DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT OF GUYANA
FINAL REPORT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABCE	America, Great Britain, Canada, and the European Union
AFC	Alliance for Change
AG	Attorney General
APNU	A Partnership for National Unity
BBC	British Broadcasting Commission
CAC	Child Advocacy Center
CANU	Customs Anti-Narcotic Unit
CARICOM	Caribbean Community and Common Market
CBSI	Caribbean Basin Security Initiative
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCHA	Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
DEA	Drug Enforcement Agency
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DO	Development Objective
DOJ	Department of Justice
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance
DSL	Digital Subscriber Line
EDC	Educational Development Center
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
EPP	Elections and Political Processes
ERC	Ethnic Relations Commission
ESC	Eastern and Southern Caribbean
EU	European Union
FAC	Foreign Affairs Canada
FBO	Faith-Based Organizations
FY	Fiscal Year

GAP	Guyana Action Party
GBA	Guyana Bar Association
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDF	Guyana Defense Force
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GECOM	Guyana Elections Commission
GGDMA	Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners Association
GGMC	Guyana Geology and Mines Commission
GHRA	Guyana Human Rights Association
GNBA	Guyana National Broadcasting Authority
GoG	Government of Guyana
GPA	Guyana Press Association
GPF	Guyana Police Force
GT&T	Guyana Telephone and Telegraph
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Auto-Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IMC	Interim Management Committee
INL	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRI	International Republican Institute
LAPOP	Latin American Public Opinion Project
LEAD	Leadership and Democracy Project
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MMU	Media Monitoring Unit
MP	Member of Parliament
NCC	National Coordinating Committee (HIV/AIDS)
NDC	Neighborhood Democratic Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHRI	National Human Rights Institutions
OAS	Organization of American States

OLPF	One Laptop Per Family Program
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PNC	People's National Congress
PNC/R	PNC Reform
PPP	People's Progressive Party
PPP/C	PPP/Civic
PSC	Private Sector Commission
RDC	Regional Democratic Council
ROAR	Rise, Organize and Rebuild
SAF	Strategic Assessment Framework
SASOD	Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination
SKYE	Skills and Knowledge for Youth Employment Project
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TA	Technical Assistance
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
TOT	Trainer of Trainers
U.S.	United States
UF	United Force
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	U.S. Dollar
VAT	Value-Added Tax
WPA	Working People's Alliance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The May 2015 election of a multi-ethnic, reform-minded coalition brought a fresh opportunity for Guyana to move toward a more responsive and accountable state of governance. However, this democratic outcome is far from certain. The coalition government faces deep-seated legacies of single party domination; politically driven ethnic divisions; and a centralized patron-clientelist system with weak, unaccountable, and unresponsive government institutions. Changing this system will not be easy, especially for a tenuous political coalition, inexperienced in governing and confronted by an entrenched opposition and a frustrated population with unrealistically high expectations.

It was too soon to tell how this transition will end during the assessment and whether reforms will stall. Guyana's past demonstrates that these windows do not remain open for long as engrained practices take over and the government assumes the attributes of the past. Political missions have moved swiftly to support the reform efforts diplomatically and through discrete mission funds. The Democracy, Governance, and Human Rights (DRG) Assessment recommends that development agencies follow suit to take advantage of these opportunities quickly to deepen democratic development in Guyana. In particular, the DRG assessment recommends that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provide immediate assistance to support the constitutional reform process, bring balance to Guyana's governance, and strengthen local government and its first elected local governments in 23 years. This should be followed by a bilateral DRG program for the medium- to long-term that could help institutionalize the reforms and ensure their consolidation.

CONTEXT

Governance in Guyana has been characterized by long periods of one-party rule, ethnically divisive politics, inefficient government, and corruption. Its oldest political party, the People's Progressive Party (PPP), split before independence, creating the two main parties: the PPP and the People's National Congress (PNC), which alternated power until 2015. The PNC was in power from independence until 1992 through tight centralized party control and rigged elections. In 1992, international mediation led to credible elections and a change in government to the PPP/Civic (PPP/C) party. The PNC did not accept those election results or the PPP/C's next win in 1997 and violence erupted after both elections. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) negotiated new elections in 2001 that were to be preceded by constitutional reforms. The PPP/C went on to win the elections in 2001, 2006, and 2011.

In 2011, the PPP/C failed to gain the majority votes in the National Assembly, resulting in a minority government for its president. This created a political stalemate that led to the president suspending the parliament after a threat of a no-confidence vote. Parliament was eventually dissolved and new elections held in May 2015. These elections were won by the PNC/Reform (PNC/R) -dominated A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) that formed a coalition with the moderate, multi-ethnic Alliance For Change (AFC). The APNU + AFC ran on a democratic reform agenda, promising constitutional reforms and the holding of long-delayed local elections. It won a one-seat majority in the Assembly and faces the PPP/C in opposition that has challenged the election results in court.

Guyana's political parties reflect its ethnic makeup. The PPP courted the Indo-Guyanese, which made up more than 40 percent of the population, while the PNC courted the Afro-Guyanese who comprise about 30 percent of the population. The indigenous and mixed populations provide the swing votes. The focus

on ethnicity in politics led to perceived and actual exclusion of one group or the other depending on which one was in power.

Most of Guyana's 748,000 population lives along its coast, with its vast interior home to its indigenous populations and others. It is rich in natural resources, most notably gold, diamond, bauxite, oil, and timber. Although it is in South America, Guyana identifies culturally and politically with the English-speaking Caribbean. It has a stark center-periphery difference, with the power and most of the services at the center. Guyana has an increasingly high level of crime and violence, domestic violence, and gun proliferation. It is a trafficking point for drugs from South America and for trafficking in persons (TIP). It has a disproportionately high suicide rate, especially among Indo-Guyanese and youth. It suffers from an enormous "brain drain," with 90 percent of its tertiary-level graduates migrating to other countries, most notably the U.S., Canada, and the Caribbean.

KEY CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

The assessment found problems in all five elements of democracy, human rights, and governance. The most critical were in the areas of *competition and political accountability* and *government responsiveness and effectiveness*.

1. **Consensus.** The Guyanese have a shared political culture and the belief that democracy is the only legitimate form of government, but long-standing acrimony between the PPP/C and PNC/R makes achieving consensus on policies, committee appointments, and constitutional reform priorities difficult at the national level. However, social capital and the shared desire for change facilitate consensus building at the regional and local levels.

2. **Inclusion.** No group is legally excluded or formally disenfranchised. However, there is perceived and real ethnic exclusion from the political processes and social discrimination based on race, gender, socio-economics, and sexual orientation. There is also de facto discrimination of indigenous people and those who live in the periphery in terms of access to social services and economic development.

3. **Competition and political accountability.** Historically, political competition has been dominated by two main parties aligned largely along ethnic lines. Elections incite and exacerbate ethnic tensions as the de facto winner-take-all system promotes one-party rule. Power is centralized in the executive and the formal check and balance system is marginalized by ineffective/nonfunctioning institutions, patron-client relationships, and corruption. Success of the multi-party coalition in the 2015 elections may signal a shift toward more issue-based politics, but it faces stiff opposition from the losing party. The introduction of single member seats in the March 2016 local elections offers an opportunity for change.

4. **Rule of law and human rights.** Guyana's legal framework provides for the rule of law and protection of human rights but implementation is problematic. Citizen access to justice and quality of services depends on physical location and personal situation. National human rights institutions are not fully established or effective and criminality and violence are prevalent. Gender-based violence (GBV) is a major problem as is trafficking in persons and drugs.

5. **Government responsiveness and effectiveness.** The state is well formed, established, and functioning, but heavily centralized with cumbersome procedures and institutional arrangements. Too-few resources are used for public good. Rural and hinterland communities are disproportionately affected. Institutions that should promote service delivery and accountability are weak or nonfunctional. There is no real devolution of authority to local government and even the most localized decisions are taken by the central government.

KEY POLITICAL ACTORS AND INSTITUTIONS

Political power is concentrated in the **executive**, and more specifically within the office of the president. **President David Granger**, a former military officer and elected leader of the PNC/R, was elected in May 2015. President Granger and the coalition government enjoyed a honeymoon period that is now largely over. The **APNU + AFC coalition** is stable and expected to last until the 2020 election, although they need to maintain cohesion and manage tensions arising between the two parties. They ran on a reform platform that promised constitutional reforms and the holding of long-delayed local elections. Their election was the first change of government in 23 years. They say the right things about reforms, including asking donors for DRG support that had been resisted by the former PPP/C government. However, it is still too early to tell if this reform resolve will last.

The president controls government through his cabinet of government **ministers**, who are also **Members of Parliament** (MPs). MPs are elected through a closed party list system and are answerable to their parties rather than to the voters. The coalition has a one-seat majority in the **National Assembly**, where the winning parties' majority vote ensures assent to government-proposed legislation. The sole exception was the minority government in 2011 that ended in political stalemate and the early dissolution of parliament.

The courts are one of the few means to get redress in the country. However, the system is slow and cumbersome. The **Attorney General** (AG) has asked for donor support to reform the system. Guyana adopted the **Caribbean Court of Justice** as its final court of appeals and the AG noted that the coalition government inherited sizeable judgments from that court against the former PPP/C government. Access to justice in the interior is difficult, where the **Magistrates' Court sittings** are held in hinterland regional capitals only once every three months, as there is currently only one magistrate. Most of the **national human rights institutions** are not effective or functioning because of stalled appointments, among other issues.

There is significant need to reform the **Guyana Police Force** (GPF) and strengthen its investigations and prosecutions. An estimated 90 percent of prosecutions are unsuccessful[1] and it is the least-trusted institution in the country[2]. The **Guyana Defense Force** (GDF) is a trusted institution and seen as above politics. It recently re-joined with the GPF to fight the upsurge in crime.

Local government has been a neglected actor yet holds the greatest potential for democratic governance. Elections for **Municipal Councils** and **Neighborhood Democratic Councils** (NDCs) have not been held since 1994, leaving in power those elected decades ago, or replaced by centrally appointed persons or **Interim Management Committees** (IMCs). The 10 regions of Guyana are managed by **Regional Democratic Councils** (RDCs), which have held regular elections. Indigenous villages are managed by **Village Councils**, who are elected every three years. Political dynamics at the regional and local levels tend to be more issue-based with officials working across party lines. The coalition announced local government elections for March 2016 and the creation of the **Local Government Commission** to provide oversight and reduce centralized ministry control.

Guyana has a number of political parties in addition to the **PPP/C** and **PNC/R**. This includes **A Partnership for National Unity**, formed in 2011 by the PNC/R and five smaller parties; and the **Alliance for Change**, founded in 2005, which is multi-ethnic and issues-based. Elections are administered by the **Guyana Elections Commission** (GECOM). Although its commission is politically balanced, GECOM is widely perceived as professional, yet is always the scapegoat for the losing party as a way dismiss their

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[1] Government of Guyana. *Justice System Strategy, 2006–2010.* p 8.

[2] LAPOP AmericasBarometer. (2014). *The Political Culture of Democracy in the Americas: Democratic Governance Across 10 years of the AmericasBaromter.*

election loss. The level of mistrust is so high that it still relies on a donor-funded **international technical assessor** to serve as an objective witness to the process.

Civil society is dynamic and engaged at all levels nationwide. They serve on many government boards. Few however, consistently and actively engage in DRG. The **media** is pluralistic and politicized, with the state media having the only nationwide reach. Self-censorship is common as previous governments retaliated against critical coverage. The state media provided pro-state coverage in the past. The **private sector** is dependent on government favors and patronage and hopes the current government will provide a more accessible business environment.

