

FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2026



*Developed by the
Women and Gender Equality Commission (W&GEC)*

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Foreword by the Chairperson: Ms Indra Chandarpal

It has been a privilege to have served as the Chairperson of the Women and Gender Equality Commission (WGEC) during the period 2013-2018 when we sought to roll out our first strategic plan. There have been many accomplishments but there have also been some challenges that are associated with inadequate human, and financial resources as well as issues central to governance and gender justice at the national and regional levels. Constitutionally, the mandate of the Commission is to promote national recognition and acceptance that women's rights are human rights, respect for and the protection, development, and attainment of gender equality. The Commission holds fast to its vision *to have in Guyana, an environment where the rights of women are recognized as human rights and gender equality is upheld*. Our mandate and our vision are also guided by Goals 5 and 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Specifically, Goal 5 states that “*Gender equality is a human right, and is vital for a peaceful, prosperous world*”, whereas Goal 16 states that “*the aim is inclusive societies with strong institutions that provide justice for all*”. As we enter this new era beset by new challenges such as COVID-19, we also look forward to the opening up of new opportunities as we are poised to become an oil-rich economy.

This Five-year strategic action plan (2021-2026) outlines the course of action the Commission will be taking as it supports national efforts for a gender-just Guyana. The Commission continues to draw upon the international agreements which have been ratified, as well as the range of experiences and lessons learned as Guyana sought to implement those processes that would promote gender equality. The Commission has conducted its internal self-assessment and consultations. Hence this plan is shaped in part by our strengths and weaknesses as well as the expectations of our stakeholders.

The strategic action plan for the next five years has been built around a framework for social justice. Gender justice is an integral component of this plan which is built upon five pillars. These are access to justice; human rights; equity in economic development; participation in decision-making on gender and social justice issues; and access to health and social services.

Further, this strategic plan is an indication that the Commission is committed to upholding the full rights of women in advocating gender justice. The Commission must continue to monitor Guyana's compliance with the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as enshrined in the Guyana Constitution. Our Commission looks forward to a Guyana where gender and social justice become a norm.

To all the other stakeholders within the government and non-government sector that contributed to the development of our 2021-2026 Five Year Strategic Action Plan, we thank you!!

Indranie Chandarpal
Chairperson

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Five Year Strategic Plan for the Women and Gender Equality Commission(W&GEC) for the period 2021-2026 is framed within the context of gender justice and built around five pillars. These pillars are: (i) access to justice;(ii) human rights; (iii) equity in economic development; (iv)Participation in decision-making on gender and social justice issues; and (v)Access to Health and Social Services. The Plan consists of two primary objectives, five goals with clear outputs and outcomes. The achievement of the outcomes is linked to collaborations with several other stakeholders and the anticipated roles of these collaborations and integrated activities are detailed within the plan. Ultimately this plan serves as a roadmap for implementing the Commission’s vision to advance gender justice within a framework of social justice.

The 2013-2018 strategic plan outlined the ambitious agenda of the Commission, and while much was achieved, the primary challenges were three-fold. These included (i) inadequate technical and financial resources to undertake the multiplicity of tasks, (ii) the terrain of Guyana which made it difficult to adequately reach the underserved communities and, (iii) a political climate that does not always place gender justice at the front of its agenda. To mitigate these challenges, the new plan embraces both a top-down and bottom-up approach where networks of support will be strengthened to enable the Commission to purposefully and efficiently execute its constitutional responsibilities for a gender just Guyana.

This Five-year strategic plan outlines a course for the Commission to monitor and protect the human rights of women and advocate for social justice. Although the Commission is the national authority for the promotion of women and gender equality in Guyana, it is not the only agency working to do so. Hence along with the Government of Guyana, this mandate is also pursued by several other non-governmental and civil society agencies. This plan, therefore, outlines a series of collaborative and strategic partnerships to support the efforts of the Commission.

List of Acronyms	
BOC	Budget and Oversight Committee
BoS	Bureau of Statistics
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
GAWL	Guyana Association of Women Lawyers
GAB	Gender Affairs Bureau
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEP	Government Enhancement Programme
GFP	Guyana Police Force
GPA	Guyana Press Association
GPS	Guyana Prison Service
GM	Gender Mainstreaming
GSR	Gender-sensitive reporting

List of Acronyms	
GTU	Guyana Teachers' Union GWLI
GWLI	Guyana Women Leadership Institute
GWMO	Guyana Women Miners Association
HRC	Human Rights Commission
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IGS	Institute for Gender Studies
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPC	Indigenous People's Commission
MAB	Men's Affairs Bureau
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MLGRD	Ministry of Local Development and Regional Development
MLHSS	Ministry of Labour Human Services and Social Security
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation

List of Acronyms	
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
MMC	Media Monitoring Committee
RCC	Rights of the Child Commission
RWAC	Regional Women's Affairs Committee
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UG	University of Guyana
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
WAB	Women's Affairs Bureau
WGEC	Women Gender Equality Commission
WPC	Work Plan Committee

SECTION 1

Introduction

Social justice has been central to the work of the Women and Gender Equality Commission (W&GEC). This is evidenced in the 2013-2018 strategic action plan which outlines a four-pronged approach to (i) organize and strengthen the Commission (ii) advocate for women leadership and governance (iii) promote women's economic empowerment (iv) lobby for efforts to mitigate gender-based violence.¹ This approach is consistent with global perspectives on social justice that articulate the views that “everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities” “Social justice encompasses economic justice”(NASW (2016). Embedded in social justice is the protection of human rights and access to equal opportunities (Soken-Huberty, n.d). It should be demonstrated within society through a notion of fairness. For social justice to be effective, it requires both individuals and the gatekeepers of society to understand and act upon their different roles.

Main Objective

The Women and Gender Equality Commission hereafter referred to as (W&GEC), shall promote national recognition and acceptance that women's rights are human rights, respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality.

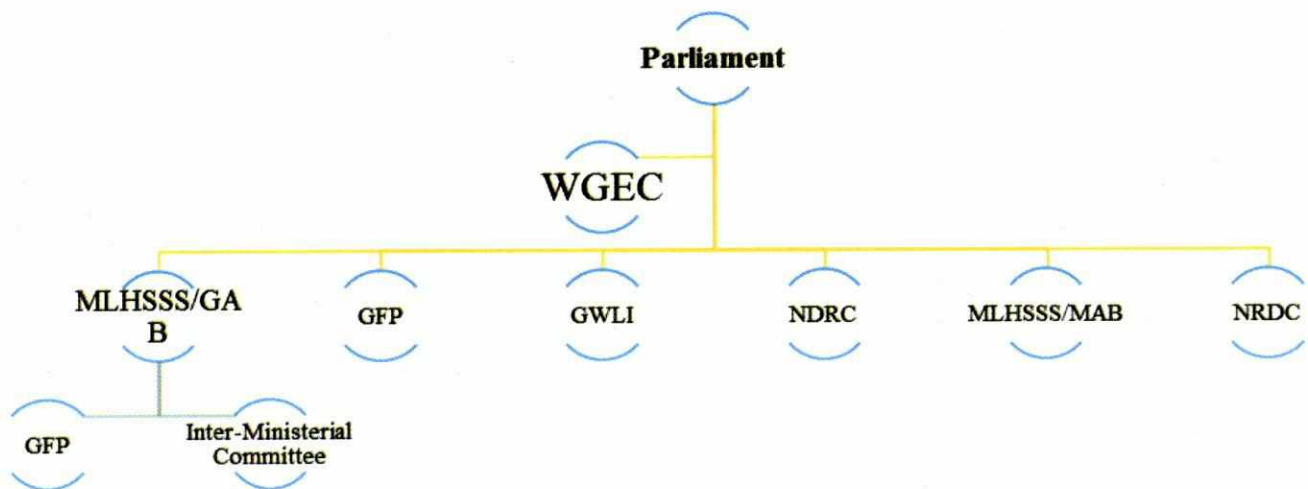


Figure 1: The National Gender Machinery in Guyana

¹WGEC Strategic Action Plan 2013-2018

The W&GEC continues to be a pivotal stakeholder in the promotion of social justice. The Commission advocates for gender justice within both the legislative and policy environment to increase equality in opportunities for women with specific reference to practical needs and priorities of disadvantaged women.² Within the period 2013-2019, the Commission implemented varying aspects of its access to justice program in seven (7) of the ten (10) regions of Guyana.³ The access to justice program has been scaled up in the development of Goal 2 of the W&GEC action plan which sought to empower women via rights-based initiatives to access the justice system successfully.⁴

The continued sensitization of the public and specifically women's, men's, youth, and religious organizations to gender issues continues to be pivotal to the mandate of the Commission. The pillars and priorities upon which this plan is built outlines how the Commission intends to execute its mandated functions over the next five years. Since 2003, the Guyana Government demonstrated its commitment to gender equity became when the Guyana Constitution enshrined as a fundamental Right - equal rights status with men in all spheres of political, economic, and social life – as embodied in the CEDAW Convention. Other supporting evidence of Guyana's advocacy and improvements must be recognized in a 13 percent increase in female representation in parliament over the last two decades, (18.5 percentage in 1992 to 32 percent in 2012). This was due to 2001 legislation requiring political parties to include as a third of their lists of candidates as an eligibility criterion to contest national and regional elections. Concomitantly, women's advancement in both non-traditional sectors in the public and private sectors has become very visible over the last two decades.

CEDAW reports have highlighted that while significant progress had been made in Guyana, patriarchal norms, religion, social and cultural attitudes, and the challenging economic situation constituted obstacles to the achievement of full gender equality. Notwithstanding these challenges, the Commission is committed to pursuing gender transformation and social justice. These efforts the Commission envisages will not only improve the quality of life for women in their families, communities, and place of productive engagement but the country as a whole. The EU affirms that "Countries with more room to improve gender equality have much to gain. On average, improved gender equality in these countries is expected to lead to an increase in GDP of about 12% by 2050".⁵ Hence this plan with a focus on gender and social justice is geared towards supporting the developmental trajectory of Guyana.

²Towards effective Rights Commission in Guyana: Capacity Assessment Report, UNDP2012

³ Annual report, WGEC

⁴WGEC Strategic action plan, 2013-2018

⁵Economic Benefits of Gender Equality in the European Union; retrieved at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/economic-and-financial-affairs/economic-benefits-gender-equality>

Women and Gender in Guyana: A context

As early as the mid-1940s, and long before the UN conferences, women's activism began to unfold in Guyana. Prominent female figures in government and public life, strong advocacy through women NGOs/CSOs movements etc., were critical components of women's development taking shape while igniting a broader development debate. Later, empowerment as a mechanism for achieving gender equality was catalyzed including the signing and ratification of the CEDAW and establishment of the Women Affairs Bureau (WAB) in 1981. From 1996 the National Commission on Women, a ten-member group representative across political parties, NGOs, and CBOs appointed by the Cabinet, served as the advisory council for the Bureau of Women's Affairs. It also has been the leading organization in developing the Guyana and Caribbean Plans of Action for Beijing, and the National Plan of Action for Women, 2000 to 2004. When in 1997, the first constitutional review committee began its hearings, the existing National Commission on Women appointed in 1996 made representation for the establishment of a Commission under the constitution. This advocacy was strongly supported by the Non-Governmental Women's Organizations (NGWOs).

