



Rights of the Child Commission

**Annual Report
January - December 2014**

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CCPA	-	Child Care and Protection Agency
GAWL	-	Guyana Association of Women Lawyers
MCYS	-	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport
MHSS	-	Ministry of Human Services and Social Security
RCC	-	Rights of the Child Commission
SKYE	-	Skills & Knowledge for Youth Employment
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children Fund
UN	-	United Nations

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chairperson’s Remarks	3
Introduction	4
Composition of 2014 Action.....	9
Activities for 2012.....	12
Challenges and Successes	13
Appreciation.....	14

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

The year 2014, though subject to a regime of challenges, mainly pertaining to difficulties accessing the Commission's Budget, has been one that has been productive.

During this year, the Commission conducted three legs of engagement at the New Opportunity Corps, wherein, there was a significant infusion of ideas salutary to the rights and interests of Guyana's children in contact with the law. It has been an engagement that constituted a significant capacity building of the New Opportunity Corps- Guyana's only juvenile correctional facility. As a significant corollary, the Commission has also engaged the children, resident at the Corps, with a leadership and empowerment programme intended to educate and empower, so that such children, can be reintegrated into their communities as productive citizens.

During 2014, also, the Commission also engaged such centres as the Kuru Kuru, Sophia and Vryman Erving training centres with a similar engagement of staff and students. This engagement has been guided by the thrust of youth education and empowerment.

In 2014, an innovative initiative was started i.e. the RCC's Child Rights and Poetry workshop intended to convey the spirit and intent of the RCC's principal human rights instrument: the CRC, through the medium of poetry. This initiative was premised on the pedagogic principles that children learn in a myriad of ways.

The Child Participation Action Plan workshop was a definitive endeavor intended to make manifest the spirit and intent of Article 12, of the CRC i.e. to empower children with the capacity and facility to effectively participate in the respective settings in which they exist.

The Commission's engagement of the Ptolemy Reid Rehab Centre constituted a thrust to cultivate and engender a societal ethos benevolent to Guyana's children with disabilities. It makes manifest an endeavor to actualize the spirit and intent of the UNCRPD.

The success of 2014 will inspire and activate renewed vigour in the interest of Guyana's children. I implore all stakeholders to come on board a movement for our children.

Aleema Nasir

Chairperson

INTRODUCTION

The year 2014 was a challenging and in a limited way, productive one for the Rights of the Child Commission ("RCC"). As was expected, the progress that was possible by the RCC hinged on the financial commitments of the State through budgetary allocations. In the course of this report, the activities as highlighted will reflect the level of support provided.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the RCC was supported tangibly by UNICEF and this international organisation's support is gratefully acknowledged and recorded.

The following persons served on the Rights of the Child Commission for 2014.

Representatives of Religion



Aleema Nasir – Chairperson, RCC

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



Colleen Anthony – Member

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

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



Sarojanie Rambaran – Member

Mrs. Rambaran represents the Hindu religion. She is a counselor and educator of many years' experience. She is also a member of the Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sabha and has served for many years as a member of Mahela Mandele, its women's arm.



Sandra Hooper – Member

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

Representatives of women



Rosemary Benjamin-Noble – Deputy Chairperson

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

Representatives of service



Yvonne Fox - Member

Mrs. Fox is a trained educator, having been a teacher and later principal for many years. A graduate of the George Meany Labour College, USA, Mrs. Fox also has given yeoman service representing the Guyana Teacher's Union (GTU) including as President of its women's arm. Throughout the years Mrs. Fox served as Co – ordinator of the Teachers upgrading classes in the Georgetown District for years, and is a former Vice – Chairperson of the Legal Aid Clinic of Guyana. She is a member of the Education sub – committee of the Rights of the Child Commission and was honored by the Women and Gender Equality Commission in August, 2011.

