN Secretary General launched a high level Panel to provide guidance and recommendations for post 2015 development Agenda. There has been advocacy within the UN Systems for SIDS with UNICEF as Co -leader.

Caribbean SIDS recognized as major driver on SIDS issues. The first Meeting of SIDS was held in Barbados in 1994 out of which came the Barbados Plan of Action (BPoA) A second meeting was held in Mauritius in 2005 with the Mauritius Strategy for further Implementation (MSI). The third SIDS conference is scheduled for 1-4 September, 2014 in Apia, Samoa.

Barbados hosted an inter- Regional Meeting on August 26-28, 2013, and that meeting highlighted a number of priorities and a Caribbean Statement which reflected a number of critical areas for women and gender development.

Freedom from Violence: Violence against women and girls; Protection of vulnerable groups from violence; Transnational crime- drug trade through strengthening of international and national trade;

Access to Justice

Accessing Capabilities: Education- critical thinking skills from early childhood, public education to promote gender equality, boys participation in education, equal value of certification among sexes; **Health-** Increase access to mental health services , Provision of SRH Services, HIV Prevention, Recognition of GBV as Public Health issue, Reduction of Maternal Maternity and morbidity; Full implementation of the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, including safe abortion **Food and Nutrition-** Prioritize domestic and Regional Agriculture, provide gender sensitive public education on Food and nutrition to transform consumption practices.

Economic Empowerment: Support for gender responsive trade policies; support for poverty reduction through macro economic reforms; Reduction in exposure to and participation of women and youth in sex and drug trades; Promotion of labour reforms, prioritizing living wages, State health and pension plans; support for women in non productive sector through training and technology.

Leadership: Encourage and enable a critical mass of gender sensitive transformational leaders in all aspects of decision making including household, community, trade union, national government and international institutions ; strengthen women's collective action ,network, organizations which advance women's leadership; encourage youth participation and leadership at all levels through school governance; mobilize political parties to transform to gender friendly practices; implement CEDAW's call for special measures to ensure gender equality in leadership and decision making; enable the emergence of critical mass of women to become corporate leaders serving on Private Sector Boards, and involved in formal and informal areas of economic enterprise.

Copies of the SIDS document which would be presented to the CARICOM meeting were collected to be shared with Commissioners

Some points raised for consideration

- Has gender perspective in the Caribbean changed?
 - How does gender mainstreaming systems affect boys/girls, differences?
 - Men's involvement in gender equality
 - Reports to be done by Countries.
 - UN Agenda - Gender must be put on the Post 2015 Agenda **The recommendations for future action included**
- Every Ministry must have a copy of the Joint Statement and consultation/ advocacy/ conversations be held to sensitize groups.
1. Government Partners
 2. Civil Society
 3. NGOs

Beijing +20 Lessons Learnt

Highlights of presentation by Ms Mondesire, Consultant

Governments have an institutional challenge shaping gender equality. Gender was a Women's machinery.

Questionnaires sent to countries - only Antigua, Barbuda, Guyana, Suriname, Grenada responded. They were congratulated for their response. The Regional Thematic focus was on Institutional Settings,

Mandate of National Women's Gender Policy, Capacity, Networking. The findings would help in the way forward.

Position and Influence of Regional and National Gender Equality Mechanisms in the Region

1995-2010 - Milestones set by CARICOM that were women and gender driven and included Building human capital; Health, HIV /AIDS; Poverty and Economy ; Child Protection; Migration.

National Women's Machinery - Legislation; Gender Policies - two countries have; Name Changes - Women to Gender Bureau; Staff - Contracted not Civil Service; Gender courses at State University- Guyana

1995 to now - Expectations have shifted, gender was mainstreamed and there was networking- Government Agencies and NGOs-

Four countries have policies and the old policy was under review in some others.

The results of Networking was noted- Financial support, reaching more persons, data sharing

Influence of Networking was seen in - new legislation, Public awareness, Dialogue, capacity building, skills

Future Focus Action and Persistent Challenges

1. Mandate - Clarification needed
2. Operating Resources - Improving capacity, Increase staff, technology, finance'
3. Planning- Data Collection, Strategies, Gender Management
4. Relationship Building- empowerment of Community, buying into change, cooperation with Ministries.
5. Structure - Elevating structure, gender focal points.