More recently, efforts at a rights-based approach to women's development have been concretized through initiatives such as the Constitutional, Women and Gender Equality Commission.⁶ In addition to the work of the WAB in coordinating national efforts to remove discrimination against women in Guyana, there have been other functioning mechanisms and institutions to promote gender equality within the national and international arena. Figure 1 highlights the national gender machinery in Guyana. Under the auspices of the Women's Affairs Bureau (WAB), now known as the Gender Affairs Bureau, gender focal points (GFPs) were put in place at the institutional level to ensure gender mainstreaming as an ongoing process. This should have been monitored by the Inter-Ministry Committee which should have been providing the Bureau with the evidence of gender mainstreaming in government ministries, departments, and agencies. This system has not been as functional nor effective as it could be and needs to be addressed. Also, the Guyana National Plan of Action for Women (2000-2004) constituted a comprehensive approach to address factors such as health, education, agriculture, unemployment, violence against women, and leadership issues.

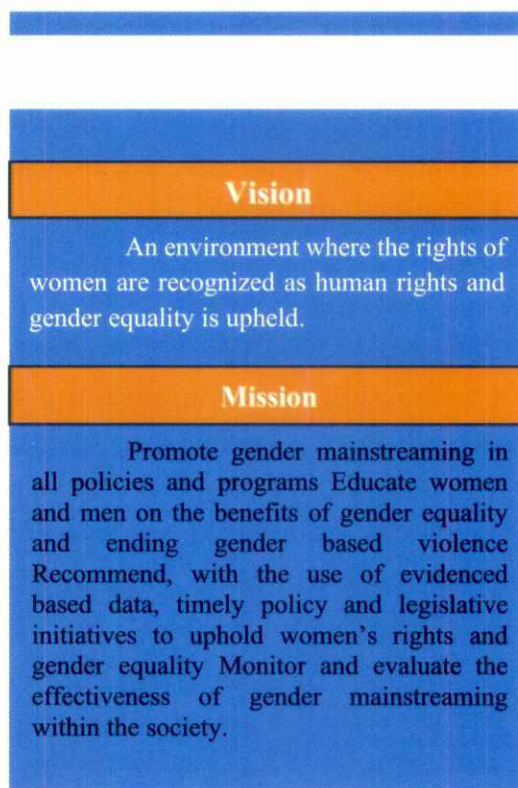
The plan of action which comprehensively addressed the range of issues pertinent to advancing women's equality needs to be reviewed and updated. Other important stakeholders that

⁶Women Empowerment and Gender Equality in Guyana: What About it? UNDP, 2010

comprised the national machinery for promoting women and gender equality are the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute which had been established in 1997, with programmatic support from UNDP, aimed to empower women in terms of both personal and public leadership. Currently, the facility is under-resourced and unable to properly implement its mandate. Also, the National Resource and Documentation Centre (NDRC) is responsible for the collection and dissemination of materials and information on women and gender issues. Whilst still functional, the Centre lacks the capabilities to undertake comprehensive research that would promptly inform its interventions on women and gender issues. Structures were put in place but have either not been implemented or sustained and those that exist seem not to be influential. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the structures which were put in place were done within a supportive legislative and policy environment.

Despite having the national machinery and legislative framework to ensure women and gender equality, gender issues, it is felt, are still subsumed within the broader context of social, economic, and political challenges within the society. The relations between men and women in terms of roles, access to resources, and power are circumscribed by a range of social conditions, governance issues, crime and violence, and divisiveness. Both men and women as well as girls and boys are affected by these conditions but, in general, women carry a disproportionate burden relative to men, in economic and social terms. Women are more likely to be living in poverty, and increasingly carry sole responsibility for household maintenance and childrearing; women are in lower-paying jobs and less likely to be in decision-making positions. With the contraction of the formal sector, increasingly women have moved to the informal sector at a subsistence level.¹⁰ There has not been enough social support to address the needs of women as they move into the workforce: -the need for childcare facilities and flexible work schedules continue to be the burden of women.

Since 1996, the National Development Strategy (NDS) in addressing the institutional capacity of both the Government (specifically the WAB) and the non-government sector to promote women and gender equality clearly stated that it is “weak, both in terms of human and



financial resources.”⁷ The report further stated that as the main institution with responsibility for promoting women's equality, the WAB is further weakened by its location in a social services ministry. It was recommended that the WAB be equipped with the capacity and the capability to carry out its functions with the greatest possible efficiency and effectiveness. And that mainstreaming of issues that concern women's position and condition must be accompanied by effective mechanisms for the review and monitoring of sectoral policies, promote and maintain an awareness of key gender issues and develop analytical capabilities for those issues.⁸

The Women and Gender Equality Commission and Human Rights in Guyana

Guyana's revised Constitution provides for a human rights institutional architecture. This is made up of four rights commissions and an apex commission. The four sectorial commissions are: The Rights of the Child (RCC), The Women and Gender Equality (W&GEC), The Indigenous Peoples (IPC), and The Ethnic Relations (ERC). The apex National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) will, according to the constitution, be made up of the respective chairs of the four sectorial commissions and a separately appointed chair for the HRC. These constitutional human rights commissions are tasked to protect and promote human rights; address the various forms of discrimination; and provide complaint mechanisms to their respective constituencies. So far, the four Commissions have been established and are operational. The W&GEC is one of the four Commissions for the promotion and enhancement of fundamental rights and the rule of law established under section 212G of the Constitution of Guyana. Members were appointed under Resolution No. 86 which was passed in the National Assembly in 2009.⁹ The work of the Commission began in 2010.

The Beijing Platform

for Action, to which Guyana is a signatory, established gender mainstreaming as the major global strategy for ensuring the incorporation of gender perspectives in all areas of societal development and the promotion of gender equality. This call was issued to all “governments and active players to promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in

⁷Constitution of Guyana, 2001

⁸ National Development Strategy Report, 1996

⁹Constitution of Guyana, 2001

all policies and programmes”¹⁰. Constitutionally, the W&GEC shall promote national recognition and acceptance that women’s rights are human rights; respect for gender equality and the protection, development, and attainment of gender equality. Specifically, the mandate WGEC is as follows:

1. Promote the issues related to the enhancement of the status of women, girls, and gender issues.
2. Promote the integration of women’s needs and interests and mainstreaming of gender issues;
3. Promote the empowerment of women;
4. Promote women’s rights as human rights;
5. Raise the awareness of the contribution of women and problems faced by women including the recognition and value of unwaged work;
6. Promote women’s needs, interests, and concerns in the wider spectrum of economic and social development and address both the practical and strategic needs of women as being different from those of men;
7. Educate and monitor employees and the public on desirable employment practices in relation to women; men;
8. Monitor compliance and make recommendations for the compliance with international instruments to which the Government accedes from time to time, including those already acceded to and which relate to the purpose of the Commission;
9. Evaluate any system of personal any family law, customs and practices or any law likely to affect gender equality or the status of women and make recommendations to the National Assembly with regard thereto;

¹⁰ Supporting gender mainstreaming: The work of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/report.pdf>

10. Recommend and promote the implementation of legislation and the formulation of policies and measures so as to enhance and protect the status of women;
11. Promote, initiate or cause to be carried out research and the creation of databases on women and gender-related issues including those health, especially reproductive health, violence against women and the family, and their socio-economic and political status, as the Commission may deem relevant or as may be referred to it by the National Assembly;
12. Promote consultation and cooperation with women's organizations in relation to decision making that affects the lives of women;
13. Recommend training and technical assistance to support initiatives by and for women and girls; and
14. Promote the participation of women in national decision-making Within its fourteen-point functions, the Commission is expected to advocate, educate and monitor national efforts to promote women and gender equality.

Within its fourteen-point functions, the Commission is expected to advocate, educate and monitor national efforts to promote women and gender equality. The Beijing Platform for Action, to which Guyana is a signatory, established gender mainstreaming as the major global strategy for ensuring the incorporation of gender perspectives in all areas of societal development and the promotion of gender equality. This call was issued to all “governments and active players to promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes”¹¹. Upon signing this

agreement, the Guyana government automatically endorsed a commitment to promote the human rights of women, by ensuring that gender is integrated and that all issues of gender are universally addressed. W&GEC in ensuring that Guyana continues to fulfil its obligations must have a systematic monitoring and evaluation plan with tools to:

¹¹Supporting gender mainstreaming: The work of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/report.pdf>

1. Ascertain intermediate effects of outputs on women and girls.
2. Track the implementation of gender mainstreaming interventions consistent with the strategy
3. Measure long-term, widespread improvement in society.
4. Investigate and handle complaints
5. Guide the Commission to conduct internal self-assessments

The Organizational Structure and Management

This section outlines both the constitutional arrangements of the Commission as well as the organizational management and reporting structure of the Commission. Firstly, the Constitution of Guyana clearly outlines the formation, composition, skills, and expertise needed for the effective management of the Commission. Article 86 states that there should not be less than five or more than fifteen persons serving. The Constitution mandates that the administrator of the Women's Affairs Bureau must sit on the Commission and each of the other four Commissions, IPC, ERC, RCC, and the HRC, should have one non-voting representative.

