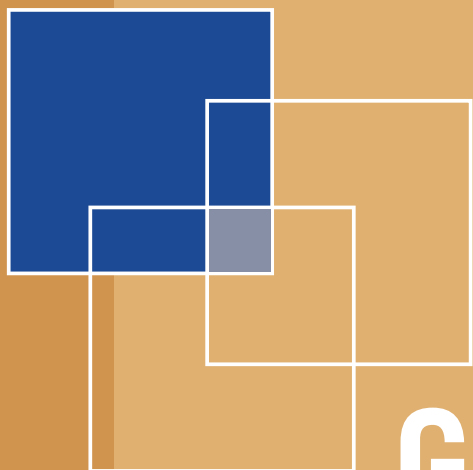




International  
Labour  
Organization

Office for the  
Caribbean



# GENDER at WORK in the CARIBBEAN

COUNTRY REPORT:

**Guyana**





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## Foreword

Despite the progress towards achieving gender equality in the world of work, considerable constraints remain. As a result, and as the Organization approaches its centenary in 2019, the Director-General launched the Women at Work Centenary Initiative. The initiative aims to better understand and address why progress on delivering on decent work for women has been so slow and what needs to be done towards securing a better future for women at work.

In March 2016, the ILO published the Women at Work – 2016 Trends Report, which presented in-depth analysis of the gender gaps in the world of work and explored the key policy drivers for gender transformative change. Taking this publication as a reference guide, the ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean commissioned country studies to establish an up-to-date and comprehensive picture of five ILO member States: Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica and Saint Lucia.

This research is timely since at this juncture we do not have a comprehensive overview of the situation of women at work in the Caribbean. The findings of the report would provide information relevant for the implementation in the Caribbean of the “Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030”, adopted in October 2016. It will also contribute to SDG 5 on Gender Equality, SDG 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth, and SDG 10 on Inequalities, as well as the UN Women initiative on 50 50 by 2030.

The goal is to widen our knowledgebase on gender dimensions in the world of work in the Caribbean and how they are currently addressed. It is our hope that this will help direct policy makers as they mainstream gender in decent work policies. The studies use existing data to address important questions such as: What are the gender inequalities in the labour market? What is causing them? Do we have the data we need to understand the realities? Where are the inequalities mostly concentrated in terms of sectors and groups of workers? Are there legal protection and policy issues that are to be addressed? How well have countries done in mainstreaming gender equality dimensions across policies? What institutions, measures, policies and laws exist which promote women’s labour force participation, including in non-traditional types of work, as well as in trade unions, political and social organizations and how well are they being used? What are the good practices that can be identified and possibly replicated?

This initial study is expected to then further inform and guide additional research into the situation of women and men at work and the obstacles to equality and economic empowerment.

I would like to acknowledge, with deep appreciation, the guidance provided by Dagmar Walter, Deputy Director, and Shingo Miyake, Specialist, Labour Law and International Labour Standards, ILO DWT and Office for the Caribbean, in supervising the project and preparing this publication. I would like to express special thanks to Caroline Allen who conducted the research and prepared the draft text, with the invaluable assistance of representatives of the Gender Ministries who provided the information relating to their respective countries. Finally, I am also grateful of all Specialists of ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean who have provided comments and inputs to the draft text.

Claudia Coenjaerts  
Director  
ILO Decent Work Team and  
Office for the Caribbean





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## Acknowledgements

Ms Caroline Allen, PhD, undertook the research and authored the present reports, which are aimed at providing a comprehensive overview of the Gender at Work situation in the Caribbean. Drawing from her regional level work, she focused on five country studies – Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica and Saint Lucia. Ms Chantal Toby, Research Assistant, provided support for this report. Mr Edwin St. Catherine, Director of Statistics, provided access to data analysed in the report. The findings and insights will allow for informed discussions with constituents and partners to take the subject forward in the countries concerned and beyond.

We thank UN Women and other collaborators who shared literature, data and recommended additional sources of information.

Staff of the ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean (DWT/O-POS) contributed in various ways to this report. Managing the initiative from start to finish were Ms Dagmar Walter, Deputy Director, and Mr Shingo Miyake, Labour Law and International Labour Standards Specialist. Mr Diego Rei, Employment and Labour Market Specialist, provided extensive contributions with respect to statistical data. Other colleagues of the DWT/O-POS provided further technical inputs and administrative support.



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## List of abbreviations

APA	Amerindian Peoples Association
BIT	Board of Industrial Training
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CAFRA	Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (Guyana Chapter)
CAGI	Consultative Association of Guyanese Industry
CAREC	Caribbean Epidemiology Centre
CARICOM	Caribbean Community and Common Market
CASWIG	Conference of the Affairs and Status of Women in Guyana
CBOs	Community-Based Organizations
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CEACR	Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIM/OAS	The Inter-American Commission of Women, Organization of American States
CLO	Chief Labour Officer
CSMDG	Caribbean Specific Millennium Development Goals
C-TIP	Counter Trafficking in Persons Unit
DPI	Department of Public Information
DWT/O-POS	ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EMPRETEC	Emprendedores e Tecnología
FITUG	Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana
FPP	Forest Peoples Programme
GAB	Gender Affairs Bureau
GAWL	Guyana Association of Women Lawyers
GAWU	Guyana Agricultural and General Workers' Union
GBTI	Guyana Bank for Trade and Industry Limited
GFPs	Gender Focal Points
GMSA	Guyana Manufacturers and Services' Association
GNBS	Guyana National Bureau of Standards



GO Invest	Guyana Office for Investment
GOCRG	Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana
GTUC	Guyana Trades Union Congress
GWLI	Guyana Women's Leadership Institute
IGDS	Institute of Gender and Development Studies
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
ILO	International Labour Organization
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
MAB	Men's Affairs Bureau
MESECVI	Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention
MMC	Media Monitoring Committee
NCSW	National Commission on the Status of Women
NEC	National Exhibition Centre
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NIS	National Insurance Scheme
NTC	National Tripartite Committee
NTPYE	National Training Project for Youth Empowerment
OAB	Old Age Benefit
OAPP	Old Age Pension Programme
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
PANCAP	Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS
PAP	Public Assistance Programme
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme
READ	Rural Enterprise and Agricultural Development Project
Red Thread	Red Thread Women's Development Organization
RDC	Regional Democratic Councils
RWAC	Regional Women's Affairs Committee
SASOD	Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination
SBB	Small Business Bureau
SBC	Small Business Council
SBDF	Small Business Development Fund



STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN Women	United Nations Entity on Gender and the Empowerment of Women
UWI	University of the West Indies
VAT	Value Added Tax
WAB	Women's Affairs Bureau
WAC-TUC	Women's Advisory Council of the Trade Union Congress
WGEC	Women and Gender Equality Commission
WPC	Work Planning Committee



# Introduction

To mark the commitment of constituents of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to gender equality, and as the Organization approaches its centenary in 2019, the Director-General launched the **Women at Work Centenary Initiative**. The Initiative takes stock of the status and conditions of women in the world of work, and identifies action taken in response to gender inequalities found.

This Country Report is part of an ILO Project to take stock of the situation and identify the response to gender issues in the world of work in the Caribbean. It presents an initial assessment of gender at work in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana (Guyana), one of five countries initially included in the Project. The information presented is based on desk review of research, policy documents and legislation.

An overview of gender at work in the five countries is presented separately in the Project's **Synthesis Report**, which presents a literature review based on Caribbean research on gender at work. It summarizes the results and draws general findings from the five countries. Readers are invited to review the Synthesis Report alongside the individual country reports.

The information in this Country Report is based primarily on secondary sources of information, accessible via publications and the Internet.<sup>1</sup> A wide variety of statistical, policy, national and multilateral agency reports, laws and academic studies were identified and reviewed. The aim of these country studies (and the Synthesis Report) is to provide a basis on which to engage with constituents and stakeholders to further refine and enrich the analysis and fill information gaps, as well as foster explicit gender equality actions in the world of work over the years to come.

The Guyana Country Report begins with an overview of the general features of gender at work in the Caribbean, based on a review of research literature (Part One). It is based mainly on quantitative data analysis of the labour market situation of women and men.

The focus of Parts Two and Three is analysis of the institutional and legal response to gender at work issues, again comprising mostly qualitative information from reports, laws and academic studies. In the discussion of the findings in Part Four, there is an examination of the specific barriers to gender equality in the world of work in Guyana, and an evaluation of the actions taken to address them.

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<sup>1</sup> All web links listed in this Report were accessed on various occasions during the period January 2016 to December 2017.







## Overview of gender at work in Guyana — Key trends and research findings

The Cooperative Republic of Guyana (Guyana) is located on the South American continent with a population of 746,955 people (according to census figures in 2012).<sup>2</sup> It shares a similar colonial history to Caribbean countries, is a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and is considered part of the Caribbean.

An important feature of Guyana is its ethnic composition. According to 2012 census data, people of Indian descent (known as East Indians) accounted for 39.8 per cent of the population; people of African descent were 29.3 per cent; mixed race were 19.9 per cent; First Peoples were 10.5 per cent; and other races and ethnicities (including people of Portuguese, Chinese, and European descent) comprise 0.5 per cent of the population.<sup>3</sup> The large East Indian presence differentiates the country from most Caribbean countries, except Trinidad and Tobago. The ethnic mix is associated with differing social norms and cultural practices, including gender roles and responsibilities. This may help to explain some differences in indicators of gender at work between Guyana and other Caribbean countries.

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Statistics: *Guyana census 2012 compendium 2: Population composition* (Georgetown, Guyana, GOCRG, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Citing the 2012 population and housing census. Wikipedia: *Demographics of Guyana*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_Guyana#Structure\\_of\\_the\\_population.5B4.5D](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Guyana#Structure_of_the_population.5B4.5D).



Guyana has the lowest level of income per capita in the English-speaking Caribbean. Figures from 2012 estimate the country's Gross National Income (GNI) per capita at US\$3,410 in 2012. It is believed this may explain Guyana's lower life expectancy than in other Caribbean countries. Again from 2012 data, average life expectancy at birth was 66.1 years—with women at 68.8 years and men at 63.5 years. Guyana is in the “medium” category of the Human Development index; it was ranked at 127 out of 188 countries in 2016.<sup>4</sup>

Just as in other Caribbean countries, in Guyana, girls and women have higher rates of attendance at educational institutions than boys and men. For example, 2012 data shows that 9.6 per cent more girls than boys were enrolled in secondary schools.<sup>5</sup> In addition, girls tend to achieve better examination results than boys. Guyana also has a relatively high percentage of female-headed households, like other Caribbean countries—some 33.5 per cent, according to 2009 statistics.<sup>6</sup>

The World Economic Forum included Guyana in its 2015 *Global Gender Gap Report*, in which countries are ranked using official statistics to show their performance on gender equality, with regard to economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment. A score of one means equality, while lower scores indicate the distance from achieving equality.

Guyana achieved a score of 0.702 on the *Gender Gap Index*, positioning it at 66 out of 145 countries in 2015. It achieved a score of 1 in educational attainment and close to 1 in health and survival, reflecting the high educational attainment of girls, the female-male ratio in life expectancy at birth, and an indicator of the sex ratio at birth of 0.94. However, it scored less than 0.65 on all but one of the indicators of economic participation and opportunity.<sup>7</sup> The component parts of this economic equality indicator for Guyana will be analyzed in more detail Section 1.6 of this Report.

Guyana scored particularly poorly on the measure of political empowerment, with a score of less than 0.5. This statistic is concerned with the percentage of women Members of Parliament, Ministers and Heads of State. Figures for Guyana show improvement in the percentage of parliamentarians who are women between 2000 and 2010. This percentage is relatively high in Latin America and the Caribbean. A ranking of 33 countries in the region showed Guyana has the 11th highest percentage of women holding seats in national legislative bodies.<sup>8</sup> Still, fewer than one in three Members of Parliament is a woman.

Overall, there is a mixed picture as it relates to health, education and other social indicators in terms of their likely impacts on the world of work for women and men. On the one hand, high levels of life expectancy and education appear likely to offer advantages for women. On the other hand, levels of adolescent fertility and female household headship may make it difficult for women to balance caring and professional aspects of their work. Low political representation may affect the institutional and legislative environment, which will be examined in other chapters of the Report from this Consultancy.

4 *Human development index factsheet for Guyana*, UNDP, 2016, [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/GUY.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/GUY.pdf)

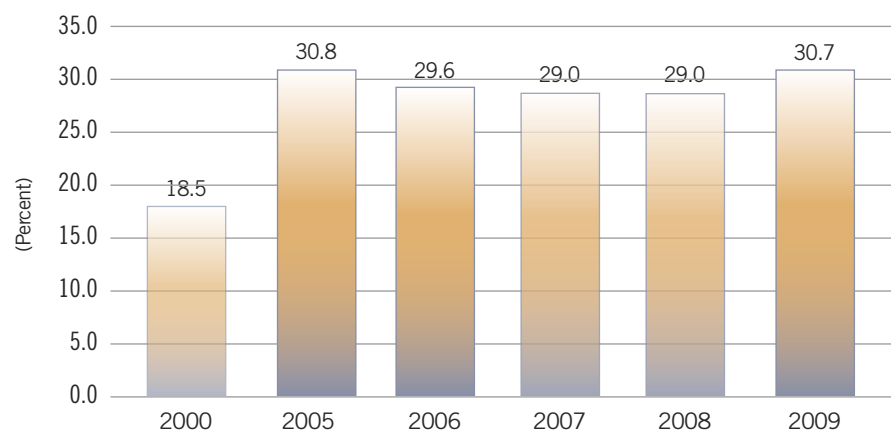
5 UNICEF: “Guyana statistical tables” in *State of the world's children 2015* (New York, UNICEF, 2016), [www.unicef.org/infobycountry/guyana\\_statistics.html#120](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/guyana_statistics.html#120).

6 *Female headed households (% of households with a female head)*, World Bank, World Bank Data, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.HOU.FEMA.ZS>.

7 *Global gender gap report 2015: Guyana fact sheet*, WEF, 2016, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=GUY>.

8 ECLAC: *Economic and social panorama of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, 2016*. (Santiago, Chile, ECLAC, 2017).

Figure 1.  
Percentage of seats held by women in the Guyana Parliament, 2000–2009 <sup>9</sup>



Source: Caribbean Specific Millennium Development Goals Indicators for CARICOM Countries.

## 1.1 Labour force participation

*The labour force participation rate is a measure of the proportion of a country's working-age population that engages actively in the labour market, either by working or looking for work; it provides an indication of the size of the supply of labour available to engage in the production of goods and services, relative to the population at working age.* <sup>10</sup>

The following table, from the Guyana Bureau of Statistics, shows that between 1970 and 2006, the extent of male participation in the labour force changed little, but female labour force participation increased substantially. However, at the end of the period, male participation was still more than twice as high as that of females.

Table 1. Labour force participation rate by sex in Guyana, according to surveys from 1970–2006 <sup>11</sup>

Source (Survey or Census)	Year	Male	Female	Total
Population and housing census	1970	80.4	19	49.2
Population and housing census	1980	83.6	25	53.8
Household income and expenditure survey	1986	83.4	33.5	57.8
Population and housing census	1991	81.2	39.3	59.5
Population and housing census	2002	78	34	56
Household budget survey	2006	81	35	57

Source: Guyana Bureau of Statistics.

Gender differences remain large, which can be seen across age groups. The graph in Figure 2 shows that the female labour force participation rate for women aged 25 and over is even lower than that for

<sup>9</sup> Caribbean specific millennium development goals indicators for CARICOM Countries, CARICOM, undated, [www.caricomstats.org/CSMDG.html](http://www.caricomstats.org/CSMDG.html).

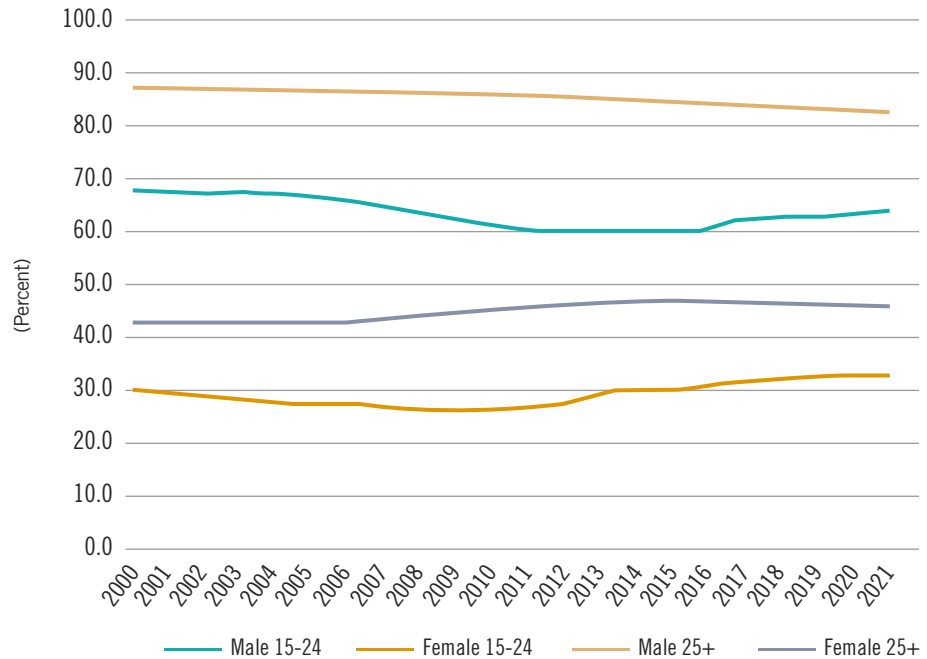
<sup>10</sup> Key indicators of the labour market: ILO modeled estimates, ninth edition, ILO, Nov. 2015, [www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/research-and-databases/kilm/WCMS\\_422090/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/research-and-databases/kilm/WCMS_422090/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>11</sup> Selected labour force statistics, 1970 to 2006, GOCRG, Guyana Bureau of Statistics, [www.statisticsguyana.gov.gy/download.php?file=70](http://www.statisticsguyana.gov.gy/download.php?file=70)



young men, as well as older men. Indeed, male labour force participation is recorded to be twice as high as female labour force participation for both age groups – by a factor of 2.16 for older adults and 1.92 for youth – across the whole time-period.