What have we learnt

Progress not linear- Change due to Political change Policy implementation slow
Harmonization of national Regional Agenda required.

Measuring Progress under Beijing - Core set of Violence against Women indicators adopted by UN Commission in 2013- Presentation by Ms Isuawa Lyahen- UN Women Prevalence Model on Measuring Gender Based Violence Pages 15-16 Highlights:

Nine Indicators identified including- Psychological, Physical, Mutilation, Mental

At Meeting held in April 2014, the WHO study on Women and Girls indicated that Administrative Data, Police Data, Judicial, Health - do not indicate types of Violence.

How applicable is this to the Caribbean since Religion and Culture were not addressed as well as Early Marriage, Teenage pregnancy, Sexual Harassment .

- Two countries in the Caribbean will be used to pilot the survey - Jamaica and one Eastern Caribbean Country. US\$500,000 would be made available for the project with two surveys Men - Prevalence; Women - Victimization .
- Three and a half week training would be provided for Interviewers who would be required to do at least two to three interviews per day.
- The survey would be taken to CARICOM to be adopted as the model.
- It was noted that Gender socialization issues may prevent men responding to the survey.
- While some felt the survey should not be publicized, others felt that Bill Boards through the Private Sector could be used for awareness for empowering CSOs. This could help persons to answer questions in the survey.
- A recommendation should be made to COHSOD that the MDGs be made Caribbean specific.

The day's activities concluded at 17.30hrs.

Wednesday 7th May, 2014

The programme for the day included Review of the Previous Day's Presentations, a Panel Discussion and Group work to develop recommendations for the COSOD Meeting.

Some of the issues raised during the review included:

Sexual Rights and Sexual and Reproductive Health. Montevideo presented a strong statement for CARICOM - there was lack of agreement among some groups

- MDGs did not fully address all Gender issues
- The MDGs would be achieved with Gender development
- Some groups did not agree on Violence.
- ECLAC Meeting - a topic could be highlighted each month .
- Assessing Cario 1994 programme was done at 47th Conference on Population and Development Session, 7-11 April for Mission Staff. This was extremely challenging, there was opposition to sexual rights. The Montevideo Conference document was rejected . Suriname had agreed to chair CARICOM Group- no statement was done.

Some questions to be answered;

What is the position of the Bureau?

What role should CARICOM play?

- It was suggested that the delegates should meet for briefing to prepare them to represent their Countries/Region
- Bureau Heads should help with problems in Country presentations and share strategies to move forward.
- Bureau Heads should see themselves as strong Policy Makers and for Networking
- Civil Society and Bureau should be partners for country development.
- Bureaux, therefore need to be more strategic and effective
- MISSION STAFF take instructions from Head Office. They need to use the processes and get involved at Mission level for their benefit and for key positions. ,,

- The Missions' Staff and Representatives must collaborate to arrive at position on issues for the Region.

The opportunity was taken to draw to the meeting's attention the poor representation of CARICOM at the ECLAC Meetings in Montevideo 2012 and Ecuador 2013.

It was noted that many times lack of finance prevents Countries from participating in these meetings.

PANEL DISCUSSION

The Panel discussion was chaired by Dr. Brown.

The presentations were forwarded to participants after the meeting. These were printed and are available for reference in the W&GEC Office.

The meeting was required to discuss the issues and recommendations presented, then make recommendations to be used by member States to strengthen the gender architecture at the National and Regional levels, to better respond to International and Regional commitment.

Presentations.

1. Overview of CSME - Olivia Smith

In the absence of Ms Smith a power point presentation was done

2. CARICOM Gender Analysis of CSME and its Regional Impact - Tamara Huggins

3. Highlights of Country Gender Assessment

Here focus was on the CARICOM Trade and Competitiveness Project (CTCP) which began in 2007 with support from the Government of Canada and helped CARICOM to increase operations of CSME. The Gender input examined the ability of men and women to participate equitably in all aspects of social-cultural, political and economical life in member States. Guyana was one of the ten countries which participated in the assessment and highlights of the assessment were given during the presentation.