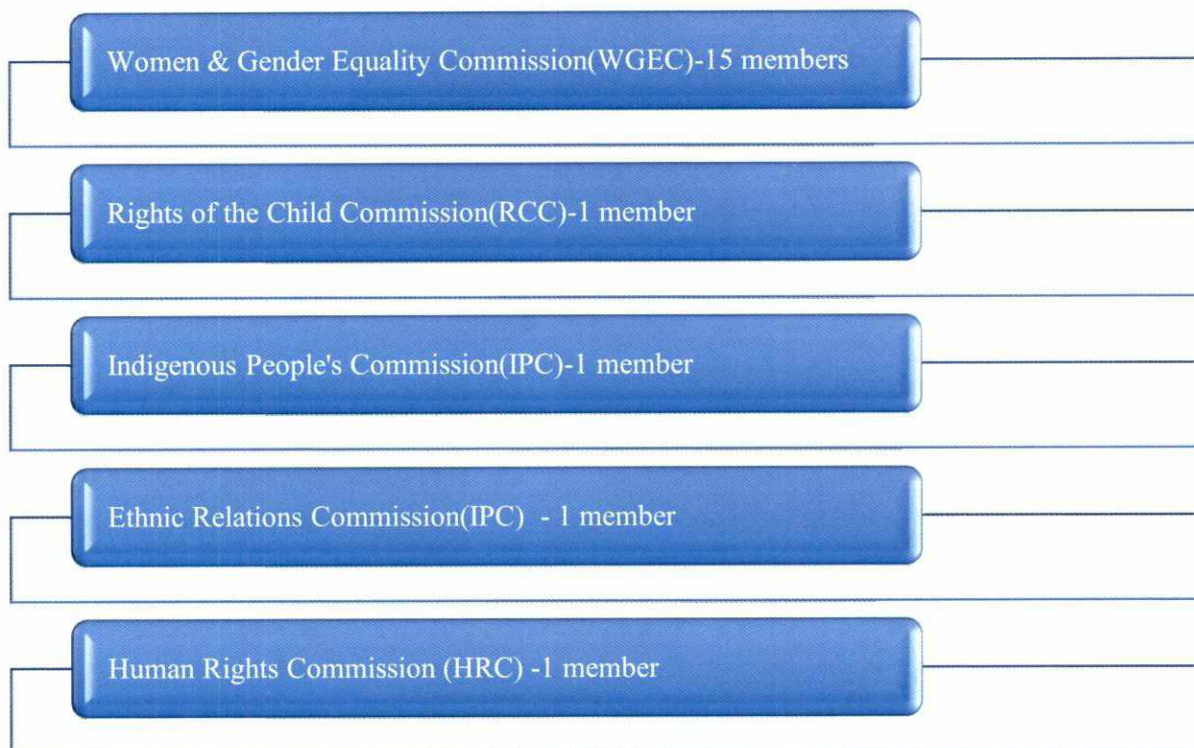
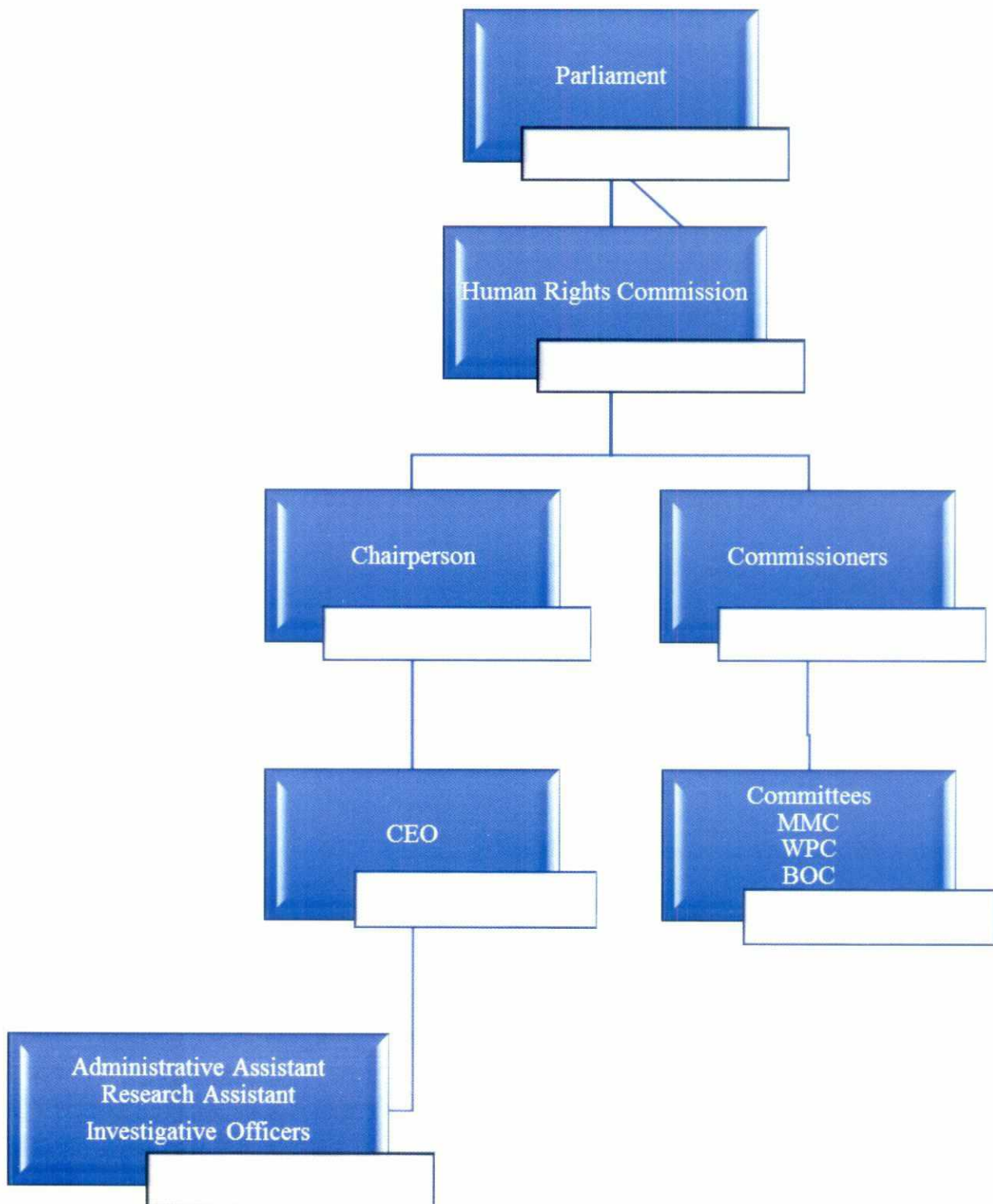


Figure 2: The constitutional composition of the W&GEC

Under the leadership of the Chairperson, the Commissioners serve as the drivers of the work of the Commission. The CEO is the operational manager, who implements based on their directives. Functionally, as head of the Commission, the Chairperson holds a part-time position, and the CEO reports to her directly in her day-to-day management. The work of the 16-member Commission is supported through Committees which have undertaken different aspects of programming. To date, two such committees have been operational, a Work Planning Committee (WPC), the Media Monitoring Committee (MMC), and the Budget and Oversight Committee (BOC). In line with their Constitutional arrangements, the Commission reports directly to parliament. The chart below outlines the operational and reporting structure of the Commission.



Globally there has been consistent advocacy and action for the empowerment of women, gender equality, and equity. This resulted in international commitments with governments taking strategic action to affirm these agreements. The Beijing Platform for Action called on governments and stakeholders to promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes”¹² The Platform reflects the international commitment to the goals of equality, development, and peace for all women everywhere. It builds on commitments made during the United Nations Decade for Women, 1976-1985, and on related commitments made in the cycle of United Nations global conferences held in the 1990s. This position was reaffirmed by the Beijing +10 declaration of 2005.

The 2000 Millennium Declaration to which the Commission had been aligned, contained a statement of values, principles, and eight specific Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with related targets that constituted an international agenda for the twenty-first century. Specifically **Goal 3: To promote gender equality and empower women** was widely recognized as being essential to achieving the other seven MDGs. MDG 3 required governments and development institutions to mainstream gender ensuring equity. The Commission has since embraced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which were established in 2015. The SDGs are "a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all by 2030.”¹³ **Goal 5 states: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.** Over the years, all of the international commitments have increasingly emphasized the need to economically empower women through mainstreaming of gender into all aspects of the development process from problem identification to planning to service delivery and evaluation. While economic development creates opportunities for increasing gender equality, in the long run, growth alone will not deliver the desired results. The international community advocates for an institutional environment that provides equal rights and opportunities for women and men with policy measures and legal frameworks that will address persistent inequalities. The 1995

Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)

The twelve areas of concern of the BPfA are:

- Women and Poverty
- Education and Training of Women
- Women and Health
- Violence against Women
- Women and Armed Conflict
- Women and the Economy
- Women in Power and Decision-making
- Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of Women
- Human Rights of Women
- Women and the Media
- Women and the Environment
- The Girl Child

¹²United Nations (1995): Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women. New York: UN Division for Public Information UN.

¹³ United Nations SDGs; <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

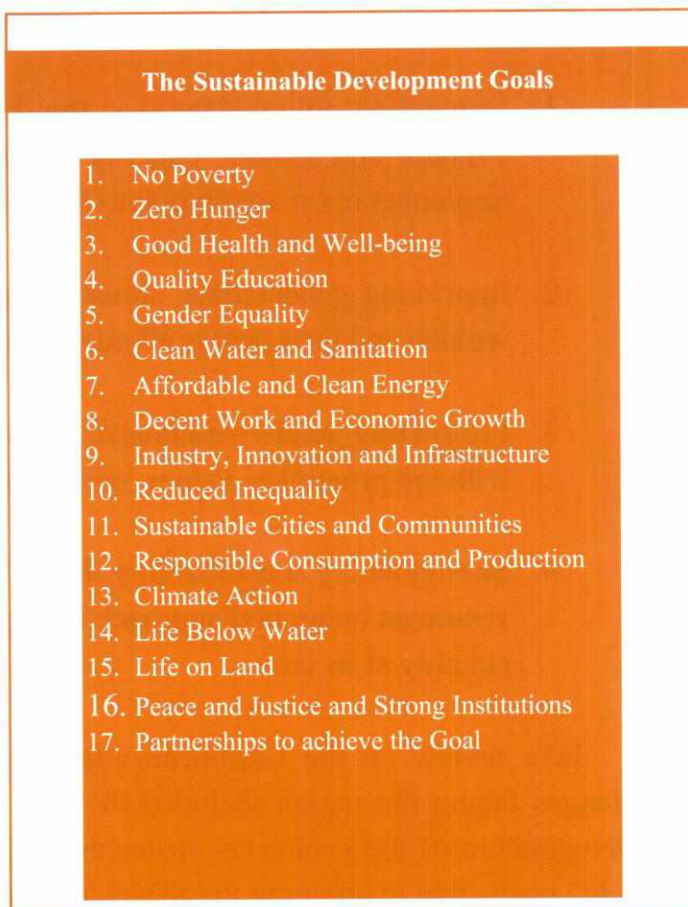
Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development sets forth many goals, strategic objectives and actions to be taken for the advancement of gender equality, and has specific suggestions for the agricultural sector (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1995). To promote sustainable development, the Secretariat highlighted mainstreaming women's concerns into effective agricultural and rural development policies, plans and programmes, to ensure household and national food security and an adequate livelihood for rural women. The Plan of Action further indicates amongst other things measures to ensure that women acquire a full entitlement to land rights on an equal basis with men, resources to be specially allocated to ensure growth and broaden opportunities for income generation for women involved in subsistence agriculture and special efforts to provide women cultivators with equal access to credit, inputs, technology and extension services and ensure equal pay for women agricultural wage workers.¹⁴

In a similar vein, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action on Gender Equality, Equity and Empowerment of Women outline a wide range of actions that governments, the private sector, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations should take to promote gender equality and equity and women's empowerment. The areas for action include, among others, women's participation in political life, education, fulfilment of women's rights, enabling women to earn income, eliminating violence against women, including female genital mutilation, eliminating discrimination against women in the workplace and international organizations, facilitating women's ability to combine work with child-rearing, enforcing national laws and international conventions concerned with women's rights, ensuring women's property rights and legal rights to inheritance, providing infrastructure and other investments that will lessen women's domestic burdens, and strengthening women's civil society groups. Guyana participated actively in this process and was a part of the consensus agreement of the 179 countries.

¹⁴Gender Mainstreaming in Agriculture and Rural Development: A Reference Manual for Governments and Other Stakeholders;
<http://www.thecommonwealth.org/gender>

Of importance is the Bélem do Pará Convention which states that violence against women “is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between women and men”, and recognizes that the right of every woman to be free from violence includes the right to be free from all forms of discrimination. This reflects the uniform concern felt throughout the Americas for the seriousness of the problem of violence against women, its connection with the discrimination women have historically suffered, and the need to adopt comprehensive strategies to prevent, punish, and eliminate it. Another remarkable quality of the Convention is that it offers extensive strategies and enforcement mechanisms that go beyond the realm of those offered by the UN Declaration. The strength of the Convention can be enhanced by creatively combining it with norms contained in other instruments of the Inter-American Human Rights System.