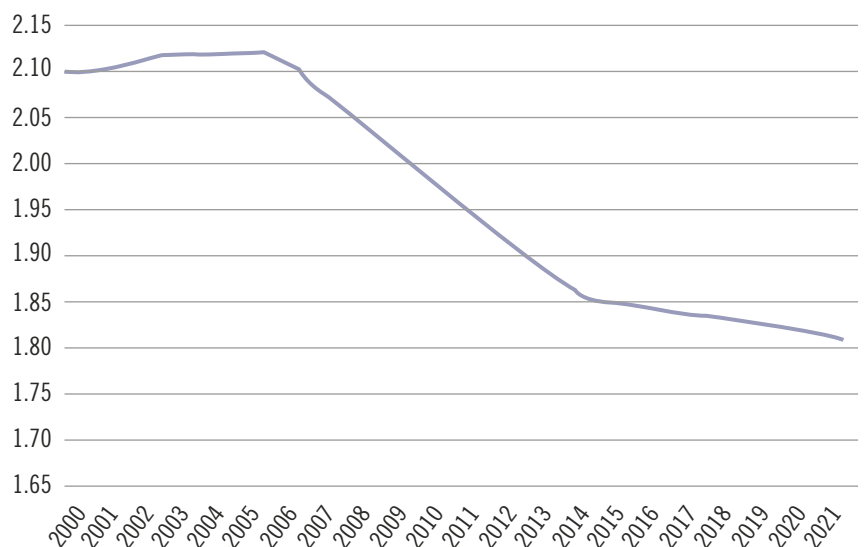
Figure 2.  
Labour force participation rate in Guyana by sex and age group, 2000–2021 (ILO estimates and projections)<sup>12</sup>



Source: Key Indicators of the Labour Market (ILO modeled estimates, July 2015).

Between 2000 and 2014, the male-to-female ratio of labour force participation declined by 11.9 per cent (from 2.1 to 1.85) and is projected to fall a further 2.2 per cent (to 1.81) by the year 2021.

Figure 3.  
Male-to-female ratio in labour force participation in Guyana, 2000 to 2021 (ILO estimates and projections)<sup>13</sup>



Source: Key Indicators of the Labour Market (ILO modeled estimates, July 2015).

<sup>12</sup> “Labour force participation rate” in *Key indicators of the labour market: ILO modeled estimates*, ILO, July 2015, [www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI\\_ID=15](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI_ID=15)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



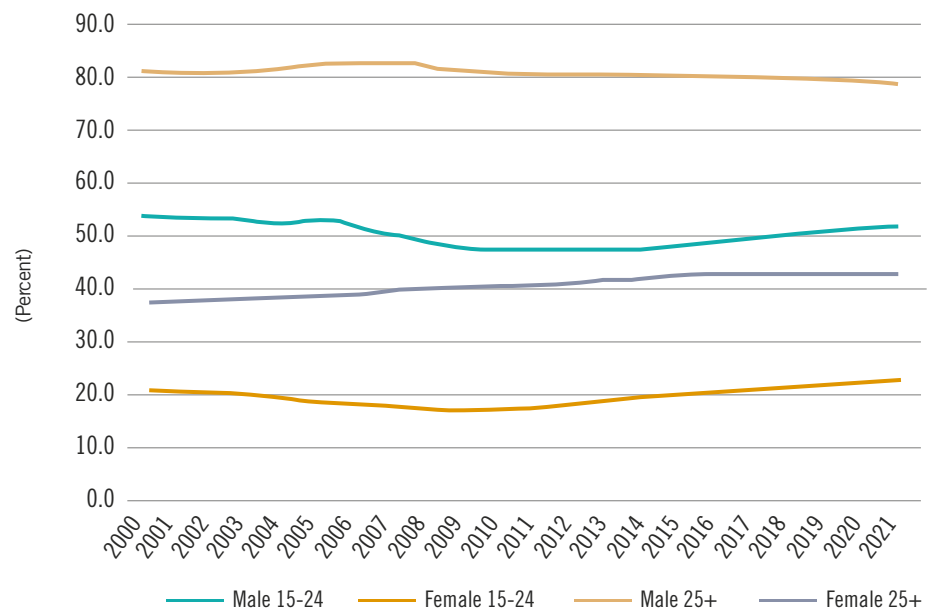
## 1.2 Employment-to-population ratios including proportion of informal employment

As for the labour force participation rate, there is a slight decline in the employment-to-population ratio among men since 2000, and a slight increase among women. Among youth, male employment exceeded that of females by 16.7 per cent over the period. Among adults 25 years and older, the gender differential was 23.3 per cent.

There were large differences in the propensity for employment among youth and older adults. Employment of older men exceeded that of younger men by 35.7 per cent. Employment of older women exceeded that of younger women by 28.5 per cent.

The smaller gender differences among youth suggest that the differences may continue to decline over time.

Figure 4.  
Employment-to-population ratios in Guyana by sex and age group, 2000–2021 (ILO estimates and projections)<sup>14</sup>

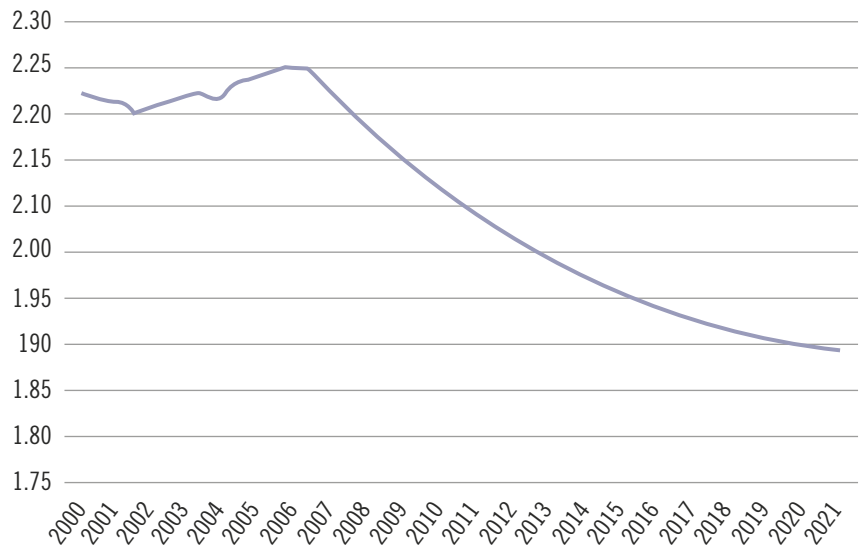


Source: *Key Indicators of the Labour Market (ILO modeled estimates, Nov. 2016)*.

As the participation of men has decreased slightly while the participation of women increased, a decline in the male-to-female ratio in employment can be observed. Between 2006 and 2015, the male-to-female ratio declined by 11.9 per cent – from 2.26 to 1.99. The proportion of men who are employed remains twice as high as that of women.

<sup>14</sup> “Employment-to-population ratio” in *Key indicators of the labour market: ILO modeled estimates*, ILO, Nov. 2016, [www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI\\_ID=7](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI_ID=7)

Figure 5.  
Male-to-female ratio  
in employment-to-  
population ratio in  
Guyana, age group  
15+ years,  
2000–2021  
(ILO estimates and  
projections) <sup>15</sup>

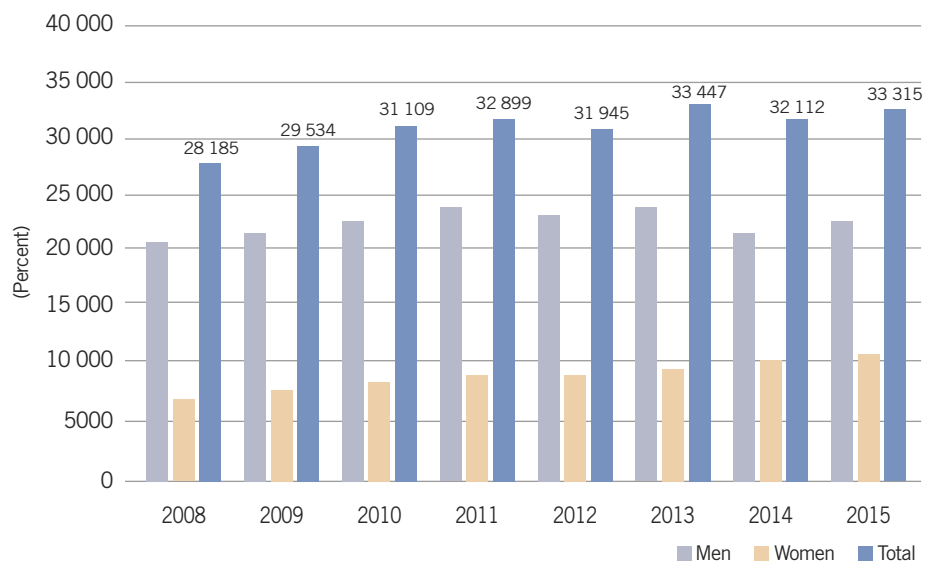


Source: Key Indicators of the Labour Market (ILO modeled estimates, July 2015).

There is a lack of sex-disaggregated, quantitative data on persons involvement in the informal labour sector in Guyana. Informal sector employees are less likely to pay into national insurance schemes than formal employees. One proxy measure of informal employment is coverage by National Insurance pensions.

In Figure 6, the graph shows that there are far fewer female than male pensioners in Guyana, suggesting that women may be more involved in informal work than men. <sup>16</sup> Sex-disaggregated data on the number of own-account workers, another proxy for informal employment, was unavailable in sources searched.

Figure 6.  
Number of NIS  
Pensioners on  
stream by gender,  
2008–2015 <sup>17</sup>



Source: Analysis of Framework for the Formalization of Economic Units in Guyana (ILO and S. David et al., 2017).

<sup>15</sup> “Employment-to-population ratio” in *Key indicators of the labour market: ILO modeled estimates*, ILO, Nov. 2016, [www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI\\_ID=7](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI_ID=7)

<sup>16</sup> S. David et al.: *Country research paper on analysis of framework for the formalization of economic units in Guyana for the International Labour Organization: Final report*. (Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, ILO, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> S. David et al.: *Country research paper on analysis of framework for the formalization of economic units in Guyana for the International Labour Organization: Final report* (Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, ILO, 2017).



### 1.3 Unemployment rates

Successive surveys in Guyana have found higher unemployment rates among women than men. The difference in proportions of men and women who were unemployed did not decline between 1970 and 2006.

Source (Survey or Census)	Year	Male	Female	Total
Population and housing census	1970	14.5	19	15.4
Population and housing census	1980	15.1	22.1	16.8
Household income and expenditure survey	1986	8.4	23.7	12.9
Population and housing census	1992	8.4	18.1	11.7
Population and housing census	2002	10.2	15.1	11.7
Household budget survey	2006	9.2	14	10.7

Source: Guyana Bureau of Statistics, *Selected Labour Force Statistics, 1970 to 2006*.

In a CARICOM collection of statistics, the most recent unemployment data for youth aged 15–24 years for Guyana are for 2002, when unemployment stood at 31.1 per cent for young women and considerably lower, at 20.5 per cent, for young men (23.9 per cent overall). This is based on figures from the Guyana Bureau of Statistics. <sup>19</sup>



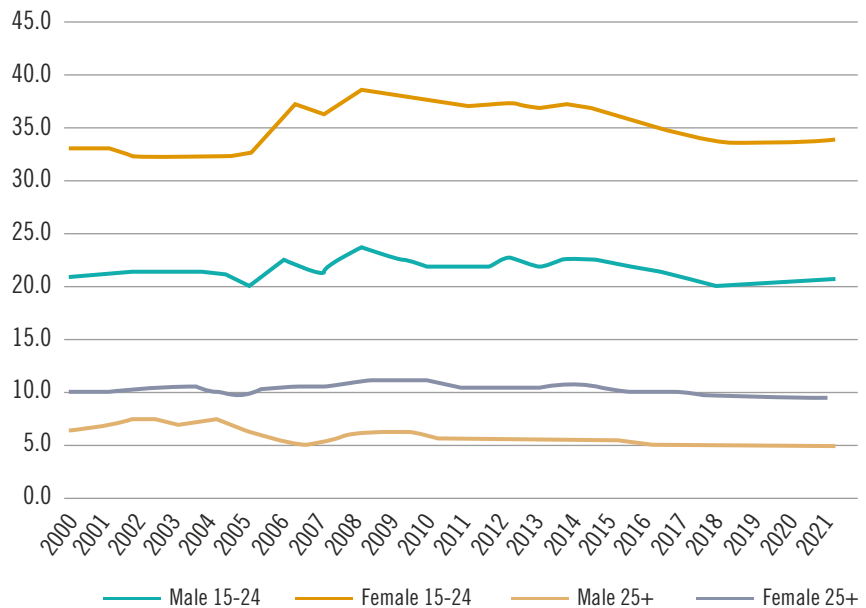
<sup>18</sup> *Selected labour force statistics, 1970 to 2006*, GOCRG, Guyana Bureau of Statistics, [www.statisticsguyana.gov.gy/download.php?file=70](http://www.statisticsguyana.gov.gy/download.php?file=70)

<sup>19</sup> CARICOM regional statistics: *Vital statistics, population and selected labour force indicators: Youth unemployment 1998* (CARICOM, latest available year), [www.caricomstats.org/Employment.html](http://www.caricomstats.org/Employment.html).



The ILO has estimates and projections of unemployment by age group and sex for the years 2000–2021. The rate of youth unemployment peaked around the time of the global economic crisis of 2008. Since that time, it has gone down to levels seen previously in the early 2000s. In addition, clear gender gaps are observed in rates of unemployment, with the gap being much larger for youth than older adults.

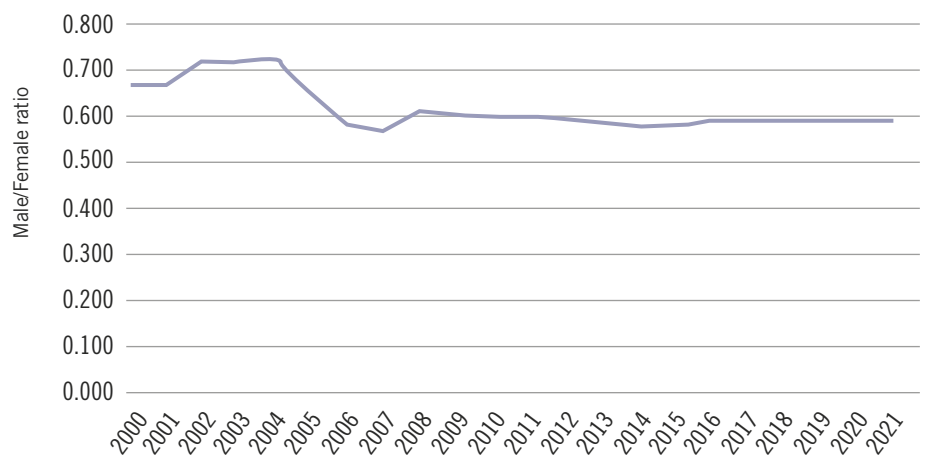
Figure 7.  
Unemployment rate by age group and sex, 2000–2021 (ILO estimates and projections) <sup>20</sup>



Source: Key Indicators of the Labour Market: Unemployment rate (ILO modeled estimates).

Figure 8 highlights the fall (and eventual levelling off) of the difference between male and female unemployment rates between 2002 and 2006. The overall unemployment rate is some 40 per cent higher among women than men.

Figure 8.  
Male-to-female ratio of unemployment in Guyana, 2000–2021 (ILO estimates and projections) <sup>21</sup>



Source: Key Indicators of the Labour Market (ILO modeled estimates, Nov. 2016).

<sup>20</sup> “Unemployment rate” in *Key indicators of the labour market: ILO modeled estimates*, ILO, Nov. 2016, [www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI\\_ID=2](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI_ID=2).

<sup>21</sup> “Unemployment rate” in *Key indicators of the labour market: ILO modeled estimates*, ILO, Nov. 2016, [www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI\\_ID=2](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI_ID=2).





## 1.4 Working time for pay or profit and unpaid work in and outside of home

The current review has determined that no time-use surveys have been conducted by the Government of Guyana to date. The United Nations has recently compiled results of time-use surveys around the world, but no English-speaking Caribbean countries appear in their listing.<sup>22</sup> Several time-use surveys have been conducted in Latin America, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN/ECLAC) has promoted the conduct of such surveys through technical reports,<sup>23 24</sup> as well as a seminar in 2014. Several Caribbean countries participated, however, Guyana was not one of them.<sup>25</sup>

The only evidence of a time-use survey being carried out in Guyana is a Report in a news article published in 2004 in the *Kaieteur News*.<sup>26</sup> The Report states that the Guyanese women's organization, Red Thread, conducted the survey with a purposive sample of mainly grassroots women, of varying races and ethnicities, drawn from several communities. According to the article, the exercise was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Time-use diaries were completed by 37 Indo-Guyanese women, 31 Afro Guyanese women, 14 Amerindian women, 18 mixed-race women and one Portuguese woman. The research was used to orient the work of Red Thread (described further in Section 2.6 of this Report). While not based on a representative sample, the Study has served to highlight the difficulties women face in accessing formal employment.<sup>27</sup>

## 1.5 Employment sectors and occupational segregation

Over time, there has been a shift in the pattern of employment between the major economic sectors in Guyana, as shown in Figure 9. The data reveals that the service sector has been the major employer for some time, with the number of people employed in this sector increasing. Meanwhile, employment numbers in agriculture and industry are low and have remained comparatively stable, with a slight increase in employment in industry and a slight fall in employment in agriculture.

22 *Gender statistics: Allocation of time and time-use*, UNSD, 2016, <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/timeuse/>.

23 S. Stuart. *Situation of unpaid work and gender in the Caribbean: the measurement of unpaid work through time-use studies*, (Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, 2014).