Most **indigenous people** live in the hinterland areas and receive support from the **Ministry of Indigenous People's Affairs**, often bypassing regular development processes and institutions, such as the elected RDCs. Guyana's Indigenous people have issues of land/mineral rights and limited services because of their remoteness. Other **peripheral populations** also face limited services and high levels of unemployment as bauxite mines closed and the sugar industry plummeted. Guyana has a large **Diaspora** population with remittances making up more than 15 percent of GDP.[3]

The **international community** plays an influential role, even under the previous governments. The **ABCE Group** of America, Britain, Canada and the European Union is active along with **United Nations** (UN) agencies and the **Inter-American Development Bank** (IDB), which is Guyana's largest donor.

OPERATIONAL AND PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENT

The United States refocused its mission priorities in late 2015 in light of Guyana's changed circumstances, most notably the change of government; discovery of significant maritime oil reserves; end of Venezuela's rice-for-oil arrangement that threatens the Guyanese economy but opens opportunities for clean, renewable energy; and Venezuela's renewed claims for Guyana's Essequibo territory.

USAID's efforts in Guyana are managed by its Eastern and Southern Caribbean regional office in Barbados since 2012. It will implement a USD 700,000-project provided under the global Elections and Political Processes (EPP) Fund to support voter education for the local elections and social cohesion efforts with parties, newly elected leaders, and their constituents. USAID also has a USD 7 million, five-year Skills and Knowledge for Youth Employment (SKYE) Project funded through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), which will end this year. Other CBSI-funded activities are implemented and/or planned by the State Department with the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and Department of Justice (DOJ) for police training, counter-narcotics, and the courts.

U.S. Government priorities are to improve Guyana's willingness and capacity to govern effectively while respecting the rule of law, achieve a clean and secure energy future, and expand economic opportunities and prosperity. Within DRG objectives, focus on improving citizen security; strengthening rule of law for more accountable governance; strengthening civil society; supporting women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons; and addressing the root causes of violence. USAID has no current resources for a DRG program, but anticipates seeking additional funding to support Guyana's reform process. DRG assistance was requested by the Prime Minister in a July 2015 letter to USAID/Washington that also praised the inroads made by USAID's previous DRG program, despite the difficult circumstances created by the previous government.

STRATEGIC AND PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The main challenge to DRG in Guyana is its legacy of political parties organized along ethnic lines; of single party dominance; and its centralized patron-clientelist system that contributed to weak,

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3   Maldonado and Hayem. (2015). *Remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean set a new record high in 2014.* Pp. 3 and 30.

unaccountable, unresponsive, and ineffective government institutions. The dysfunction in its political system has led to a feeling of hopelessness among many Guyanese, high levels of emigration, and insecurity.

The election of a multi-ethnic, multi-party coalition brought a fresh opportunity to Guyana to make these substantive democratic reforms that could transform its political system and make it more effective, accountable, and inclusive. USAID should take advantage of the window of opportunity that is open now to support the reform process that is underway that can strengthen Guyana's governance, balance the power of the executive, start the devolution of power to local government, and ensure a more accountable and responsive government. If adopted and implemented, these democratic reforms can address the over-centralization of power, address politicized and nonperforming institutions that were found during the assessment, and increase governance effectiveness and responsiveness.

However, this outcome is far from certain. There are indications of significant change, but there are also reasons for concern. Time is of the essence as this window may not be open for long. The assessment team estimates it will close within the next 18 to 24 months as the focus shifts to the 2019 local elections and 2020 national elections. Some believe it will close even sooner if not supported, citing rising citizen anger and impatience against the slowness of the reforms and signs of business-as-usual.

The assessment team recommends USAID focus on a two-tiered strategy. In the near term, focus on the reform processes, key oversight mechanisms, information flow, and newly elected local authorities. In the medium to long term, reinstate a DRG program that can make a more substantive contribution to strengthening Guyana's democratic institutions and system. It does not recommend political party assistance in the near term as the parties are internally regrouping and intending to work out their own issues and are not open to assistance at this time.

As a result, the recommended **DRG objective is more accountable, responsive, and balanced governance in Guyana.**

Recommended programmatic priorities are:

1. **Constitutional reform** through support for the current reform process and the implementation of previous constitutional reforms. These can help balance the power of the executive, address the winner-takes-all nature of the political and electoral systems, and devolve power to local government. Near-term priorities are reform content and consultations, constitutional referendum (if held), and constitutional commission appointments. Mid- to long-term priorities are the implementation of the new constitutional reforms and strengthening the Human Rights and Integrity Commissions that provide oversight and citizen protection.

2. **Strengthened checks and balances** through strengthening key institutions and increasing access to information and evidence-based decision making. This can help increase accountability; balance the dominance of the executive; address issues of cronyism, impunity, and corruption; and ensure the rule of law is applicable to all. Near-term priorities are assessments in the key areas of rule of law, electoral system, and economic governance and consideration for a small flexible fund to support quick-impact, low-cost changes within key institutions. Mid- to long-term priorities include parliamentary oversight and outreach.

3. **Strengthened local governance** through support for the devolution process; capacity building for local institutions; and increasing citizen engagement to ensure local government has the authority, resources, and capacity required to be responsive to its communities, serve their needs, and counter the top-down, overly centralized nature of government. Near-term priorities are the Local Government Commission, newly elected local officials, and constituency engagement. Mid- to long-term priorities include supporting the training curricula for local officials, constituency engagement, and information on and monitoring of the 2019 local elections.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG Center) in the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA/DRG) contracted a Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) Assessment of Guyana. The DRG assessment is intended to assess the political change and democratization in Guyana, consider the U.S. Government's operational and programmatic environment, and develop strategic and programmatic recommendations to address the core DRG problem(s) identified in the assessment. Currently, USAID/Eastern and Southern Caribbean's (USAID/ESC) program in Guyana focuses mainly on supporting the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI). Also presently, a one-year DRG project is supporting voter education for the local elections in March 2016 and dialogue and consensus toward social cohesion at the community level.

The assessment was conducted following the DRG Strategic Assessment Framework (*Conducting a Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Assessment: A Framework for Strategic Development*), or SAF.[4] This framework includes a political economy analysis of a country, leads to program choices, and incorporates lessons from comparative experiences. The framework uses a four-step process to develop a DRG assistance strategy for a country:

1. Identify the DRG problem through analysis of five key attributes of a democracy (the degree of **consensus** on rules and fundamentals; the degree to which the **rule of law and human rights** are respected; the degree of **competition and political accountability**; the quality of political **inclusion**; the level of **government responsiveness and effectiveness**) and the direction of change on the democratic development continuum.

2. Identify the key actors and institutions that can support or obstruct DRG reforms, and assess the incentives and resources for reforms (political economy analysis).

3. Distill the ideal strategy for assistance from an analytical standpoint, and then determine how USAID can best help to address these problems.

4. Recommend strategy and programming options for USAID that will most effectively address the major DRG problems identified.

The fieldwork for the Guyana DRG assessment was undertaken in November–December 2015 by Sue Nelson, Team Leader; Dr. Stacey-Ann Wilson, Country Specialist; Dr. Aaron Abbarno, Fellow at USAID's DRG Center; Lawrence Lachmansingh, National Expert; and Chloe Noble, USAID/ESC. While in Guyana, the team met with a wide range of political, civil, and international actors (Annex 1) and reviewed relevant documentation and reports related to the state of democratic development and assistance in Guyana (Annex 2). In addition to interviews in the capital Georgetown, part of the team travelled to Annai, Lethem, and Mahdia in Regions 9 and 8, with the other team members travelling to Linden, Berbice, and Bartica in Regions 10, 5, 6, and 7. In these locations, they met with local and regional government officers, civil society, indigenous villagers, and political actors. Although the team met with a wide range of persons and more than 80 institutions, it is still a very small sample from a large and complex country. Nevertheless, the information provided by the different sources was validated by its

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[4] USAID. (September 2014). *Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Strategic Assessment Framework.*

consistency. Assumptions about broad public sentiment were corroborated by public opinion data from the 2014 AmericasBarometer survey in Guyana where appropriate indicators exist. Similarly, topline governance indicators, such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Scorecard for Guyana, help ground arguments made throughout the report.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Guyana is a diverse nation primarily comprising indigenous peoples and descendants of enslaved Africans and indentured East Indian laborers. Although located in South America, Guyana is more culturally and politically similar to the English-speaking Caribbean. Guyana is a large country of 83,000 square miles, approximately the size of Idaho, with a low lying coastland, rugged hinterland terrain, wide rivers, savannahs, and rainforests. The country is rich in natural resources, most notably gold, diamond, bauxite, oil, and timber. More than 90 percent of Guyana's population of 748,000 lives along a narrow strip of coastal area, which is less than 10 percent of the country's land mass. Vast areas of the country are thus sparsely populated. The capital of Guyana, Georgetown, and other coastal villages and towns are below sea level and prone to flooding. Coastal areas are protected by an elaborate system of sea walls, locks, and drainage canals built originally by the Dutch.

According to the 2002 Guyana Census, the two largest groups are of East Indian descent (Indo-Guyanese), with approximately 43.5 percent of the population, and of African descent (Afro-Guyanese), with approximately 30.2 percent. Indigenous peoples make up 9.2 percent of the population, with 16.7 percent of the population identifying as mixed heritage. Whites, Portuguese, and Chinese together make up about 0.4 percent of the population.[5]

Guyana will celebrate its 50th year of independence from Britain in May 2016. Although Guyana looks forward to the future, its present is still marked by the legacies of its past. The split of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) into two factions in 1955 and the establishment of the People's National Congress (PNC) by PPP co-founder Forbes Burnham in 1957 led to the hardening of political, economic, and social structures along key ethnic lines. PPP co-founder Cheddi Jagan courted and was supported by rural Indo-Guyanese, while Burnham was courted and was supported by Afro-Guyanese. This division led to mistrust between the two main political parties, their leaders, and their constituents, which continues to this day.[6]

The legacy of these divisions has been de facto one-party rule, first under the PNC, which held power for 26 years following independence in 1966 through an increasingly authoritarian government; then under the PPP/Civic (PPP/C) for more than two decades until the May 2015 elections ushered in a multi-ethnic reformist coalition, which won with a one-seat majority.

Guyana faces a number of social problems. These include high levels of crime and violence; high levels of domestic violence; incidents of violence against transgender individuals; high incidents of trafficking in persons (TIP); and the increasing use of guns, particularly for criminal purposes. Guyana is also a trans-shipment point for drug smuggling from South America to North America, Europe, and West Africa. There is a disproportionately high suicide rate in Guyana, particularly among Indo-Guyanese and youth. The country also has a high migration rate, with 90 percent of tertiary-level graduates migrating to the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom (UK), and other parts of the Caribbean. While the Guyanese Diaspora is tremendously important to the country in terms of remittances, the high migration levels have an adverse effect on the society in that it drains the country of intellectual capacity, technical skills, and know-how. The public and private sector also experience high turnover as educated, trained, and capable people find opportunities elsewhere.

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[5]   Guyana Bureau of Statistics, Population and Housing Census, 2012 Preliminary Report.

[6]   For more information, see Annex 3: Historical Political Development.

Guyana shares borders with Brazil, Suriname, and Venezuela and has land disputes with two of these, due in large part to the wealth and diversity of Guyana's natural resources. In May 2015, Exxon Mobil announced that it had discovered large oil and gas deposits off the coast of Guyana. This announcement was shortly followed by Venezuela extending its claims beyond the previously decided but still disputed Essequibo region to include areas of the oil and gas find. The Government of Guyana (GoG) has asked the United Nations (UN) to intervene. For the Suriname-Guyana land dispute in the mineral rich landmass of the Tigri area, a committee was set up in 2011 to negotiate a way forward. These issues are still unresolved, even as Guyana was able to achieve a satisfactory final solution in 2007 to its offshore dispute with Suriname, through the UN Law of the Sea Tribunal.