The SDGs), also known as the Global Goals adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 remain as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.¹⁵As a signatory to the SDGs since 2015 Guyana has undertaken a suite of reforms designed to achieve this vision across the whole-of-government. Through an inclusive process, all stakeholders – the private sector; civil society; communities, especially indigenous communities and people in vulnerable situations; and development partners have been involved to ensure that no Guyanese is left behind. This principle of inclusivity was demonstrated in extensive stakeholder consultations to ensure national ownership and a participatory approach to policymaking and empowerment. (UN, 2019).



¹⁵UNDP (2021) What are the Sustainable Development Goals?

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The 2030 Agenda is clear: there can be no sustainable development without gender equality.¹⁶ Addressing these challenges requires dramatic advances in statistics, financing, and policies for gender equality. These interventions according to the UN Women report requires four key areas for action:

1. Harnessing policy synergies: the demands for implementation are huge—there are 17 goals and gender equality matters for all of them. Integrated approaches to implementation are pivotal to harnessing these synergies.
2. Improving gender data, statistics, and analysis to effectively monitor progress for women and girls across all goals and targets.
3. Prioritizing gender-responsive investments, policies, and programmes to align action with the principles, values, and aspirations of the 2030 Agenda.
4. Strengthening accountability through gender-responsive processes and institutions to ensure an integrated approach to implementation, follow-up, and review with gender equality at its core.

In a review on the Caribbean attaining the MDGs, ECLAC had highlighted that the challenges facing the region included the lack of resources and lack of accountability for the implementation of the gender as obstacles to achieving Goal 3 of the MDG. Not dissimilarly, ECLAC posits that in attaining the SDGs, the Caribbean faced similar challenges as it transitions from the MDGs to the SDGs. These include the rationale for selecting priority goals; financing the implementation of SDGs in the region; and enhancing institutional infrastructure and governance for implementing, monitoring progress, and achieving the Goals.¹⁷

For governments, the attainment of the SDG requires that ongoing connections between the Goals and other global agreements, such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Vienna Declaration, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Cairo Programme of Action of the International Conference on

¹⁶UN Women (2018) (2018). Turning promises into action: Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

¹⁷Caribbean Countries Prioritize 12 SDGs (IISD,2015); <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/caribbean-countries-prioritize-12-sdgs/>

Population and Development (ICPD). The majority of States are already under formal, legal obligations to realize gender equality, particularly those States that have ratified CEDAW. In this respect, CARICOM is the first region where every country has ratified the CEDAW Convention.¹⁸ The CARICOM recommendations which are very pertinent to this region are outlined in Box 1.

Box 1: Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in the Caribbean

CARICOM Recommendations

- Increased and consistent political support for gender issues and equality by advocating, for example, that all Caribbean states develop Gender Plans for Action as well as Gender Impact Assessments in all new work plans in relevant departments, ministries, organizations, and corporations.
- Political will at the highest level – state legislatures paving the way for women's participation and parties actively promoting women candidates in general and local government elections.
- Increasing the seats at the tables where economic decisions are made, so women themselves have the opportunities to reverse and rectify existing inequalities.
- Strengthening the institutionalization of Gender Bureaus by increasing their resources and including them in all levels of policymaking processes as well as forging closer alliances with various statistical and data-gathering agencies so that research can be analyzed along gender lines and better used to inform programmes and policies targeting women.
- Providing gender training for relevant staff in NGOs (Non-governmental Organizations), government and regional organizations on gender analysis and the way gender operates in society
- Due diligence in preventing, investigating, and punishing violence against women and children.
- Incorporating gender analysis into HIV/AIDS policy and programming at national and regional levels. This would provide a better understanding of what influences male and female behaviour and how gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS and reducing its social and economic impact on communities

Deepening the gendered analysis of boys and education to further research the links between women's disproportionately high responsibility of emotional, social, and financial care of children, notions of masculinity, boys' under achievement in the education system, and young men's vulnerability to criminal behaviour

Organizational analysis: Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

This section discusses the successes, challenges, and lessons learned since the development of the last strategic action plan in 2013 as the Commission sought to execute its constitutional mandate.

Successes

Within its last strategic framework, the Commission was guided by four strategic priorities. These included: organizational and institutional strengthening of the Women and Gender Equality Commission; women, leadership and governance; women and economic empowerment; and gender-based violence. These priorities were primarily aligned to Goal 3 of the MDGs to promote gender equality and empower women. SDG 5 with which the Commission is now aligned addresses gender equality. Although the Commission is still strapped for human and financial resources, two critical additions to the staff of the Commission within the last two years have been the investigative officer and the researcher. These additions have enhanced the organizational capacity of the Commission to deliver on its mandate. Furthermore, in its promotion of gender equity and leadership at the macro level, the Commission collaborated with the University of Guyana and York University for the review of the Women Studies Unit and the resulting establishment of the Institute of Gender Studies (IGS). Important too, the WGEC funds a researcher for the IGS and has also been supporting women in the sciences at the national university. Several grassroots leadership trainings for women have been conducted in collaboration with the Institute. With UNESCO's support leadership trainings were conducted for permanent secretaries and women parliamentarians.

One of the important steps which has been highlighted within the ongoing work of the Commission is its increased advocacy to end Gender-Based Violence (GBV). This has seen the Commission working both independently and collaboratively at both the national and regional levels to address the issue. Notwithstanding this, more work needs to be done to address the social norms which have contributed to GBV. Additionally, since its inception, the Commission has placed access to justice as one of its key priorities. This program provided a unique opportunity for the Commission to give voice to citizens about their concerns/gaps in the system, to raise awareness of their constitutional rights, and to document their recommendations. Particularly, the Commission recommended to Parliament that rural women would have improved access to justice if mobile courts could be put in place and operate consistently.

Challenges

The three primary challenges faced by the Commission since its inception continue to be:

- 1) inadequate human and financial resources to attain its mandate.
- 2) the absence of meaningful participation in key decision making about the role and function of the Commission, and
- 3) research to support evidence-based intervention strategies.

One of these challenges may be in part linked to the non-functioning of the Human Rights Commission (HRC). Article 212 P (2) states that the HRC shall be responsible for the efficient functioning of the Secretariat of the Commissions. That WGEC still reports to Parliament indicates that officers to manage this unit are not in place.¹⁸ This negatively impacts the efficacy of the management and functioning of the Commissions and therefore requires urgent attention. Additionally, all government ministries have not been systemized to recognize the importance of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting, the Commission continues to persist in seeking to address these challenges.

As an important national stakeholder, efforts at inclusion in key national and international processes must see the inclusion of the WGEC. This institution has both the critical gender lens and the constitutional mandate to promote gender equity. Hence, the perspectives or representation of the Commission should at all times be considered in the crafting of national budgets, on other Commissions or Boards as well as the writing of national policies and international reports on gender-sensitive issues.

Lessons Learned

Over the years, several important lessons have been learned by the Commission. Hence although the resources are inadequate, the importance of collaborative engagement is one of the key learnings which the Commission has thrived on. There are good working relations with government and non-government partners, civil society agencies, the private sector as well as international agencies. There is still a heavy reliance on the activity-driven approach even with the strategic direction of the 2013-2018 plan. This, it is recognized must be addressed to achieve the outcomes and efficacy.

¹⁸Annual Report of the WGEC, 2018

Why the focus on gender and social justice?

Social justice is perceived as an important ingredient for the welfare of society as a whole, making societies richer and more secure [5]. It is also pivotal to ensuring gender justice. Particularly, the rise in poverty in all its manifestations, and displaced persons present sufficient evidence for a judgment of persistent, if not growing, injustice in the world (UN, 2006). Social injustices may force persons to resort to behaviours that may negatively impact societies. Particularly where women are affected by social injustices, it impacts the family, community, and the larger society.

The UN, therefore, advocates that “social justice requires strong and coherent policies in a multitude of areas. Fiscal, monetary, and other economic policies, as well as social policies, incorporate specific objectives but must all be geared towards the overall social goal of promoting the welfare of a country’s citizens, and increasingly, in this age of global interdependence, the citizens of the world” (p. 16). Therefore, effective social justice which enhances “the well-being of citizens requires broad-based and sustainable economic growth, economic justice, the provision of employment opportunities, and more generally the existence of conditions for the optimal development of people as individuals and social beings” (UN, 2016. p.16). As highlighted in the Baganara report, “social justice is important for the welfare of society as a whole. Having social justice and responsibility leads to satisfaction and pleasure of life, as well as respect and loyalty to the leaders. Furthermore, people who are treated unjustly eventually rebel and make the abuser pay dearly” (W&GEC,2019).

Definition of Concepts

Gender refers to the political, social, and cultural significance attached to biological differences between men and women, boys and girls. A focus on gender not only reveals information about women and men’s different experiences, but also sheds light on ingrained assumptions and stereotypes about men and women, the values and qualities associated with each, and how power relationships can change. The Secretary-General defines the term in his 2002 report Women, Peace and Security as: “the socially constructed roles as ascribed to women and men, as opposed to biological and physical characteristics.

Gender roles vary according to socio-economic, political, and cultural contexts, and are affected by other factors, including age, race, class and ethnicity. Gender roles are learned and are

changeable.” Gender equality is the recognition that women and men, as well as girls and boys, have different needs and priorities and the fact that women and men should experience equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and have the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from national economic, social and cultural development.¹⁹

Gender equality means ensuring that similar opportunities are available to both women and men. Equality does not mean that women and men or that girls and boys are the same but that their enjoyment of rights, opportunities, and life chances are not governed or limited by whether they were born female or male. Working towards gender equality does not necessarily imply treating women and men in the same way. This is where gender equity comes in.

Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. Gender equity recognizes that different measures might be needed for women and men where they reflect different needs and priorities; or where their existing situation means that some groups of women or men need special or additional supportive measures. Gender identity according to the Yogyakarta Principles, “refers to each person’s deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.”²⁰

Gender mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities - policy development, research, advocacy, dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation, and monitoring of programmes and projects.²¹

¹⁹ Gender Mainstreaming: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gendermainstreaming.htm>

²⁰ Discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity: https://www.ohchr.org/documents/issues/discrimination/a.hrc.19.41_english.pdf

²¹ Gender Mainstreaming: Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality, Factsheet 1, rev August 2001

Gender budgeting is critical to gender mainstreaming. It involves the practice of including gender perspectives in the processes of budgeting. Budgeting often requires making decisions between competing priorities. It does not mean that separate budgets must be prepared for men and women but it means planning and implementation of a budget that takes into consideration the needs, priorities, and problems of women and men, as well as their roles within the family, workplace, and community. It is a process through which public budgets are examined to assess whether and how much they include and/or contribute to equality between men and women. It often results in proposed changes towards reaching gender equality.

Gender planning consists of developing and implementing specific measures and organizational arrangements (for example, capacity to carry out gender analysis, collect sex-disaggregated data) for the promotion of gender equality, and ensuring that adequate resources are available. Gender planning is an active approach to planning which takes gender as a key variable or criteria and seeks to integrate an explicit gender dimension into policies or action.