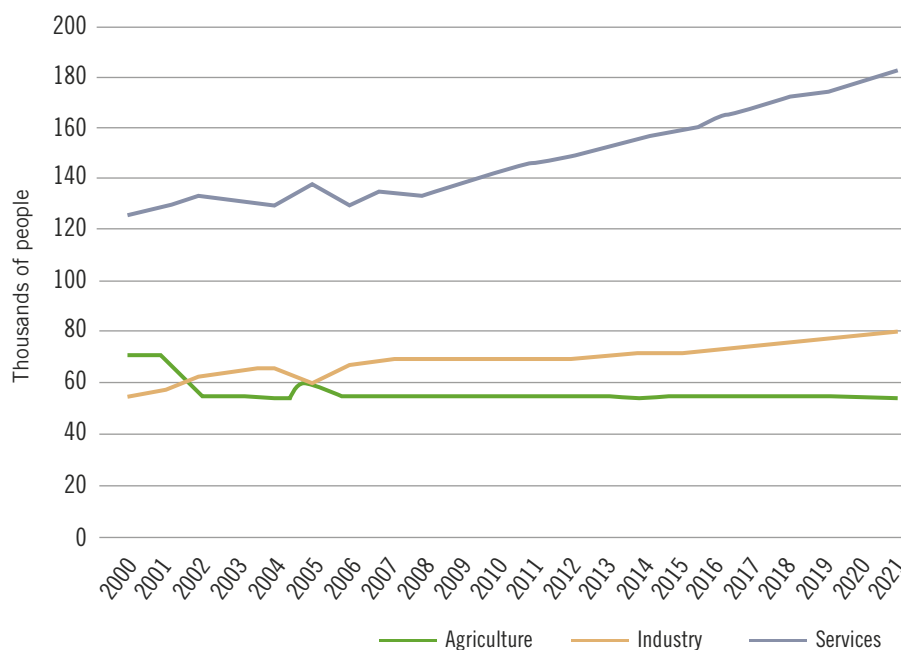
24 R. Aguirre and F. Ferrari. *Surveys on time use and unpaid work in Latin America and the Caribbean Experience to date and challenges for the future*. (Santiago, Chile, ECLAC, 2013)

25 ECLAC: *Report of the regional seminar on time-use surveys*, Kingstown, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, 10–11 Dec. 2014, (Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, 2015).

26 Staff Reporter: "Red Thread completes time use survey. Amerindian women's work burden heaviest", in *Kaieteur News*, 3 Dec. 2004, [www.landofsixpeoples.com/news404/nk412034.htm](http://www.landofsixpeoples.com/news404/nk412034.htm).

27 K. De Souza: "Red Thread has three priorities", in *Stabroek News*, 2013.

Figure 9.  
Total number of people employed by sector in Guyana, 2000–2021 (ILO estimates and projections) <sup>28</sup>

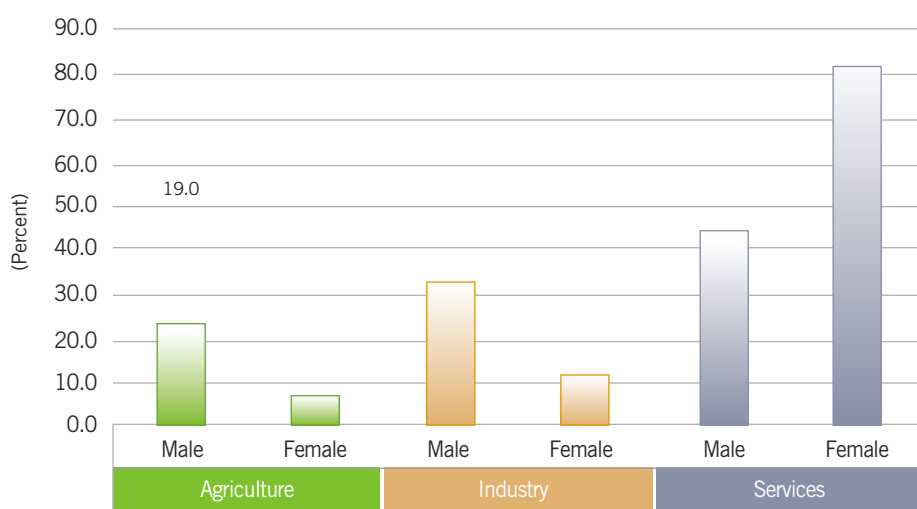


Source: Key Indicators of the Labour Market (ILO modeled estimates, Nov. 2016).

Agriculture and industry sectors employ mostly men, as shown in Figure 10, but employ smaller proportions of the population than services. In contrast, most employees in the growing service industries are women. Thus, the employment of women can be expected to increase over time. However, as shown above, female unemployment rates have not fallen. This may indicate systematic barriers to women’s employment.

A further important point to note is that there actually are fewer female employees than males in the service sector. ILO figures show this to be the case every year since 2000. In 2015, some 82,000 men and 78,000 women reportedly were employed in services. Because labour force participation is so low, it is possible for services to represent over 80 per cent of women’s jobs, but for the number of jobs in this sector still to be smaller than those of men.

Figure 10.  
Percentages of male and female employees by economic sector, 2015 (ILO estimates) <sup>29</sup>



Source: Key Indicators of the Labour Market (ILO modeled estimates, Nov. 2016)

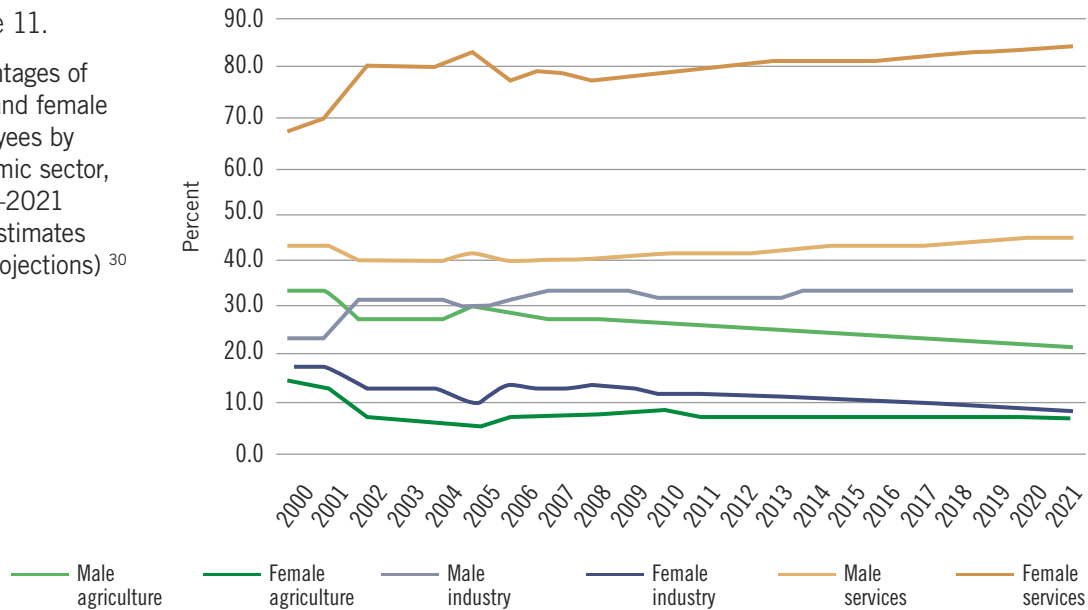
28 “Employment by sector” in *Key indicators of the labour market: ILO modeled estimates*, ILO, Nov. 2016, [www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI\\_ID=33](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI_ID=33).

29 “Employment by sector” in *Key indicators of the labour market: ILO modeled estimates*, ILO, Nov. 2016, [www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI\\_ID=33](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI_ID=33).



Figure 11 demonstrates that the differences in proportions of male and female employees in each sector are not new but have persisted over time. Over the period, there were 3.17 times more male than female employees in the agriculture sector, and 2.57 times as many male than female employees in industry. On the other hand, there were 89.7 per cent more female than male employees in the services sector.

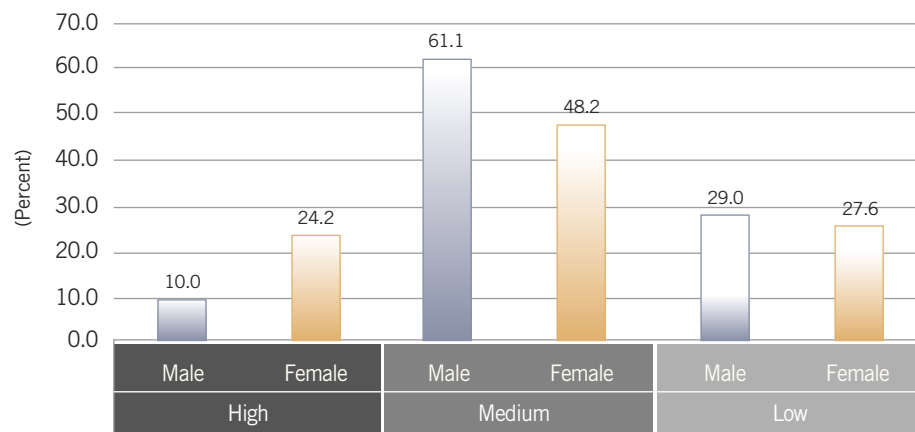
Figure 11.  
Percentages of male and female employees by economic sector, 2000–2021 (ILO estimates and projections)<sup>30</sup>



Source: Key Indicators of the Labour Market (ILO modeled estimates, Nov. 2016).

The chart in Figure 12 shows that in 2015, there were more female than male employees in highly skilled occupations, while more male than female employees held jobs with medium levels of skill. Roughly equal numbers of female and male employees had jobs with low levels of skill.

Figure 12.  
Level of skill by sex among the employed population in Guyana, 2015 (ILO estimates and projections)<sup>31</sup>



Source: Key Indicators of the Labour Market (ILO modeled estimates, Nov. 2016).

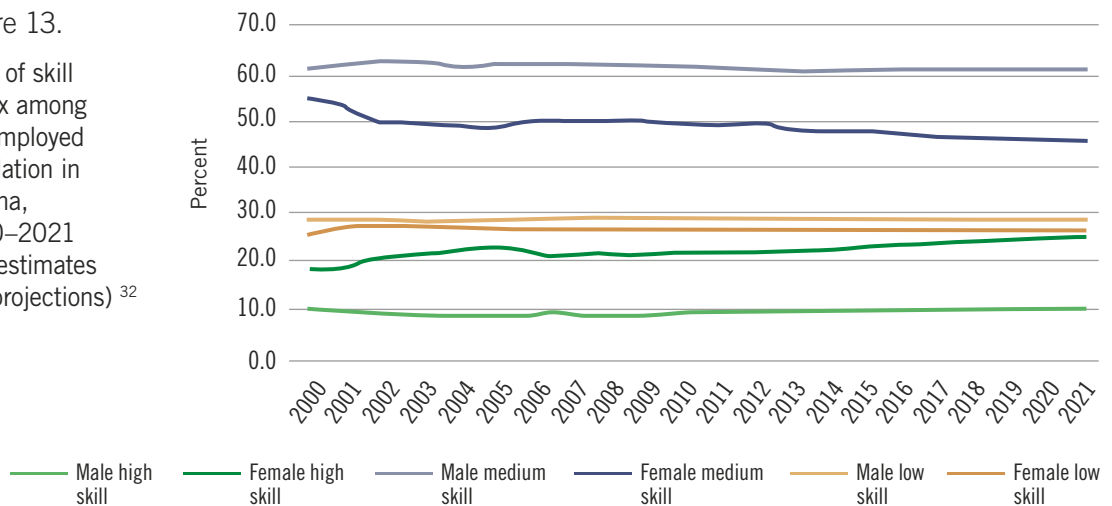
30 “Employment by sector” in *Key indicators of the labour market: ILO modeled estimates*, ILO, Nov. 2016, [www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI\\_ID=33](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI_ID=33).

31 “Employment by occupation” in *Key indicators of the labour market: ILO modeled estimates*, ILO, Nov. 2016, [www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI\\_ID=12](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI_ID=12).



Figure 13 below reveals that over time, there has been a substantial increase in the percentage of women employees with high skills, and a decline in the percentage of women in the medium skill category. The percentages of men and women employees with low skill levels has remained steady.

Figure 13.  
Level of skill by sex among the employed population in Guyana, 2000–2021 (ILO estimates and projections)<sup>32</sup>



Source: Key Indicators of the Labour Market (ILO modeled estimates, Nov. 2016)



<sup>32</sup> “Employment by occupation” in *Key indicators of the labour market: ILO modeled estimates*, ILO, Nov. 2016, [www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI\\_ID=12](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI_ID=12)



## 1.6 Gender wage gaps

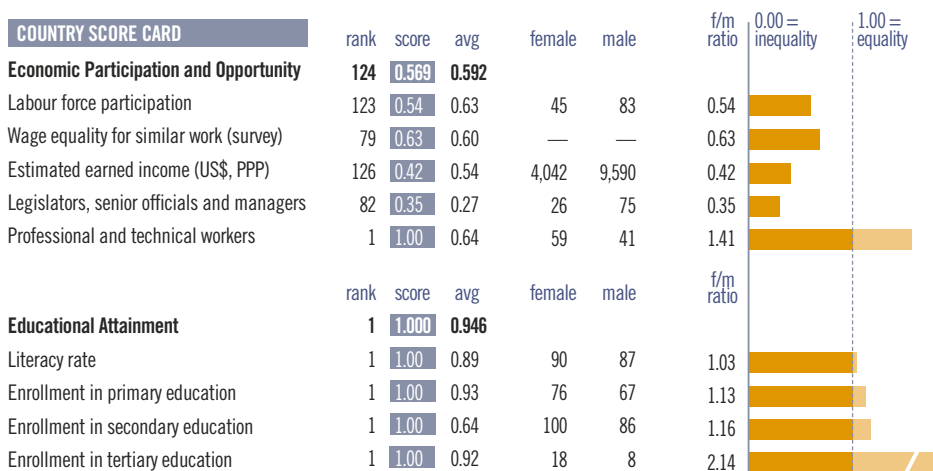
The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2015 ranks Guyana 124th out of 145 countries, in terms of gender parity in economic participation and opportunity. One component of this measure is estimated earned income. In US dollars, at purchasing power parity (PPP), female income per capita is given as US\$4,042 and male as US\$9,590, giving a female-to-male ratio of 0.42.

On the measure of estimated earned income, Guyana is ranked 126th. On the component of wage equality for similar work, Guyana places 79th, with a female-to-male ratio of 0.63, and thus generating a gender wage gap of 37 per cent.<sup>33</sup>

The substantial gender gap in pay appears inconsistent when the higher achievements and participation in formal education of girls and women (as opposed to that of boys and men) are considered. The Global Gender Gap Report ranks Guyana first out of 136 countries in literacy rates and enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education. Notwithstanding this, achievements in education have not translated into equal or higher pay for women.

Figure 14.

Global gender gap indicators of economic and educational gender equality for Guyana, 2015<sup>34</sup>



Source: World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2015: Guyana Fact Sheet.

33 Global gender gap Report 2015: Guyana fact sheet, World Economic Forum, 2016, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=GUY>.

34 Ibid.





## Institutional analysis

### ■ 2.1 National entities responsible for gender

#### 2.1.1 Government agencies and NGOs

The Women's Affairs Bureau (WAB) was Guyana's national focal point for gender and development during the period 1981 to 2015. From 2014, its reporting line Ministry has been the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security. The WAB's main functions include:

- Contribute to the formulation of a gender awareness policy for the advancement of women in Guyana.
- Provide administrative and technical assistance to women's NGOs in the planning and implementation of programmes.
- Provide a referral service for women.
- Initiate gender based research and provide disaggregated data to inform policy and programme formulation.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Guyana national review in the context of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, ECLAC, 2014, [www.cepal.org/mujer/noticias/paginas/3/51823/Guyana\\_Review\\_Beijing\\_20.pdf](http://www.cepal.org/mujer/noticias/paginas/3/51823/Guyana_Review_Beijing_20.pdf)



The Bureau has coordinated programmes and projects that seek to promote gender equality in collaboration with Governmental, civil society and international organizations. One of its signature achievements was the establishment of a national resource and documentation centre.<sup>36</sup>

Since 1981, the WAB reported to several Government ministries, including: the Ministry of Labour and Housing; the Ministry of Cooperatives; the Office of the Prime Minister; the Ministry of National Mobilisation; the Ministry of Culture; and the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security. It has been challenged with limited human and financial resources. To make up for this deficit, the Regional Women's Affairs Committees (RWACs) within the Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) were established in 1986.

The Bureau has provided a forum for consultation and advocacy in general and specifically with the ten RWACs.<sup>37</sup> The RWACs comprise representatives of the national NGOs in their respective administrative regions. They were set up to operate in each region in the same way as other sectoral committees (such as, health, education, agriculture and cooperatives) and have a similar status, receiving funding annually from Government's financial resources allocated to those regions. RWACs were meant to be the backbone for the setting of regional political, social and economic development programmes and provide implementation, technical and monitoring support.

A National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) was established with responsibility for the monitoring of the status or progress of women. The Body was appointed by the political directorate and was constituted with persons from the NGO and State sectors. The Commission has developed a number of issue papers through research on areas of critical importance.<sup>38</sup>

In 2011, a Men's Affairs Bureau (MAB) was set up, also under the purview of the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security. It reportedly sought to address the issue of "male absenteeism" – given that many households are headed by women – and to focus on working with men to address their concerns and help them to be responsible partners and fathers. It also responded to the relatively low educational achievements of boys, placing increased attention on and availability of skills training programmes for school drop outs and low achievers.<sup>39</sup> The MAB has advocated against domestic and sexual violence, and provides a forum or safe space for boys and men to work through their issues as it provides counselling and psychological care to victims and/or survivors of violence. Interventions are carried out in schools, prisons and communities. In partnership with UNFPA, the MAB also implemented a project to build capacity in prison officers dealing with prisoners incarcerated for violent crimes, as well as mini-bus drivers and conductors, to address traditional norms and practices associated with gender-based violence.<sup>40</sup>

In 2015, the WAB and the MAB merged into a single entity called the Gender Affairs Bureau (GAB)<sup>41</sup> under the authority of the Ministry of Social Protection (formerly the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security), thus shifting the focus from "women" to "gender".

36 S. Harris: *Study of gender mainstreaming in the Caribbean*, ECLAC, 2000, Report No.: LC/CAR/G.607. Available online at [www.cepal.org/en/publications/27456-study-gender-mainstreaming-caribbean](http://www.cepal.org/en/publications/27456-study-gender-mainstreaming-caribbean).

37 ECLAC, 2014, *ibid*.

38 S. Harris, 2000, *ibid*.

39 ECLAC, 2014, *ibid*.

40 ECLAC, 2014, *ibid*.

41 *Push for gender equity continues – Regional Women's Affairs Committee concludes two days of discussions*, (GOCRG, Department of Information, 2016), <http://dpi.gov.gy/push-for-gender-equity-continues-regional-womens-affairs-committee-concludes-two-days-of-discussions/>.