Guyana's border with Brazil presents a different set of issues. Social services in Brazil have attracted young Guyanese families near the border, with school-aged children attending schools in Brazil and their mothers collecting the family allowance given by the Brazilian government to poor Brazilian families.[7] Favorable foreign exchange rates mean that border towns import commodities cheaply, which weakens local productive capacity, particularly in manufacturing, agriculture, and animal husbandry. However, the exchange rate is good for other types of businesses, such as hotels, grocery stores, wholesale stores, and clothing boutiques.

With reference to Guyana's rich landscape, there are concerns about sustainable mining, logging, and forest management. There are unresolved issues with respect to Indigenous land rights. The Amerindian Act of 2006 and the demarcation and communal titling of land to indigenous communities do not give sub-surface rights on those lands. Many indigenous communities have found themselves in disputes with miners who were given permission to mine lands that were eventually titled to indigenous villages. The titling of land to indigenous communities does not nullify previously assigned mining tracts. In addition, there are several instances of indigenous lands being mined without the prior consent or negotiation with indigenous communities. Observers suggest that with the increased availability of guns in Guyana, if regulatory, policy, or constitutional reforms are not made in a timely manner to resolve these issues, this situation could escalate.

The urban-rural divide in Guyana is quite stark: 71.5 percent of the population is rural.[8] Rural includes villages along the coast as well as those "scattered deep in the hinterland of the country."[9] While close to 90 percent of the population lives along the coast, the minority of the population, including the majority of the indigenous population, lives in the hinterland areas. Access to social services—such as healthcare and education; public infrastructure; and water, roads, and communications networks—are less accessible and generally are of lower or inconsistent quality in rural areas than in urban areas. Hinterland areas have even less access to sustainable employment opportunities, beyond subsistence agriculture, and residents are less likely to complete secondary education. Schools are poorly resourced and are often available a great distance from "neighboring" villages so that students are required to board. Hinterland residents also have less influence over decision makers in central government, as they are far removed from the centers of power and influence.

Despite the problems and challenges, power brokers in government and civil society still have a great deal of optimism and hope that with the right kinds of initiatives and support, Guyana can overcome.

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[7] The family allowance (*Bolsa Familia*), is a cash-transfer welfare program in Brazil aimed at helping poor families. Families with children must ensure their children attend school regularly and get them vaccinated in order to receive the funds.

[8] Bureau of Statistics op cit. Data is based on the 2002 Census.

[9] Ibid.

2.0 KEY CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GOVERNANCE

This section describes the key challenges to democracy, human rights, and governance in Guyana by focusing on the five analytical elements of consensus, inclusion, rule of law and human rights, competition and political accountability, and government responsiveness and effectiveness. The assessment found problems in all five elements, but the two most critical areas were in *political competition and accountability* and in *governance responsiveness and effectiveness*. These affected the issues found in all of the key analytical elements.

TABLE 2.1: KEY ANALYTICAL ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Consensus: Is there basic consensus on questions of national identity and the fundamental rules of the game, and is the political contest played by those rules?

Inclusion: Are there problems of inclusion or exclusion? Are parts of the population formally excluded and disenfranchised from meaningful political, social, or economic participation? Is participation in political life, economic life, and social life high or low?

Competition and Political Accountability: Is there competition in the system? Are free and fair elections a regular feature of competition? Are there other mechanisms beside elections that ensure the government delivers on its promises and fulfills the public trust? Is there a competition of ideas, a free media, and a vibrant civil society? Is a healthy set of checks and balances present between branches of government or between levels of government?

Rule of Law and Human Rights: Is there ordered liberty? Are political life, economic life, and social life bound by a rule of law? Does the state recognize and protect the rights of its citizens?

Government Responsiveness and Effectiveness: Are public institutions administered effectively? Do they respond to public needs and provide socially acceptable services? Do robust internal mechanisms exist to hold government institutions accountable and enhance their effectiveness?

2.1 CONSENSUS

While there is a shared political culture and the belief that democracy is the only legitimate form of government, long-standing acrimony between the two dominant political parties has made achieving consensus on policies, committee appointments, and constitutional reform priorities, among other issues, difficult at the national level. However, social capital and the shared desire for change have facilitated consensus building at the regional and local levels.

Basic consensus exists on questions of national identity and the boundaries of the state. There is also consensus on the fundamental rules of the game, although in the past not all political actors play by those rules consistently. Historically, political parties, specifically the PPP/C and the PNC/Reform (PNC/R),

have been polarized in terms of ethnic politics and political ideology and priorities, which often makes achieving consensus on policy issues difficult. Even when there is consensus, it can be derailed. For instance, under the previous government, the president would assent to bills in a protracted way or fail to assent to bills passed by the National Assembly. Although there is a shared political culture corresponding to the shared national identity and the belief in the superiority of the democratic form of government for Guyana, there is much disagreement on the best way to function in such an environment.

While consensus at the national level has been difficult, consensus at regional levels has been easier to accomplish. Consensus at the level of Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) was facilitated by familiarity and based on personal relationships and trust (social capital), rather than political wheeling and dealing. At the local levels/periphery, consensus was made easier by the urgency of wanting change (improvements) and economic development. The youth and those working on community issues seem far more willing and able to agree, not just on the rules of the game, but the roles to be played.

At the national level, political actors frequently confuse the roles of the party, the government (local and central), and the state. There is a tendency to overstep, confuse, or willfully misrepresent the bounds of each to maintain control. It was noted that more intense divisions were noticeable after the recent elections because politicians, especially the PPP/C, continued to debate and engage in acrimonious exchanges in an effort to maintain power and control, while the public in large part is willing to move on.

This willingness to move on previously presented itself in the lead up to the 2015 elections. During the November 2014 no-confidence vote standoff in parliament[10] and subsequent multi-ethnic protests in the streets, Khemraj Ramjattan (co-founder of the Alliance for Change) saw this as a change in society, a society now willing to move away from race to dealing with issues.[11] Then-President Donald Ramotar did not share that view; he saw the stand-off and multi-ethnic protests as a "result of maneuvering by an upstart opposition seeking to gain power."[12]

Although there is consensus on the rules and legal equality of access, citizens do not trust government systems and services to work because they are inefficient in delivery and often lack accountability when services are not delivered. A key driver for the lack of national consensus is mistrust among stakeholders—particularly among key actors within the political parties. Since race correlates with parties, an ethno-political dimension to mistrust exists. Guyana's toxic mix of race and politics encourages a struggle for ethnic dominance as part of the struggle for political office.[13] Constitutional and institutional reforms, while necessary, are likely insufficient without trust-building to generate increased consensus.

Considering the consensus crisis Guyana finds itself in all too frequently, there have been numerous calls for power-sharing, shared governance, and government of national unity by local, regional, and international experts and some politicians. Such calls have not been successful to date, in large part because of political mistrust.

2.2   INCLUSION

No ethnic, cultural, or religious group is formally excluded or disenfranchised from participation in the political, economic, or social life of Guyana. The diverse and multicultural nature of Guyana is promoted

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[10] On November 10, 2014, then-President Donald Ramotar suspended Parliament to stave off a call of no-confidence vote by the AFC against the government's spending. The power to prorogue (suspend) parliament up to six months is provided for in Article 70(1) of the constitution.

[11] Gupta. (2015). "A multiethnic movement emerges in Guyana to counter politics-as-usual," *The New York Times*, January 17, 2015.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ramakarran. (2015). "Politics as usual." *The Conversation Tree*. September 5, 2015.

and recognized in Article 35 of the Guyana constitution. However, there is perceived and real ethnic exclusion from the political processes, social discrimination, and de facto exclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons. There is also de facto disenfranchisement of indigenous peoples and those who live in the remote hinterlands in terms of access to social services, reliable communication, economic development, and a decent standard of living.

The constitution has fairly progressive clauses calling for the establishment of human rights commissions, and setting out how diverse and inclusive they should be. The constitution also provides for the inclusion of opposition parties on national committees and commissions. It mandates that the president must hold consultations with the leader of the opposition in making key appointments, such as the ombudsman. For the critical appointment of the Chairman of the Elections Commission, there must be agreement between the president and the leader of the opposition. The current constitution does not specifically identify sexual orientation as a basis for non-discrimination and human rights groups in Guyana are working to change that.

Although there is general agreement on the concept that everyone should be treated equally, connections, power relations, and location create inequities that perpetuate a system of patronage, where inclusion and access is often dependent on connection to central power. The urban (coast)-rural (hinterland), center-periphery divide is a crucial factor for inclusion/exclusion in Guyana. As a general rule, the more remote the community, the less access it has to basic services. This is a function of poor/inadequate infrastructure and communication networks and promotes economic under-development and inequality in rural communities. This is most acute for indigenous communities who live primarily in the hinterlands.[14] Both the former and current Governments of Guyana focused attention on the inclusion and development of Guyana's indigenous populations, now anchored in the Amerindian Act of 2006. However, contentious land rights issues remain unresolved, and the general perception is that indigenous peoples' views are not considered when decisions are being made about and for them. The roots of social exclusion are also local. Indigenous women are marginalized many times over. As rural citizens, these women lack access to justice and health services. Their socio-economic development is hindered in indigenous communities that are silent about gender-based violence (GBV) and where pernicious norms facilitate early marriage and/or pregnancy that interrupt girls' schooling. Indigenous women who do not speak English as a first language are more likely to remain taciturn or to convey their beliefs less effectively in women's advocacy groups. It is worth noting that at least one person noted that indigenous communities are generally tolerant toward LGBTI persons, although they are not openly accepted, and therefore may experience some hardships. While there are different gender norms within all ethnic groups in Guyana, there are no legal barriers to women's participation in the social, economic, or political life of the country. Guyana, like the rest of the Caribbean, has championed and actively promotes gender equality and women's empowerment. Women in Guyana have historically held prominent political and government roles in the country. One of the founding members of the PPP was a woman, Janet Jagan, who also served as President (1997–1999) and then Prime Minister (1999). Guyana is highest-ranked in the Caribbean in terms of women parliamentarians, consistently having over 30 percent female representation in parliament.[15] Women are well represented in the public sector, with most of the Ministry's Permanent Secretaries being women. Female students also greatly outnumber male students at the tertiary educational level, with more women both enrolling in and completing university than their male counterparts.[16] Women are well represented in the professional sectors (law, medicine, finance); private security; and in the informal economy, particularly as street vendors. Women's participation in the wider

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[14] The Indigenous peoples date back some 11,000 years. There are nine indigenous Nations identified in Guyana – Akawaio, Arawak, Arekuna, Carib, Macushi (Makushi), Patamona, Wai Wai, Wapichan (Wapishana) and Warrau. While each nation has their own distinctive cultural heritage, language and sometimes religions, they also identify with the Guyanese nationality.

[15] http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS.

[16] Government of Guyana, Ministry of Education. http://www.education.gov.gy/web/index.php/downloads/cat_view/8-downloads/60-digest-of-education-statistics.

economy is hindered by cultural and community norms, which dictate the domestic lives of women with reference to reproduction, child rearing responsibilities, and caring for the elderly and other dependents. This is compounded by the lack of available facilities (day-care, senior care) to alleviate the need for home-care.