Gender analysis refers to the systematic gathering and examination of information on gender differences and social relations to identify understand and redress inequities based on gender.

Gender justice is referred to as “the systemic redistribution of power, opportunities, and access for people of all genders through the dismantling of harmful structures including patriarchy, homophobia, and transphobia. Similar to terms like racial justice and climate justice, it signifies an intersectional approach that centres the needs, experiences, and leadership of people most impacted by discrimination and oppression”.²²

Social justice is the equal access to wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.²³

²²What is gender justice? Retrieved at: <https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/gender-justice/>

²³What is Social Justice? Retrieved at: <https://www.pachamama.org/social-justice/what-is-social-justice>

UNDERSTANDING THE PILLARS OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The five pillars addressed in this plan include access, equity, participation, and human rights. These pillars are particularly aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 5 & 10, that is, Gender Equality and Reduce inequality within and among countries²⁴. To promote social justice, strategic collaborations and initiatives will be designed to target the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Hence efforts will be made to address women and girls, the elderly, and the indigenous communities. This does not exclude other groups who may meet the criteria of being defined as disadvantaged.

Access: The principle of access to resources and services is essential to social justice. However, it has been recognized that women and vulnerable or marginalized populations may not have equitable access to resources due to location, socio-economic status, education, employment, and other factors.

Equity: The acquisition of gender justice and social justice requires the provision of equitable resources based on the specific needs of the geographic or community or target population. Every effort should be made to ensure equal access to resources. Advocating for social justice could mean promoting policies that address systemic barriers as well as education to sensitize public recognition of these policies at every layer within the Guyanese society. The promotion of equity by enabling development would redound to communities and societies as a whole.

Economic justice: This is one of the cross-cutting pillars and addresses the opportunities for meaningful work and employment. Individuals, particularly women and the most vulnerable and marginalized groups must be able to benefit from fair rewards resulting from their access to productive activities. The Commission is particularly concerned about equity in agriculture as well as the oil and gas sector.

²⁴SDGs: https://worldtop20.org/global-movement?gclid=Cj0KCQiAst2BBhDJARIsAGo2ldVuogbt8d0PoXBIDXymsKb6z1fBzKPx9nvxD4ndOKZx3OT5OnOOB4UaAvfQEALw_wcB

Participation: Citizens at every level in society should be able to participate in decisions which concern their lives and livelihoods. However, when citizens are pre-occupied with bread and butter issues, participation in decision-making takes a back-seat. Notwithstanding, internet connectivity and other practical interventions such as local elections have increased opportunities for political participation.

Human rights: Human rights are inherent to all individuals and are pivotal to human dignity, and equity. Evidence of human rights is seen in laws that grant access to justice, freedom of speech, voting rights, the right to land, access to resources, and other basic rights that enable a stable and secure livelihood. Human rights can be negatively affected by poverty, exclusion, and discrimination. The critical elements of a rights-based approach to social justice are dignity, freedom, equality, justice, and peace.

Health care and social services: Access to health care is imperative to any society concerned with equity. Women and men must be assured that they can have access to the care and resources to address their reproductive and other health issues for their families. Particularly, with the national concerns around gender-based violence and suicide, citizens must also be able to access the kind of psychosocial support that supports their mental and emotional wellness.

The Goal of the Strategic Action Plan

The overarching goal of this strategic plan is to outline a comprehensive process through which the Commission can advocate and support a gender just and equitable society in Guyana over the next five years (2021-2026).

Objectives of the Strategic Action Plan

The objectives are to:

1. Advocate for gender justice through concrete national and community-based actions
2. Outline the collaborative national and local actions which will promote gender and social justice.

Organizational and Institutional Strengthening of the W&GEC

To enable efficiency in the work of the Commission in the execution of its mandate and the actions as embodied in the strategic action plan, there will be the need for ongoing institutional strengthening. Institutional strengthening builds the capacity of the staff and commissioners with the knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSAs) so that the Commission can be recognized as the national authority that ensures women and gender equality. The areas outlined below draws upon the 2013-2018 strategic action plan. The strategic actions for capacity institutional strengthening are outlined in Table 1.

Strengthening collaborations for gender equality Whilst the Commission is the lead agency for advancing and protecting women's rights and ensuring gender justice, it is not the only organization working to do so. Several governmental and non-governmental partners also contribute to the promotion of gender equality. The GAB is the main stakeholder and though under-resourced has put in place the Inter-Ministerial Committee for mainstreaming gender. Other N G O ' s have also been responding to different issues about women and gender equality. The Commission will continue to build upon these collaborations. The result would see in place a framework for monitoring the individual and collective impact and gaps, ensure synergy and provide strategic guidance on what is needed to further promote women and gender equality.

Capacity building Enhancing the capacity of Commissioners and staff will continue to be one of the key objectives of the Commission. In the absence of a functioning of the HRC, the umbrella arm of the Rights Commissions (RC) with the responsibility for equipping Commissioners with the KSAs to make them conversant with their roles and responsibilities, the W&GEC must ensure that their Commissioners get the needed training. Each Commissioner must understand their individual and collective mandate to execute their varying roles at the national and regional level with their different constituents.

Gender Budgeting Gender Budgeting is essential to promoting gender equality in Guyana. It is a mechanism to ensure equity in the distribution of monies from the national purse. This process requires that the Commission and stakeholders within the national machinery be educated to understand gender budgeting, lobby for its application, and monitor its implementation. For

gender budgeting, sex-disaggregated data and gender-related data need to be available to monitor the impact of public spending on men, women, boys, and girls.

Advocacy and Communication Efforts to promote the work of the Commission shall be ongoing. These include increased partnerships with the media; community outreach; management of the W&GEC website as a continuous source of information and dialogue. The advocacy and communication strategy of the Commission will increase the visibility of the Commission in the promotion of gender justice within the changing environment in Guyana so that gender equality remains a front-burner issue. This requires an advocacy officer to bring attention to the work of the Commission.

Expert Committee Approach Constitutionally, the selection of commissioners has been linked to sectors, such as labour, business etc., thus strongly suggesting that they are the lead “experts” in this field. The establishment of the Expert Committee-based approach is a management strategy that harnesses the expertise within the Commission. The Commission will also solicit additional expertise as needed to augment its work. This approach will require:

- a. A lead Commissioner, with the requisite knowledge and skills, to coordinate each of the four priorities.
- b. The leadership and expertise of all Commissioners to be fully utilized allowing for specialization within the Commission.
- c. Committees report monthly to statutory
- d. Capacity building of Commissioners to ensure implementation of associated tasks
- e. Critical monitoring is an essential prerequisite for successful implementation

Research. A significant portion of the work of the Commission is dependent on data collection with an emphasis on the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data. “There is a lack of credible and up to date research on the situation of women in Guyana. In its response to Guyana’s report in 2012, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women expressed concern at the lack of disaggregated data and lack of detail in response

to questions” (Janki, 2019). This means that the Commission must make it a strategic priority to strengthen relations with institutions in the business of research such as the NRDC, the Statistical Bureau, and the University of Guyana. Additionally, the Commission must also have access to reliable data through its internal research framework.

Strengthening legislative, policy, and investigative capacity The Commission will be keeping the legislative and policy environment under scrutiny through partnering with relevant stakeholders with legal competencies thereby being able to make informed recommendations to Parliament.

Investigations and complaints mechanism: As the Commission will continue to increase its capacity in investigating and seeking redress for complaints. Resources must always be set aside to address this need.

Human and Financial Capacity: To address its strategic actions, the Commission needs the following:

1. An increased complement of full-time staff selected through a recruitment process that ensures the Commission benefits from persons with the requisite knowledge and skills to make the commission more effective.
2. A research unit
3. Access to a team of legislators to support its access to justice program
4. Increased budget allocation from the appropriate national fund to conduct meaningful work.
5. Ability to independently seek donor support and have the project and financial management capacity to be accountable.
6. Coordinating within the HRC to share resources and relevant information.²⁵

²⁵UNDP 2012: Towards effective Rights Commissions in Guyana: Capacity Assessment Report

Table 1: Organizational and Institutional Strengthening of the W&GEC

Goal 1: Strengthen the capacity of the staff and commissioners to execute the constitutional mandate of the Commission					
Output 1: All staff and commissioners have the competencies to execute the constitutional mandate of the Commission					
Outcome 1: The W&GEC confidently executing its constitutional mandate and achieving its deliverables					
Objectives	Activities	Who/Partner Organization	Indicators	Means of Verifying	Timeframe
To strengthen the capacity of staff and commissioners and stakeholders on the role and mandate of the W&GEC	Orientation and Capacity Building workshops for staff and Commissioners on the role and mandate of the Commission	WGEC/HRC/Don or community	No. of capacity building sessions completed	List of participants completing sessions	2021-2026
	Conduct two (2) self-assessments on the WGEC to determine its work concerning its constitutional mandate and strategic plan	WGEC	All staff and Commissioners participate in the internal self-assessment	Self-assessment report	2022 - 2024
	- Collaborate with GAB to reactivate gender focal points in all line ministries, national agencies, and public organizations with the capacity to oversee gender mainstreaming in all ministries	- WGEC - GAB - Government ministries	- Report from GAB on the reactivation of Inter-ministry gender focal points	- GAB report to the Commission	2021-2026
	- Capacity building of inter-ministerial focal points on role and function				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To maintain an active advocacy and communication strategy - Collaborate with the media on GSR - Encourage a media followership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To lobby for full-time or part-time communications officer - Conduct annual symposium/roundtable on gender-sensitive reporting (GSR) in collaboration with GPA - Reactivate the MMU with GPA - Annual media award for the best media article - Increase media presence via statutory press releases, media packages, and social media - Collaborate with IGS and Communications unit to develop a module on gender-sensitive reporting - Preparation of quarterly bulletin on WGEC news 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WGEC - UNWOMEN - GPA - UoG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communications officer or media consultant in place - No of media outlets and reporters attending national symposium on gender-sensitive reporting - Launch of annual Best media award on GSR in 2021 (Around 10 days of activism) - No. of media releases released. - No. of persons visiting WGEC social media sites monthly/annually - A module on GSR available to UG students and online for GPA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summary report of advocacy and communication plan - Report on the national symposium on gender-sensitive reporting - Booklet on gender-sensitive reporting - Media award issued - Quarterly bulletin on the social media page and disseminated to stakeholders 	2021-2026
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To collaborate with MoF and other stakeholders to be a trainer of trainers on gender-sensitive budgeting - To partner with MoF to decentralize trainings for increased understanding of gender-sensitive budgeting at national and regional levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concept note on gender budgeting - Lobby for the appropriate staff of MoF to be trained as trainers (ToT) in gender budgeting - National and regional gender budgeting workshops - Train Commissioners and staff to understand gender budgeting - Collaborate with MoF to review of budget of at least two line ministries in budgets from 2022-2026 	WGEC/MoF/Don or community MoF Gov't ministries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concept note on gender budgeting completed - No. of national and regional gender budgeting workshops conducted - Number of ministries and agencies reported as having gender just budgets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lists of participants by Region gender participating in gender budgeting workshops - Review reports by MoF 	2021-2026
Receive and initiate complaints of violations of gender rights and identify appropriate redress	Develop a standard operating procedure (SoP) for investigating and handling complaints	WGEC/HRC	No. of complaints handled using SoP	- SoP for handling complaints	2021- 2026

Framework for the strategic action plan: Gender and social justice

The WGEC strategic action plan emphasizes social justice. However, gender justice is perceived as a critical component of social justice. This strategic action plan is developed around five pillars. Each pillar has a concrete output and outcome as shown in Table 2. These pillars are not stand-alone since the work of the Commission is directly linked to the national priorities for a just and equitable society as enshrined in the national motto: *One People One Nation One Destiny*.