4. Adopting Convention 189 and Ensuring Rights of Domestic Workers

- Here it must be noted that Convention 189 of 2001 covered the Rights of Domestic Workers to which fifteen Countries had signed on with Guyana as the only Caribbean Country signing.
- There is also a Caribbean Domestic Workers Association which includes Guyana's organization, Red Thread and they are working to promote security for DW.

The Afternoon Session was chaired by the Monserrat representative Presentations included:

1. Gender and TVET- Linda Cooke

- Pathways to gender Equality in TVET was launched in 2011 and consists of a seven year plan under programmatic areas. The Councils meet three times yearly and leadership is critical.

Political	Technical	Cultural
Institutional Policies and Direction	Human Resources with expertise to analyse and deliver	Prevailing attitudes / beliefs.

Some general recommendations raised after all the presentations by Panelists

- A GENDER DESK to be established at CARICOM Secretariat

- There must be on line connection with all Bureaus to facilitate sharing of ideas/ information.
- Countries must establish Bureaus for implementation of Policies.
- Policies and Protocol for Bureaus must be similar at Regional level
- Commissions to promote Policy recommendations can be established
- Networking with Civil Society Organisations to promote greater participation/ involvement in programmes
- Youth should be encouraged to be actively involved, including at Parliamentary Level
- Assessment of the impact of Climate change on marginalized groups be done.
- Positing of the Bureau will be strategic -Gender Focal Point /Gender mainstreaming In line Ministry.
- There must be capacity Building for Bureaus
- Assessments must be made of Bureaus for - gender response, social approach, what should operate
- Financial commitment must be made for the operations of the Bureaus.
- Previous assessment made by Commonwealth Secretariat - identified how gender equality was being mainstreamed and Policy incoherence in how the Governments responded to gender issues, can guide future actions.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The meeting was subdivided into Groups to list recommendations to be included in the Statement from the meeting to be presented to the COSHOD Meeting. A small committee was identified to format the Statement.

Some of the recommendations included.

1. SIDS 2015 to be integrated into the Regional document at the CARICOM meeting and used as a resource document.
2. Support the model for CARICOM Population Based Prevalence Survey on Gender Based Violence
3. Remit and authority of Gender /Women Machinery be pursued by all territories
4. Identify and increase funding of national Women Machinery /Mechanisms
5. Increase the capacity of Institution for data collection
6. Promotion of Labor Rights and free movement with all workers under the Treaty of Chagaramas.
7. Establish Local COHSOD Committees with key Stakeholders for Common vision / objectives /Gender sensitive policy in territories.
8. Resuscitate Networking of Women' body
9. Strengthen National Gender machinery
10. Gender must be incorporated into HFLE
11. Temporary special measures that advance Women's leadership
12. Use of Social Media for public education.
13. Differential impact of climate change on labour

Next Meeting

- Prior to the meeting of CSW, Annual Budget for Regional Gender Meeting prepared .

- Get Ministers to champion the cause- Advocacy at meeting
- Term of Reference developed for Regional Advisory Committee
- Suggestion that meeting of RAC and CSW be merged.

Any other Business

1. Announcement of an Economic Empowerment Course 18-25 August in Egypt
2. Phase II of CT&CP Project for US \$150,000 - Training and Technical Assistance, Funds to be spent by June 2015. Equipment can be bought for Gender Bureaus. This fund can be divided for the benefit of each of the 15 territories

CLOSE

The three Representatives were thanked for their Agencies' Sponsorship of the meeting and it was noted that two of the Representatives would be at the COHSOD meeting.

Bureaus' heads and Representatives of other Organisations were also thanked for their presence and participation. As thanks were expressed by participants, the hope was expressed that this meeting would see the recommitment to annual meeting of the Bureaus, and the establishment of Commissions in territories.

It must be noted that while some Country Representatives expressed an interest in the work of our W&GE Commission, the Trinidad Representatives, copied information that could help to guide their interest.

We must thank CARICOM for the invitation to be a part of this meeting and I thank our Chairperson, for selecting me to represent the Commission.

Although the Work for Women's involvement at national and local levels in all spheres of life in the Caribbean is growing, it is clear that Guyana, despite the limited funding is ahead of the others in giving meaning to the developing of women and gender. In the pronouncements by both the Head of the Bureau and I, **the statement was made that we have the unit to make recommendations for Policy- the W&GEC and the Units to promote women and Gender Issues - The WAB and more recently the MAB.** We in Guyana therefore, need to continue to make our presence known and felt as we continue to work for the women and gender development.