The links between politics and ethnicity fueled accusations against the PPP/C government of exclusion of Guyanese of African descent from access to state resources. The PPP/C for its part now accuses the coalition government of ethnic victimization. Both realities highlight the challenges of governing an ethnically charged society and the burden placed on the state to ensure equity and fairness. Inclusion was the major DRG challenge area found by the last USAID democracy and governance assessment done in Guyana in 2002. It found that "the use of race as a political marker has allowed it to become a destructive tool of exclusion" with "parties prey[ing] on racial differences, fear of deprivation, histories of victimization and ethnic insecurity to appeal to the basest instincts of Guyanese society."[17]

The multi-ethnic A Partnership for National Unity and Alliance for Change (APNU + AFC) coalition signaled a change from the past exclusionary politics. It reached out to the PPP/C to create a government of national unity, but the PPP/C refused. Some thought the coalition had not tried hard enough to convince the PPP/C to join, but the PPP/C told the assessment team that the APNU + AFC had "won the election so let them run the government."

So far, the government is pursuing a comprehensive approach to the inclusion of average citizens, private sector organizations, and civil society. Civil society organizations (CSOs) interviewed noted that the new administration was more open, wanted to hear their concerns, and sought to solicit their views and participation.

Consistent with the constitution, RDCs have been tasked by the government to develop regional plans with an accompanying budget, which was to be generated through an inclusive consultative process with CSOs, private sector, Indigenous Village Councils, Neighborhood Democratic Councils (NDCs), and others. The Ministry ranked the plans and presentations; Region 3 won and Region 8 placed second. This accomplishment was relayed to the community (and the DRG assessment team) with much pride and a sense of accomplishment.

Issues of inclusion at the regional and local levels include limited and unequal access to government services such as education, healthcare, social welfare officers, police, and the justice system, as well as unequal access to communication and road works infrastructure. These areas also have unequal access to economic opportunities. For example, some personnel in state institutions—the police, Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) officers, and road works laborers, for example—are not from the communities they serve. Similarly, private contracting for government projects is often done outside the region, which then brings in their own people, resulting in few employment opportunities for local populations.

There is social consensus on the roles of women, men, and LGBTI individuals, with men generally seen as decision makers, women as home makers, and LBGTI as needing moral guidance. However, there is a view that the Guyanese population is becoming more tolerant over time with the place of LGBTI persons in the society, and there is a petition to have the human rights constitutional protections extended to include sexual orientation. However, it was noted that there is discrimination against LGBTI people in terms of access and rights, specifically workplace discrimination and the fact that homosexual sex is still a crime in Guyana.

It was pointed out on a number of occasions in both urban and rural settings, that issues of men and boys have been overlooked. School-age boys have a higher school dropout rate than their female counterparts

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[17]   USAID. (2002). *Democracy and Governance Assessment of Guyana*. p 9.

and are involved in crimes at higher rates than girls. Furthermore, it was noted that youth lack adequate venues for economic participation (high rates of unemployment among youth). The experiences of and involvement in crime and violence among Caribbean youth have become linked to other developmental issues, including high levels of youth unemployment, poor educational opportunities, and feelings of voicelessness and exclusion from national and regional governance processes.[18] Local elections, 18 years overdue and now being held in March 2016, are seen as a venue that could open doors for youth participation. While many are presumed to be apathetic, there are pockets of activists in both rural and urban areas. The new government for its part is reaching out to youth groups for inclusion.

2.3   COMPETITION AND POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Historically, political competition has been dominated by two parties aligned largely along ethnic lines. Elections incite and exacerbate ethnic tensions as the de facto winner-takes-all system promotes one-party rule. Power is centralized in the executive and the formal check and balance system is marginalized by ineffective/nonfunctioning institutions, client-patron relationships, and corruption. Success of the multi-party coalition in the May 2015 general elections may signal a shift toward more issue-based politics, but it faces stiff opposition from the losing party. The introduction of single-member seats in the upcoming local elections offers an opportunity for change. Civil society and the media are active and provide a diversity of views. Economic competition is constrained by centralized control and clientielism.

Despite a proportional system of representation, political competition in Guyana is a zero-sum game. In elections, presidential candidates lead closed party lists made up of party loyalists. Minority governments are highly uncommon and party leaders rely on recall legislation to discourage dissent by members of Parliament (MPs). The lack of effective accountability mechanisms thus leaves a winner-takes-all system that marginalizes the losers, encourages disloyal opposition, and renders the party in power virtually unchecked until the next election. Guyana does not require a quota of women and generally records over 30 percent MPs being women. There are no women's caucuses in the National Assembly; previous efforts to establish them were blocked by one of the most important PPP/C members, also a woman. In general, women are present in the public and private sectors, but not often in positions of decision making.

The political and governmental system is dominated by the presidency under the constitution. The opposition parties contest this concentration of power while in opposition but find it convenient when they are in power. In November 2014, President Ramotar prorogued parliament after the government faced a no-confidence vote initiated by the AFC. This allowed the executive to rule, unchecked by parliament, until new elections were called in May 2015.

The current checks and balances system is not functional, with only the courts providing some measure of redress. Court cases, however, can take years to be heard or reach finality and the legal system has not been untouched by allegations of corruption. Constitutional reforms in 2001 provided for a series of constitutional bodies to be created to ensure integrity in public service and equality for all Guyanese. Most of these commissions are not functioning as the National Assembly has disagreed on nominees and other aspects of the work of the Commissions.

The National Assembly itself does not play an effective oversight role. Since MPs are answerable to their parties and not to voters, given the use of party lists for elections, MPs toe the party line. Ministers of Government are also required to be MPs, further reducing the separation of powers and undermining checks and balances. Thus, the Assembly is often referred to as a rubber stamp. An effective opposition veto of government legislation as well as the president's non-assent to opposition-initiated legislation during the 2011–2014 Assembly created a political impasse that was not surmountable through

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[18]   United Nations Development Programme. (2012). *Caribbean human development report 2012, human development and the shift to better citizen security.*

negotiations and compromise, and which was what led to the early dissolution of the Assembly and elections in 2015.

Now that the coalition has a one-seat majority in the Assembly, the PPP/C charges the coalition government is flouting parliamentary rules when it has introduced and voted on bills in the same session, making it impossible for the opposition to review the bill in advance and to have a meaningful debate. During the assessment field work, the government asked for a suspension of the National Assembly's standing orders to allow three bills to be laid, debated, and passed at the same seating. The government withdrew one of these bills (the anti-terrorism bill) after PPP/C and non-governmental organization (NGO) protests, but passed two others with its one-vote majority while the PPP/C walked out in protest.[19] The government's non-convening of the National Assembly, for almost two months in the final quarter of 2015, saw the PPP/C further calling into question the democratic credentials of the coalition. The government admitted the delay was due to ministers being overseas, which would rob the government of its parliamentary majority.

Zero-sum contestation for power is aggravated by ethnicity. The two main parties, the PNC/R and PPP/C, are organized historically largely along ethnic lines. Although anecdotal evidence[20] suggests more young people now identify as "mixed race" and the present government is multi-ethnic, political and electoral competition still assumes ethnic overtones which have been exploited in party and campaign rhetoric. Many analysts liken the elections in Guyana to an ethnic census.

Voting based on ethnicity tends to increase turnout in elections.[21] Country demographics thus have the potential to shape electoral and political outcomes. The Indo-Guyanese plurality is waning toward parity with the Afro-Guyanese while mixed-heritage and Indigenous populations are growing. These latter groups can be determinate as swing votes, which builds incentives for extralegal means of capturing votes. Indigenous populations have been historically targeted through party patronage and clientelism. Recent elections have been extremely close. The APNU + AFC coalition won the majority of seats in the 2015 elections but only by 4,500 votes. The PPP/C charged electoral fraud, and has taken the Elections Commission to court.

Elections are tense, polarizing events with violence and election rigging in the past. The 1992 elections are considered the first since 1964 that reflected the will of the people and that brought the PPP/C into power after 28 years of PNC rule. The PNC's refusal to accept the 1997 election results triggered violence and a political crisis. This was eventually resolved through international mediation and accords that led the PNC to take its parliamentary seats, accept constitutional reforms to strengthen the checks and balances, and call fresh elections in 2001. Guyana's first peaceful election in 2006, marked by the acceptance of the results by the losing party, was preceded by substantial national and international efforts to build social cohesion and reduce electoral conflict.

Election administration is generally seen by international observers as fair and transparent although since its 2015 election loss, the PPP/C has been calling for the resignations of the Chief Electoral Officer and Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) Chairman. The GECOM Commission is politically balanced and polarized, with two opposing commissioners posturing publically on areas of disagreement, through letters in newspapers during December 2015. Guyana still uses an international technical assessor to serve

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[19]   Sutherland. (2015). "Government relents on terrorism bill- anti-laundering amendments passed." *Stabroek News*. 18 December 2015.

[20]   Systematic evidence is lacking as the formal 2012 census report has not been released. Several interviewees remarked on the "weakening of ethnic ties" among young Guyanese. One observer specifically noted the absence of meaningful racial identification among university students; although there is nontrivial probability that graduates will seek gainful employment outside of Guyana.

[21]   Horowitz. (2001). *Ethnic groups in conflict*. p 326.

as an objective observer for the election commission and the parties during elections. This post has been funded by international assistance since 1992.

Long-delayed local elections are now scheduled for March 2016. These are mandated every three years, but have not been held since 1994 due to disagreement between the two parties on needed local government reforms, including the electoral system and systems for fiscal transfers. Local governments are currently run by the remnants of the earlier councils or by appointed officials. Half these seats will be elected directly on a constituency basis, with the other half done through proportional representation. Hence, 50 percent of all council seats will be available to independent candidates without any formal party affiliation. If candidates for these seats are, in fact, non-partisan, local elections will become more competitive beyond the APNU + AFC and PPP/C parties. Moreover, in assessment interviews, local officials and party members focused on local issues and solutions that crossed party lines and several other individuals indicated their intention to run for office as independents. This suggests potential for increased political accountability in local governance should newly elected councils properly understand and carry out their mandate. This may have downstream benefits for women, who face distinct challenges depending on their region of residence. One prospective candidate for an independent seat in the new local government Township of Lethem, in Region 9, identified a host of gender-specific issues she would target for improvement, including enhanced health offices and medical services in Indigenous villages, as well as training on LGBTI acceptance and anger-management workshops to combat GBV.

Broadly speaking, the 2015 election results suggest to many observers an opportunity for change. The APNU + AFC ran in the 2015 elections as a coalition, on a reform agenda that includes constitutional reform. The extent of the intended reforms varies depending on whom is asked; according to senior party officials, everything is on the table, including the electoral system and parliament. The coalition is a multi-party, multi-ethnic group, which may signify another shift in Guyanese politics away from ethnicity toward more issue-based politics. However, fractures in the coalition are evident.

Pluralistic media and civil society may also assist positive change in Guyana. Although many are partisan, they provide for a diversity of opinions and views. CSO representatives are included on many government boards by constitutional requirement. Previous administrations have consulted with CSOs, but many civic actors thought the new government was more responsive to their input. State media were blatantly pro-government in past administrations. The new management promises more objective and balanced reporting and for its members to be able to join the press associations. The state television station and radio have the only nationwide reach. Broadcast frequencies were allegedly allocated to presidential cronies before the broadcast regulation went into effect and in the lead up to the 2011 elections. This allocation is being challenged in court by several media associations and individuals and the cases are pending. Although there is no formal censorship, reporters and editors self-censor, as the government is the biggest advertiser and those who criticized government policies or actions in the past faced retribution. Some of the press, both state and private, repeat racial slurs and hate speech that has incited voters to violence in the past. More recently, this has turned to fear-mongering on the pro-PPP/C side and the other side telling people "it's our time." The media is monitored during election time by the Media Monitoring Unit (MMU) of GECOM, but its impact is limited as there are few sanctions. The MMU compiles quantitative reports on performance, incidents, and other issues which it compiles and shares with the media houses. The reports have not been used aggressively. For example, they are released without much fanfare or regularity, reducing its "name and shame" potential.