Table2: Five Pillars of the W&GEC Social Justice Framework

Pillar 1: Access to Justice

Goal 1: To improve the ability of women in Guyana to seek and obtain justice through formal institutions for grievances in keeping with human rights standards

Output 1: Strengthening strategic national, local and international partnerships to enable equitable access to justice for marginalized women

Outcome 1: W&GEC has a strong national and regional network to monitor initiatives that promote equitable access to justice

Pillar 2: Human Rights

Goal 2: To increase awareness of social justice as a basic human right; assuring protection of citizens' civil, political, economic, cultural, and social rights

Output 2: Increased awareness of the political, economic, cultural, and social rights amongst citizenry at every level of society

Outcome 2: A public awareness framework that outlines the action steps to promote social justice

Pillar 3: Equity in Economic Development

Goal 3: To advance the well-being of individuals of all genders through equal access to economic opportunities

Output 3: Increased awareness of the need for a gender-responsive national budget and support for the introduction of policies to ensure equitable access to financial resources, job opportunities, and capital

Outcome 3: Women and men positioned to access economic resources and to seek economic opportunities in emerging sectors

Pillar 4: Participation in decision-making on gender and social justice issues

Goal 4: Ensuring that all persons, including women and those from hinterland, rural and marginalized communities can participate fully at all levels of public life

Output 4: Commitment from national and local leaders, accompanied by the necessary policies, to pursue balance and gender mainstreaming in decision- making processes and outcomes

Outcome 4: Inclusion of women at all levels to contribute to decisions that affect their lives through, inter alia, capacity-building, coalition-building, and gender-sensitive institutional policies, programs, and mechanisms.

Pillar 5: Access to Health and Social Services

Goal 5: To advocate for equitable access to health care and social services by women and persons residing in rural and hinterland communities

Output 5: Increased number of women and men accessing health care and social services in the marginalized, hinterland, and rural communities

Outcome 5: Improvement in the delivery of health care, social services, and psycho-social support to marginalized groups, particularly women and persons residing in rural and hinterland areas

Pillar 1: Access to Justice

This plan clearly outlines the rationale for the Commission continuing the access to justice component within this strategy. Some additional elements to strengthen the access to justice program includes: (1) collaborate with the office of the Ombudsman and (2) advocate for the restructuring of the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR). Constitutionally, the Ombudsman's office is an independent, impartial body providing free services, in investigating complaints that have not been solved by an organization or public body that the complaint is made against. This office also investigates complaints of cases deemed to have been handled badly or unfairly complainants thereby making causing suffering to those affected. Complaints to the office of the Ombudsman in 2018 point to the inequities pertaining to social and gender justice. Complaints included matters with the police, reports of injustices in the handling of cases with the court system, land matters as well as other civil society issues. The WGEC believes that this office is underutilized and should be properly resourced and more visible to proactively investigate and handle complaints. Secondly, the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) is another of the offices with which the Commission will be working closely to promote gender and social justice. The Mission of the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) is to: (a) investigate complaints of alleged misconduct made against members of the Force; (b) monitor investigations of personal complaints conducted by various Divisional or Branch personnel; (c) perform its duties and responsibilities promptly, objectively to clear the innocent and facilitate administration of discipline for the guilty; (d) work to increase levels of public confidence in the integrity and professionalism of the Guyana Police Force; (e) develop and maintain the trust and respect of members of the Guyana Police Force in the process of which these investigations are conducted and supervised; and (f) ensure that no action is ever to be taken in connection with personnel investigation, which adversely affects the human rights or human dignity of any person. Anecdotal data points to the weaknesses of these two offices in addressing the needs of citizens seeking redress. Thus, like the Ombudsman's office, the OPR should be able to ensure access to justice. The WGEC intends to advocate for the OPR to become an independent unit where public confidence is assured. Table 3 outlines the range of initiatives through which the Commission will continue to advocate and promote social justice.

Table 1: The Strategic Action Plan –Pillar 1-Access to Justice

Pillar 1: Access to Justice					
Goal 1: To improve the ability of women in Guyana to seek and obtain justice through formal institutions for grievances in keeping with human rights standards					
Output 1: Strengthening strategic national, local and international partnerships to enable equitable access to justice for marginalized women					
Outcome 1: W&GEC has a strong national and regional network to monitor initiatives that promote equitable access to justice					
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
To collaborate with constitutional and other units/agencies to promote gender and social justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish an MOU with Ombudsman's office to refer complaints that cannot be addressed - Concept note and consultation on the justification of the OPR 	Office of Ombudsman Office of Professional Responsibility MoHA Office of DPP Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No of cases referred to Ombudsman's office - Consultation on the restructuring of the OPR - Evidence-based recommendation to parliament on the restructuring of OPR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MOU with Ombudsman office - Concept Note on the restructuring of OPR - Media report on the new OPR - Parliamentary approval of recommendations for restructuring of OPR 	

Pillar 1: Access to Justice					
Goal 1: To improve the ability of women in Guyana to seek and obtain justice through formal institutions for grievances in keeping with human rights standards					
Output 1: Strengthening strategic national, local and international partnerships to enable equitable access to justice for marginalized women					
Outcome 1: W&GEC has a strong national and regional network to monitor initiatives that promote equitable access to justice					
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
To support the strengthening of the Judiciary and the Guyana Police Force to manage domestic violence cases	Reengaging the police force to review the operations of the domestic violence units.	W&GEC GPF UG MHSSS	Meeting with GPF	MoU with GPF	2021-2026
	To support the review, update and implementation of the domestic violence module in the Police Officers' training programme	W&GEC MHSSS UG GPF	No. of consultation with key stakeholders for the review of the Police officers training module Revised training module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation Reports • Police Training Curriculum - Training registration forms 	

Pillar 1: Access to Justice					
Goal 1: To improve the ability of women in Guyana to seek and obtain justice through formal institutions for grievances in keeping with human rights standards					
Output 1: Strengthening strategic national, local and international partnerships to enable equitable access to justice for marginalized women					
Outcome 1: W&GEC has a strong national and regional network to monitor initiatives that promote equitable access to justice					
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
	Retraining of police officers on revised domestic violence modules	W&GEC MHSSS GPF	No. of Police Officers trained on revised domestic violence module, disaggregated by region, gender, and rank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Registration lists from Police Officers training Programmes - Curriculum of Police Officers Training Programme 	
	Advocate for employment of social workers and counsellors in all domestic violence units of Police Station	GPF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of a concept note which justifies the need for social workers and counsellors - No. of new Social Worker/Counsellor positions created within the Guyana Police Force 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concept Note submitted to Guyana Police Force - Financial provisions made for Social Workers/Counsellors. positions in the annual budget of the Guyana Police Force - Organogram of the Guyana Police Force 	

Pillar 1: Access to Justice					
Goal 1: To improve the ability of women in Guyana to seek and obtain justice through formal institutions for grievances in keeping with human rights standards					
Output 1: Strengthening strategic national, local and international partnerships to enable equitable access to justice for marginalized women					
Outcome 1: W&GEC has a strong national and regional network to monitor initiatives that promote equitable access to justice					
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
	Development of modules to train teachers, police, and judiciary on domestic violence	W&GEC MoE UG	- Consultation with stakeholders on the development of module and training materials	Finalized module for both synchronous and asynchronous use	2021-2022
	To engage the judicial system on the protocols for the timely management of domestic violence cases from entry to completion	Judiciary DPP	- No. of members of the judiciary consulted on timely management of domestic violence cases - No. of consultation with Chancellor and Chief Justice and Director of Public Prosecution	Reports on consultations Meeting registration forms	2021-2023

Pillar 1: Access to Justice					
Goal 1: To improve the ability of women in Guyana to seek and obtain justice through formal institutions for grievances in keeping with human rights standards					
Output 1: Strengthening strategic national, local and international partnerships to enable equitable access to justice for marginalized women					
Outcome 1: W&GEC has a strong national and regional network to monitor initiatives that promote equitable access to justice					
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreed protocols for expediting DV cases - No. of Roundtable with members of Judiciary - Development of agreed protocols for expediting DV cases 		

Pillar 1: Access to Justice					
Goal 1: To improve the ability of women in Guyana to seek and obtain justice through formal institutions for grievances in keeping with human rights standards					
Output 1: Strengthening strategic national, local and international partnerships to enable equitable access to justice for marginalized women					
Outcome 1: W&GEC has a strong national and regional network to monitor initiatives that promote equitable access to justice					
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
1. To guarantee legal representation and support for women with domestic violence cases	Lobbying for legal aid clinics in every region	W&GEC AG MoHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter of Understanding with Ministries Ministries budget for expansion of Legal Aid 	Annual Budget shows the expansion of Legal Aid	2021-2023
	Lobby the bar association for pro-bono service for victims of gender-based violence and marginalized women and men who need support in the judicial system	W&GEC Bar Association	Agreement with private lawyers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOU with WGEC/ Bar Association & Legal Aid List of private lawyers shared with Legal aid 	2021-2026

Pillar 1: Access to Justice					
Goal 1: To improve the ability of women in Guyana to seek and obtain justice through formal institutions for grievances in keeping with human rights standards					
Output 1: Strengthening strategic national, local and international partnerships to enable equitable access to justice for marginalized women					
Outcome 1: W&GEC has a strong national and regional network to monitor initiatives that promote equitable access to justice					
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
	<u>Regional and Local Levels</u> Seek to form alliances with NGOs and the private sector such as Rotary, chamber of commerce to advocate for support for victims of violence and marginalized population	W&GEC NGOs Rotary	No. of NGO and private sector collaborations to support victims of violence and marginalized groups	Reports on the number of alliances and action items agreed upon	2021-2026
Increase awareness on existing legislation and gender justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of handbook on the laws, rights, and protocols on women - Develop with partners infomercials on 	USAID UNDP UNICEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of handbooks on laws, rights, and protocols on women developed by the W&GEC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Handbook completed on laws, rights, and gender justice - Infomercials in media 	2021-2026

Pillar 1: Access to Justice					
Goal 1: To improve the ability of women in Guyana to seek and obtain justice through formal institutions for grievances in keeping with human rights standards					
Output 1: Strengthening strategic national, local and international partnerships to enable equitable access to justice for marginalized women					
Outcome 1: W&GEC has a strong national and regional network to monitor initiatives that promote equitable access to justice					
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
	women rights and gender justice as part of communication strategy		- Infomercials on gender and social justice		

Pillar 2: Human Rights

The WGEA as a rights-based commission promotes respect for the development, and attainment of gender equality. This is consistent with both Goals 5 and 16 of the SDGs which advocates for gender equality as a human right, with inclusive societies and strong institutions promoting justice for all. Table 4 outlines the strategic actions for the protection of human rights and social justice.