United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2012-2016 Mid Term Review was held on Wednesday 18th June, 2014 at Grand Coastal Hotel where the Commission was represented by Diana Swan-Lawrence, CEO and Nicole Cole, Commissioner



The United Nations Development Assistance Framework as crafted by the UNCountry Team (UNCT) and the Government of Guyana (GoG) fully recognised the Guyanese citizens not only as the source, but also as the primary motivating force for the development. The results framework through which the United Nations Country Team will operationalise its support to the further development of the Republic of Guyana sets as its common goals strategies which will:

- enhance the awareness and comprehension of people so that they are better able to influence and determine the direction of economic, social, environmental and political change;
- enhance the efficiency, productivity, innovation, creativity and organizational capacities of the Guyanese people in order to realise the national potential, and
- provide them with a sense of responsibility and accomplishment, and facilitate their enjoyment of their resources.

The UNDAF is a knowledge product of the UNCT and the GoG that is intended to guide the joint and individual technical cooperation of the UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes for the period 2012 - 2016.

This strategic framework is derived from the analytical examination of national conditions, challenges and national responses contained in the Common Country Analysis (CCA). For this programming period, the development agenda is driven mainly by the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (PRSP) II and to some extent by the National Competitiveness Strategy, the Constitutional Reform Plan, the National Health Sector Strategy, the Agricultural Development Plan, the Guyana Food and Nutrition Security Strategy, and the Education Sector Plan. Out of these Government Papers, a number of development themes, around which the work of the UN system in Guyana could be structured, were identified and assessed. This led to the formulation of four thematic papers, focused on:

Environment and Sustainable Development, Inclusive Growth, Inclusive Governance, and Human and Social Development, and jointly prepared by the GoG and the UNCT.

The CCA reviews the prevailing national conditions around each axial theme, identifies the associated challenges, national development goals and potential areas for development cooperation. After an intensive period of interaction with the GoG, the UNCT identified those areas in which it has a comparative advantage and could therefore make the greatest impact, fulfilling its mandate to focus on the MD/MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals and treaty obligations, and in so doing contribute to the development of Guyana

To be inclusive is a core value of democratic governance, in terms of equal participation, equal treatment and equal rights before the law. This implies that all people - including the poor, women, ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous peoples and other disadvantaged groups - have the right to participate meaningfully in governance processes and influence decisions that affect them. It also means that governance institutions and policies are accessible, accountable and responsive to disadvantaged groups, protecting their interests and providing diverse groups with equal opportunities for public services such as justice, health, and education. The three traditional branches of governance -legislature, executive and judiciary - along with civil society, the media and the private sector all have unique roles in, and a responsibility to, promoting sustainable human development. Moreover, the diverse functions of these institutions offer multiple opportunities for synergistic policy formulation and programming to promote inclusion of disadvantaged groups and an environment conducive to development.

Here the UNCT is targeting *Strengthened public participation, trust, and confidence in national governance institutions, including the five Rights Commissions, the Parliament and GECOM*. The following outputs will contribute to the realisation of this outcome:

1. Strengthened institutional capacity of Rights Commissions;
2. Participatory parliamentary approaches and functioning strengthened, including greater use of innovative ICT strategies and new age technology (E-Parliament);
3. Initiatives addressing social cohesion, public trust, human rights, peace building and conflict resolution scaled-up;
4. GECOM's capacity strengthened to develop and implement strategies to improve voter confidence and reduce opportunities for dissatisfaction.

The Outcome 3 for the Goal 3 listed above would be Strengthened public participation, trust, and confidence in national governance institutions, including the five Rights Commissions, the Parliament and GECOM

The Indicators are all Constitutional Commissions fully constituted and functioning of positive media articles/letters on public perception of Parliament interactive (e-parliament) website functioning GECOM comprehensive civic and voter education programme implemented Initiatives in Social cohesion, peace building established and being implemented

The Baselines 4 of the 5 Rights Commissions have been fully constituted of positive media articles/letters on public perception of Parliament in 2012 Parliament website

Social Cohesion Programme
(2003-2006) and EPTSI Programme (2008-2011)
Annual reports of the Commissions (tabled and available at the Parliament)

Media surveys involving all print and electronic media
Continued press freedom, High levels of public engagement in issues related to governance, Human Rights Commissions are fully Functioning, Technical cooperation and financial support for institutional capacity strengthening.