Economic competition remains stifled. The state nationalized 80 percent of the economy in the 1970s and 1980s; despite some subsequent privatization, the state is still the biggest employer.[22] Competition is difficult for smaller, unconnected businesses. It is hard for small enterprises to obtain credit from banks and there is a general lack of information on business requirements and opportunities. Services are

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[22]   The Commonwealth. *Guyana: History.*

centralized in Georgetown, requiring travel for those outside of the capital for business registration and licensing, for example. Some of the Chambers of Commerce interviewed felt the coalition government had a better approach toward the private sector than previous administrations, but still had to make changes to match their rhetoric. Others felt that "the more things change, the more they stay the same."

2.4   RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Guyana's legal framework provides for the rule of law and protection of human rights, but its implementation is problematic. Administration of justice is slow with uncertain access to fair and equitable justice. De facto discrimination still exists, particularly for persons without means, those in the hinterlands, women, and LGBTI individuals. National human rights institutions are not fully established or effective and criminal violence is a critical problem. Guyana ranks among the top 20 countries worldwide in murder rates;[23] it has the fourth-highest homicide rate in South America with 17 homicides per 100,000 people.[24] AmericasBarometer data indicate Guyana shows the second-largest increase in citizens identifying security as the most important problem, although it still ranks low compared to other countries in the Americas.[25] GBV is a major problem as is TIP, especially around mining areas. Guyana is also a transshipment location for guns and drugs from South America with all of its related problems, such as increased crime and corruption of law enforcement and judiciary actors.

Legal professionals interviewed thought that Guyana's legal framework provided a solid foundation for the rule of law and protection of human rights despite some needs for updating. This is also reflected in the MCC indicators for political rights, civil liberties, and freedom of information, which are above average. Guyana's legal framework is based on the 1980 constitution with significant revisions (1999/2000), which provides for equality among citizens and the protection of basic civil rights including freedom of assembly, expression, and religion. Guyana also incorporated several international conventions for human rights directly into its constitution, which would bring these requirements up to international standards.[26]

The implementation of these provisions, however, is problematic. On the MCC index, Guyana received below-average rankings for rule of law (41 percent) and control of corruption (30 percent).[27] Its justice system is outdated, under-resourced, and understaffed and cannot keep pace with the needs. The Guyana Justice Sector Reform Strategy (2006–2010) estimated that 90 percent of prosecutions are unsuccessful and that half of the 25,400 cases pending at the High Court would never go to trial because the case was settled in the meantime or abandoned because the persons on bail disappeared, or the witnesses were no longer available.[28] It also estimated that 30 percent of the prison population was on remand, waiting for their preliminary hearings.[29]

Although some justice sector policy reforms were made under the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)-funded 2006–2010 justice reform strategy, most reforms were not implemented, including the

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[23]   "Guyana among top 20 countries with most murders," *Kaieteur News* December 22, 2014.

[24]   *Guyana 2015 crime and security report.* United States Department of State Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC).

[25]   LAPOP AmericasBarometer. (2014). *The political culture of democracy in the Americas: Democratic governance across 10 years of the AmericasBarometer.* p 13-14.

[26]   These include the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Convention Against Torture and Other Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women. It also signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Rights or Indigenous Peoples, and the Inter-American Convention against Corruption.

[27]   Millennium Challenge Account. (2015). *Guyana scorecard, fiscal year 2016.*

[28]   Government of Guyana. *Justice System Strategy, 2006–2010.* p 8.

[29]   Guyana, op cit. pps. 4, 8.

completion and adoption of new rules of court. Despite IDB assistance to reduce the court backlog at the time, a significant backlog remains today. Legislation has also been passed by the coalition government, giving the courts their own budget to increase their independence. According to the Attorney General (AG), some persons have to wait in prison for as long as four years for their preliminary hearings. The population of pre-trial detainees includes accused persons committed to custody for charges legally eligible for bail, which raises questions about equal application of the law.

Citizen access to justice and the quality of services received depends on their physical location and personal situation. Much of the administration of justice machinery is located in urban areas leaving a significant center-periphery divide. Areas outside of Georgetown in particular lack adequate security and justice sector personnel, resources, and infrastructure. One magistrate covers all the hinterland regions, visiting each region only once every three months. There is also limited availability of legal advice and representation, especially for those without means or connections. Some of those interviewed provided anecdotes of how some persons used the slowness of the legal system to delay or derail justice in some cases, as it would prolong the time to resolve an issue, during which time witnesses could disappear or evidence be lost. There is little arbitration to resolve cases outside of court, despite significant investments by USAID and others in alternative dispute resolution. According to some women mediators and lawyers, senior lawyers with old biases resist a shift toward more mediation. Mediation is practiced largely by women, is free of charge, and tends to lead to successful resolution—especially of extralegal matters that never require formal hearings in the first place. The Arbitration Act of 1931 is outdated.

There is also an underlying fear of speaking out, as those who spoke out in the past or who took a different side on an issue were either punished by the state, paid a social and economic price for their position, or were perceived to have been penalized in some way. This included not only the political opposition and media, but economic entities, persons without means, women, and LGBTI persons.

Public trust in judicial institutions plummeted since 2012. Trust that courts could guarantee a fair trial dropped from more than 60 percent to below 45 percent in 2014 and confidence that the justice system would punish the guilty party also fell from more than 60 percent to close to 40 percent.[30] Guyana suffered from a dramatic increase in criminal activity in the immediate aftermath of the 2002 prison break. The government itself was implicated in unlawful behavior through the existence of "Death Squads" and "Phantom" Squads. Associated with drugs, drug lords, guns, and politics, these squads committed extra-judicial killings of persons wanted for crimes.[31]

Police administration has been both top heavy and slow to respond. Some changes have been made with the new administration to help provide a faster response. However, according to the Ministry of Public Security, the police are short-staffed by 2,000 officers, and lose about 300–400 persons a year due to migration and better remuneration with some private security companies. The Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) 2014 polls showed that 11.6 percent of respondents felt that no police would come if they called, 22.5 percent said it would take more than three hours, while another 24.1 percent felt it would take between one to three hours.

Entry-level police make about USD 300/month. According to a CSO working with the training academy, the entrance standards for police recruits are low and no psychological testing is required, so not all recruits are fit for the position. Transfers are frequent, negating the concept of neighborhood policing. Resources are limited—for example, the police in riverain areas have no boats. The police remain the least-trusted institution in Guyana at 35.4 percent (2014). The police and army are also mostly Afro-Guyanese, which adds an ethnic dimension to the security sector. Still, the Afro-Guyanese had the lowest

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[30] All polling data in this section is from LAPOP AmericasBarometer, *The political culture of democracy in the Americas, 2014: Democratic governance across 10 years of the AmericasBarometer*.

[31] Bahabur. (2015). "CIA Meddling, race riots and a phantom death squad," *Foreign Policy*, July 31, 2015.

levels of trust in the police at 24.3 percent (down from 41.5 percent in 2012), while the defense force itself is one of the most trusted institutions at 58 percent.[32]

One senior security functionary attributed this disparity in levels of public trust to the police force's culture of covering up issues and a reluctance to discipline higher ranks when wrongdoing is uncovered. It was also felt that the Police Complaints Authority should be constituted differently, with persons not tied to the police force who could operate more independently. The state has consistently called for the army to reinforce the police in the battle against violent crime, through legally permissible ways and police-led joint patrols and actions.

The private security sector is poorly regulated and employs significant numbers of women and older persons. These security guards are poorly paid and often the victims of sexual harassment and other crimes.

Although reliable national statistics are not available, a variety of evidence suggests that Guyana has high levels of domestic abuse and GBV. A 1998 survey conducted by Red Thread women's advocacy and support group reports that 65.8 percent of respondents in their non-probability sample of 360 women in Georgetown reported some kind of abuse in their relationship.[33] These rates do not appear to have dwindled much with time. *Kaieteur News* recently cited reports indicating that over 50 percent of women in relationships had experienced verbal, physical, or sexual violence in their relationship.[34] The Help & Shelter clinic for domestic abuse and GBV has seen a decrease in the absolute number of clients and hotline calls between 2006 and 2015, although the rate of decline is far from dramatic.[35] Social norms compound the difficulty to determine the extent of GBV in Guyana. Women do not always seek help outside the family for fear of reprisal, stigmatization, and possibly also acceptance. AmericasBarometer data for Guyana show the country in 2014 had among the highest levels of acceptance for domestic violence in the region, with 10.2 percent of LAPOP poll respondents approving a husband who hits an unfaithful wife, and another 25.4 percent who do not approve, but "understand the situation." Statistics are not available for violence against LGBTI persons.

Guyana is a Tier 2 Watch List country for TIP as both a source and destination country for men, women, and children for sex trafficking and forced labor.[36] It was granted a waiver from a Tier 3 classification because it has a written plan that could bring Guyana closer into compliance with minimum standards for the elimination of TIP if implemented. Given its geographic proximity and vast, largely un-policed borders, Guyana is also a transshipment location for cocaine from South America traveling to North America, Europe, and West Africa; and guns, typically small weapons, entering the country from Brazil. This has a direct impact on its level of crime, violence, and corruption. According to Freedom House, the informal economy is driven by drug proceeds which could equal 40–60 percent of formal economic activity.[37] There is some relevant legislation in place, including anti-money laundering legislation, but this also requires more effective implementation.[38]

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[32] LAPOP AmericasBarometer. *Trust levels of others at 37.06 percent (2014) down from 44.11 percent in 2012, and Indo-Guyanese at 41.49 percent (2014) down from 51.30 percent (2014).*

[33] Red Thread Women's Development Programme. (2000). *Women researching women: Study on issues of reproductive and sexual health, and of domestic violence against women in Guyana.*

[34] Rooplall. (2012). "50% of women experience domestic violence in relationships." *Kaieteur News*, January 17, 2012.

[35] Help & Shelter Cumulative statistics, 2006-2015. http://www.hands.org.gy/stats

[36] U.S. Department of State. (2015). *2015 trafficking in persons report, Guyana.*

[37] Freedom House (2015a). *Freedom in the world, Guyana 2015.*

[38] U.S. State Department. (2014). *2014 International narcotics control strategy report, Guyana.*

2.5 GOVERNMENT RESPONSIVENESS AND EFFECTIVENESS

The State of Guyana is well formed, established, and functioning, but too large a portion of the nation's human and financial resources is being invested in government for too little public good. Rural and hinterland communities are disproportionately affected. Institutions that should promote service delivery and accountability are weak or non-functional.

Citizen dissatisfaction with government effectiveness is persistent, whether for national, regional, or local government. Stakeholders interviewed by the DRG assessment team identified many service deficiencies affecting them, from garbage collection, road and drainage maintenance, health, education, and security, to processes such as obtaining a passport or retrieving bail money. The perception of unequal access to services is exacerbated by, and exacerbates, Guyana's ethno-political divide. The quality of government effectiveness generally declines further away from the capital.

The APNU + AFC coalition campaigned on an aggressive strategy to improve government performance. The coalition articulated a discrete 100-day plan and so far has implemented 14 of its 21 items, with timelines established for much of the remainder—inclusive of local government elections and the lowering of the Berbice bridge toll since the toll was much higher than crossing the Demerara River bridge.[39]

The new government reached out to national and international development partners for ideas, resources, and support. For example, it tapped civil society for personnel to fill state boards; asked donors (including USAID) to support governance reforms; and is pursuing a new emphasis on the generation and use of data, inclusive of public opinion polls, to strengthen strategic planning and policy making.

There are numerous challenges to satisfactory government performance. Government, like all employers in Guyana, suffers from the effect of the world's highest level of brain drain. Ninety percent of Guyana's post-secondary graduates have migrated.[40] This results in a small number of qualified persons wearing many hats and serving on different boards and positions at the same time.