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

Representatives of youth



Kaloutie (Pamela) Nauth – Member

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

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

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

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

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



Marissa Massiah– member

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

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



Michelle Kalamandeen – Member

Ms. Kalamandeen represents the Rights of Children (ROC) organisation. She co-founded ROC in 1998 and has conducted child rights advocacy training workshops throughout Guyana and community opportunity for addressing issues. She also developed numerous youth campaigns aimed at racial harmony, co-developed the preamble of the Guyanese Constitution and is a board member of the Guyana Human Rights Association. Michelle is an environmental lecturer at the University of Guyana.



Suelle Findlay – Williams – Member

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

Representatives of Human services



Kwame McCoy – Member

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

Representatives of other (related) interests



Hyacinth (Cynthia) Massay - Member

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

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

Ex – officio Commissioners



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

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



Amarnauth Panday - Chief Executive Officer/Secretary

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



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

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

Composition of 2014 Action

Plan

During the first quarter of 2014, the CEO composed a 2014 Action Plan which was ratified at a special meeting of the Commissioners. The Action Plan was composed utilizing the various mandates as adumbrated by the RCC's Strategic Plan. These mandates include:

- Promoting of Child Rights
- Promoting the Rights of Children – including of policy levels and in Government decisions
- Monitoring compliance making recommendation for the compliance with international instruments.
- Establishing of Complaint Mechanism with tracking system.
- Fundraising, Operational and Capital.

First leg of engagement with the New Opportunity Corps.

During the first quarter of 2014, the RCC conducted a capacity building training with the staffers of the New Opportunity Corps. The training focused on the need of the child, the UNCRC, the models of human development and the importance of evidence based decision making.

The capacity building session was aimed at empowering the staff of the corps with a knowledge and appreciation of the critical nature of their respective roles in the psychosocial rehabilitation of the children under their care.

The session would mark an important juncture in the cultivation of a productive relationship with the Ministry of culture, Youth and Sports. A relationship that would see the Commission doing pioneering empowerment work at the NOC, KKTC, Sophia Training Centre and Vryman Erving Training Centre.

Capacity Building Workshop with the staffers of the Sophia Training Centre and Kuru Kuru Training Centre.

During the first quarter of 2014, the RCC conducted similar workshops with the staffers at the Sophia Training Centre and the Kuru Kuru training centre.

Both of these centres are vocational skills training institutions with a clientele of children and youth. This clientele would be significantly comprised of those children and youth who would have dropped out of or underperformed in the regular school system.

Promoting Child Rights through Poetry

During the first quarter of 2014, the RCC conducted a **Child Rights through Poetry** workshop. This workshop was attended by ten Georgetown schools. The workshop was facilitated by the CEO Mr. Amar Panday and Mr. Yaphet Jackman.

The workshop examined the basics of poetry, Guyanese poetry and appreciating child rights through poetry.

Second leg of the NOC engagement.

During the second quarter of 2014, the RCC conducted the second leg of the engagement with the New Opportunity Corps. This engagement took the form of a two day workshop with both the staff and students of the corps. The session with the staff focused on the respective legislation which apply to the corps, as well as the strengthening of the psycho social role and capacity of the staff. The session with the students focused on personal and leadership development as well as literacy development.

The engagement with the NOC represents a key focus of the Commission. It is a focus that is committed to the protection, empowerment and education of Guyana's at risk and disadvantaged children.

Exercising the Mediator Role of the Commission

During the year 2014, the RCC sought to exercise its constitutionally mandated role as a mediator pursuant to the objective of the protection of Guyana's children. As a result, a number of cases on the investigative desk of the Commission were mediated. This led to an amelioration and betterment, both on a short term and permanent basis, of the plight of a number of children in at-risk and vulnerable positions.

Capacity Building with the senior staffers of the NOC, Kuru Kuru, Sophia and Vryman's Erven's training Centres.

In the second quarter of 2014, the RCC conducted a special training with the senior staffers of the NOC, Kuru Kuru, Sophia and Vryman's Erven's training Centres. This workshop focused on Professionalism and Leadership as well as an in depth examination of the Sexual Offences Act of 2010. This workshop was conducted by the Deputy Chairperson Mrs. Rosemary Benjamin Noble and other commissioners, together with CEO of the RCC, Mr. Amar Panday.