Report on meeting held Wednesday 9th July, 2014 at the CUSO's Office.



From left to right Deputy Country Representative Melanie Mc Turk, Commissioner Magda Pollard and Deputy Chairperson Cheryl Sampson

Present were the Deputy Chairperson, Ms. Cheryl Sampson, Commissioners Ms. Magda Pollard, Ms. Karen Vansluytman-Corbin, Ms. Vanda Radzik, Ms. Renata Chuck-A-Sang, Ms. Sandra Hooper and CEO, Ms. Diana Swan-Lawrence of the W&GEC, Ms. Melanie Mc Turk, Deputy Country Representative and Ms. Cheryl Hebert CUSO Volunteer represented CUSO.

The main purpose of the Meeting was to discuss the mandates and initiatives of the organizations and look at possible areas for collaboration. One common area identified was related to education on legal rights.

Ms. Melanie Mc. Turk said that **CUSO** had two main areas of focus, **Wealth Creation and Social Justice**. She elaborated that **Wealth as holistic included quality of life and access to basic human needs, while Social Justice was mainly engagement of the legal system through partnerships with W&GEC and WAB.**

Ms. Mc Turk shared a Gender Action Plan for CUSO Guyana: Addressing Inequalities between Women and Men. She elaborated that CUSO's main objective was to engage the Commission to support youths in the legal system with emphasis on the differences in experiences between boys and girls.

The Commission noted that CUSO was currently recruiting volunteers and needed an update on the status of this.



From left to right Commissioners Corbin and Radzik

Suggestions/ Recommendations from the Commission

1. Collaboration with CUSO in line with the Strategic Plan for the next 3 years.
2. The need for a professional Researcher
3. The filling of the vacancy at the CARICOM Gender Desk
4. The need for more collaboration with the NGO Community (e.g. establishment of similar NGOs such as CATCH-A-FYAH in Barbados) to promote greater networking opportunities for women and youths.
5. The need for Work Place Rights Policy on Sexual Harassment.
6. Commission would send the Concept Note on "Know Your Rights" to Cuso for possible support and funding
7. The possibility of CUSO support to train the UG students following the work shop on Gender Training at York University in partnership with Guyana and Suriname.

Suggestions/ Recommendations from CUSO

1. The position of Gender within CARICOM needs to be strengthened
2. UN Women and CDB are willing to fund another meeting for Bureau Heads in January
3. Linkages with the Volunteer Support Platform (VSP) - Promoting Volunteerism for Community Development
4. Partnership with the Gender Advisor of CUSO
5. Support for the Commission through E-Volunteering (allows for experts to share expertise and mentor various groups without a physical presence)

**Way Forward Recommendations from York University Workshop & Meeting
- July 22-24, 2014
Summary Report to WGEC - from Commissioner: Vanda Radzik**



Background:

As part of its Strategic Work Plan the WGEC has proposed the establishment of a Centre for Gender Studies at UG (among other recommendations pertaining to upgrading of the current Women's Studies at UG). A delegation from the Commission led by the Chair met earlier this year with Mr Opadeyi, the Vice Chancellor to discuss our proposal and to scope out the VC's receptivity to this - as well as a suite of other proposals put forward by the Commission. A Draft MOU between the WGEC and the University of Guyana represented by the VC was developed and has formed the basis of our engagement with the University of York - as a potential partner.

The WGEC also met with Dr Alissa Trotz of the University of Toronto and with Dr Kamala Kempadoo of the University of York (Canada) - both professors expressed an interest in the WGEC's proposal for a Centre for Gender Studies at UG and offered their assistance. Dr Kamala Kempadoo followed up on our meeting with her and organised a Workshop at York University over the summer to further explore ideas, content, curricula and resources etc. The workshop was organised to specifically engage a joint team from Suriname and Guyana, since Dr Kempadoo has been advised by potential sponsors/donors in Canada that it would be more beneficial to support a sub-regional proposal (Guyana & Suriname) than a single country proposal.