The current Bureau's staff composition is unclear. The available documentation confirms the existence of one manager position – a position advertised in May 2017 – as vacant. The study of gender mainstreaming in the Caribbean carried out in 2000, noted that Guyana's WAB had five staff, comprising the Director, two Women's Affairs Officers, a Secretary and a Clerk. It also noted that gender analysis and policy capacity lay only with the Director.<sup>42</sup>

Established in 1997 by the Government with programmatic support from UNDP, Guyana Women's Leadership Institute (GWLI) is among the important stakeholders that comprise the national machinery for promoting women and gender equality. The Institute, an arm of the Ministry of Social Protection, aims to empower women regarding personal and public leadership with structured training residential and non-residential programmes. Between 1999 and 2001, the Institute trained 582 women in areas such as gender and development, leadership, business management, organizational skills, personal development, interpersonal skills, computer skills and job skills.<sup>43</sup> A 2010 UNDP evaluation of programmes conducted in Guyana found that the training programmes reached a significant number of Amerindian women.<sup>44</sup> A 2016 article in *INews Guyana* highlighted the work of the Organization: a "*gender-focused education and training programme for women and men in the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private sector companies to promote gender awareness and equity in the first quarter of 2016*".<sup>45</sup>

The National Resource and Documentation Centre for Gender and Development, established as a Unit of the Ministry of Social Protection, works collaboratively with the GAB and GWLI. The Centre's primary objective is to provide critical information support for training, gender sensitization, programme planning, policy formulation, decision-making and stimulation and promotion of research – all of which are required to underpin the concept of gender equality and to support measures aimed at building the capacity of women and improving their status in society. The Centre has also produced a directory of women parliamentarians and maintains an archive of clippings on women's issues.<sup>46</sup> In the process, the Centre has accepted responsibility for monitoring the situation of women and the progress they have made in society, through the collection of a range of statistics from Governmental and non-governmental organizations, in order to facilitate an analysis of domestic violence, while reinforcing (as far as possible) the need to maintain and expand such activities.<sup>47</sup> While still functional, the Centre has been said to lack the capabilities to undertake the kind of comprehensive research that would promptly inform on women and gender issues.<sup>48</sup>

### 2.1.2 The political arena

The Government has undertaken a menu of measures to ensure women's equal access to, and full participation in leadership and decision-making. One significant achievement has been the implementation of a *legislative quota* to increase women's political involvement. The impact has been evident in increasing women's representation in Parliament, as evidenced by the number of seats held by women, where they now hold 30–33 per cent of parliamentary seats. Women's

42 S. Harris, 2000, *ibid*.

43 DevTech Systems Inc.: *Gender assessment for USAID/Guyana* (GOCRG, USAID, DevTech, 2003), [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/pdacg104.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacg104.pdf).

44 UNDP: *Assessment of development results: Guyana. Evaluation of UNDP contribution* (Washington DC, UNDP, 2010).

45 *INews*: "Increased focus on gender-based violence this year—Women's leadership institute" in *INews Guyana*, (20 Jan. 2016), <http://www.inewsguyana.com/increased-focus-on-gender-based-violence-this-year-womens-leadership-institute/>.

46 DevTech Systems Inc., 2003, *ibid*.

47 UN Committee on economic, social and cultural rights (CESCR): *Combined second to fourth periodic reports of States Parties due in 2000 Guyana—Submitted in 2012*. Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under Articles 16 and 17 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), (UN Economic and Social Council, 15 July 2014).

48 Women and Gender Equality Commission: "Annexes" in *strategic plan of action for 2013–2018* (WGEC, 2013).



political participation from hinterland communities also has been augmented by the ascension of two Amerindian women to Ministerial positions within the Government.<sup>49</sup>

Unfortunately, a recent Study (Persadie, 2014) concluded that the quota system has had little effect on translating the gains related to participation and empowerment of women in politics to other spaces, such as arenas where women traditionally have been marginalized. Detailed analysis included reasons such as the importance of race and class in politics in Guyana, which tend to “trump” gender, and entrenched gender norms among members of political bodies such as the Constitutional Reform Commission.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, the Study proposes that the increasing numerical and descriptive representation of women in politics do not have a significant impact on the creation of more women-friendly legislation and policy outcomes.

Furthermore, the Study notes that it is not possible to see a direct correlation between the quota system and an increased introduction and support of bills and policies that address women’s issues by female parliamentarians. According to the Persadie Study, before the quota system, such policies were implemented on a much greater scale, using CARICOM’s Model Legislations, for example, and the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women. Analysis of the system suggests that despite the presence of a quota, women’s issues still are not treated with priority or represented sufficiently. Possibly, the biggest disillusion would be that the quota system has not changed the climate of gender and power relations, at least in the political arena and that in fact, women in Guyana’s Parliament are seen as being confined to the backbenches or soft politics related to family and children–focused positions.<sup>51</sup>

Alternatively, the quota system is believed to have played a role in challenging social norms by giving higher numbers of women the opportunity and access to negotiating within typically male dominated spaces.<sup>52 53</sup>

## ■ 2.2 Other institutions to promote gender equality

One issue that severely hinders women’s work is gender-based violence, and in Guyana, several entities have been created to address it directly.

The National Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Violence was established under Section 87 of the *Sexual Offences Act 2010*.<sup>54</sup> This Inter-Agency Task Force has a mandate to develop and implement the national plan for the prevention of sexual violence. Under the Legislation, members are appointed by the President, and include:

49 N. Persadie: “Getting to one-third? Creating legislative access for women to political space in Guyana”, in *Politics, power and gender justice in the Anglophone Caribbean: Women’s understandings of politics, experiences of political contestation and the possibilities for gender transformation* (UWI, IGDS and IDRC, 2014), <https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/handle/10625/53637>.

50 N. Persadie, 2014, *ibid*, pp. 40, 35–37.

51 N. Persadie, 2014, *ibid*.

52 N. Persadie, 2014, *ibid*.

53 I. Khan: “Advancing gender justice? The opportunities, resistances, and limitations of Guyana’s quota system”, in *Politics, power and gender justice in the Anglophone Caribbean: Women’s understandings of politics, experiences of political contestation and the possibilities for gender transformation* (UWI, IGDS and IDRC, 2014), <https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/handle/10625/53633>.

B. Shirley: “Crossing over the barriers: A historical journey of women’s political leadership in the Anglophone Caribbean” in *Politics, power and gender justice in the Anglophone Caribbean: Women’s understandings of politics, experiences of political contestation and the possibilities for gender transformation* (UWI, IGDS and IDRC, 2014), <https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/handle/10625/53632>.

54 *Sexual Offences Act 2010*, GOCRG, Ministry of Legal Affairs, 2010, [www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/463-chapter-803-sexual-offences](http://www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/463-chapter-803-sexual-offences)”



- The Ministers of Legal Affairs, Home Affairs, Human Services and Social Security, Amerindian Affairs (now, Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs), Education, Health, Local Government, Youth, Sport and Culture;
- Senior public officers with responsibility for law enforcement, health and human and social services; and
- Persons from non-governmental organizations.

On 8 December 2016, Ministers of Social Protection, Public Security, Public Health and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs signed on to a Protocol to operationalize the Task Force.<sup>55</sup>

The National Domestic Violence Oversight Committee includes members from several Government ministries, national commissions, NGOs, the magistracy and the Guyana Police Force.

The Ministry of Social Protection's Counter Trafficking in Persons Unit (C-TIP) and the Men's Affairs Bureau (MAB) also work on gender-based violence issues. A National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Response to Trafficking in Persons 2017–2018 was launched on 18 January 2017, and details activities to enhance the prevention of trafficking in persons, protection of victims and prosecution of suspected offenders through partnership among stakeholders.<sup>56</sup>

## ■ 2.3 Ministry responsible for labour and employment

The Ministry of Social Protection is the line Ministry for the Gender Affairs Bureau. It is also in charge of the national administration of the Labour Policy of Guyana. Its work is informed and influenced by the legal framework of the Constitution of Guyana, as well as ILO Core Labour Standards and Regional Labour Policy. The National Constitution of Guyana, the country's Labour Laws, and International Labour Conventions of the ILO which have been ratified by Guyana, form the legal foundation and framework for working conditions and industrial relations in Guyana. The legislation for which it is responsible is detailed in Section 3 of this Report, with analysis of the ways it contributes to gender equality in the world of work.

The Ministry's Labour Department is responsible for rolling out several projects, namely:

- The Single Parents Training Programme led by the Board of Industrial Training (BIT). This offers certification in garment construction, cosmetology, catering and as drivers and salespersons – in mostly traditional female fields of work in the services sector.<sup>57 58</sup>
- The National Training Project for Youth Empowerment (NTPYE), is a short term (six to 12 months duration), Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Programme. It targets out-of-school youths across the country (between the ages of 15 and 25 years), helping them to acquire skills in various occupations and gain employment after training. For 2013, a total of 1,688 persons were trained under the NTPYE in the skill-sets listed in the following table.

55 "Social Protection Ministry signs Protocol for prevention of sexual violence", GOCRG, Department of Public Information, 2016, <http://dpi.gov.gy/social-protection-ministry-signs-protocol-for-prevention-of-sexual-violence/>.

56 *National plan of action for the prevention and response to trafficking in persons 2017–2018*, GOCRG, Ministerial Task Force on Trafficking in Persons, 2017, <https://mops.gov.gy/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2017-2018-TIP-Action-Plan.pdf>.

57 Department of Labour: "Single Parents Training Programme", GOCRG, Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, 2014.

58 Department of Labour: "Kamarang youths, single parents benefit from BIT training", GOCRG, Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, 2014.



Notably, the majority were young women, who took courses oriented to service occupations: health services, home economics and IT/Clerical. Courses oriented to manufacturing and skilled manual work were taken mostly by young men.<sup>59</sup>

**Table 3. Trainees of the Guyana National Training Project for Youth Empowerment by sex and subject, 2013**

Region	Engineering		Electrical		Building Construction		Health Services		Home Economics		IT/Clerical		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2	85	1	2	–	19	1	–	29	–	10	7	18	123	59
3	67	1	20	1	25	–	4	54	–	123	4	21	120	200
4	192	–	5	–	19	3	–	–	7	327	13	70	236	400
5	20	1	5	–	–	–	2	36	1	51	2	36	30	124
6	70	–	10	–	16	–	3	62	–	60	4	22	103	144
7	13	1	–	–	3	–	–	7	–	2	–	3	16	13
10	41	–	2	–	1	–	1	22	–	50	–	13	45	85
<b>Total</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>1,025</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>492</b>		<b>45</b>		<b>87</b>		<b>220</b>		<b>631</b>		<b>213</b>		<b>1688</b>	

The Ministry also collaborates with international agencies to execute projects that can assist vulnerable women in addressing systematic barriers to their participation and performance in the labour force and their ability to carry out their caring work, such as poverty and HIV stigma and discrimination. Examples include the following:

- The TACKLE Child Labour Project. This collaboration with the ILO sought to reduce child labour by improving school attendance and punctuality, through the provision of transportation and hot meals for students, and supportive services for parents, guardians and teachers. It ran from 2011–2012, and successfully increased school attendance by providing services that supplemented the efforts of families, many of which were headed by women who were living in poverty. On completion of the Project, the school retention and child labour prevention efforts were continued by the Ministry of Education.<sup>60</sup>
- The HIV Workplace Project, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor and the ILO, ran from 2003–2014. This collaboration led to the design of Guyana’s *National HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy* with recommendations for several economic sectors including security, mining, manufacturing, media, banking and agricultural companies. The Policy makes mention of gender as follows:

*(iii) Gender equality—The gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS should be recognized. Women are more likely to become infected and are more often adversely affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic than men due to biological, socio-cultural and economic reasons. The greater the gender discrimination in societies and the lower the position of women, the more negatively they are affected by HIV. Therefore, more equal gender relations and the empowerment of women are vital to successfully prevent the spread of HIV infection and enable women to cope with HIV/AIDS.*

59 Department of Labour: “National Training Project for Youth Empowerment”, GOERG, Ministry of Labour, Human Services & Social Security, 2014

60 Department of Labour: “TACKLE Child Labour Project”, GOERG, Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, 2014



While this statement of principle is useful in sensitizing people on gender issues relating to HIV, it offers no practical solutions to address intersections between HIV discrimination and sex discrimination at work.<sup>61</sup>

## ■ 2.4 Mechanisms to resolve disputes

The system of industrial relations in Guyana includes procedures for conciliation, mediation and arbitration.<sup>62</sup> At present, however, there is no Industrial Tribunal.<sup>63</sup> As early as 2001, the Government was said to be in discussions with workers' and employers' organizations on a draft *Industrial Tribunal Bill*, according to a report on labour law in Guyana (Akeel 2001), from that time.<sup>64</sup> As recently as August 2015, an article in the *Kaiteur News* stated that "plans were afoot" to establish such a Tribunal, as part of measures to enhance social protection.<sup>65</sup> This review notes that gender issues were not discussed in any of the reports relating to the establishment of such a Tribunal.

Guyana's CEDAW reporting indicates that there are other constitutional and statutory mechanisms for complaints and redress:

- The Police Complaints Authority
- The Public Service Commission
- The Judicial Service Commission
- The Police Service Commission
- The Human Rights Commissions
  - Women and Gender Equality Commission (WGEC)
  - The Rights of the Child Commission (RCC)
  - The Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC)
  - The Indigenous Peoples Commission (IPC)
- The Ombudsman
- The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
- The Judiciary

### 2.4.1 The Human Rights Commissions

Article 212 of the revised Constitution (2003) establishes five Constitutional Bodies to protect and guarantee human rights.

1. The Human Rights Commission (HRC), which is the secretariat for the four other rights commissions;
2. The Women and Gender Equality Commission (WGEC);
3. The Indigenous Peoples Commission (IPC);
4. The Rights of the Child Commission (RCC); and
5. The Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC).

61 *National HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy*, GOCRG, Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, 2014

62 ILO: *The System of Industrial Relations in Guyana* (ILO, undated), [www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---sro-port\\_of\\_spain/documents/publication/wcms\\_224311.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---sro-port_of_spain/documents/publication/wcms_224311.pdf).

63 L. Lewis: "No industrial tribunal in place" in *Guyana Chronicle* (3 May 2017), <https://guyanachronicle.com/2017/05/03/no-industrial-tribunal-in-place>.

64 M.A. Akeel, (2001) *National Labour Law Profile* (Guyana, Geneva, ILO, 2001), [www.ilo.org/ifpdial/information-resources/national-labour-law-profiles/WCMS\\_158900/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ifpdial/information-resources/national-labour-law-profiles/WCMS_158900/lang--en/index.htm).

65 Staff Reporter: "Major reforms" in the pipeline to enhance social protection", in *Kaiteur News* (26 Aug. 2015), [www.kaiteurnewsonline.com/2015/08/26/major-reforms-in-the-pipeline-to-enhance-social-protection/](http://www.kaiteurnewsonline.com/2015/08/26/major-reforms-in-the-pipeline-to-enhance-social-protection/).



These institutional mechanisms provide for the protection and promotion of human rights, complaints mechanisms and opportunities for advocacy and recommendations to the highest decision-making forum in the society – the President and the Legislature.<sup>66</sup> The HRC is comprised of the chairpersons of the other four Commissions named above, and the President appoints one of them as Chairperson.

The Women and Gender Equality Commission (WGEC) was first appointed in 2009 with fifteen members (fourteen of whom were women), and replaces The National Commission on Women established in Guyana in 1996.<sup>67</sup> The WGEC derives its mandate from Article 212-Q of the Constitution to “*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*”.

The WGEC has been committed to capacity development, raising awareness and advocacy on women’s rights. It developed a five-year strategic plan in 2013, which provides guidance for carrying out its mandate. This Commission is required to submit to the Speaker of the National Assembly its report and any special report it so requires; these are submitted annually.<sup>68</sup> Its primary directive is to promote “*national recognition and acceptance that women’s rights are human rights, respect for gender equality and protection, development and attainment of gender equality*” and reports to the National Assembly on an annual basis.<sup>69</sup>

WGEC’s functions are outlined in Article 212-R and include recommending training and assistance relevant to the improvement of women and girls, while at the same time facilitating women’s participation in decision-making. These functions are important to developing capacity, as well as



66 *Guyana national review: In the context of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, ECLAC, 2014, [www.cepal.org/mujer/noticias/paginas/3/51823/Guyana\\_Review\\_Beijing\\_20.pdf](http://www.cepal.org/mujer/noticias/paginas/3/51823/Guyana_Review_Beijing_20.pdf).

67 Staff Reporter: “National Commission on Women to Be Replaced by Constitutional Body”, in *Stabroek News*, (18 Sep. 2008), [www.stabroeknews.com/2008/archives/09/18/national-commission-on-women-to-be-replaced-by-constitutional-body/](http://www.stabroeknews.com/2008/archives/09/18/national-commission-on-women-to-be-replaced-by-constitutional-body/).

68 ECLAC, 2014, *ibid*.

69 CEDAW: *Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of the combined 7th and 8th periodic report Guyana*, CEDAW, 2012, CEDAW/C/GUY/7-8, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/730170?ln=en>

access to, and advancement in, the world of work. It also has the following functions that can help improve the environment for gender equality in the world of work:

- Recommending and implementing legislation and formulating policies that seek to enhance and protect the status of women.
- Initiating research and creating a suitable database on women and gender issues, particularly as they relate to reproductive health, domestic violence and socio-economic and political status.
- Promoting consultation and cooperation with women organizations in relation to decision-making that will effect changes in the lives of women.<sup>70</sup>

As at 2017, WGEC comprises 16 members (one of whom is a man), chosen from the Private Sector, Regional Affairs Committees, the Gender Affairs Bureau, the Labour Movement, and women's NGOs.<sup>71</sup> The Commission also has two representatives from the other Human Rights Commissions. Committees which have undertaken different aspects of programming also support the work of the Commission. To date, two such Committees have been operational – a Work Planning Committee (WPC) and the Media Monitoring Committee (MMC). In line with their Constitutional arrangements, the Commission reports directly to the Parliament.

In 2013, WGEC developed a 5-year Strategic Plan for the period 2013–2018. The strategy presents four clear thematic priorities:

1. Organizational and Institutional Strengthening of the Women and Gender Equality Commission;
2. Women, Leadership and Governance;
3. Women and Economic Empowerment; and
4. Gender Based Violence.<sup>72</sup>

The Government of Guyana reportedly allocated over GY\$60 million (approximately US\$300,000) to the Commission during the 2010 to 2012 period. The budgetary allocation was used to fulfil its mandate and maintain a functional office with staff and other resources. In 2012, WGEC also reported benefiting from financial and technical support from USAID to convene consultations and workshops.<sup>73</sup>

The Economic Empowerment recommendations of the WGEC include the following:

- Review of Labour Laws, in consultation with the Ministry of Labour (now, Ministry of Social Protection), Trade Unions, the Public Service Commission, Chambers of Commerce, Civil Society Groups and the ILO;
- Review action and Legislation on equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, and other measures regarding parity in the world of work;
- Evaluate the economic status of women in Guyana and structural causes. Conduct consultations to build strategies based on the findings;
- Advocate for the Ministry of Education to revise school curricula and text books to promote gender equity;

70 CEDAW, 2012, *ibid.*

71 “The WGEC Team”, WGEC.