The decision to focus on the Sexual Offences Act was premised on allegations of sexual abuse at the NOC. It was reasoned that briefing senior staffers on the comprehensive nature of the Act would provide the requisite knowledge that would allow them to play meaningful roles in combating this malady.

Consultation with the Strategic Management Plan of the Guyana Police Force

In the second quarter of 2014, the chairperson, deputy chairperson and CEO meet with the GPF's Strategic Management Team.

The consultation focused on a number of policy areas with the Commission submitting its policy positions in a number of areas of child protection and empowerment which converge with the role and mandate of the Guyana Police Force. Issues related to strategy on youth gangs, youth crime, and juvenile and child justice including wandering, criminalization and diversion; standard operating procedures for the police to deal with violence near schools and police intervention; drug use among children and strategies to keep it out of school (peer groups, counseling, and welfare programmes), were all discussed.

The Team committed to incorporating the policy positions of the RCC into the Strategic Management Plan of the Force. Both parties also committed to working closer to ensure the protection of Guyana's children.

Second Leg of the engagement with the Kuru Kuru Training Centre

During the third quarter of 2014, the RCC conducted its second engagement with the Kuru Kuru training Centre. This workshop entailed working with both the staff and students of the Centre in the areas of the UNCRC and the CEDAW and the ways in which they intersect.

A session was also conducted with the staff of the corps on professionalism, leadership and team building. Both the Staff corps and student body of the Centre hail from predominantly rural and hinterland regions. Thus, it is contemplated that the work done with the Centre, will also benefit those rural and hinterland communities.

As the principal body responsible for the dissemination of the articles of the UNCRC, the RCC is committed to sharing the articles of the UNCRC throughout the rural and hinterland communities of Guyana.

Engagement with the Ptolemy Reid Rehabilitation Centre

During the third quarter of 2014, the RCC conducted its first engagement with the senior staffers of the Ptolemy Reid Rehabilitation Centre.

This workshop focused on the Needs of the child, the UNCRC and the RCC's Investigative Mechanism. The engagement with the Rehab Centre reflects the commitment of the Commission to address the protection, empowerment and education needs of Guyana's differently abled children. It is anticipated that the training provided to the staff will enhance their capacity to better care for the children under their superintendence.

The Commission, through this initiative, has sought to forge a closer relationship with this Centre.

Community Outreach and Partnerships

Throughout the year 2014, the RCC has sought

to establish strong working relationships with communities spanning the administrative regions of Guyana. Communities which were targeted include Bush lot, Meten Meer Zorg, Kitty and Buxton encompassing administrative regions 2, 3 and 4.

During the year, workshops were conducted with youth activists from these communities who, in turn, would lead the way in the protection, empowerment and education of the children in their communities.

The training provided to these youth activists include the UNCRC, CEDAW, Literacy and Leadership Development. The Commission continues to maintain a relationship with these communities working closely with our trained ambassadors in cultivating a community ethos conducive to upholding the rights of the child.

Third Leg of the NOC engagement

During the third quarter of 2014, the RCC conducted the third leg of its engagement with the NOC. This leg was conducted jointly with the Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association (GRPA).

The two - day workshop saw sessions facilitated on sexual and reproductive health as well as literacy and leadership conducted by representatives of the GRPA and the RCC respectively. These sessions were very well received by the students.

The second day saw sessions with the staff on professionalism and leadership conducted by the CEO of the RCC. These sessions also saw the participation of Ms. Nandranie Conjah of the Women and Gender Equality Commission.

The third leg of the engagement with the NOC represents the formidable commitment of the Commission towards the institutional strengthening at the NOC.

RCC's Presence on the UNDP's MDGs Awards Committee

During the third quarter of 2014, the RCC participated in an awards committee that was tasked with adjudicating awards to both public and private sector actors and stakeholders who

have been engaged in sustained and stellar work in the advancement of the UN Millennium Development goals.

The RCC was initially represented on this committee by the CEO Mr. Amar Panday and then subsequently by Commissioner Sandra Hooper, and these persons contributed to a successful conclusion of those deliberations.