Guyana has a culture of institutional favors being granted on the basis of relationships. Financial inducements further undermine equitable service delivery.

Guyana's large geographic size (83,000 square miles), with accompanying logistical challenges, relative to the size of its population (743,000) puts further impediments on government, at all levels, to deliver.

The response of successive administrations to the problem of governmental performance has been to increase the scale, scope, and size of government, including as relates to budgets and oversight. Subsequent to the constitutional reform process of 1999/2000, numerous new institutions and commissions were mandated but not established promptly, or at all (such as the Rights Commissions and the Public Procurement Commission). Several of these bodies are now defunct, including the vital Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), which had among its many mandates the duty to ensure no ethnic bias in the production and distribution of public goods and services by government. Others that are established (such as the Integrity Commission and the Office of the Ombudsman) have no commissioners, are under-resourced, or in need of reform, to the extent that they do not add to effective oversight of governmental performance. The constitutional reforms adopted in 2000 met many international obligations, as international actors and NGOs participated in the broadly inclusive process. Yet the government effectively shirked those obligations by allowing these Commissions to remain vacant or under-funded to the point of impotence. The new government has yet to fill these positions despite promises to do so

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[39] Haniff. (2015). "APNU + AFC recommits to fulfilling promises in 100 days plan," *I News Guyana*. 24 August 2015.

[40] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2013). *World migration in figures*. October 2013.

promptly.[41] Among the constraints are onerous processes for identifying nominees, a general shortage of qualified and suitable persons, partisan contention over nominees, and political will.

The absence or weakness of these governance institutions deprives the public of non-partisan efforts to redress grievances and concerns as relates to the delivery of public services. The continued inability of these institutions to fulfill mandates relating to the challenges of ethnicity, integrity, and gender, for example, arguably contributes to the prolonging and even worsening of those challenges.

Central government consumed 32 percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2013 while state enterprises consumed 34 percent, for a combined total of 66 percent of GDP.[42] In the context of a small, underdeveloped, and ethno-politically divided country, the size of the state is an incentive for state capture and contributes to a winner-takes-all mindset. When it comes to performance, the sheer size of central government and state enterprises begs the question as to whether the state is most efficiently structured and whether scarce human and financial resources are being most effectively utilized. Economist and current advisor to the government Dr. Clive Thomas argued in a Stabroek news article that: "… the performance record suggests the Guyana Government has been too large, too cumbersome, too inefficient and technologically undeveloped to have been entrusted with spending as much as two-thirds of Guyana's GDP over the past decade."[43]

Citizens in Guyana suffer from a lack of government responsiveness to their concerns. This is partly a function of the system of governance where central government can implement projects directly in communities or provide grants (much like a donor) to regional and local governments, rather than devolve power to local authorities, all with limited local ownership, participation, and accountability. Limited coordination between different levels of government has posed a major challenge to development efforts, although recent efforts to generate locally owned regional development plans to be used for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 budgeting and planning purposes is encouraging. Successive national governments have found it difficult to partner effectively with regional and local governments that are either controlled by a different political party or that lack accountability (including through weak capacities).

Public servants, both elected and appointed, are rarely held accountable for lapses in performance. The firing of a Minister just before the 2015 elections and public apologies from Ministers in the new government (for example, over an outburst made in defending increased salaries of ministers and MPs shortly after the 2015 election) may signal an improved level of governmental responsiveness.

Successive governments have pursued aggressive legislative agendas, with a view to strengthening government effectiveness and responsiveness. While the quality and quantity of legislation is considered to be sufficient, this has not always been matched by the quality of its implementation. This mismatch is only partly related to limited state capacity: it is also driven by limited political will, vested interests, and the general inability of citizens to influence policymakers.

In 2015, progress was made toward strengthening accountability regimes related to freedom of information and whistleblower protection. Parliament further supports the improved responsiveness of government through the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), chaired by the opposition. The timely tabling of audited accounts for consideration by the PAC significantly improved the ability of the PAC to identify financial breaches, sanction public officials, and establish remedies that prevent further breaches.

The media and civil society play a limited role in demanding quality services from government, typically through advocacy efforts at the national level, where the media and civil society are simultaneously

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[41]   "Government still to move on Integrity Commission, eight months on…" Stabroek News, January 25, 2016

[42]   Thomas. (2014). "Is the Government of Guyana too big, too little, or the right size for the economy?' *Stabroek News.* July 13, 2014.

[43]   Ibid.

present and capable. Government is only occasionally responsive to such advocacy (for example, in the health sector).

Encouragingly, the level of bribe-paying for public services has been steadily decreasing, from a high of 25 percent in 2006 to 16 percent in 2014. One hypothesis is that citizens are more aware of their rights to free public services, thanks to the expansion of reach and influence of mainstream and social media, and are pushing back against requests for bribes (as evidenced on social media, for example). Another possibility is that some government sectors have significantly improved their service delivery processes. For example, 57 percent of LAPOP respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with public health services in 2014.[44]

2.6 DRG CHALLENGE

Guyana is a developing democracy with the formal structures and systems for a parliamentary-style democracy but which remain to be developed to their full democratic potential. Although regime change in 1992 happened through the ballot box and was followed up by constitutional reform in 2001, the reforms were never fully implemented and the PPP/C used its capture of the state system to perpetuate its dominant position.

The elections of May 2015 brought in a multi-racial, multi-party coalition that ran on a platform of inclusion and democratic reform. This moved Guyana again toward the path of reforms that, if successful, could fundamentally change the balance of power within the political system and make the government more accountable and responsive to the needs of its people.

The DRG assessment found significant challenges in all five DRG elements, and particularly in competition and political accountability and government responsiveness and effectiveness. These contributed to the problems found in the other DRG areas. The precise nature of cause-effect relationships across subsectors cannot be known. However, low accountability for ineffective and non-responsive government feature in every significant issue. Infrequent and inadequate access to justice in the hinterlands coupled with overwhelming case backlogs in Georgetown and little opportunity for extra-legal mediation creates and exacerbates human rights challenges. People languish in pre-trial detention for years without bail, while the slow system allows perpetrators of GBV and sex trafficking time and space to eschew prosecution and conviction. Most of this is due to a lack of efficiency related to limited human and financial resources and difficult work conditions. Moreover, internal reforms that could improve government functioning are hindered by the political gridlock due to competition for what is, for a democracy, inordinately strong control over policy.

A major opportunity for change exists in the constitutional reform process and at the level of local government, where new elections may introduce non-partisan outsiders and a focus on improving delivery of basic services based on regional needs, provided that coordination between local government units and central government in Georgetown also improves. Attending simultaneously to constitutional reform and local government permits the deepening of gains that lead to sustained improvements in service delivery through increased citizen participation. Attending to one without the other will likely achieve little in the way of tangible sustained gains in the long term.

The coalition government has started to implement its reform platform but faces the legacies of political parties organized along ethnic lines, single party domination, and a centralized patron-clientelist system that contributed to weak, unaccountable, unresponsive, and ineffective government institutions. This dysfunctional political system led to a widespread sense of hopelessness with high levels of migration and insecurity.

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[44] LAPOP, op. cit.

3.0 KEY POLITICAL ACTORS AND INSTITUTIONS

This section offers a political economy analysis. It explores how key actors and the institutions relevant for the prioritized elements in Section 1.0 operate and how they are influenced by the structures of each institution and the incentives they create. It considers the extent to which the existing legal framework and enabling environment can provide opportunities to support the democratic reform process within Guyana.

3.1   THE EXECUTIVE

Guyana adopted an executive presidency in 1980. David Granger of the PNC/R is the current president, elected on May 11, 2015, via a coalition (APNU + AFC) that includes seven parties. Candidates contest for the presidency through closed party lists in an electoral system where the winning candidate is the one whose list receives the largest number of votes, typically more than 50 percent. In 2011, the PPP/C's Donald Ramotar became president with less than 50 percent of the popular vote, a first for Guyana and for any Commonwealth country (although it must be noted that Guyana's electoral system is not typical within the Commonwealth). Without the vehicle of a party, it is very difficult to become an MP and not possible to become president. Thus, while voters elect presidents, presidents must manage the demands of both their parties and the people.

In another first for Guyana, David Granger was elected as leader of the PNC/R at a Special Delegates Congress in 2011 that culminated a system of primaries. Here, competing PNC/R candidates (including current Minister of Foreign Affairs, Carl Greenidge, whom Granger beat by four votes) faced each other in regional meetings across the country. Previously, party leaders in all parties were selected through significantly less transparent and participatory mechanisms.

President Granger and the coalition government enjoyed a honeymoon period that is now largely over. The coalition is stable and expected to survive until the next elections in 2020 even as efforts are made to maintain cohesion within the coalition, and to manage tensions arising between its two largest parties, the PNC/R and the AFC.

The **president** exercises executive authority and control of government via the cabinet, which comprises government ministers. Cabinet members are presidential appointees and typically also members of the National Assembly. The constitution expects a high degree of cabinet involvement in executive decision-making, with the National Assembly serving as a check on the executive. However, since ministers are also MPs, and the executive and the National Assembly are both typically controlled by the same party, the Assembly cannot provide effective oversight of the executive. Save for the exceptional electoral reality post-2011, every president has enjoyed such support from the National Assembly.

There are therefore strong and reinforcing linkages among the president and the ruling party, the cabinet and the government, and the National Assembly, which are relatively impermeable to outside influence. Checks and balances are very difficult to obtain, as citizens and the opposition are not in the loop. This

reality has led to an exclusionary political system, often described as winner-takes-all, despite a constitutional design that is geared toward inclusionary democracy and proportional representation.

The incentives for unyielding executive dominance of the political system may be eroding in the post-May 2015 period given the slim victory margin of the APNU + AFC coalition over the PPP/C. The coalition is undoubtedly aware of the need to preserve or improve this slender lead by demonstrating the improved performance of, and the perception of responsiveness by, the government ahead of the next election.

Strategically, the executive has been pursuing the interests it stated in its electoral platform: unity, reform, inclusion, and good governance. As a general matter, the executive struggles (in the eyes of interlocutors) to:

- Gain the confidence of all ethnic groupings at the same time;

- Pursue politically meaningful reforms, including electoral system, political party, and campaign financing reforms;

- Achieve political unity on crucial policy issues, such as how to save the sugar industry;

- Restrain the abuse of state resources for partisan ends;

- Manage corruption; and

- Contain the size of government, and constrain the habit of inserting party loyalists within made-up positions or by bypassing due processes.

Already, the new executive has done enough to suggest that it lacks the political acumen needed to address the above-listed struggles. The most dramatic illustration of this deficit has been the decision to raise the salaries of ministers and MPs, a decision that evoked the widest of condemnations—most vocally from APNU + AFC supporters.

Some observers propose that the new executive is significantly influenced in its modes of functioning by the military background of the president, his advisors, and supporters. From a management perspective, this might be a good thing: heightened efficiency could improve responsiveness and service delivery. At a minimum, observers opine that, given its security sector credentials, the new government should do better in the fight against crime.

Positively, and across most stakeholders, the current executive was complimented for "talking the talk." When it comes to democracy, human rights, and governance, the executive has been credentialing itself as a champion, intent on reforming government and upgrading governmental performance. To this end, the executive has invited partnerships—including with USAID—to give effect to the reform agenda.

It was considered still too early to assess whether the executive is actually "walking the walk." Events occurring during the writing of this report suggest that the executive has been sufficiently reminded of its political vulnerability. For example, the decision to table in the National Assembly the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Guyana Sugar Corporation, along with the postponement of police promotions, may indicate a preferential option for more democratic governance. Alongside the drafting of a ministerial Code of Conduct, which has been opened for public comment and input, there is cautious optimism that a deepening of democratic values within the executive is occurring.[45]

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[45] "Citizens to contribute to code of conduct for ministers." (2015). *Daily Express Guyana*.