72 WGEC, 2013, *ibid.*

73 CEDAW, 2012, *ibid.*



- Review Laws governing financial institutions to ensure they comply with gender equity objectives;
- Promote training for women in micro-enterprises;
- Initiate the implementation of workplace policies against sexual harassment in the public and private sector;
- Initiate public education on gender and entrepreneurship; and
- Collaborate with the Ministry of Labour (now, Ministry of Social Protection), trade unions and Public Service Commission for the introduction of workplace care facilities and flexible schedules for working mothers where possible.<sup>74</sup>

This review did not find information on the status of these recommendations, but makes the following assessments with respect to the recommendations themselves.

- The recommendations for extensive review, research and consultation suggest uncertainty as to where the challenges lie and what should be done, and may delay progress.
- The proposal for workplace care facilities and flexible schedules is commendable and should be monitored carefully to ensure success across a range of public and private sector settings.
- The recommendations stop short of concrete proposals for more equitable sharing of “social reproductive” tasks between men and women.
- The proposals for training and education appear to take little account of market demand and the needs of, and strategic opportunities for women. There is a need for schools and other educational entities to infuse business skills into their curricula so that all members of the population can benefit from a realistic approach to income generation.

#### 2.4.2 Other constitutional and statutory mechanisms

The Constitution protects gender (and other) rights Conventions ratified by Guyana, which are listed in Section 3.1 of this Report. The executive, legislature and judiciary can refer to and use them in decision-making and in the courts, according to Article 154-A of the Constitution.<sup>75</sup> In addition, since 2008, Legal Aid Clinic services have been expanded to six of the ten administrative regions of the country to facilitate greater access to justice for the poor and vulnerable.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, the Ombudsman and the Police Complaints Authority have the authority to investigate and address complaints of maladministration and violation of rights.<sup>77</sup>

The complaint mechanism in place was presented to the CEDAW Committee as follows:<sup>78</sup>

*“Where a victim of discrimination or harassment based on sex arises, whether in the public or private sector, the matter can be raised with a superior officer within the agency or directly with the Chief Labour Office, Ministry of Labour, if there is fear that further discrimination would occur. Where it is a case of discrimination based*

74 WGEC, 2013, *ibid.*

75 *Constitution (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 2003*, GOCRG, 2003, [http://parliament.gov.gy/documents/acts/4619-act\\_no\\_10\\_of\\_2003.pdf](http://parliament.gov.gy/documents/acts/4619-act_no_10_of_2003.pdf)

76 CEDAW, 2012, *ibid.* See also the paragraph on the Guyana Association of Women Lawyers (GAWL), on p. 38 of this Report.

77 CEDAW, 2012, *ibid.*

78 CEDAW, 2012, *ibid.*





*on the individual's gender, the Chief Labour Officer intervenes, and an investigation is conducted by officers of the Ministry of Labour, and if the complaint is found to be valid, the Chief Labour Officer acts as arbitrator/negotiator between the employer and the aggrieved employee. The aggrieved individual has the right to have a lawyer present at the arbitration, and if they cannot afford one, they can approach the Guyana Legal Aid for legal assistance. The Chief Labour Officer ensures that the absence of an attorney does not prejudice the aggrieved individual."*

In instances where the complaint involves one of sexual harassment falling within the provisions of the *Sexual Offences Act* or the *Criminal Law (Offences) Act*, there is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Social Protection, the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, the Ministry of Public Health and law enforcement agencies.<sup>79</sup>

If the complaint is lodged with the Department of Labour of the Ministry of Social Protection, the Chief Labour Officer (CLO) (or one of the labour officers) receives the complaint and provides for the aggrieved individual to be removed immediately from the place of employment and placed under the care and guidance of the Ministry of Human Services (which is responsible for providing counseling, transportation and a safe haven for the individual), or the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, (in the event the individual is an indigenous person or a resident of the interior).<sup>80</sup>

The CLO carries out an investigation, and where a case of sexual harassment is found, the CLO informs the police of the matter. The police conduct their own investigation and bring charges against the accused individual. The police liaise with either the Ministry of Social Protection or Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, depending on in whose care the victim has been placed.<sup>81</sup>

CEDAW reviews have expressed concerns about women's ability to exercise such rights and bring cases of discrimination before the courts. The absence of permanent magistrates' courts in all regions, the lack of information about women's rights and other practical difficulties in gaining access to the courts are all factors that act as barriers.<sup>82</sup>

## ■ 2.5 Government institutions concerned with economic development

This review has found sparse resources of publicly available information on the gender-related aspects of the work of Government institutions concerned with economic development. There is also little sex-disaggregated data on the staff and the beneficiaries of these entities. Nevertheless, information on the main institutions is provided, which may be supplemented with further gender analysis, once more information becomes available.

79 CEDAW, 2012, *ibid.*

80 CEDAW, 2012, *ibid.*

81 CEDAW, 2012, *ibid.* Detailed information on sexual harassment cases were unavailable at the time of this Report.

82 CEDAW, 2012, *ibid.*



### 2.5.1 National Tripartite Committee

In 1993, Guyana established the National Tripartite Committee (NTC) to be a mechanism for social partnership, creating a forum for dialogue between Government, trade unions and the private sector on the national labour policy.<sup>83</sup> The Committee deals with labour legislation and labour policy matters. The Committee is chaired by the Labour Minister and comprises eighteen members representing Government, employers and labour, with the number of representatives allocated equally. Six sub-committees complement the NTC and deal with the following issues:

- Minimum wage and legislation;
- Industrial disputes;
- ILO matters;
- Social services;
- Occupational safety and health; and
- Training and placement.

The NTC is also the entity responsible for the implementation of the ILO Decent Work Country Programme, and the TACKLE Programme discussed above. Over the years, the NTC has achieved some notable successes in securing consensus for the enactment of new labour laws, based on CARICOM Model Laws, in the areas of termination of employment, prevention of discrimination, occupational safety and health, as well as trade union recognition. It also has spearheaded amendments for the updating of labour laws and the National HIV/AIDS Policy in the Workplace.<sup>84</sup>

### 2.5.2 Ministry of Business and Tourism

Another Institution concerned with economic development in Guyana is the Ministry of Business and Tourism, which is responsible for articulating the business policies of the country and negotiating trade agreements with other nations. The Ministry's mandate was outlined in the extraordinary *Official Gazette* of 6 June 2015, which listed the Minister's areas of responsibility as follows: investment promotion; sustainable development; workforce enhancement; and export promotion. The Ministry is comprised of several departments and agencies, some of which are semi-autonomous:

- Department of Industry;
- Department of Commerce;
- Business Strategy and Policy Unit;
- National Exhibition Centre (NEC);
- Guyana Office for Investment (GO-Invest);
- Guyana National Bureau of Standards (GNBS); and
- Small Business Bureau (SBB).

83 "National Tripartite Committee (NTC) – Information", in *AICESIS-ILO Joint Database*. Available online at [www.aicesis.org/database/organization/261/](http://www.aicesis.org/database/organization/261/).

84 *Decent work country programme: GUYANA (2012–2015)*, GOCRG and ILO DWT/O-POS, 2012, [www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---sro-port\\_of\\_spain/documents/publication/wcms\\_336134.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---sro-port_of_spain/documents/publication/wcms_336134.pdf)  
Staff Reporter: "ILO team hails Guyana's TACKLE Project", in *Guyana Chronicle* (18 May 2014), [guyanachronicle.com/2014/05/17/ilo-team-hails-guyanas-tackle-project](http://guyanachronicle.com/2014/05/17/ilo-team-hails-guyanas-tackle-project).



The Guyana Office for Investment (GO-Invest) was established under the *Public Corporations Act (1994)* as a semi-autonomous Body responsible for investment promotion and export facilitation by Guyana's approved investment and trading strategies. The Agency's mission is to: “contribute to Guyana's economic development by promoting and facilitating local and foreign private-sector investment and exports in accordance with the country's approved investment and export strategies”.<sup>85</sup>

Despite being the central investment Agency for sectors such as tourism and agro-processing – which both have a predominantly female workforce – the Agency apparently does not have any programme that is gender specific to stimulate access to work for and investment from female entrepreneurs and investors.

The *Small Business Act* does not explicitly address gender, but it does contain several provisions that can assist women in business.<sup>86</sup> The Act provides incentive regimes and support programmes for small businesses, a sector within which businesses are owned mainly by women due to the flexibility it offers in facilitating the work-family balance. Following its enactment, a Small Business Council (SBC), the Small Business Bureau (SBB) and the Small Business Development Fund (SBDF) were established. The Council is the governing body of the SBB, with the SBC acting as an oversight and advisory body to the Bureau. The SBB has made three types of support available to women (as detailed below), namely training, grant assistance and facilitation of marketing opportunities.<sup>87</sup>

Since 2010, the SBB has provided small business management training to women, creating in them the capacity to design business proposals and improve their eligibility for funding. It also has made access to finance for small business owners through the REDD+ Investment Fund possible. The Fund grants



85 “About GO-Invest”, GOCRG, Guyana Office for Investment, 23 Mar. 2013, <http://goinvest.gov.gy/about-go-invest/>.

86 *Small Business Act*, GOCRG, 2004, [http://parliament.gov.gy/documents/acts/4631-act\\_no\\_2\\_of\\_2004.pdf](http://parliament.gov.gy/documents/acts/4631-act_no_2_of_2004.pdf).

87 ECLAC, 2014, *ibid*.



financing to business owners who do not qualify for a bank or micro-finance institution. Between 2013 (when the Fund became operational) and 2014, the Fund had received over two hundred applications from micro and small-scale women entrepreneurs.

The SBB has also been working in collaboration with CUSO International. The initiative has benefitted some female entrepreneurs through access to subsidies, as well as transportation logistical assistance to attend local, regional and international marketing events.<sup>88</sup> The Bureau was successful in supporting the small businesses of women from Guyana's First Peoples, in collaboration with the following NGOs, among others:

- Pomeroon Women Agro-Processors Association;
- Araputika Processors Friendly Society;
- Helping Hands Women Producers Cooperative Society; and
- Women's Agro-Processors Association.

### 2.5.3 Ministry of Agriculture

The Ministry of Agriculture is the principal coordinating body for the agriculture sector. The Institution has several agencies and technical units, each with a different area of focus on the industry and a separate but similar governance arrangement.

The Rural Enterprise and Agricultural Development Project (READ), an initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture with funding from the FAO, ran for six years from 2009 to 2015.<sup>89</sup> The Programme sought to improve social and economic conditions of households, particularly for small farmers, women and indigenous peoples. Some of its strategies included increasing access to financial capital, and human capacity-building at the community level.

This review was able to unearth some information on attempts during the mid-1990s to implement a National Agricultural Policy in Guyana, which included a Draft Policy on Women in Agriculture.<sup>90</sup> It is unclear what has happened to this Policy. However, the Policy's aims included:

- Ensuring that sustained attention is given to the integration of women into development activities in the agricultural sector;
- Ensuring that the needs of women receive consideration during project formulation; and
- Enhancing the socio-economic conditions of rural women and their families.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>88</sup> ECLAC, 2014, *ibid*.

<sup>89</sup> Staff Reporter: "Rural Enterprise and Agricultural Development Project ends – Leaves Its mark on small scale producers, says Dr Ramsammy", in *Guyana Chronicle*, 29 Mar. 2015, <http://guyanachronicle.com/2015/03/28/rural-enterprise-and-agricultural-development-project-ends-leaves-its-mark-on-small-scale-producers-says-dr-ramsammy>.

*Guyana: Rural Enterprise and Agricultural Development Project*, GOCRG, FAO Food and Nutrition Security Platform and IICA, 2009, <https://plataformacelac.org/en/programa/359>.

*A review of gender related challenges affecting Local Government and MSMEs in Guyana*, CARILED, 2014, <http://cariled.org/wp-content/uploads/RPT-Gender-and-MSMEs-in-Guyana-1412.pdf>

<sup>90</sup> Sectoral Committee for the NDS: "Chapter 21: Women, gender and development", in *National Development Strategy 2001–2010. a policy framework eradicating poverty and unifying Guyana: A civil society document*, (2000), [www.guyana.org/NDS/chap21.htm](http://www.guyana.org/NDS/chap21.htm).

<sup>91</sup> Sectoral Committee for the NDS, 2000, *ibid*.



#### 2.5.4 Private sector organisations

The Private Sector Commission of Guyana was established in 1992 with the aim of bringing together all private sector organs and business entities under the purview of being one national body.<sup>92</sup> It counts among its membership the national employers' organization – the Consultative Association of Guyanese Industry (CAGI) – the lead speaker on labour policy, industrial relations, and trade unions matters.<sup>93</sup> CAGI also provides training and advisory services in key areas of industrial relations, namely dispute settlement, negotiation and conciliation. There appear to be no evidence of gender-oriented programmes among these agencies.

The Guyana Bank for Trade and Industry (GBTI) targets the micro, small and medium enterprises sector. It is a partner with the Ministry of Human Services for the implementation of the Women of Worth Loan Facility, which allows single women to access up to GY\$250,000 in loans to start their businesses, at a rate of six per cent per annum. The Programme is described in more detail in another part of this Report.

The CARILED Report<sup>94</sup> has concluded that overall, at community and agency levels, many of these programmes were not integrated and coordinated across agencies, so as to provide maximum benefits to men and women. This challenge was aggravated in rural and hinterland communities.

## ■ 2.6 Non-governmental organizations

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Guyana generally do not have a strong online presence, which has limited the information available for this Report. Contact with the GAB is recommended for updated information.

Gender analysis was conducted in preparation for Guyana's *2001–2010 National Development Strategy*,<sup>95</sup> with its Sectorial Committee identifying a number of weaknesses inherent in NGOs, which limit their ability to address gender inequalities:

- a) Poor coordination among them and across regions;
- b) The ageing of their membership, that is, a challenge in attracting and/or keeping younger women members; and
- c) The lack of research-oriented advocacy, monitoring and evaluation, and income-generation.

The Sectoral Committee also highlighted issues with the ability of NGOs to work together in a sustained way, across political, party and racial (or ethnic) differences.<sup>96</sup>

This Report suggests that further research would be necessary to assess the extent to which the Committee's analyses are accurate and if so, whether they remain applicable. The review did uncover some instances to which the Committee referred in the case of one NGO in particular, Red Thread,

92 "Private Sector Commission Guyana | About", Private Sector Commission, <http://psc.org.gy/about/>.

93 "About CAGI", Consultative Association of Guyanese Industry, <http://www.cagi.org.gy/about.html>.

94 CARILED, 2014, *ibid.*

95 Sectoral Committee for the NDS, 2000, *ibid.*, Chapter 21.

96 Sectoral Committee for the NDS: "Annex 25: Gender issues", in *National development strategy 2001–2010. A Policy framework eradicating poverty and unifying Guyana: A civil society document*, (2000), [www.ndsguyana.org/downloads/annex25.pdf](http://www.ndsguyana.org/downloads/annex25.pdf).



which, over the years, has faced and strenuously countered innumerable accusations of political bias.<sup>97 98</sup> Politics in Guyana is heavily affected by ethnic allegiances and favouritism, which creates a challenging environment for the work of NGOs and other agencies seeking to address gender inequalities.<sup>99</sup>

### 2.6.1 Red Thread Women

Red Thread Women was formed in 1986 with a focus on the empowerment of “grassroots women”, especially in the world of work. Their name symbolizes and pays tribute to women garment manufacturers and seamstresses. The NGO has formed strong alliances with poor and marginalized women, such as women in the Guyanese hinterland and women engaged in sex work near mining sites.

In 2000, Red Thread collaborated with the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC) in training and managing women’s groups, members and sex workers to conduct an HIV seroprevalence survey.<sup>100</sup> Red Thread has also conducted a time-use survey which featured samples of women from around the country.<sup>101</sup> The group also successfully published a guide to the *1996 Domestic Violence Act*.<sup>102</sup>

Red Thread’s stated objectives include:<sup>103</sup>

1. To work for women’s unwaged and low-waged caring work to be re-valued and properly remunerated, and for equal pay for work of equal value.
2. To work against all forms of violence, especially against women and children, beginning with domestic violence and violence during racial and/or political conflict, and to support victims of such violence.
3. To build solidarity among women across divides and to oppose all forms of discrimination including discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, class, dis/ability, age, sexual identity, and HIV status.
4. Wherever possible, to provide individual women and groups of women with the information, skills, and other support they need to fight against economic, social, and political injustices.
5. To develop, evaluate, and share the lessons of small projects addressing key issues including grassroots women’s income generation, women’s health, and children’s literacy.<sup>104</sup>

The following is a quote from Karen De Souza (2013), the National Coordinator of Red Thread, as she wrote about one of Red Thread’s campaign issues, showing the centrality of women’s work as a focus of their advocacy:

97 D. Jaipaul: “Where are Red Thread, other groups who represent the poor?” in *Guyana Times* (6 Dec. 2016), <https://guyanatimesgy.com/where-are-red-thread-other-groups-who-represent-the-poor/>

98 K. De Souza: “Red Thread has three priorities”, in *Stabroek News* (7 Aug. 2013), [www.stabroeknews.com/2013/opinion/letters/08/07/red-thread-has-three-priorities-including-protection-and-justice-for-women-in-violent-situations/](http://www.stabroeknews.com/2013/opinion/letters/08/07/red-thread-has-three-priorities-including-protection-and-justice-for-women-in-violent-situations/).

99 N. Persadie, 2014, *ibid*.

100 C.F. Allen et al.: “Sexually transmitted infection service use and risk factors for HIV infection among female sex workers in Georgetown, Guyana”, in *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*, (2006, Vol. 43 No. 1), pp. 96–101.

101 Staff Reporter: “Red Thread completes time use survey. Amerindian women’s work burden heaviest” in *Kaieteur News* (3 Dec. 2004), [www.landofsixpeoples.com/news404/nk412034.htm](http://www.landofsixpeoples.com/news404/nk412034.htm).

102 *Guide to the Domestic Violence Act*, Red Thread, undated, <http://www.legalaid.org.gy/files/dv.pdf>.

103 D. Jaipaul, 2016, *ibid*.

104 *Red Thread Women*, Red Thread, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/RedThreadWomenGuyana/>.