Table 2: The Strategic Action Plan –Pillar 2-Human Rights

Pillar 2: Human Rights					
Goal 2: To increase awareness of social justice as a basic human right; assuring protection of citizens' civil, political, economic, cultural, and social rights					
Output 2: Increased awareness of the political, economic, cultural, and social rights amongst citizenry at every level of society					
Outcome 2: A public awareness framework that outlines the action steps to promote social justice					
<i>Objective</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
To collaborate with MLHSSS and other stakeholders on the review of NPA for women and National gender policy	- Meet with MLHSSS to establish a working group on NPA and gender policy	MLHSSS Donor Community	Report of meetings for the review and revision of: - NPA - Gender policy	- Copy of Revised NPA - Copy of updated Gender Policy	2022-2025
	Review and revision of NPA and Gender policy				

Pillar 2: Human Rights					
Goal 2: To increase awareness of social justice as a basic human right; assuring protection of citizens' civil, political, economic, cultural, and social rights					
Output 2: Increased awareness of the political, economic, cultural, and social rights amongst citizenry at every level of society					
Outcome 2: A public awareness framework that outlines the action steps to promote social justice					
<i>Objective</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
To establish the Guyana CEDAW committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting up the Guyana CEDAW Committee to monitor Guyana's implementation of CEDAW Advocate for the Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) allowing individual petitions 	WGEC MLHSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The launch of the Guyana CEDAW committee Preparation of shadow report on CEDAW 	W&GEC submission of shadow report on CEDAW	2021-2026

Pillar 2: Human Rights					
Goal 2: To increase awareness of social justice as a basic human right; assuring protection of citizens' civil, political, economic, cultural, and social rights					
Output 2: Increased awareness of the political, economic, cultural, and social rights amongst citizenry at every level of society					
Outcome 2: A public awareness framework that outlines the action steps to promote social justice					
<i>Objective</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To host a series of the national conversation on pillars of gender and social justice To host a national conference for women annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three thematic symposiums conversations on the pillars National women's conference with a focus on gender justice 	WGEC/Government/Donor Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of women attending the conference List of decisions made at Conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on symposiums Conference report Attendance registers for symposiums and Conference 	2021-2026
Engage MoE/UG for inclusion of a module on gender in teacher education using the CARICOM initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with MoE to address gender inclusion in teacher education and school curricula Meeting with CARICOM on collaboration for gender in teacher 	MoE CARICOM	List of attendees and meetings	Reports of meetings	2022-2026

Pillar 2: Human Rights					
Goal 2: To increase awareness of social justice as a basic human right; assuring protection of citizens' civil, political, economic, cultural, and social rights					
Output 2: Increased awareness of the political, economic, cultural, and social rights amongst citizenry at every level of society					
Outcome 2: A public awareness framework that outlines the action steps to promote social justice					
<i>Objective</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
	education and school curricula – Partner with GTU for continuing education for trained teachers				
To collaborate with MLHSSS and other stakeholders on the review of NPA for women and National gender policy	– Meet with MLHSSS to establish a working group on NPA and gender policy – Review and revision of NPA and Gender policy	MLHSSS Donor Community	– Report of meetings for the review and revision of: – NPA – Gender policy	– Copy of Revised NPA – Copy of updated Gender Policy	2022-2025
To establish the Guyana CEDAW committee	– Setting up the Guyana CEDAW Committee to	WGEC MLHSSS	– The launch of the Guyana CEDAW committee	W&GEC submission of shadow report on CEDAW	2021-2026

Pillar 2: Human Rights					
Goal 2: To increase awareness of social justice as a basic human right; assuring protection of citizens' civil, political, economic, cultural, and social rights					
Output 2: Increased awareness of the political, economic, cultural, and social rights amongst citizenry at every level of society					
Outcome 2: A public awareness framework that outlines the action steps to promote social justice					
<i>Objective</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
	monitor Guyana's implementation of CEDAW - Advocate for the Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) allowing individual petitions		- Preparation of shadow report on CEDAW		
- To host a series of the national conversation on pillars of gender and social justice	- Three thematic conversations on the pillars - National women's	WGEC/Government/Donor Community	- No. of women attending the conference	- Report on the conference - Attendance register	2021-2026

Pillar 2: Human Rights					
Goal 2: To increase awareness of social justice as a basic human right; assuring protection of citizens' civil, political, economic, cultural, and social rights					
Output 2: Increased awareness of the political, economic, cultural, and social rights amongst citizenry at every level of society					
Outcome 2: A public awareness framework that outlines the action steps to promote social justice					
<i>Objective</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
- To host a national conference for women annually	conference with a focus on gender justice		- List of decisions made at Conference		
Engage MoE/UG for inclusion of a module on gender in teacher education using the CARICOM initiative	- Meeting with MoE to address gender inclusion in teacher education and school curricula	MoE CARICOM	List of attendees and meetings	Reports of meetings	2022-2026
	- Meeting with CARICOM on collaboration for gender in teacher education and school curricula				
	- Partner with GTU for continuing education for trained teachers				

Pillar 3: Equity and economic development

Table 5 outlines the proposed actions of the WGEC to promote equity through economic development. Women have been particularly vulnerable to the economic shocks which affect developing countries like Guyana, often bearing the burdens of child care and other family care during periods of disasters and other social crises such as COVID 19, HIV, family violence, and the like. Guyana is on the precipice of becoming an oil-rich economy. However, women like men must be positioned to benefit from this oil wealth. This requires special policies and training along with support measures that enhance the capabilities of women to take advantage of the opportunities within this sector. Mainstreaming gender within the economy requires gender-sensitive budgeting as a continuous process to ensure that the economic benefits reach women and men equitably. The presence of the WGEC on boards and agencies as well as in the formulation or review of economic policies allows for the representation of women and encourages the mobilization of action to ensure gender justice in the economic sector. National and regional budgets impact women differently with women being more vulnerable due to lack of access to resources. Therefore, women like men must have access to land, bank loans, and equal opportunity within the financial sector.

Table 3: The Strategic Action Plan –Pillar 3-Equity and economic development

Pillar 3: Equity in economic development					
Goal 3: To advance the well-being of individuals of all genders through equal access to economic opportunities					
Output 3: Increased awareness of the need for a gender-responsive national budget and support for the introduction of policies to ensure equitable access to financial resources, job opportunities, and capital					
Outcome 3: Women and men positioned to access economic resources and to seek economic opportunities in emerging sectors					
<i>Objective</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
To educate women and men particularly in underserved communities, on how to access resources to enable their economic advancement	<u>Gender-responsive national budget</u>	Ministry of Finance	- No. of consultations held with key stakeholders	- W&GEC reports	2021-2022
	- Engagement and orientation of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee (PAC), Gender Affairs Commission, Ministry of Finance, and other partners to ensure a gender-responsive national budget	Parliamentary Affairs Committee (PAC)	- No. of stakeholders engaged in consultations on gender-responsive budget	- Meeting registration forms	
	<u>Access to Finances and loans</u>	W&GEC UG/IGS	- Tools for analysis and review developed	- Procedural report on lending and loan agencies	2022-2026
	- Review of loan application processes	Banking Association			

Pillar 3: Equity in economic development

Goal 3: To advance the well-being of individuals of all genders through equal access to economic opportunities

Output 3: Increased awareness of the need for a gender-responsive national budget and support for the introduction of policies to ensure equitable access to financial resources, job opportunities, and capital

Outcome 3: Women and men positioned to access economic resources and to seek economic opportunities in emerging sectors

<i>Objective</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in economic programs and lending agencies (women of worth, IPED, HAZE, banking institutions) to ensure that women are adequately catered to Gender Analysis of loan recipients in loan agencies Sensitization on accessing loans for small businesses 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of banking and lending agencies consulted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender Analysis report on loan recipients 	
	<p><u>Training</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate and lobby in collaboration with 	<p>GWLI</p> <p>MLHSSS/GAB</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of stakeholders engaged 	Report to EITI	2021-2026

Pillar 3: Equity in economic development

Goal 3: To advance the well-being of individuals of all genders through equal access to economic opportunities

Output 3: Increased awareness of the need for a gender-responsive national budget and support for the introduction of policies to ensure equitable access to financial resources, job opportunities, and capital

Outcome 3: Women and men positioned to access economic resources and to seek economic opportunities in emerging sectors

<i>Objective</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
	GWMO for the training of women to take advantage of job opportunities in the extractive industry	Ministry of Natural Resources GWMO EITI	- No. of women trained to work in the extractive industry (oil and gas, mining, forestry, and fisheries)		
	<u>Access to lands</u> - Review gender and land rights policies to ensure equitable access to women - Incentives to support the expansion of sustainable agricultural practices	MHW CHPA GLSC	- No. of consultations with key stakeholders on improving women's access to lands - No. of stakeholder agencies consulted	W&GEC reports Reports MH&W, CHPA and GLSC	2021-2023

Pillar 3: Equity in economic development

Goal 3: To advance the well-being of individuals of all genders through equal access to economic opportunities

Output 3: Increased awareness of the need for a gender-responsive national budget and support for the introduction of policies to ensure equitable access to financial resources, job opportunities, and capital

Outcome 3: Women and men positioned to access economic resources and to seek economic opportunities in emerging sectors

<i>Objective</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Who/Partner Organization</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verifying</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
			- No. of revised land access policies		
	Development of a victims' survival fund. Reference can be drawn from the New Zealand model	W&GEC MLHSSS	- Guideline for victims' survival fund (VSF) developed - Launch and sensitization campaign on VSF)	No of persons benefiting from VSF	2021-2024

Pillar 4: Participation in decision-making on gender and social justice issues

Table 6 addresses the actions of Pillar 4. Here the actions of the Commission to enable participation in decision-making on gender and social justice issues have been detailed. The importance of women's inclusion in the decision-making process at every level of society has been documented within this plan. Women's active participation in political and non-political decision-making processes furthers gender equality. Hence the Commission will continue to advocate for the proper representation of women in the legislative, executive, judicial, corporate, statutory bodies, as also the advisory Commissions, Committees and Boards, etc. the Commission will lobby for quotas where necessary. Policies such as care facilities to enable women's participation in the financial and other critical decision-making sectors will be advocated to enable women's participation in their personal, professional and national development.