3.2   THE LEGISLATURE

The **National Assembly** has 65 members. Candidates for elections compete under party lists, where the party determines which 65 names will be on the list of candidates. Under an interim electoral system agreed in 2001, and which continues to be used, 25 members are elected from geographic constituencies and the remaining 40 elected on the basis of proportional representation.

There are no regulations governing how parties are to identify candidates or extract candidates from the party list to sit in the Assembly, leaving party leaders with considerable power over candidates. There is no residency requirement for the 25 geographic constituency seats, or regulations for how these 25 representatives interface with their constituents. Few of these representatives systematically reach out to their constituents. The linkage between the electors and the elected is very weak since the party leadership exercises near-total authority over the positions and actions of its Assembly members. Accountability is therefore upward, toward the leaders, and only downward to the people at election times when votes are needed.

Together, the president and the National Assembly comprise **Parliament**. Legislation approved by the National Assembly requires the assent of the president before enactment. Legislation almost always emanates from the government, with legislative drafting capacity located within the Ministry of Legal Affairs. As such, legislation tends to serve the policy interests of the executive.

While legislative hearings are open and increasingly accessible to citizens through the media, including online and social media, these proceedings are generally predictable in their tone and content given that the ruling party typically has an Assembly majority. MPs are answerable to their parties and toe the party line. Ministers of government are also required to be MPs, further reducing the separation of powers and undermining checks and balances.

Procedures are in place to help promote political consensus but in recent years, specifically during the 2011–2014 period when the opposition held a one-seat majority over the ruling party, presidential dissent over-ruled some pieces of legislation. Significant efforts were made between 2001 and 2011 to increase political trust and dialogue, and these have seen some gains, but insufficient to address the peculiarities of an opposition majority in the Assembly.

The **Speaker of the National Assembly** can be elected from among the members or from persons outside the Assembly who are qualified for election as members. The current Speaker is from outside the Assembly and known for his legal, political and diplomatic skills. He was elected by the APNU/AFC majority. The opposition has declined to nominate a deputy speaker per parliamentary custom, and the governing coalition has preferred not to fill the vacancy.

A significant space is provided within the legislature for issues of common concern to be addressed jointly, both within the committee structure as well as in the improved physical complex of the Assembly, which encourages discussion and research. Critical and complex legislation, such as has accompanied local government reform and other pressing national priorities, such as the reform of the sugar industry, have been dealt with by parliamentary sub-committees. The opposition chairs the key PAC, which interrogates past government spending based on reports of the Auditor General. The opposition also chairs the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Constitutional Reform. Participation in the Parliamentary Management Committee and the Appointive Committee (which work on appointments to the Constitutional Commissions) provides further opportunities for the opposition to deepen its role in the Assembly.

The political gridlock from 2011–2014 demonstrates that parliament is unable to utilize democratic norms fully, such as negotiations, consensus-building, and accountability, to overcome policy differences. While the dust is still settling from the turbulence of the May election, as is to be expected after 23 years of the

same party being in power, the National Assembly has yet to find a way of working effectively across the political divide as contention and opposition walk-outs dog proceedings. It is possible that the increased complexity of governing Guyana, as evidenced when looking at the anti-money laundering bill, the conflict with Venezuela and Suriname, the sugar and rice industries, and the impacts of the oil discovery, will lead to increased political engagement in parliament, and to the improvement of public policies.

The eleventh, and current, parliament, is made up of members drawn from the APNU (21 seats), AFC (12 seats) and PPP/C (32 seats). MPs from the APNU + AFC coalition and the PPP/C have remained cohesive as political groupings in the Assembly since the last elections. Mutterings of discontent within both sides can be heard, but at a low volume. Since 2011, over 30 percent of MPs have been women due to constitutional and legal changes that require one-third of the candidates lists to be female in elections. Some women MPs rise to high positions of leadership, such as the two chief whips for the current parliament. Both the government and opposition chief whips are women. There are no self-identified LGBTI MPs, and youth MPs typically form a very small number. There are no youth or women's caucuses in the Assembly, despite previous efforts. The coalition was criticized, including by its own constituents, for its evidently less-youthful representatives in the Assembly.

3.3   THE JUDICIARY AND LEGAL PROFESSIONALS

The new government is hoping to make significant improvements in the judicial system, including the police. The APNU + AFC coalition government promised in their election manifesto to break the deadlock over the appointment of the chancellor and chief justice and end the appointment of governing party cronies to the courts. It also promised to operationalize the family court, train judges and ensure succession arrangements, eliminate the backlog of cases, and implement fast-track mechanisms for appeals to the Caribbean Court of Justice (which Guyana adopted as its last court of appeals).[46]

Previous governments did not always abide by the letter of law, and used ex post facto legislation in some cases. They were generally seen as lacking the level of commitment needed for genuine reform to empower the judiciary and enforce the rule of law. The former PPP/C government was accused of political interference of the judiciary and attempting to intimidate justices by not confirming positions and leaving them in acting positions for extended periods of time.

Guyana suffers from low human capital, which is reflected in the judicial system. It is difficult to attract well-qualified people at low wages and very few (if any) incentives.[47] This has resulted in slow and delayed justice with a backlog of cases and pre-trial detentions that can last up to four years.

Magistrate Courts in the interior districts are held every three months, as there is currently only one magistrate assigned to these courts. One of the magistrates noted that those coming before the court are not always from the area, therefore cases need to be tended to expeditiously.[48] People in the interior are a bit nomadic, which creates serious issues for the availability of witnesses to testify in court. He also noted that the court tends to get blamed for the backlog in cases but sometimes the lawyers' tactics of frequent and unnecessary adjournments and prosecutors' tactics of padding their witness lists are contributing factors to delayed justice and a clogged court system.[49]

There is a **legal aid program** in Guyana, but it does not extend to remote rural areas; therefore accused persons in these locations have to find and pay for defense lawyers out of pocket. Bail must be recovered in Georgetown. It was noted that sometimes the monies to be recovered were less than the cost of

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[46]   A Partnership for National Unity and Alliance for Change Coalition (2015). *Manifesto, elections 2015.* p 16.

[47]   Ibid.

[48]   Interview with Magistrate, Lethem, December 8, 2015.

[49]   Ibid.

traveling to Georgetown, so often people do not bother to recover it. The new magistrate's court in Lethem has provisions for a registry and a clerk and other staff, so that such recovery in the future can be done in Lethem. This will help communities in and around Lethem; however, Region 9 is a vast territory. Without infrastructural improvements, the most remote communities will still face unique hardships in accessing justice.

Police investigations, especially in the remote regions, tend not to make use of forensics due to the lack of equipment, human resources, and expertise, which leads the police and the magistrates to rely on confessions and witness testimony. The police need to be better resourced to deal with crime in the interior, and the unique challenges of law enforcement in border areas.[50] There were two challenges identified in Lethem that highlight the significance of the problem. One challenge in Lethem is the border with Brazil where guns and drugs are trafficked and where Brazilians commit crimes in Lethem and then return to Brazil. There is very little the Lethem police have been able to do to stem the flow of guns, drugs, or criminals coming across the border. The second challenge is that Lethem police had to rely on private citizens' vehicles to conduct police business, although two horses were recently brought to Lethem for transport.

The **Attorney General**, whose office coordinates the administration of justice in Guyana, asked USAID for support to assess the entire justice sector, including the public prosecutor, police, police prosecutors, the judiciary, and prisons to see how they can improve their systems as the new coalition government works "to restore the rule of law in Guyana."[51] **Public prosecutors** are part of the independent office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, which leads the prosecution of higher-profile, more complex cases. Police prosecutors are actually police tasked with prosecution, usually of more mundane cases. While public prosecutors tend to be lawyers, police prosecutors are typically not well trained, which reduces the quality of police prosecutions. Guyana is currently working with the Foreign Affairs of Canada (FAC) to address the training of judges, magistrates, and prosecutors. An impact assessment has also been conducted for Region 1, and the government has funds allocated to address this.

3.4   NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

Constitutional reform after the 1990's turmoil saw a range of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) being established. The integration of human rights into its constitution is one reason why it is now considered as one of the most progressive in the Commonwealth, according to both government and opposition leaders.

However, the PPP/C government did not consistently prioritize the establishment and/or strengthening of the NHRIs. Practically, the government adopted a policy of selective implementation of NHRIs.

The constitution created the Ethnic Relations Commission (the first of the new Commissions to be established) in 2004, by the government. The Indigenous People's Commission, Rights of the Child Commission, Women and Gender Equality Commission, and Human Rights Commission were established many years later. The NHRIs were granted broad mandates and the authority, through tribunals, to rule on complaints received. The lengthy processes required to identify commissioners delayed the formation of the NHRIs. Currently, the ERC still lacks commissioners while the **Human Rights Commission**, which is supposed to comprise representatives of the other four commissions, has never been established. Membership in the NHRIs is further complicated by the term of office being relatively short: three years.

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[50]   Ibid.

[51]   Interview with the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, Georgetown, December 4, 2015.

The NHRIs are intended to be independent but they have no acts that accompany them or regulate them beyond those highlighted in the constitution. The commissions are advisory in nature. Fiscal independence was recently granted through legislation, but has yet to be realized in practice. The process of identifying commissioners is ostensibly also independent, with civil society sectors (such as the unions, youth, and private sector) being asked to identify representatives that parliament appoints. Still, political partisans have found their ways onto the NHRIs, confusing citizens as to whether the NHRIs are supposed to be independent or partisan. For example, the chair of the **Women and Gender Equality Commission** is a PPP/C MP, while her deputy is a PNC/R leader. The former chair of the ERC became a Junior Minister under the 2011–2014 PPP/C administration. A prominent PPP/C functionary is a Commissioner on the Rights of the Child Commission.

The **Ethnic Relations Commission**, the first and most publicly prominent of the NHRIs to be established (2004), received significant support from government and multiple donors over an extended period before and after the 2006 elections, partly in recognition of the ethno-political challenge Guyana faced. This support allowed the ERC to develop organizational capacity and implement major national programs (inclusive of research, dialogue, advocacy, trust-building, electoral peace, conflict transformation, complaints management, and so on) geared toward improving ethno-political relations. The ERC became increasingly tarnished by its perceived closeness to the PPP/C, as well as maneuvering by that government in 2007 to extend the tenure of the commissioners. The ERC declined in prominence and potency thereafter, and has been defunct since 2011.

The protracted process of establishing and maintaining the NHRIs, together with the reality and perception of partisan intrusion, as well as a lack of financial independence, has ensured that the NHRIs generally fail to perform the national service originally intended under the constitution. The public is largely unaware, or unconvinced, about the value the NHRIs add to the protection of human rights. Limited resources, both human and financial, further rob the NHRIs of capacity to build public awareness; do research, monitoring, and investigations; and implement meaningful programs. Only one commission has a strategic plan, developed with UN support.

NHRI reports are regularly submitted to parliament, as required, however they are not included in the standing orders for parliament so the reports are not read or discussed. There are no requirements for follow-up action on report findings and recommendations. Despite the shortcomings of the NHRIs, the country at large does have, and exercises, concern for human rights issues, although less so for some culturally sensitive issues, such as LGBTI rights. Through the media, concerns about domestic and criminal violence, indigenous people's issues, and equality, for example, are regularly raised by political parties, faith-based organizations (FBOs), NGOs, the private sector, unions, and the people themselves.

3.5   SECURITY SERVICES

The security sector in Guyana consists of the Joint Services of the Guyana Defense Force (GDF), Guyana Police Force (GPF), Guyana Prison Service, and Guyana Fire Service. There is civilian control of the security sector through the Ministry of Public Security, formerly the Ministry of Home Affairs, which is responsible for internal security and immigration.