*“A living income for unwaged and low-waged women. Activities in support of this priority have included advocacy for the removal of VAT from essential items, increases in wages for low-waged women workers including domestic workers, security guards, and shop assistants, and increases in old age pensions and public assistance. The advocacy has been backed by research including a time use survey.*

*This area of work is now to have an increased focus, including via a drop in centre for women workers to get information about their rights and towards this end, we’ve begun training in labour legislation.”*

Ms De Souza also explained that Red Thread’s work encompasses capacity-building as well:

*Back in town [Georgetown], for 13 years, we ran free reading and computer classes with over 80 students from schools in South Georgetown (and a few adults) and we continue to run a library, workshops and camps for youth. The literacy classes included a feeding programme three times a week for which we received donations.<sup>105</sup>*

Red Thread’s advocacy on work issues is complemented by two other main areas of focus: protection and justice for women and children in violent situations, and increased visibility and voice for grassroots women.<sup>106</sup> Further details on the work of this NGO can be found a study conducted by Trotz (2007) and published in the journal *Race and Class*.<sup>107</sup>

In addition to Karen De Souza, several other Guyanese women have made outstanding contributions to gender activism in the country:

- Andaiye (she does not use a surname). A founding member of Red Thread, Andaiye is well known for her advocacy for grassroots women and particularly, for her focus on women’s health.
- Vanda Radzik. Vanda is known as an environmental activist and promoter of local cultural art-forms.
- Kamala Kempadoo. Currently based at York University in Toronto, Kamala Kempadoo is a leading international feminist scholar who has worked closely with Guyanese feminists. Areas of her research include sexuality, the political economy of sex work and human trafficking.

## 2.6.2 Other gender rights based NGOs

The Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD) campaigns on the issue of access to opportunities among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people, including work opportunities. In 2016, they held a meeting with other NGOs and the Minister of Business about developing strategies to increase such access.<sup>108</sup>

105 K. De Souza, 2013, *ibid*.

106 K. De Souza, 2013, *ibid*.

107 A. Trotz: “Red Thread: the politics of hope in Guyana”, in *Race & Class*, (2007, Vol. 49 No. 2), pp. 71–79, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0306396807082859>.

108 Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination: “Minister Gaskin commits to examine challenges for marginalized groups starting small businesses”, SASOD, 4 April 2016, [www.sasod.org/gy/sasod-blog-minister-gaskin-commits-examine-challenges-marginalized-groups-starting-small-businesses](http://www.sasod.org/gy/sasod-blog-minister-gaskin-commits-examine-challenges-marginalized-groups-starting-small-businesses).



The Conference of the Affairs and Status of Women in Guyana (CASWIG) is probably one of the pillars of women's organizations in Guyana. It was established as an umbrella organization, which engaged in income-generating and education projects throughout the 1980s.<sup>109</sup> Its most notable achievement was the creation in 1981, of the Women's Affairs Bureau (WAB). It is unclear whether the Organization is still active.

The Guyana Association of Women Lawyers (GAWL) was founded in 1987 with the primary aim of giving legal advice and assistance to women in the society. The Association is a voluntary organization, and it is not compulsory for women lawyers to become members. GAWL has worked over the years in promoting women's rights and issues, and in particular, on property rights and violence against women. One its major accomplishments was the establishment of a Legal Aid Clinic.<sup>110</sup> Data from four Regions of Guyana for the period January to September 2017 show that the majority of clients in each Region are women. However, the data on numbers of clients by type of civil and criminal matter is not broken down by sex. Very few of the matters dealt with by the Legal Aid Clinic deal with employment matters. There appear to have been only three such clients among the 2,034 cases handled over the January to September 2017 period.

The Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) is a regional linking network, with a primary focus on research. In 1992, the Guyana Chapter spearheaded the Women's Rights Campaign, which looked at domestic violence, women's rights at work, child abuse and sexual harassment. The Guyana Chapter also addressed the issue of media reporting of cases of violence against women, as well as conducted occasional training in this area for the police force.

The Women's Studies Unit–University of Guyana, is a research Unit of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Guyana and was established in September 1987. The Unit has conducted a broad range of research, teaching, and outreach activities. Research projects completed for agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF and UNDP have examined, for example, the economic and social situation of households headed by females, as well as investigated the incidence and problems of early pregnancies. The Unit also organized forums and published a newsletter. However, during the course of its existence it was moved repeatedly within the Faculty of Social Sciences and was finally merged with the Institute of Development Studies in 2006.<sup>111</sup> In 2015, the WGEC and the University of Guyana (re)launched the Gender Studies Unit. The Unit partners with the University of the West Indies and York University in Toronto. Kamala Kempadoo was instrumental in the establishment of this Unit.<sup>112</sup>

### 2.6.3 Employers' organizations

Employers' organizations also play a significant role in the growth and development of Guyana. They constitute a major component of the private sector and represent the interests of enterprises involved in economic activities in various sectors, including agriculture, fishing, forestry, mining, manufacturing, construction, communication, finance and tourism.

109 Sectoral Committee for the NDS, 2000, *ibid.*, Chapter 21.

110 Guyana Association of Women Lawyers Women Supporting Equality and Justice, GAWL, 2013, <http://guyanaassociationofwomenlawyersonline.org/GAWL/>.

111 *The Women's Studies Unit*, University of Guyana, WSU, undated.

112 Press Statement: "UG's Gender Studies Unit launched on day two of National Gender Policy Conference", GOCRG, Ministry of the Presidency (20 July 2015), <https://motp.gov.gy/index.php/2015-07-20-18-49-38/2015-07-20-18-50-14/232-ug-s-gender-studies-unit-launched-on-day-two-of-national-gender-policy-conference>.





Registered in 1967, the Guyana Manufacturers and Services' Association (GMSA) has evolved over the decades into a business support institution, functioning as liaison between businesses (in manufacturing and social and business services) and the Government of Guyana. As such, GMSA maintains relationships with other private sector business support organizations and Government agencies, as well as regional and international organizations and financing agencies.

#### 2.6.4 The trade union movement

The trade union movement in Guyana is grouped under two trade union centres:

1. Guyana Trades Union Congress (GTUC); and
2. Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana (FITUG).

First formed in 1983, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana (FITUG) was dormant for many years until 2002. FITUG covers the following sectors: mining, agriculture, clerical, fishing, forestry, energy, manufacturing and transportation. These sectors employ more men than women and as such, this Union may not represent the interests of women effectively.

The Guyana Agricultural and General Workers' Union (GAWU) is a FITUG affiliate, and given the large number of women employed in the agriculture sector, GAWU has a critical role in the formulation of policies addressing gender issues. This Report was unable to locate any information on their impact on the national dialogue on gender in the workplace; nor was there any evidence of the Union having developed or adapted a gender policy, or having gender considerations in their bargaining agreements.

The Guyana Trades Union Congress (GTUC) covers workers in mining; primary, secondary and tertiary education; agriculture; postal and telecommunications; the public sector (namely, Local Government); retail trade; and manufacturing. Its women's arm, the Women's Advisory Council of the Trade Union Congress (WAC-TUC), was established in 1967 to: (a) develop training programmes for women trade unionists; (b) advise the TUC on problems and goals for female workers; (c) coordinate





activities of the women's section of the TUC; and (d) secure complete organization of all women in unions affiliated with the TUC. This Report was unable to locate any information about their current activities and of their role in negotiating collective agreements for female workers.

### 2.6.5 Advocates for the rights of Guyana's Indigenous Peoples

#### *Amerindian Peoples Association (APA)*

The Amerindian Peoples Association (APA) is a non-governmental Indigenous Peoples Organization in Guyana. It is primarily an advocacy organization that seeks to promote the social, economic, political and cultural development of Amerindian communities and defend the rights of the Indigenous Peoples of Guyana. Their areas of focus are: <sup>113</sup>

- Land and territorial rights;
- Current legislation;
- Climate change and low carbon development initiatives; and
- Extractive industries and infrastructure development.

APA has produced a number of reports and assessments of the situation of Amerindian people in Guyana, and especially on the negative impact of the mining industry on women. Above all, they have exposed the ugly reality of myriad human rights violations occurring in villages, in particular against women. <sup>114</sup>

#### *The Guyanese Organisation of Indigenous Peoples (GOIP)*

Established in 1990, the stated primary goals of the Guyanese Organisation of Indigenous Peoples (GOIP) include: (a) facilitate the development of the indigenous people of Guyana through indigenous peoples' institutes; and (b) promote the recognition of the internationally recognized rights and interests of indigenous people of Guyana through a partnership with other NGO's, stakeholders and agencies.

It is unclear whether the organization is still active and whether it is linked to the APA. Some of their key advocacy achievements include:

- The 2003 consultations on the revision of the *Amerindian Act*;
- The 2004 training workshop for indigenous women leaders interested in standing as candidates for local Government bodies i.e. village councils, RDC's, NDC's and other similar institutions); and
- The 2004–2005 sustainable, indigenous-based agriculture project.

113 Amerindian Peoples Association: *Indigenous Rights*, APA, <http://apaguyana.com/>.

114 Amerindian Peoples Association and Forest Peoples Programme: *Our Land, Our Life: A participatory assessment of the land tenure situation of Indigenous Peoples in Guyana. Report for Region 1 and Region 2*, (APA and FPP, 2016), [www.forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/publication/2016/12/fppguyanaltainternet.pdf](http://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/publication/2016/12/fppguyanaltainternet.pdf).

L. Anselmo and Amerindian Peoples Association: "Indigenous peoples' rights, forests and climate policies in Guyana: A special report", K. Dooley and T. Griffiths (Eds.), Edisi pertama [The First Edition] (Moreton-in-Marsh, England, Forest Peoples Programmes, 2014), [www.forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/private/publication/2014/06/guyana-special-report-fpp-2014.pdf](http://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/private/publication/2014/06/guyana-special-report-fpp-2014.pdf).



## ■ 2.7 Initiatives and tools for gender mainstreaming

The Cabinet of the Government of Guyana established an Inter-Ministerial Committee in response to the clarion call by the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) for global governments to:

*“...give all ministries the mandate to review policies and programmes from a gender perspective; to locate the responsibility for the implementation of the mandate at the highest possible level; establish and/or strengthen an inter-ministerial coordination structure to carry out this mandate, to monitor progress and to network with the relevant ministries...”*

When conceptualized, the members of the Committee were to be senior personnel in the public service coming from the highest decision-making levels. This, however, did not materialize, and instead, they were reported to be two levels lower than the Permanent Secretary and not to possess substantial gender expertise, making it necessary for the Bureau to provide them with gender sensitization training.<sup>115</sup>

Around the year 2000, there were a couple of reviews of gender mainstreaming in Guyana. One was part of a regional review of gender mainstreaming supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The other formed part of the preparation of the country's *National Development Strategy 2001–2010*. Both reviews were critical of the level of mainstreaming that had been achieved, and of the resources devoted to the Women's Affairs Bureau (WAB).<sup>116</sup>

The Caribbean gender mainstreaming study concluded that gender bureaux in the region overall, were “largely weakly structured, ill-defined units whose ability to function as the sole implementing agency for the government's policy on women in development was compromised by the absence of appropriate support and resource provisions”. Looking specifically at Guyana, the Study underlined that the WAB's “understaffing, low core budget, heavy dependency on external funding and a low profile in the government hierarchy” and characterized it as “being a weak mechanism with a huge mandate”. At that time the Bureau was offering a wide range of services, including the operation of a loan fund and individual support to women.<sup>117</sup>

Likewise, Guyana's *National Development Strategy 2001–2010* stated that the effectiveness of the Bureau was undermined by inadequate staffing and funding, which, given the importance and scale of its task, severely limited what it could achieve.<sup>118</sup> According to the Sectoral Committee, the multiple locations and relocations within Government during the first ten years of the WAB's existence (1981–1991), inhibited its ability to participate in central decision-making and to impact upon policy formulation. The lack of effective inter-ministry linkages and focal points in technical ministries severely hampered the WAB's ability to effectively support gender mainstreaming.<sup>119</sup>

115 S. Harris, 2000, *ibid.*

116 In 2015, the Women's Affairs Bureau (WAB) and the Men's Affairs Bureau (MAB) merged into a single entity called the Gender Affairs Bureau (GAB).

117 S. Harris, 2000, *ibid.*

118 Sectoral Committee for the NDS: “Annex 25: Gender issues”, in *National Development Strategy 2001–2010. A policy framework eradicating poverty and unifying Guyana: A civil society document*, (2000), [www.ndsguyana.org/downloads/annex25.pdf](http://www.ndsguyana.org/downloads/annex25.pdf).

—: “Chapter 21: Women, gender and development”, in *National development strategy 2001–2010. A policy framework eradicating poverty and unifying Guyana: A Civil society document*, (2000), [www.guyana.org/NDS/chap21.htm](http://www.guyana.org/NDS/chap21.htm).

119 Sectoral Committee for the NDS, 2000, *ibid.*, Chapter 21.



The *National Development Strategy 2001–2010* made several recommendations for gender mainstreaming, such as the establishment of women’s focal points in ministries and agencies, and that the Women’s Affairs Bureau should be located within the Ministry which has responsibility for national development planning. It stated that the WAB should also be provided with required technical and financial support for its national programmes, as well as for meaningful participation in regional and international organizations. In addition, the Sectoral Committee noted that project implementation should be the responsibility of the line ministries, supported by competent NGOs.<sup>120</sup> However, this review was unable to discover the extent to which these recommendations were actualized and effected.

More than a decade later, concluding observations of the CEDAW committee established that to date, Guyana had not taken sufficient measures to strengthen the national machinery by providing it with adequate human, financial and technical resources, to enable it to coordinate and work effectively for the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming.<sup>121</sup>

On paper, Gender Focal Points (GFPs) were put in place at the institutional level to guarantee gender mainstreaming as an ongoing process. However, according to WGEC’s *Strategic Plan 2013–2018*, this system is not functioning as it should. This review did not discover evidence that these GFPs were ever put in place and, if they had been, the ministries in which they were located.

WGEC made several recommendations in 2013 to improve the underlying conditions to advance gender programming. These focused on institutional strengthening:

- Strengthened institutional structures and mechanisms of the national machinery with gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting being systematized;
- A commitment to ensure that improved legislation and policy are coupled with enabling environments to ensure their enactment;
- A national agreement to advance a statistical system for the routine use of sex disaggregated data in creating policies and programmes
- Increased public education on gender equality; and
- A monitoring and evaluation framework.

Contact with stakeholders in-country is recommended to assess the degree of success in operationalizing these recommendations.<sup>122</sup>

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120 Sectoral Committee for the NDS, 2000, *ibid.*, Chapter 21.

121 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: *Follow-up letter on concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* (OHCHR, CEDAW, 2016).

122 WGEC, 2013, *ibid.*



## Legal and policy analysis

### ■ 3.1 International Conventions on gender and work ratified by Guyana

With regards to international agreements addressing labour standards and gender, Guyana has ratified 47 ILO Conventions, including all eight Fundamental Conventions internationally recognized as the “core labour standards”.<sup>123</sup>

However, Guyana has ratified only two of the four Conventions considered by the ILO to be the core gender equality Conventions, namely: the *Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100)*, and the *Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111)*. Still to be ratified are the *Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No. 156)* and the *Maternity Protection Convention (No. 183)*.

<sup>123</sup> These are the eight fundamental Conventions, along with their dates of ratification by Guyana: CO29, Forced Labour Convention (ratified 1966); CO87, Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention (1967); CO98, Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention (1966); C100, Equal Remuneration Convention (1975); C105, Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (1966); C111, Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (1975); C138, Minimum Age Convention (1998); C182, Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (2001).



In 1980, Guyana ratified the *UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, another principal gender equality instrument. This Convention is legally binding, and as such, by ratifying this Convention, Guyana has committed to eradicating all forms of discrimination against women.

The *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women*, also known as the *Convention of Belém do Pará* and adopted in 1994, addresses the problem of violence against women, and sets forward comprehensive strategies to prevent, punish, and eradicate violence against women.

All these instruments provide women with a wide range of economic, social and cultural rights, notably: the right to work; the right to health and social security; the right to education; the right to join an organization of their choosing; the right to housing; and the right to food. To be effective, however, these international and regional human rights instruments require that the guarantees embedded in them be implemented in practice.

In 2003, Guyana amended its Constitution. With the *Constitution Amendment (No. 2) Act* providing that:

*“every person, as contemplated by the respective international treaties to which Guyana has ratified or acceded to, is entitled to the human rights enshrined in those treaties, and such rights shall be respected and upheld by the executive, legislative, judiciary, and all organs and agencies of Government...”*<sup>124</sup>

The incorporation of the provisions of ratified international treaties is automatic and therefore eliminates the need for separate legislative enactments.

Table 4. International and Regional Human Rights Conventions ratified by Guyana that address gender equality at work	
Instrument	Ratified
UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	1980
ILO Convention No. 100, Equal Remuneration (1951)	1975
ILO Convention No. 111, Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) (1958)	1975
ILO Convention No. 189, Domestic Workers (2011)	2013
International Covenant on Civil and Political rights (ICCPR)	1977
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) - Optional Protocol	1993
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	1977

<sup>124</sup> “Article 154(a)1”, in *Constitution of the Co-Operative Republic of Guyana*, GOCRG, Ministry of Legal Affairs, [www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/410-chapter-101-the-constitution-of-the-co-operative-republic-of-guyana/file](http://www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/410-chapter-101-the-constitution-of-the-co-operative-republic-of-guyana/file).

Table 4 International and Regional Human Rights Conventions ratified by Guyana that address gender equality at work continued

Instrument	Ratified
UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children	2004 (both Convention and Protocol)
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (2003)	2010
Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (“Convention of Belem Do Para.”)	1996

While legally non-binding, Guyana is a member of the United Nations and the Commonwealth. It is encouraged, therefore, to implement the following international action programmes:

1. The Beijing Platform for Action<sup>125</sup> calls on governments and active players to “*promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes*”. It echoes the international commitment to the goals of equality, development and peace for all women, which were reaffirmed by the Beijing+10 declaration of 2005 and the Beijing+20 declaration of 2015.
2. The 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development identifies goals, strategic objectives and actions to be taken by the government for the advancement of gender equality, with particular recommendations for the agricultural sector (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1995). This was updated with further goals, strategic objectives and actions in the *Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015*, which includes gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment as critical areas for Commonwealth action.<sup>126</sup>

## ■ 3.2 Discrimination, equal opportunity

### 3.2.1 The Constitution

Section 149 of the *Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana of 1980*<sup>127</sup> states rights to protection from discrimination. The Constitution defines the term “discriminatory” to mean:

*“...affording different treatment to different persons attributable wholly or mainly to their or their parents’ or guardians’ respective descriptions by race, place of origin, political opinion, colour, creed, age, disability, marital status, sex, gender, language, birth, social class, pregnancy, religion, conscience, belief or culture whereby persons of one such description are subjected to disabilities or restrictions to which other persons of the same or another description are not made subject or accorded privileges or advantages which are not afforded to other persons of the same or another such description.”*  
(Paragraph 149(2))

125 UN Women: *Fourth World Conference for Women: Platform for Action*, Sep. 1995, [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/index.html](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/index.html).