Second and third leg of the engagement with the Sophia Training Centre

During the third quarter of 2014, the RCC conducted the second and third legs of its engagement with the Sophia Training Centre.

These workshops focused predominantly on the youth clientele of the Centre. These sessions focused on personal development, leadership development and the UNCRC. The third leg of the engagement targeted the students who were selected to attend work study engagements. The third leg of the engagement featured a motivational presentation by the Speaker of the National Assembly the Hon. Raphael Trotman. These engagements were very well received by the student body of the Centre.

The Sophia Training Centre is a significant location of Guyana's at risk and disadvantaged children and youth. The engagement with the centre reflects the commitment of the commission to the empowerment of the student body of the Centre.

Face the Community meetings Conducted in Partnership with the Ministry of Education

During the third quarter of 2014, The RCC partnered with the Ministry of Education to participate in a number of face – the - community meetings in Grove (Region 4) and Zeeland (Region 5).

These meetings allowed the commissioners and CEO to interact with parents and other stakeholder on issues relevant to the education of Guyana's Children. These meetings were attended by Commissioners Pamela Nauth, Sandra Hooper

and the CEO of the RCC Mr. Amar Panday.

At these meetings, the RCC took the opportunity to brief parents and other stakeholders on the work done by the commission. Commissioners also spoke to parents on the UNCRC and the requirements thereof.

The face the community meetings represented an important juncture vis a vis the relationship with the Ministry of Education as the Commission would move to cement other tangible initiatives in partnership with the Ministry of Education.

Child Participation Action Plan Workshop

During the third quarter of 2014, the RCC in partnership with UNICEF, hosted a Child Participation Action Plan workshop.

This workshop utilized the Child Participation Framework that was crafted in 2013 to come up with a National Child Participation Action Plan. This Action Plan will serve as a tangible blueprint and roadmap for establishing child participation in Guyana. The framework document has been shared with Members of Parliament, Government Ministers etc.

This workshop was facilitated by the CEO of the RCC Mr. Amar Panday along with vital support from other commissioners. The youth and child participants were drawn from each administrative region.

Engagement with Teachers of the Dharmic Rama Krishna Primary school

During the last quarter of 2014, the RCC conducted a UNCRC and capacity building workshop with the teachers of the Dharmic Rama Krishna Primary School.

This school falls under the jurisdiction of the Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sahha. The workshop was organized by Mrs. Sarojanie Rambarran, commissioner of the RCC and Board member of the Dharmic Rama Krishna Primary School. The session focused on professionalism in the teaching service and examined the articles of the CRC. The workshop was facilitated by the CEO Mr. Amar Panday with vital support from Commissioners

Rambaran and Hooper.

The workshop represents the commitment of the Commission to work with all faith based organizations in raising national consciousness with regard to the needs of the child and the UNCRC.

Second engagement with the senior staffers of the Ptolemy Reid Rehab Centre.

The RCC during the last quarter of 2014, conducted the second leg of the engagement with the senior staffers of the Ptolemy Reid Rehab Centre.

The engagement focused on the UNCRPD and the Acts pertaining to disabled children in Guyana. The workshop was organized by RCC commissioner and Director of the Ptolemy Reid Rehab Centre, Mrs. Cynthia Massay. This workshop was facilitated by the CEO Mr. Amar Panday with vital assistance from commissioners Massay and Rambaran.

The RCC will continue to work closely with the Rehab Centre and other similar institutions ensuring that Guyana's differently able children are offered the protection and empowerment enshrined in the UNCRC and UNCRPD.

Leadership and Website Launch Workshop

During the last quarter of 2014, the RCC conducted a leadership and Website launch workshop. The workshop saw the launch of the RCC's website www.rccgy.org. The workshop featured the participation of ten Georgetown Schools.

RCC contracted web designer Mr. Paramdeo Singh, briefed the participants on the myriad features of the website and moreover, how they can communicate with the Commission via the site. Participants also got an opportunity to make suggestions on the continued crafting and enhancement of the site.