Table 4: The Strategic Action Plan – Pillar 4: Participation in decision-making on gender and social justice issues

Pillar 4: Participation in decision-making on gender and social justice issues					
Goal 4: Ensuring that all persons, including women and those from hinterland, rural and marginalized communities can participate fully at all levels of public life					
Output 4: Commitment from national and local leaders, accompanied by the necessary policies, to pursue balance and gender mainstreaming in decision-making processes and outcomes					
Outcome 4: Inclusion of women at all levels to contribute to decisions that affect their lives through, inter alia, capacity-building, coalition-building, and gender-sensitive institutional policies, programmes, and mechanisms.					
Objective	Activities	Who/Partner Organization	Indicators	Means of Verifying	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To advocate for constitutional reform with increased representation of women in decision-making bodies at all levels - To engage the women on NTC and Amerindian community councils in agenda action planning for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Constitutional reform - Review national policies for the inclusion of women and men in decision making - Evaluate participation by gender in the development of national policies and legislation - Symposium for indigenous women on agenda-setting with 	<p>W&GEC PAC RDC NDC NTC CDC UNESCO MoAA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report on the constitutional reform process - No. Of indigenous women participating in the symposium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report on policy review for women involvement in decision making - Action plan agenda for women 	2021-2026

Pillar 4: Participation in decision-making on gender and social justice issues

Goal 4: Ensuring that all persons, including women and those from hinterland, rural and marginalized communities can participate fully at all levels of public life

Output 4: Commitment from national and local leaders, accompanied by the necessary policies, to pursue balance and gender mainstreaming in decision-making processes and outcomes

Outcome 4: Inclusion of women at all levels to contribute to decisions that affect their lives through, inter alia, capacity-building, coalition-building, and gender-sensitive institutional policies, programmes, and mechanisms.

Objective	Activities	Who/Partner Organization	Indicators	Means of Verifying	Timeframe
inclusion in decision making	focus on economic and social development				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusion of WGEC in the decision making pertinent to the extractive industries: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oil and gas • Mining (gold quarrying, bauxite, etc.) • Forestry • Fishing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocate for representation of the Gender Commission on all decision-making bodies especially in the extractive industries - Engage in the reporting to EITI on gender-disaggregated data and employment - Contribute to the public debate on the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> W&GEC GEA GEPA EITI GWMA WIM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Representation of the Commission on the boards or commissions of the extractive sector - WGEC contributing to the national and global EITI report 	WGEC actively contributing to national and global EITI reports	

Pillar 4: Participation in decision-making on gender and social justice issues					
Goal 4: Ensuring that all persons, including women and those from hinterland, rural and marginalized communities can participate fully at all levels of public life					
Output 4: Commitment from national and local leaders, accompanied by the necessary policies, to pursue balance and gender mainstreaming in decision-making processes and outcomes					
Outcome 4: Inclusion of women at all levels to contribute to decisions that affect their lives through, inter alia, capacity-building, coalition-building, and gender-sensitive institutional policies, programmes, and mechanisms.					
Objective	Activities	Who/Partner Organization	Indicators	Means of Verifying	Timeframe
	contributions of the extractive industry to the economy and along with gender-disaggregated data				
	Capacity building of women to participate meaningfully in the decision-making processes in both the political and economic sector	W&CGEC MLHSSS	Consultation with policymakers in human services	Disaggregated data on the number of women with the capacity	
	National symposium and regional workshops on mainstreaming gender in all national plans including climate action plans	W&GEC MLHSSS Gov't Ministries/RDC/NTC	No. of government agencies addressing gender inclusion in their policies and plans	Annual reports of Ministries and agencies	

Pillar 5 Access to Health and Social Services

The focus of the access to health pillar as detailed in Table 5 centres around advocacy in the hinterland regions. Special attention will be given to advocating for the MoH to have a public health approach that ensures rural and hinterland health facilities are resourced to provide accessible and optimal healthcare to women and girls. Health services within the region should be accompanied by psychosocial support in rural and hinterland communities. Education and training must also be done so that women can make informed choices for their health and that of their families.

Table 5: The Strategic Action Plan – Pillar 5 Access to Health and Social Services

Pillar 5: Access to Health and Social Services					
Goal 5: To advocate for equitable access to health care and social services by women and persons residing in rural and hinterland communities					
Output 5: Increased number of women and men accessing health care and social services in marginalized, hinterland, and rural communities					
Outcome 5: Improvement in the delivery of health care, social services, and psycho-social support to marginalized groups, particularly women and persons residing in rural and hinterland areas					
Objective	Activities	Who/Partner Organization	Indicators	Means of Verifying	Timeframe
- To ensure that the Ministry of Health applies a public health policy where rural and hinterland health facilities are resourced to provide accessible	Promote the use of regional and community health centres in rural and hinterland communities	W&GEC MoH MoAA NTC	- Stakeholder meeting with the Subject Minister(s) - Meetings with Director-General and Regional Health Officers	- Decisions of the stakeholder meeting - % of the budget on healthcare in indigenous and marginalized communities	2021-2026

Pillar 5: Access to Health and Social Services					
Goal 5: To advocate for equitable access to health care and social services by women and persons residing in rural and hinterland communities					
Output 5: Increased number of women and men accessing health care and social services in marginalized, hinterland, and rural communities					
Outcome 5: Improvement in the delivery of health care, social services, and psycho-social support to marginalized groups, particularly women and persons residing in rural and hinterland areas					
<p>and optimal healthcare to its residents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To equip healthcare providers and community counsellors and teachers to provide psychosocial support in rural and hinterland communities 	Advocacy for the establishment of indigenous community counselling services at the community level in collaboration with RDC and Ministry of Human Services	W&GEC MLHSSS RDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting with MLHSSS on community counsellors - Development of package of training for community leaders/advocates - Training community leaders in basic counselling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Package of training materials developed for community counsellors - No of community leaders/advocates by region trained 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To advocate for the implementation of a policy framework that ensures that all public spaces are disability-friendly 	Advocate for the establishment of disability-friendly spaces in the public and private sectors	NCD MH&SS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of Consultations on disability-friendly spaces - No. of persons engaged in the establishment of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NCD Reports - W&GEC Reports 	2021-2026

Pillar 5: Access to Health and Social Services				
Goal 5: To advocate for equitable access to health care and social services by women and persons residing in rural and hinterland communities				
Output 5: Increased number of women and men accessing health care and social services in marginalized, hinterland, and rural communities				
Outcome 5: Improvement in the delivery of health care, social services, and psycho-social support to marginalized groups, particularly women and persons residing in rural and hinterland areas				
			disability-friendly spaces - No. of policies proposed or implemented to encourage the establishment of disability-friendly spaces	
	Lobby for the establishment of Day-Care and Night-Care Centres for working women in urban, rural, and hinterland areas.	MH&SS CCPA	- No. of consultations on the establishment of Day-care and Night-care centres - No. of Concept Notes prepared on the establishment of Day-Care and Night-Care Centres	

Pillar 5: Access to Health and Social Services				
Goal 5: To advocate for equitable access to health care and social services by women and persons residing in rural and hinterland communities				
Output 5: Increased number of women and men accessing health care and social services in marginalized, hinterland, and rural communities				
Outcome 5: Improvement in the delivery of health care, social services, and psycho-social support to marginalized groups, particularly women and persons residing in rural and hinterland areas				
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of Day Care and Night Care Centres Established, disaggregated by region and communities - No. of Children and women served by Day-Care and Night care Centres 	

Principal Partners

The W&GEC recognizes the importance of partnerships to deliver on its constitutional mandate. Hence the Commission shall continue to strengthen established partnerships while building new ones as it advances its work for gender justice. Critical partnerships are discussed below.

Table 4: Principal partners of the WGEC

Name of Ministry/Agency	Role and function of the agency
The Parliament	The Budgeting and Oversight Committee
Ministry of Labour Human Services and Social Security (MLHSSS)	The umbrella ministry for the GAB and the MAB and the Domestic Violence Unit.
Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA)	Responsible for law and order and addressing the perpetrators of GBV
Ministry of Amerindian Affairs (MOAA)	Responsible for working with indigenous communities and can enable access to indigenous women
Ministry of Finance (MoF)	An important partner in ensuring that gender-sensitive budgets are prepared by all government agencies and are reflected in the national budget.
Trade Unions	Trade Unions are often engaged in collective agreements with governments and should play a pivotal role in ensuring equal pay for work of equal value as well as the elimination of sexual harassment and all forms of discrimination.
The Private Sector Commission (PSC)	A necessary partner as an employer with civic responsibility. The partnership with the PSC is two-pronged and would be, on the one hand, to ensure that they create and monitor the work environment for equity, on the other; it should be encouraged to give back through corporate giving. PSC can initiate support services for women workers and victims of GBV.

Name of Ministry/Agency	Role and function of the agency
The Parliament	The Budgeting and Oversight Committee
The Bar Association and Guyana Association of Women Lawyers (GAWL)	Can provide pro bono services for those in need. Can also advance the legal rights of women and men for gender justice.
Legal Aid Clinic	This agency provides legal services to women and men at minimal costs if necessary.
Donor Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BHC - USAID - UNICEF - UNFPA - UN Women - UNDP - UNCT 	The donor community has pledged its commitment to the government and the people of Guyana through both technical and financial support. Many of these agencies have supported the Commission in areas where resources are scarce.
Indigenous People Commission (IPC) and the Rights of the Child Commission (RCC)	These two Commissions particularly are important stakeholders as they both represent constituencies that are inextricably linked to W&GEC. With limited resources, all efforts should be made to collaborate in promoting human rights.
Other critical partners are Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)	

The Implementation Plan

The strategic plan of the Commission will be implemented in its annual work plans over the next five years (2021-2026). The Expert Committee approach has worked. This approach allowed Commissioners with the requisite expertise to lead on thematic areas at the national and regional level. Notwithstanding, training will be conducted to ensure that Commissioners and staff understand the strategic direction of the Commission and the pillars which will be guiding the work of the Commission.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The WGEC will utilize a simple mechanism to keep track of the implementation of its work in the 2021-2026 strategic action plan. The Commission will use the strategic plan to set its annual work plan. The Work Planning Committee (WPC) has oversight responsibility for ensuring the Commission stays on track. The WPC will via its quarterly reports at statutory meetings update the Commission on the implementation of the AWP and the deliverables.

Additionally, the Commission in its annual report to Parliament shall also be reporting on its deliverables based on its AWP and strategic plan. This will ensure that the Commission stays on target and guides future planning of the Commission.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The Methodological Process

The strategic plan was developed through a process of consultation with Commissioners. The consultation was coupled with a review and analysis of the 2013-2018 strategic plans, to assess successes and challenges. The consultative process was guided by questions in Appendix 1, subsequent reviews and consultations with the Work Committee. Further, several reports of the commission were examined as listed in Appendix 2. This plan also benefitted from an analysis of other local and global reports and the SDGs.

Appendix 2: Guideline for focus group discussion on gender and social justice

1. Ideally, what should social justice look like?
2. What does social justice mean to you?
3. How can social justice be implemented in Guyana with its diverse ethnic and political perspectives?
4. How do you see social justice being implemented at the national level?
 - a. What are three concrete things that can be done by the Commission?
5. How do you see social justice being implemented at the regional level and communities?
 - a. What 3 concrete things/actions can the commission do?
 - b. How can the Commission address the issue of racial discrimination as an element of social justice?

Appendix 3: List of local and international documents reviewed

Local documents included:

1. WGEC Baganara Report
2. W&GEC Roundtable Presentation, February 2020
3. Law Assessment, Melinda Janki
4. Five Year Strategic Plan (2013 to 2018)
5. Annual reports of WGEC, 2013-2018
6. Guyana 2019 report on the Sustainable Development Goals

International documents included:

7. UN Reports on SDGs
8. UN Women report on gender equality and SDGs
9. Reports on gender and social justice