Suriname, through its Anton de Kom University, is developing, modernising and updating its gender studies and cross-cutting programming. Guyana currently has in place a small, but under-resourced Women's Studies programme at UG.

Dr Paloma Mohammed, the Dean of Social Sciences, (currently on Sabbatical) has been engaging with the University of Guyana and the University of York and has met with the relevant Canadian High Commission personnel in connection with a UG initiative she is spear-heading - which has some similar objectives to the concept and MOU proposed by the WGEC. Dr Kempadoo shared of the UG group's initiatives with members of the Commission and offered to organise a Workshop at York U, in order to bring together the various Guyanese and Surinamese representatives to discuss our shared goals and to strengthen collaboration.

The Guyanese contingent, participating in the workshop at York, included Dr Mohamed, Dr. Melissa Ifill and Mr Vidyaratha Kissoon, Lecturer in the Centre of Communications Studies at UG. Also participating was Ms Yvette Burke, PhD. Student in Gender Studies and former researcher at the UG Women's Studies Unit. Dr Janice Jackson also joined by Skype for the Day 1 discussion. She was able to provide invaluable background and information on the challenges and achievements experienced when she headed the Women's Studies unit at UG and to give an analysis on what measures were needed for the present.

The WGEC was also invited to send one of its Commissioners to the Workshop and Commissioner Radzik was appointed. She presented the Draft MOU for discussion at the workshop, which was well received and aspects of which were taken up for joint action etc. Subsequently, Ms Radzik met with Dr Paloma Mohamed and Mr Vidyaratha Kissoon for a debriefing, and Dr Mohamed is to submit some Notes as part of the Guyana follow-up. It is also proposed that, as soon as possible, the WGEC meets with Dr Mohamed & team.

This Report now submitted to the WGEC for its consideration is based on what emerged from the Workshop at York U. It draws on the draft notes received yesterday (14/10/14) from Dr Kamala Kempadoo, and summarises what was agreed in principle as a Way Forward.

Towards a Centre for Women, Gender and Development Studies (WGDS) at UG

Actions:

- **Conference in Guyana:**
- Organise a conference in Guyana co-supported by the WGEC Commission.
- Conference would outline what the proposed Centre for Gender Studies would offer and how it would be governed and funded etc. and to promote/ strengthen the proposed partnership with York University etc. -
- This would allow for promotion of the idea of a Centre of Gender Studies and presentations from experts from York U and from Anton de Kom University in Suriname. As well as Guyanese Gender specialists such as Janice Jackson etc.

- **Fundamentals for start-up of Women, Gender and Development Studies (WGDS) Programme**
- Some immediate/start-up steps and fundamentals to shape the WGDS Programme/Centre.
 - o Develop a certificate and/or minor in Women, Gender and Development Studies (WGDS)
 - o Introduce introductory/foundation courses in intersectional WGDS
 - o Bring a gender analysis into existing courses and disciplines
 - o Bring sexuality studies into WGDS
 - o Develop good pedagogy - active learning, asking big “juicy” questions, deep learning, meaningful learning, assessment, constructive alignment
 - o Stimulate intellectual curiosity and critical thinking skills
- Visiting Fellow in Caribbean Studies, University of Toronto.
- The University of Toronto has made this offer and it could be woven into the WGEC proposal and setting up of WSGD Centre at UG etc.

- Link with Ryerson University’s semester abroad in gender studies, in the Caribbean
- The University of Ryerson has also come on board with the link up for gender studies.

- Explore NGOs as sponsors of research projects;
- Organize roundtables with Women & Gender Studies (WSG) Faculty, NGOs and other stakeholders to identify needs of communities;
- Build “bridging” programs - education in the community to provide entrance to the university
- Community organizations collect and work with its own data
- Support for Caribbean woman scholars, for teaching, research, publication, further education (i.e.: PhDs)
- Identified Resources
- Set up of a Board / Steering Committee
- Establish a Steering Committee to serve as an Interim Board in the preliminary stages which will comprise university and community members to guide the development of Women, Gender & Development Studies (WGDS) Centre at UG.
- Institutional exchanges with Canadian universities - faculty and students
- Access Low Cost /No Cost Materials:
- Use of Internet - E-Courses to be factored into the proposed Women, Gender Studies & Development (WGDS) Programme & Centre for Gender Studies at UG (i.e. courses on York website can be shared - request course syllabi via email, share electronic materials, open-access journals etc.)
- Access Blogs for educational purposes (text and image)
 - o Selected blogs are used at York U in its Gender Studies - also shared were Jamaican & other Caribbean blogs that were powerful in demonstrating positive action and advocacy etc. (blogs are usually published on the Internet and can be accessed for use in classes & courses with permission of the blogger)
- Partnering with Business Sector, State & NGO partners:
- Identify and get some commitments from Partners in business, government and NGO