The workshop also featured sessions by the CEO on leadership development, the UNCRC and the RCC's complaint mechanism. RCC commissioners Ms. Pamela Nauth and Mrs. Sarojanie Rambaran played instructive roles. UNICEF's communication programme officer Ms. Jewell Mbozi also attended.

The critical support of UNICEF is acknowledged in this important step for the RCC.

RCC presentation at the UNICEF/GOG mid - term Review

During the last quarter of 2014, the RCC presented at the UNICEF/ GOG mid - term review, on the work undertaken by the Commission in partnership with UNICEF. This presentation was made by CEO of the RCC Mr. Amar Panday guided by Deputy Chairperson Mrs. Rosemary Benjamin Noble. The presentation focused on the three pillar areas of partnership between the Commission and UNICEF. These include:

1. Child Protection
2. Child Participation
3. Media Monitoring

The Mid - Term Review also featured presentations from the senior representatives of the Ministries of Health, Education, and Human Services and Social Security, all of whom detailed their ministries' accomplishments in partnership with UNICEF.

Workshop facilitated by UNICEF and the Governance Unit of the Office of the President on the reporting process attached to Guyana's treaty Obligations under the UNCRC.

During the last quarter of 2014, the RCC participated in a round table discussion on Guyana's treaty obligations under the UNCRC. The feature presentation was delivered by Ms. Gail Teixeira, Head of the Governance Unit of the Office of the President. Ms. Teixeira had disclosed that the reporting would contain a gamut of measures undertaken by the country in realizing the articles of the UNCRC.

The round table discussion was also attended by a number of other critical stakeholders with a material interest in the realization of the articles in the UNCRC. Such included the CCPA, GPF, Legal Aid etc.

Engagement with the Georgetown Schools

During the last quarter of 2014, the RCC embarked on a series of UNCRC/ Leadership workshops in

the secondary schools of Georgetown.

This engagement came out of a cultivated relationship with the Ministry of Education. The schools covered in the last quarter of 2014 are: Queen's College, Bishops' High School, Central High School and New Campbellville Secondary School. These workshops were facilitated by the CEO Mr. Amar Panday with vital support from the commissioners.

These workshops were intended to familiarize students with the articles of the convention as well to nurture a cadre of child and youth leaders who would, in turn, do further work in the dissemination of the convention. These workshops were also premised on the spirit and intent of the child participation philosophy.

Attendance and Participation at a Family Law Conference in Nassau Bahamas

During the last quarter of 2014, the RCC attended and participated in a Family Law Conference in Nassau Bahamas. Commissioner Sandra Hooper attended and represented the Commission.

This conference gave special focus to children in the observance of the 25th Anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The theme of the conference was "Our Children, an Endangered Species".

The Conference brought together representatives of the legal profession and other critical stakeholders involved in the enlivening of the articles of the UNCRC.

CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

The perennial challenge of insufficient resources remained in 2014. It was the hope of the RCC that it would be able to execute certain activities in outlying and remote areas, but these unfortunately suffered from the refusal of disbursement by the Ministry of Finance.

Generally, the stymieing of the exercise of autonomy by the RCC as guaranteed by the Constitution of Guyana, caused execution of its work plan to be at times difficult. Were it not for the dedication of commissioners, the CEO and staff of the RCC to the fundamental cause of the

rights of the child, very little work may have been done.

Regardless, however, of the foregoing frustrations, the RCC had the ever – present bolster of UNICEF, and the Commission was able to carry out other significant work.

APPRECIATION

Appreciation is hereby recorded to all of the stakeholders who partnered with RCC in 2014. Our gratitude to the UNICEF Country Representative, Ms. Marianne Flach, officers of UNICEF, Ms. Patricia Gittens, Ms. Jewel Crosse and Ms. Jewel Mbozi for their continuous assistance and support to the RCC.

Thanks to Mr. Marco De Souza and Ms. Nicole Cole, *ex-officio* representatives of the Indigenous Peoples and Women & Gender Equality Commissions, respectively, who have been diligent in supporting the work of RCC.

We look forward to continuing to execute our mandate of oversight for the protection of the rights of the child.