126 Commonwealth Secretariat: *Commonwealth plan of action for gender equality 2005-2015* (London, Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005), [http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/GenderPOA2005-2015\\_0.pdf](http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/GenderPOA2005-2015_0.pdf).

127 *Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana 1980—as last amended in 2009*, GOCRG, Ministry of Legal Affairs, 2009, [www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/410-chapter-101-the-constitution-of-the-co-operative-republic-of-guyana/file](http://www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/410-chapter-101-the-constitution-of-the-co-operative-republic-of-guyana/file).



Affirmative action is allowable under the law (such as the electoral quota of women described in Section 2.4), in that Paragraph 149(3c) allows “*privilege or advantage*” under “*special circumstances*” that are “*reasonably justifiable*”.

Section 149 includes a right to employment in paragraph 149A: “*No person shall be hindered in his or her enjoyment of the right to work, that is to say, the right to free choice of employment*”.

Reflecting Guyana’s status as a Co-operative Republic, it also states that no person shall be hindered in the management and decision-making processes of the State by participating in co-operatives, trade unions, civic or socio-economic organizations (Paragraph 149C).

According to Paragraph 149D2, the State can undertake legislative and other measures to ensure equality and protect disadvantaged persons.

Paragraph 149F focusses on gender equality. It affirms that all women are entitled to equal rights with men in all spheres of economic, social and political life. It states that all forms of discrimination against women on the basis of sex or gender are illegal. It states that women are entitled to equal access with men to academic, vocational and professional training, equal opportunities in employment, remuneration and promotion.

Two particular Acts support Article 149 of the Constitution making all prohibited acts of discrimination unlawful, bringing discrimination in the realm of the criminal law: *The Equal Rights Act 1990* and *the Prevention of Discrimination Act 1997*. Both of these address requirements of CEDAW.

### 3.2.2 The Equal Rights Act (1980)

*The Equal Rights Act (1990)*<sup>128</sup> specifically focusses on sex discrimination, with particular attention being paid to sex discrimination in employment and equal remuneration.

The Act restated the constitutional position that: “*Women and men have equal rights and the same legal status in all spheres of political, economic and social life*” and declared all forms of discrimination against women or men on the basis of sex or marital status illegal. The Act protects individual measures taken to facilitate women’s access to employment and health protection, and also makes provision for conditions supportive of working mothers, including stating that employers may offer paid leave and other provisions to enable mothers to work (Section 2, paragraph 7).

The Act upholds equal remuneration for “the same work or work of the same nature” (Section 2, paragraph 3) and prohibits discrimination in hiring and promotion practices (Section 2, paragraph 6). Acts of discrimination are considered criminal offences, and are punishable by six months imprisonment or a fine of GY\$5,000 (approximately US\$24.40 as of July 2017); and in the case of a continuing offence, to a further fine of GY\$500 for each day after the first day during which the offence continues (Section 4 of the Act).

128 *Equal Rights Act 1980*, GOCRG, Ministry of Legal Affairs, [www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/613-chapter-3801-equal-rights](http://www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/613-chapter-3801-equal-rights).





### 3.2.3 Prevention of Discrimination Act (1997)

The Prevention of Discrimination Act (1997)<sup>129</sup> focusses on discrimination in the world of work, since, according to the Preamble to the Act, it provides for the elimination of discrimination in employment, training, recruitment and membership of professional bodies and equal remuneration to men and women who perform work of equal value.

The Act is divided into nine parts. Part II defines grounds for discrimination; Part III covers protection from discrimination in employment; and Part IV, the promotion of equal remuneration. Part V provides protection against discrimination by other bodies; Part VI, protection against discrimination in other areas; Part VII outlines general exceptions; while Part VIII stipulates offences related to discrimination; and Part IX delineates the burden of proof.

Discrimination in the world of work is defined as “the making of distinction, exclusion, preference the effect or intent being to nullify or impair equality of opportunity or treatment” on the specified grounds (Part II Section 4(1)).

Part V of the Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination in the advertisement of the job, in determining who should be offered the job, in the terms and conditions provided, and with respect to promotion, transfer, training, retrenchment and dismissal.

Sexual harassment is defined under Part II of the Act as: “*any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature in the workplace or in connection with the performance of work which is threatened or imposed as a condition of employment on the employee or which creates a hostile working environment for the employee*”.

This Legislation is remarkably detailed, as compared with discrimination legislation analyzed in other Caribbean countries as part of the current Project. Nevertheless, as seen above, major gender differences in rates of employment and pay remain in Guyana.

In the 2010 CEDAW country report, Guyana affirmed that it “*recognizes its State responsibility with respect to conforming domestic laws to international law in order to promote and protect women’s rights*”. It also reported that steps had been taken – in the fields of employment, education, social security, healthcare, access to goods and services, water and housing – to facilitate and provide for equitable access, coupled with affirmative action, to ensure that women (especially those who are disadvantaged) have access to these services.<sup>130</sup> The State also reported having set out procedures where victims of sexual harassment may complain, as well as the associated penalties for those who are guilty of discrimination (see Section 3.6).<sup>131</sup>

*The 2016 US Report on Human Rights* noted that while the Law in Guyana prohibits discrimination based on gender, there was no meaningful enforcement against such discrimination in the workplace. While reported cases of sexual harassment were common, no cases were filed, and often, charges of sexual harassment were settled out of Court. In fact, job vacancy notices routinely specified that the

<sup>129</sup> *Prevention of Discrimination Act 1997*, GOCRG, Ministry of Legal Affairs, 1997, [www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/873-chapter-9908-prevention-of-discrimination](http://www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/873-chapter-9908-prevention-of-discrimination).

<sup>130</sup> CEDAW, 2012, *ibid*.

<sup>131</sup> CEDAW, 2012, *ibid*.



employer sought only male or only female applicants. Newspapers frequently carried advertisements asking gender-specific or age-specific applicants to fill positions in the retail, cosmetology, or security sectors.<sup>132</sup>

Finally, there appears to be no laws addressing “gender identity” issues; as such, transgender women are not considered or covered under the law. Anti-discrimination legislation protecting transgender women from discrimination does not exist. NGOs such as SASOD report widespread discrimination of persons in this regard. In fact, reports noted that discrimination in employment and occupation occurred against women and individuals, based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as access to education and medical care, and in public spaces.<sup>133</sup> The 2016 US Department of State Report records an incident that occurred in March 2016, in which a magistrate removed a defendant from the courtroom before she could answer to the criminal charges against her because she was a transgender woman.<sup>134</sup>

The National Policy Paper on Women (2006) is mentioned repeatedly in the literature but was not available online or on any government platform. Thus, neither the exact content nor the way it was used has been verified. Its role seems to be similar to that of a National Gender Policy. However, the IDRC Study looking at Gender Policies in the Caribbean does not count it as one.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, the Government portal blog entry mentions a Gender Policy being finalized as being the country’s first Policy, which would infer the country does not presently have one.<sup>136</sup> Clarification on the matter must be obtained.

Notwithstanding, Guyana’s CEDAW<sup>137</sup> Report makes mention of the document as being central to gender mainstreaming and as placing the issue on the national agenda. It was said to reflect the Government’s commitment to a number of principles, including most relevantly the improvement of the economic and social position and situation of women in Guyana.<sup>138</sup> In 2015, a conference was held on the development of a new Gender Policy for Guyana.<sup>139</sup>

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132 U.S. Department of State: *Country reports on human rights practices for 2016: Guyana*, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2016.  
Available online at: [www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265592#wrapper](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265592#wrapper).

133 US Department of State, 2016, *ibid*.

134 US Department of State, 2016, *ibid*.

135 D. McFee: “National gender policies in the English-speaking Caribbean”, in *Politics, power and gender justice in the Anglophone Caribbean: Women’s understandings of politics, experiences of political contestation and the possibilities for gender transformation* (UWI, IGDS and IDRC, 2014). Available online at: <https://sta.uwi.edu/igds/ppgj/documents/IDL-53630.pdf>.

136 Press Statement: “National gender policy being finalised”, GOCRG, Department of Public Information  
<http://dpi.gov.gy/national-gender-policy-being-finalised/>.

137 CEDAW, 2012, *ibid*.

138 CEDAW, 2012, *ibid*.

139 Press statement: “UG’s Gender Studies Unit launched on day two of National Gender Policy Conference”, GOCRG, Ministry of the Presidency (20 July 2015),  
<https://motp.gov.gy/index.php/2015-07-20-18-49-38/2015-07-20-18-50-14/232-ug-s-gender-studies-unit-launched-on-day-two-of-national-gender-policy-conference>.



### ■ 3.3 Maternity, paternity and parental policies

As noted above, discrimination on the basis of pregnancy is prohibited by the national Constitution of Guyana (Section 149). Pregnancy also is one of the grounds for discrimination prohibited by the *Prevention of Discrimination Act*, specifically in Part II(4)(2)(a). Part VI(18) further states that it is unlawful in application forms to request information from pregnant women, which is not asked of people who are not pregnant. An exception to prohibition of discrimination on the basis of pregnancy in employment may only be made if the essential nature of a job calls for a person who is pregnant or not pregnant, as in Part III(6)(2)(a) of the Act.

The *Termination of Employment and Severance Pay Act* protects women workers during pregnancy and after childbirth from disciplinary action or dismissal for her pregnancy, or reasons connected with her pregnancy, as outlined in Part III.8(1)(c). In addition, a pregnant employee is guaranteed the right to return to her job and to reclaim all previously assigned duties, stated in Part II(2)(a).<sup>140</sup>

Under the *Occupational Safety and Health Act*<sup>141</sup> of 1997, a pregnant employee has the right to adjustment to her working conditions, once her employer is notified about her condition. These accommodations are to ensure that she is not subjected or exposed to the use of chemicals or substances, or other working conditions detrimental to her health or that of her unborn child, stipulated in Part V.46(2)(n) of the OSH Act.

Under the *National Insurance and Social Security Act*,<sup>142</sup> maternity leave is granted for 13 weeks, which cannot start earlier than six weeks before the expected delivery date (paragraph 29(1)). Maternity benefits may be extended beyond 13 weeks, if a certificate is issued by a medical practitioner



140 *Termination of Employment and Severance Pay Act 1997*, GOCRG, Ministry of Legal Affairs, [www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/856-chapter-9601-termination-of-employment-and-severance-pay/file](http://www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/856-chapter-9601-termination-of-employment-and-severance-pay/file).

141 *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1997*, GOCRG, Ministry of Legal Affairs, [www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/871-chapter-9906-occupational-safety-and-health](http://www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/871-chapter-9906-occupational-safety-and-health).

142 *National Insurance and Social Security Act 1969*, GOCRG, Ministry of Legal Affairs, [www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/602-chapter-3601-national-insurance-and-social-security](http://www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/602-chapter-3601-national-insurance-and-social-security).



showing health conditions related to the pregnancy and delivery that prevent a mother's return to work (paragraph 31(b)).<sup>143</sup>

The ILO Maternity Protection Convention (No. 183), which Guyana has not yet ratified, recommends 14 weeks of maternity leave. Article 10 of C.183 speaks to accommodating working mothers who are breastfeeding. A recent article states that the Minister of Social Protection is considering the adoption of six months maternity leave to accommodate exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, as recommended by the World Health Organization.<sup>144</sup> However, to date, no measures have been adopted. Paternity leave is not available, but the Government has been discussing the granting of such leave to fathers.<sup>145</sup>

At present, maternity benefits are paid to working mothers and is equivalent to 70 per cent of their average insurable income by the NIS. The difference is only paid by the employer if the latter signed a Collective Agreements that included it.<sup>146</sup>

### ■ 3.4 Equal remuneration for work of equal value

As mentioned in Section 2.1 of this Report, Guyana has ratified the ILO's *Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)*.

The 1980 Constitution, under Article 149F(1), grants to every woman equal rights and status as that enjoyed by men in all domains, *including economic and social life*. In addition, Article 149F(2) states that every woman is entitled to equal access to opportunities in employment, remuneration and promotion of social, political and cultural activity, as that which is enjoyed by men.

The *Equal Rights Act 1990 and the Prevention of Discrimination Act 1997* further guarantee, under the law, equal remuneration to women for the same work, or work of the same nature. "Equal remuneration" is defined as the rates or compensation that have been established without differentiation based on the grounds of sex -- Prevention of Discrimination Act, Part IV.9(2). Under the Equal Rights Act, the Minister may make regulations to stipulate the principles for determining, or specifying, whether any work is of the same nature as any other work, outlined in Paragraph 5.2(a).

In practice, however, when looking at wage equality between women and men for similar work (converted as a female-over-male ratio), the 2015 Gender Gap Report attributed an overall score of 0.63,<sup>147</sup> with women earning approximately 37 per cent less than men for equal work.<sup>148</sup>

143 *Maternity Benefit*, Guyana National Insurance Scheme, [www.nis.org.gy/maternity\\_benefit](http://www.nis.org.gy/maternity_benefit).

144 Staff Reporter: "6 Months Maternity Leave Policy for 2017", in *Guyana Times* (21 July 2016), <https://guyanatimesgy.com/6-months-maternity-leave-policy-for-2017-lawrence/>.

145 Staff Reporter: "White Paper on Paternity Leave for Cabinet", in *Guyana Chronicle*, (11 Nov. 2015), <https://guyanachronicle.com/2015/11/11/white-paper-on-paternity-leave-for-cabinet>.

146 World Bank Group: "Guyana National Labour Law Profile", in *Women, Business and the Law 2016* (Washington DC, World Bank, 2016).

147 World Economic Forum: *The global gender gap report 2015* (WEF, 2015).

148 U.S. Department of State: *Country reports on human rights practices for 2016: Guyana*, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2016.  
Available online at: [www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265592#wrapper](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265592#wrapper).



The *Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR)*, an ILO Body of independent legal experts that monitors the implementation of ILO Conventions and Recommendations, has been examining the application by Guyana of ILO Convention No. 100. The CEACR has been recommending the amendment of Section 2(3) of the Equal Rights Act No. 19 of 1990, which provides for “*equal remuneration for the same work or work of the same nature*”, in order to align it with Section 9 of the Prevention of Discrimination Act No. 26 of 1997 (which provides for the principle of equal remuneration *for work of equal value*, which is the principle in Convention No. 100).

The Committee also indicated that this coexistence of the two different concepts in the Equal Rights Act and the Prevention of Discrimination Act might lead to misunderstanding in the application of the principle of the Convention. To address this ambiguity in the Legislation, the CEACR has recommended that Government organize training activities and awareness-raising campaigns for labour inspectors and judges, as well as representatives for workers and employers.<sup>149</sup>

For many years Guyana did not have a national minimum wage policy. However, since 1 January 2017, the private sector is under the obligation to pay employees minimum wages by virtue of the new *Labour (National Minimum Wage) Order 2016*.

The national minimum wage, effective from 1 January 2017, is as follows:

- GY\$44,200 per month (roughly US\$216 as of July 2017); or
- GY\$10,200 (US\$49.9) per week; or
- GY\$2,040 (US\$9.97) per day; or
- GY\$255 (USD1.25) per hour.

Before 2017, minimum wage rates for workers were guaranteed only by Collective Labour Agreements, putting those workers not covered by them at a disadvantage. This was especially harmful to women in the workplace, as several industries with a majority of female employees are not covered by such Agreements, including the hospitality services, bakeries, and manufacturing, among others.<sup>150</sup>

## ■ 3.5 Work-family responsibilities, including state-provided child care services

The Government of Guyana has few mechanisms that would facilitate the integration of women with major family responsibilities into the workplace. There are some provisions towards children’s care and education, but no mechanisms to provide child benefits or tax deductions for childcare expenses.<sup>151</sup>

### 3.5.1 The Single Parent Assistance Programme

The Single Parent Assistance Programme was introduced in 2010 by the to promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities. Although the programme is not gender-specific, the majority of beneficiaries are single mothers and single women who head households.

149 ILO: Observation (CEACR) - adopted 2016, published 106th ILC session in 2017, *concerning Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)*—Guyana (Ratification: 1975).

Available online at [www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100\\_COMMENT\\_ID:3295642](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID:3295642)

150 CESCR, 2014, *ibid*.

151 World Bank, 2016, *ibid*.



There are two components to this programme.

#### *Component one*

This involves the provision of skills training (and/or retraining, at no cost and with a stipend) in several areas, including: cosmetology; catering; information technology; office procedures; childcare and care for the elderly; computer repairs; electrical installation; garment manufacturing; welding; the operation of heavy duty machinery; and other skilled artisan areas. The aim is to see an improvement of the trainees' capabilities in effectively managing their business, while providing them with opportunities to source markets for production. Upon successful completion of this training, graduates receive grants of GY\$65,000 (US\$325) to enable their start-up of a business in their area of training.

#### *Component two*

The second component provides day care assistance to single parents, in the form of day care and day care vouchers to subsidize the cost of childcare to those doing skills training. As of 2014, the Programme has benefited 1,106 single parents. A follow-up study on the success of this Programme was being conducted at the time that this Report being compiled; it is unclear whether the evaluation has already concluded.<sup>152</sup>

### 3.5.2 Social protection mechanisms

Social protection mechanisms are vital tools for income security and well-being. The Guyana Government has underscored its recognition of the right of everyone to social security and social insurance.<sup>153</sup> Article 149B of the Guyana Constitution states that “*every public sector worker shall be entitled to an entirely enforceable right to any pension or gratuity granted to them under the provision of any law or collective agreement of any kind*”. In addition, Articles 213–215 of the Constitution give further protection to pension entitlements.

The National Insurance Scheme (NIS) under the *National Insurance and Social Security Act* (Cap. 36:01), provides compulsory social insurance for employees in both the public and private sectors, as well as self-employed persons between the ages of 16 and 59.

Provisions for older age are especially important for women, given their greater longevity. In Guyana, women who have reached the age of 60 can expect to live for a further 17 years, while the equivalent figure for men is 13 years.<sup>154</sup> Guyana's pension system has both an earnings-related and an old-age grant for those with some (but insufficient) earning contributions.