sectors to help to kick off sponsorships and research etc.

- NOTE: “What’s in a Name?”
- At York U itself there was a lot of debate on the naming of its own “Gender” Centre and Studies Programmes etc. (There is an entire history of this - and the naming has travelled through several permutations over the years!)
- At the York U Workshop, the Guyana group agreed in principle to put forward the name: “Women, Gender & Development Studies” (WGDS) for consideration and further discussion for the proposed Centre at UG.

List of Participants for Conference on International Women's Day 2014

No	Name of Participant	Organisation
1	H.E. Hon. Samuel Hinds	Prime Minister
2	Indranie Chandarpal	W&GEC/Women's Progressive Organisation (WPO)
3	Cheryl Sampson	W&GEC/ National Commission of Women (NCW)
4	Karen Vanslytman Corbin	W&GEC/Guyana Trade Union Congress (GTUC) Women Advisory Council (WAC)
5	Nicole Cole	W&GEC/Guyana Rastafarian Council (Culture, Ethnic)
6	Ernestine Logan	W&GEC/RWAC Region 10
7	Vanda Radzik	W&GEC/Women
8	Renata Chuck-A-Sang	W&GEC/Private Sector
9	Hymawattie Lagan	W&GEC/Women Affairs Bureau (WAB)
10	Diana Swan Lawrence	CEO/W&GEC
11	Maria Raghubir	AA/W&GEC
12	Mabel Baveghems	Member of Parliament
13	Roxanne George Wilshire	Judiciary
14	Marianne Flach	UNICEF
15	Cheryl Herbert	CARICOM
16	Yolanda Ward	UNDP
17	Nisa Kurban Babre	Ambassador/Suriname Embassy
18	Petr Sizov	Russian Embassy
19	Alexandro Martinez	Mexico Embassy
20	Sabine N Popoff	Brazilian Embassy
21	Tricia Watson	Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security
22	Sharon Alexander	Ministry of Tourism
23	Aleema Nasir	Chairperson RCC/Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana

24	Amarnauth Panday	CEO/RCC
25	Sandra Hooper	Rights of the Child Commission (RCC) /W&GEC
26	Andre Gonslaves	Investigative Officer/RCC
27	Shonell Mingo	AA/RCC
28	Abiola Chappell	Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC)
29	Esther Robinson	ERC
30	Leotha Matterson	Human Rights Commission (HRC)
31	Kelvin Morris	HRC
32	Mariea Suegrim	HRC
33	Patrick Phillips	HRC
34	Roxanne Myers	Individual
35	Maxine Parris-Aaron	Inter American Institute for Corporation on Agriculture
36	Linda Johnson	Women Across Difference
37	D. Hopkinson	Women Across Differences/WIN
38	Victoria Hamilton	Methodist Church of Guyana
39	Brenda Nurse	International Federation for World Peace
40	Susan Rijkaard	Women's Federation for World Peace
41	Megan Anderson	Women's Federation for World Peace
42	Jennie Lancaster	Women's Federation for World Peace
43	Pandit D. Tillack	Inter Religious Organisation/IRO
44	Krishnalall Persaud	Inter Religious Organisation/IRO
45	Raquel Thomas Caesar	Citizens Against Rape
46	Karen Layne	GTUC/WAC
47	Anne Massiah	GTUC/WAC
48	Brenda Alleyne	GTUC/WAC
49	Brenda Blair	GTUC/WAC

50	Chelsie France	Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association-GRPA
51	Glenis Archer	GRPA
52	Claudette Thiband	Salvation Army
53	Carolinda Cumberbatch	Salvation Army
54	Patrise Thomas	Community Based Rehabilitation Programme
55	Marlyn Waterman	Sparklin Sunshine Support Group
56	Janice Beaton-Shepherd	Guyana Postal and Telegraph Workers Union
57	Barbara Abrigo	Guyana Postal and Telegraph Workers Union
58	Kim Halley	Clerical and Commercial Workers Union
59	Allister Collins	Guyana Faith and HIV Coalition
60	Soorsattie Persaud	Faith Coalition
61	Kala Seegopaul	Bahai Faith
62	Laureen Pierre	Bahai Faith
63	Rhonda Hercules	Jah Works
64	Juhania Hughes	Jah Works
65	Mitch Thomas	9 Moons
66	R. Keith	Nyahbinghi
67	S. Garraway	Nyahbinghi
68	Shana Adonis	Guyana Women Leadership Institute
69	Carmen Ramcharran	Women's Progressive Organisation/WPO
70	Ruth Sanasie	Women's Progressive Organisation/WPO
71	Basmattie Persaud	Women's Progressive Organisation/WPO
72	Nandanie Singh	Women's Progressive Organisation/WPO
73	G. Mohabir	Women's Progressive Organisation/WPO
74	D. Bissessar	Women's Progressive Organisation/WPO
75	Hemawattie Khan	Enmore Women Support Group

76	Andrew Wilson	Guyana Relief Council
77	Rehanna Ramsey	Kaieteur News
78	N.Jaundoo	News Update (MTV) 14/65
79	Gomatie Gangadin	Guyana Times/TVG/RGI
80	D. Daniels	Stabroek News
81	Donnette Williams	HGPTV 67
82	Rashieigh Benjamin	HGPTV 67
83	S. Bowen	Prime News
84	Shunza Samuels	National Communication Networks (NCN)
85	A. Persaud	Guyana Information News Agency (GINA)
86	S. Thome	GINA

**Attendance to Statutory Meetings of the Women and Gender Equality
Commission**

(38th-51st Statutory Meeting of the W&GEC)

Period after the Commission's Report to Parliament 2014

No	Names	Jun 2013	Jul 2013	Aug 2013	Sep 2013	Oct 2013	Nov 2013	Dec 2013	Jan 2014	Feb 2014	Mar 2014	Apr 2014	May 2014	Jun 2014	Total Present	Total Absent
1	Indranie Chandarpal - Chairperson	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	AE	12	1
2	Cheryl Sampson -Deputy Chairperson	P	P	P	AE	P	P	P	P	P	p	AE	P	P	11	2
3	Ali-Hack Shalimar	P	AE	P	AE	P	AE	P	AE	AE	AE	P	AE	P	6	7
4	Baron Gaietri	P	P	AE	P	P	P	AE	P	P	P	AE	P	P	10	3
5	Burton Gillian	P	AE	P	AE	P	AE	P	AE	P	AE	P	P	AE	7	6
6	Chuck-A-Sang Renata	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	AE	AE	P	11	2
7	Cole Nicole	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	13	0
8	Coonjah Nandranie	P	P	P	P	AE	P	p	P	P	P	P	AE	P	11	2
9	Corbin Karen Vansluytman	P	AE	P	A	P	AE	P	P	P	P	AE	P	P	9	4
10	Henry Debra Ann	P	P	AE	P	AE	AE	AE	P	P	P	P	P	P	9	4
11	Hooper Sandra	P	P	P	P	AE	AE	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	11	2
12	Jacobis Doreen	A	AE	P	AE	AE	AE	AE	P	AE	P	AE	P	P	5	8
13	Khan Bebbie Haliema	P	AE	P	P	P	AE	P	P	P	AE	P	AE	P	9	4
14	Lagan Haymawattie	P	P	P	P	P	AE	P	AE	P	P	P	P	P	11	2
15	Logan Ernestine Barker	P	P	P	P	P	P	AE	AE	P	P	AE	P	AE	9	4
16	Persaud Peter	P	P	P	P	AE	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	12	1
17	Pollard Magda	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	AE	P	P	12	1
18	Radzik Vanda	p	P	P	P	P	AE	AE	P	AE	AE	P	AE	AE	7	6

P - Present

AE- Absent with Excuse

A - Absent

Total Number of Meetings for the Reporting Period

13

NOTES

NOTES