The Old Age Benefit (OAB) is available to insured persons – male or female – who have attained the age of 60 years. It is payable in either periodic payments (in the form of a monthly pension) or in lump sum form. The State also offers a non-contributory pension scheme, which permits the inclusion of disadvantaged groups, such as women who are not part of the workforce.

The universal adult pension – known as the Old Age Pension Programme (OAPP) – under the *Old Age Pensioners Act* (Cap. 36:03) is available to all citizens 65 years and over, regardless of whether they are beneficiaries of the NIS Pension Scheme, or any other scheme. The means test was removed

152 CEDAW, 2012, *ibid.*

153 CESCR, 2014, *ibid.*

154 International Monetary Fund: *National Insurance Scheme reforms in the Caribbean*, (IMF, 2016), Working Paper WP/16/206, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2016/wp16206.pdf>.



in 1995, and the only criterion is achieving the required age. The amount has increased over time, and its most recent adjustment was in 2011 to the equivalent of US\$50 per month.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (PRSP) and its social safety net mechanisms pay particular attention to the poor and vulnerable (women, children, elderly, Amerindians, and the differently-abled). The Programme includes special annual budgetary and policy interventions by the State to provide housing and water for low-income and indigent families, and universal school uniform vouchers and school feeding to ensure that children go to school. The National Commission for the Family focuses on what is in the best interests of the welfare of the household, with primary considerations being the emotional and economic needs, education and guidance, and health of the entire family. The Commission also assists with the disabled and elderly.

Under the Public Assistance Programme (PAP), persons can apply for financial aid, through their District Poor Law Guardians, when they are caring for disabled or ill persons or dependents. Those eligible include people living in poverty who are single parents (or grandparents) caring for children, or people living with HIV/AIDs who are unable to work. The disbursement is for six months initially, after which a case must be made for continued support. Family caregivers caring for the disabled, and those with terminal illness are not deregistered from the Programme.<sup>155</sup>

With regard to married women, the State has made certain provisions under the *Married Persons Property Act*,<sup>156</sup> which has implications for when their marriages dissolve, especially in terms of property ownership, since access to property can determine access to credit and thus business and work opportunities.

The Act stipulates that in divorce proceedings, the property of persons who have been living together for less than five years may be distributed as the judge sees fit, taking into account the contribution made by a spouse to the marriage, looking after the home and caring for the family. In cases where spouses have been living together for more than five years, the Act provides that only one-third of the property be awarded if the claimant party was not working, and a half, if that person was working. Notwithstanding the possibility the judge may decide otherwise, this provision still indirectly discriminates against women who may have stayed in the home, performing unpaid care work rather than entering formal employment.

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<sup>155</sup> CESCR, 2014, *ibid*.

<sup>156</sup> *Married Persons (Property) Act*, GOCRG, Ministry of Legal Affairs, [www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/880-chapter-4504-married-persons-property](http://www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/880-chapter-4504-married-persons-property).



## ■ 3.6 Tackling the issues of sexual harassment and gender-based violence

The *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará)*,<sup>157</sup> to which Guyana is a signatory, recognizes that women's right to live free from violence includes their right to live free from discrimination. It affirms the right of every woman to be free from violence and includes, among others, the right of women to be valued and educated free of stereotyped patterns of behaviour, as well as social and cultural practices based on concepts of inferiority or subordination.

The Convention also stresses on violence against women being an obstacle women's economic, social and cultural rights. It is unequivocal with regards to the obligation of signatory States' to act with due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish discrimination and violence against women, both in the public and private spheres. It asserts that States Parties must consider the particular risks women face in discrimination and violence in state policies, whether they are disadvantaged because of sex, race, ethnicity, or age, or because they are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

### 3.6.1 Domestic Violence

The *Domestic Violence Act 1996* is another Legislation addressing violence and harassment against women. It was enacted to give legal protection to persons who have suffered abuse or are at risk of suffering domestic abuse. The Act addresses the matter of violence within the home, especially to women and children.<sup>158</sup> Progressive aspects of this Legislation include its wide scope,<sup>159</sup> encompassing verbal, physical, sexual and psychological abuse between members of the household.

Under the Act, victims of domestic violence, male or female, have the right to seek Protection, Occupation or Tenancy Orders. They can apply for these orders under a wide variety of relationship conditions: against another person with whom they have been married; with whom they are co-habiting; with whom they have had sexual relations; with whom they have lived together in the same household; or even agreed to marry. This broad scope contrasts with legislation in other Caribbean countries where, for instance, domestic violence is legally defined as occurring only between people currently or formerly married or cohabiting for several years.<sup>160</sup>

### 3.6.2 Sexual harassment

The Prevention of Discrimination Act 1997 states that sexual harassment is a form of unlawful discrimination based on sex (Section 8). The Act includes a clause that provides for the Chief Labour Officer (CLO) to adjudicate on matters of sexual harassment in the workplace. The penalty for such discrimination is a fine not exceeding GY\$20,000 as well as damages from the employer (Sections 25 and 26).

157 Full text is available at <https://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/a-61.html>

158 *Domestic Violence Act*, GOCRG, Ministry of Legal Affairs, 1996, [www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/488-chapter-1109-domestic-violence](http://www.mola.gov.gy/information/laws-of-guyana/488-chapter-1109-domestic-violence).

159 Mechanism of the follow-up of the Convention on the Prevention Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (MESECVI): *Second hemispheric report on the implementation of the Belém do Pará Convention*, (OAS, MESECVI, 2012), [www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/docs/MESECVI-SegundoInformeHemisferico-EN.pdf](http://www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/docs/MESECVI-SegundoInformeHemisferico-EN.pdf).

160 OAS: "Guyana: Response to the questionnaire and final report", in *Follow Up Mechanism to the Belém Do Pará Convention (MESECVI) Fourth Conference of States Parties* (OAS, MESECVI, 2012). Available online at [www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/nationalreports.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/nationalreports.asp).





### 3.6.3 Tackling overall gender-based violence

The monitoring mechanism (Committee of Experts) of the Convention of Belém do Pará, administered by the OAS' Inter-American Commission of Women, has noted certain aspects of Guyana's Legislation and action relating to gender-based violence,<sup>161</sup> namely:

- Marital rape and rape within common law unions has been statutorily criminalized in Section 37 of the Sexual Offences Act.
- There are three State or civil society shelters for victims of domestic violence.
- Policy papers have been developed on sexual violence (“Stamp It Out”) and domestic violence (the National Policy on Domestic Violence).
- There is a Domestic Violence Policy Unit (a special Unit established in and by the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security) working in conjunction with a National Domestic Violence Oversight Committee to implement the domestic violence policy.
- Awareness programmes are consistently provided by Ministries, state agencies and through women's organizations and community women's groups.
- Training on the Sexual Offences Act and Domestic Violence Act has been provided, mostly by the GAB, to lawmakers, justice system personnel (magistrates court staff), educators, police, women's social and community-based organizations, police prosecutors, social and probation workers, faith-based organizations community leaders and advocates.
- The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security provides victims with financial assistance and counselling where needed. They also work in conjunction with the Guyana Police Force to provide victims with a safe haven leading up to and during the hearing of the matter.

Gaps noted by the Committee include the absence of statistics on violence against women. There also is no provision to protect against violence against women which may be perpetrated by the State itself.

## ■ 3.7 Policies and initiatives to stimulate entrepreneurship

Small business, private sector associations and business development organizations are seen as a primary source of programmes to boost small and micro entrepreneurship with a focus on women.

Notwithstanding the fact that women are not barred legally from access to loans, mortgages and credit, and do not need consent from their husbands or male partners to obtain credit, the reality is that the demand for high collateral and the high-interest rates put formal credit beyond the reach of many women. The result is that women sometimes have to turn to moneylenders and pay extremely high rates of interest.<sup>162</sup> As a direct response to this phenomenon, several initiatives have been created to give women the help they need.

161 MESECVI, 2012, *ibid*.

162 ILO: *Decent Work Country Programme GUYANA (2010–2015)*, (ILO, DWT/O-POS, 2012), [http://www.ilo.org/caribbean/information-resources/publications/WCMS\\_336134/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/caribbean/information-resources/publications/WCMS_336134/lang--en/index.htm).



### 3.7.1 Women of Worth Microfinance Programme

The Women of Worth Microfinance Programme was launched in 2010. Its primary mandate is to increase women's access to economic opportunities and assist single female parents in establishing and expanding small businesses (such as in catering, dressmaking, poultry farming and fabric painting). The Programme is the result of a Public–Private Partnership between the then Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security (now Ministry of Social Protection) and the Guyana Bank for Trade and Industry Ltd (GBTI), a locally owned commercial bank.

Part of the loan arrangement is that the beneficiary goes through training in such areas as basic entrepreneurial skills, networking, basic accounting, advertising and packaging.<sup>163</sup> The introduction of the Women of Worth (WOW) micro-credit facility in June 2010 emerged out of a GoG/locally owned commercial bank partnership specifically targeting women between the ages of 18-65, allowing them to access low-interest loans without collateral to start up or develop businesses in June 2010. At the time of reporting, 1000 women have been able to access these low-interest loans, totaling GD154M (USD770,000).<sup>164</sup>

### 3.7.2 The “Venture Out!” Programme

The “Venture Out!” Programme is the result of a collaboration between Republic Bank (Guyana) Ltd. and EMPRETEC, a global Programme of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development UNCTAD,<sup>165</sup> which targets Women and Women Entrepreneurs. At the community level, the EMPRETEC Project, from 2003–2006, supported small-scale economic development training for local entrepreneurs, 55 per cent of whom were women.<sup>166</sup> The Forum allowed women to meet new women in businesses, create business linkages and develop the confidence that allows them to venture out into their business enterprises.

EMPRETEC was successful in instilling entrepreneurial attitudes, and facilitators trained more than 300 entrepreneurs from Brazil and Ghana. Training of trainers was also offered in the internationally-recognized EMPRETEC capacity development package. It is unclear why the Project ended, but a stakeholder evaluation of the Programme concluded the Project ended too abruptly to capitalize on its potential to influence policies and structures related to women and entrepreneurship.<sup>167</sup>

### 3.7.3 Rural Women's Network

Rural Women's Network (RWN) was launched in November 1998, with a mandate to empower rural women to improve their standard of living through training, cultural exchange, access to credit and networking, and with a focus on capacity-building. The network seeks to improve the livelihood options and sustainability of rural women, families and communities. It also transfers skills to rural women in small business management, poultry, hydroponics agriculture, food and fruit processing, and handicraft. Members are beneficiaries of training and capacity-building initiatives, as well as a revolving (micro) loan fund and networking opportunities.<sup>168</sup>

163 MESECVI, 2012, *ibid.*

164 CESC, 2012, *ibid.*

165 To promote the creation of sustainable, innovative, and internationally competitive small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

166 UNDP, 2010, *ibid.*

167 UNDP, 2010, *ibid.*

168 *Rural Women's Network (RWN)*, Forest Connect Guyana, 2008, [https://iwokrama.org/forestconnect/membership/profile/sda\\_rwnetwork.htm](https://iwokrama.org/forestconnect/membership/profile/sda_rwnetwork.htm).  
CARILED, 2014, *ibid.*



## Discussion of the findings and the way forward for future research

### ■ 4.1 A summary of the key findings and areas of enquiry for the future

The Co-Operative Republic of Guyana has remarkable detailed Legislation against sex discrimination in the world of work. The *Constitution* includes a specific paragraph prohibiting sex discrimination, alongside paragraphs affirming the right to work and freedom of association in decision-making bodies, and allowance of affirmative action. Two other pieces of Legislation—the *Equal Rights Act* and the *Prevention of Discrimination Act*—detail ways to protect equality at work, covering aspects such as hiring practices, training, membership of professional bodies, maternity leave, equal remuneration for work of equal value and sexual harassment. Three other Acts make provision for maternity, including the protection of jobs while on maternity leave. The Government also has instituted several training programmes with job skills for women, with a focus on single parents, who often face special difficulties in accessing the labour market and finding jobs.



Guyana also has developed several progressive institutions and initiatives for gender equality, which can improve working conditions, especially for women:

- Resources for women's empowerment have been training in elements of leadership by the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute, along with the literature and data supplied by the National Resource and Documentation Centre for Gender and Development. The new Gender Studies Unit at the University of Guyana also promises to make a critical contribution.
- In a country with difficult access to hinterland communities, the establishment of Regional Women's Affairs Committees makes an important contribution to democracy.
- The Men's Affairs Bureau, now merged into the Gender Studies Unit, created greater awareness of issues which affect not only men, but their partners and children, such as male "absenteeism" from households where their children live. It also focussed attention on vulnerable boys and young men who dropped out of the education system and performed poorly in examinations at school. No information was found on whether the Gender Affairs Bureau has continued these areas of work.
- Among NGOs, Red Thread stands out in its work on improving working conditions for poor women, including campaigning on unpaid and low wage work, as well as for removal of VAT on essential items, and conducting a time use survey. They have also provided training on labour Legislation. Red Thread carries out their work throughout Guyana, making special efforts to reach people in hinterland communities. These efforts are supplemented by the Guyana Association of Women Lawyers, who provide advocacy on property rights issues and set up the Legal Aid Clinic.
- A legislative quota has successfully increased women's share of parliamentary seats to above 30 per cent. However, a report by the UWI/IGDS demonstrates that the quota system has not had a significant impact on the creation of more women-friendly legislation and policy outcomes. On the other hand, it is believed to have challenged gender norms by giving higher numbers of women the opportunity and access to negotiating within a traditionally male-dominated space.

Institutions and initiatives to promote gender equality also faced many challenges in Guyana. One is the overall political climate, which is quite divided along party and ethnic lines, so that attempts at social change may be branded as partisan. This can be seen in responses to the work of the Red Thread NGO. Another is instances of patriarchal practices, which, for instance, has prevented the electoral quota for women candidates for Parliament from being an effective vehicle for gender equality in practice.

Beyond these, many other specific challenges have arisen.

#### 4.1.1 Enabling environment

It has been reported that the laws to prevent discrimination are not effectively enforced. Further, while the law provides important safeguards, the State should actively seek to create conditions that make it easier for women to enter (and remain) in the workforce. These conditions should include but also move beyond the usual emphasis on training, to encompass the creation of job opportunities based on investment in social programmes and market research, as well as active pursuit of market opportunities at home and abroad, accompanied by affirmative action to enable women to take up these opportunities.



Business skills should be infused into school curricula, so that all members of the population can benefit from a realistic approach to income generation. Business support agencies such as GO-Invest, the Private Sector Commission and the Consultative Association of Guyanese Industry should develop programmes and policies to facilitate business opportunities for women. Such measures are critical given the very large gender differences in labour force participation and unemployment, as well as widespread poverty, especially among women household heads.

It must be noted that the gender gap in labour force participation is at roughly 45 per cent in Guyana; globally, a gap of 26 percentage points separates women and men in labour force participation (76 per cent of men and 50 per cent of women are in the global labour force).<sup>169</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Human resources and reporting issues

The Women's Affairs Bureau, followed by the Gender Affairs Bureau, have moved between many Ministries, and successive documents have reported that they have been under-resourced. Under-resourcing has also affected the WGEC. The Women's Studies Unit at the University of Guyana also was moved repeatedly within the University structure, until it shut down in 2006. There also are few full-time, technical staff in these agencies. This lack of stability and human resources in institutions relating to gender appears to reflect their marginal status.

#### 4.1.3 Gender mainstreaming issues

Gender mainstreaming generally has not been successful, or this review has not found evidence of success. The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Gender comprised people of insufficient seniority and knowledge of gender to be effective. GFPs within Ministries and other Government agencies were supposed to have been appointed, but the WGEC stated in 2013 that they were "not functional". In its Strategic Plan 2013–2018, the WGEC put forward some proposals for institutional strengthening of gender mainstreaming machinery. This Report recommends that contact be made with stakeholders in Guyana, to assess the degree of success in enacting these recommendations. A National Gender Policy conference took place in 2015; follow up is recommended to assess the outcomes of this process.

#### 4.1.4 International treaties

Of four ILO Conventions relating to gender and work, only two have been ratified in Guyana: the *Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100)* and the *Discrimination (Employment and Occupation Convention) (No. 111)*. Guyana has not ratified the *Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No. 156)* or the *Maternity Protection Convention (No. 183)*. Ratifying these additional Conventions would be important steps towards providing support for the "reproductive" work done by women, which often prevents them from full participation in the labour force.

#### 4.1.5 Other challenges

The WGEC has proposed working with the Ministry of Social Protection for the introduction of workplace care facilities and flexible working schedules. Investigation into the degree of progress in this matter is necessary.

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<sup>169</sup> Gallup, Inc. and the International Labour Organization: *Towards a better future for women and work: Voices of women and men* (New York and Geneva, Gallup and ILO, 2017).



There are no laws relating to gender identity. There are substantial reports of discrimination against transgender and other members of the LGBTI community with regard to accessing employment opportunities.

The pace of legislative change is slow. To illustrate, a Report on labour law in 2001 noted that a draft Industrial Tribunal Bill was being discussed, but by 2015, the Tribunal still had not been established. The proposals of the WGEC for economic empowerment concentrate on reviews, assessments and training, none of which is likely to make substantial differences to employment and income-generation without more substantive reforms.

The HIV Workplace Project, while recognizing gender as a factor influencing vulnerability to HIV infection, has not proposed measures to address intersections between sex discrimination and HIV stigma and discrimination.

## ■ 4.2 Conclusion

Gender equality has been among the various aspects of equality established via the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and equality commissions. It has been backed by progressive legislation and some institution-building. However, institutions responsible for gender programming have not been provided with adequate resources and have faced considerable instability. Several important projects have not been sustained.

Measures to prevent gender discrimination relating to work are not enforced systematically. This has implications for women's continued participation in the workforce, as there is continued ignoring or neglecting of the contribution of unpaid domestic and caring work – thus making it very difficult for principal carers to participate and advance in the workforce, with little action to involve men in caring tasks. Progressive action often has come from outside the State (especially from the NGO, Red Thread), but this, too, is under-resourced.

Generally, there is a need for an integrated, systematic, sustained and institutionalized approach to gender equality in the world of work, which focuses on job creation and is based on evidence of market opportunities. To achieve this, the traditional norm that entitles men to the breadwinner role must be fundamentally challenged, along with “domestic ideology” that requires most women to assume the vast burden of domestic and caring responsibilities.<sup>170</sup>

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170 J. Momsen (2002), quoted in T. Esnard: “Mothering and entrepreneurship: Experiences of single women in Saint Lucia”, in *Women, gender and families of color* (2016, Vol. 4 No. 1), p. 127.

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