Guyana's President Granger has a strong background in the security sector, having served as the commander of the GDF until 1994 and as a national security advisor to the president (1990–1994).[52] As a result, most Guyanese expect him to be tough on crime and strong on national defense.

Serious crime has been rising in Guyana and becoming increasingly more weaponized with the proliferation of guns manufactured in Brazil and brought into Guyana through the drug trade from Venezuela and Suriname. For example, the total number of serious crimes increased from 5,667 in 2013

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[52]   Guyana Defense Force. *David Granger.*

to 14,855 in 2014 including the number of larcenies, which rose from 2,898 to 12,639.[53] A new and much more violent wave of crime was unleashed in 2002, following a spectacular jailbreak that the authorities, including the GPF and GDF, were unable to stem. Following damning accusations that the government lacked confidence in the security forces and had formed an alliance with drug lords to kill wanted criminals, Parliament established a Disciplined Forces Commission in 2003 to identify ways of strengthening the security forces. Efforts by the PPP/C government to implement the commission's 164 recommendations have been criticized, particularly after it spurned a British offer of support. David Granger was one of the four commissioners.

The **Guyana Police Force** dates from 1939 and plays an important role in the maintenance of internal peace and security. However, it has been plagued by many problems that led to the GPF becoming the least-trusted institution in the country, including incidents of police brutality and politicization.[54] It has been chronically short of its 3,570 officers for over a decade, and finding new recruits with the right combination of skills and education has not been easy. This affects training, deployments, and the ability to have the right people in the right places at the right times.[55] It is perceived as an opaque institution that inadequately polices itself through its Police Complaints Board, which it staffs with police officers.

The GPF Strategic Plan 2013–2017, developed with the support of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), commits the GPF to a process of modernization that will utilize international best practices in policing, build stronger relationships with communities, and deliver more effective services. With IDB help, the GPF has already remodeled 18 police stations to allow for easier access by the public and for police use of technology. It also increased the number of community and neighborhood policing groups that are integrated into the GPF structure. However, most of the reform plans have yet to be implemented as the UK's Security Sector Reform (SSR) program was effectively halted by the former government which charged the SSR program with interfering with issues of national sovereignty. The new government has asked the UK to resume its SSR support, which the British are considering and appears likely. The IDB, through its Support for the Implementation of the Citizen Security Strengthening program, will provide support to the Ministry of Public Security to strengthen its managerial and leadership skills.[56]

The **Guyana Defense Force** is widely respected and is the most-trusted institution in Guyana behind the evangelical church. It has remained neutral in domestic politics despite some former soldiers being active in politics. They believe this is a testament to their leadership and professionalism, where well-trained leaders understand the line between personal politics and professional obligations. The GDF will be looking for an increase in its 2016 budget allocations as it feels it does not have the resources needed to ensure national defense, maintain law and order, and support the GPF in the fight against crime. The army is almost fully staffed, with improved recruitment and retention levels. However, a key issue that affects all security services is the low educational quality of new recruits who find it hard to pass the entry exams, which are at the sixth grade level.[57]

The GDF had remained out of the crime fighting efforts until recently. In December 2015, the government authorized the GDF to work with the GPF in their efforts to stem crime; ensure border security; and be better prepared for the threat of terrorism, which the Minister of State said in a newspaper interview could occur anywhere given the global situation. Called Operation Dragnet, this six-month joint effort is intended to make the people feel safe in their homes, schools, and communities. It was also

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[53] Guyana Bureau of Statistics. (2015). *Social indicators, table 3.7, reported serious crimes by select offences*.

[54] LAPOP, op cit.

[55] Government of Guyana, Ministry of Public Security. (2015a). *Guyana police force strategic plan 2013–2017.* p 15.

[56] Government of Guyana, Ministry of Public Security. (2015b). *Request for proposals support for the implementation of the citizen security strategy (ATN/OC-1459-GY).*

[57] Interview with GDF, 23 December 2015.

reportedly, partly a result of the security concerns raised by the business community and a desire to have a safer and more secure Guyana for its 50th anniversary celebrations.[58]

The Private Sector Commission (PSC) did submit a plan to fight crime (Strategies for the Reduction in Crime) to the government in early 2015. The PSC felt this had never been addressed and in November 2015 held a press conference to highlight the impact of crime on businesses and the people who were "living in fear." It cited police statistics that showed a 10 percent rise in serious crime over 2014, increase in rapes by 65 percent, and noted a string of piracy incidents on Guyana's riverways.[59]

The GPF is actively cooperating with the U.S. Government on issues of narcotics trafficking. It is receiving training, equipment, and other support from the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and others to operate the vetted customs anti-narcotic investigative unit (CANU) program.[60] The GPF is also cooperating with the United States to stem the illegal flow of gold out of Guyana, which is estimated at 50–60 percent of Guyana's actual gold production.[61]

The security services are composed predominantly of Afro-Guyanese. The services acknowledge the need to increase the representation of other ethnicities—an issue that has been raised since the constitutional reform hearings in 1999, but seems to be difficult in practice.

Only seven percent of the GDF are women, most of whom are in clerical positions. While more can admittedly be done to increase the number of women in the army, as there are no formal barriers, GDF representatives indicated that seven percent compared favorably within the region.

The police receive GBV sensitization training in the police training school and have provided spaces for interview rooms for victims and one-way mirrors for identification of suspects, but women and girls still report problems when reporting GBV to the police.[62]

There is a large **private security** sector, with security guards outnumbering police by at least two-to-one.[63] They are created or used by commercial enterprises and private persons to guard their property. These firms are also contracted by state institutions to provide site and personal security. Although the Private Security Services Act (2012) places these firms under the supervision of the GPF, most interlocutors felt the sector was largely unregulated. Private security agents generally earn less and receive less training than police officers. Despite this, some guards, such as those for banks or gold dealers, can be heavily armed. Most of the other guards are not armed and an inordinate number of the unarmed site security personnel are women, many of whom are single mothers who accept the low pay out of need. Several of the local government officials interviewed during the assessment noted that these women are easy prey for sexual abuse and violence as some are located in isolated locations, such as schools after hours, without adequate communications equipment or support.

3.6 LOCAL GOVERNMENT

There are several levels of local government in Guyana established by the constitution and fleshed out in legislation. Its 10 regions are each governed by elected **Regional Democratic Councils**. The current RDCs were recently elected in May 2015 through a proportional representation party slate system. Only

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58 "Army to be deployed as government launches 'Operation Dragnet.'" (2015). *Kaieteur News*.

59 Private Sector Commission (Guyana). (2015). *Press conference–Statement on crime*.

60 Government of Guyana, Ministry of Public Security. (2015a). *Press release, MOU on operation of a vetted counter-narcotic investigative unit programme*.

61 Paul. (2016). "Guyana - FBI gets involved as 15,000 ounces of illegal gold leave Guyana weekly." *Demerara Waves*.

62 Government of Guyana. (2014). *Report of the Republic of Guyana on Beijing + 20.* p 45

63 "Regulating private security firms" (2012). *Stabroek News*. 14 February 2012.

two of the previous regional chairmen were re-elected and the governing coalition won only three of the regions (4, 7, and 10). The PPP/C won the other seven regions.[64]

The RDCs provide services to their regions on behalf of the national government and play an oversight role for the lower-level elected **Neighborhood Democratic Councils** (NDCs) and Municipal Councils. Their funding and staffing come from the central government.

Guyana currently has six incorporated municipalities: Georgetown, Linden, New Amsterdam, Rose Hall, Anna Regina, and Corriverton. This was expected to expand to 10 in 2016 with the addition of Bartica, Lethem, Mabaruma, and Mahdia. However, the government announced in early 2016 that township for Mahdia would be deferred as it lacked a functioning local government system.[65] Municipalities are governed by **Municipal Councils**, which are elected offices headed by a mayor. The 61 remaining local authorities are NDCs, which are smaller groupings of villages. These councils and municipalities are ostensibly elected for a three-year term but only two local elections have been held since independence—in 1970 and 1994. Elections have not been held since because the parties could not agree on the needed local government reforms.[66]

This situation left the persons elected 21 years ago in place with the central government filling vacancies with appointees. In some cases, it replaced entire municipalities and NDCs with appointed **Interim Management Committees** (IMCs). Some of the local councils visited during the DRG assessment only had two counselors left, many of whom were elderly, hanging on to their responsibilities for their communities until new counselors are elected. Almost all the council chairs from the 1994 elections were men. The few council members still intact after 21 years explained their continued presence as an expression of duty to the communities. Many of the local administration and clerical officers tend to be women, a reality that the assessment team found still prevailing. The work of these paid officers is performed under difficult financial and operational conditions.

In Amerindian areas, the local government authorities are the over 70 **Village Councils** with similar powers to the NDCs. They continue to hold elections every three years, partly out of practical necessity for such institutions to exist in hinterland areas that are more communal in nature. These Village Councils are headed by a Toshao (chief) and include many young councilors.

The political dynamics at the regional and local levels are much more issue based than the dynamics found at the national level with its party and personality focuses. Councilors and staff interviewed appeared to be working together to solve local problems across party lines. These different communities had common issues and concerns. These centered on their inability to raise enough tax revenue for their needs; local service delivery (such as garbage pickup); high levels of unemployment; and unequal access to social welfare provisions, such as communications, education, and healthcare. All felt the central government was moving too slowly on their issues. As stated by one mayor, "I come to work with a heavy heart as I don't have the tools to help the people. For three decades this community was denied basic things, like potable water. We expected immediate relief. I still have to see my minister."

There was a systemic lack of information about the policies and activities of the national government at the regional and local levels and confusion over roles and responsibilities. There is such a high level of centralized control that it negates any notion of local self-governance. Staff are all centrally appointed and transferred at the will of the central government, inclusive of regional executive officers—the effective chief executive officer of RDCs. The RDCs are supposed to serve as an intermediary and oversee the IMCs, NDCs, and Indigenous Village Councils, but most of the lower-level councils interface directly with the central government for approvals on even the most local of issues (for example, expenses for

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[64] "PPP/C takes control of seven regions." (2015). *Kaieteur News Online*.

[65] GINA, Mahdia's township status to be delayed - Minister Hasting-Williams.

[66] USAID. (2002). *Democracy and governance assessment of Guyana*. p 26.

travel to the capital for meetings and the topics for local training sessions). In other cases, the RDCs controlled the NDCs, in particular, directing the use of its centrally funded budget allocation, leaving the NDCs frustrated and powerless. The political dynamics of the center also overlaid regional and local governance, with some seeing fights for control of the regions between the regional chairs and the central government, creating tensions and divisions. They also perceived high levels of corruption in local governance, believing the model came from the national level. Once the Local Government Commission is established, it will take over some of the oversight at the local level, especially as relates to local government staffing.

One area where RDCs and IMCs/NDCs and indigenous Village Councils worked together—highlighted during the assessment—was on their regional development plans, an oft-ignored constitutional requirement. There appeared to be a consultative process with the communities, regional authorities, civil society, and the private sector to identify development priorities and develop a plan that would be used by Parliament for the 2016 budget allocation process. It was generally agreed that these plans would allow for more strategic use of their central funds for the benefit of the regions as a whole. These plans were to be delivered to the ministry before the end of December 2015.

The development of these plans brought into sharp focus the different political needs and interests at the national and regional levels. There is a need to secure political consensus in the seven regions won by the PPP/C. In a classic prisoner's dilemma, both the PPP/C and APNU + AFC mistrust each other and worry that, in a worst case scenario, the other side could sway voters at the next election. The Minister of Communities, the subject minister for local government, complained bitterly that the PPP/C regions were refusing to submit plans.

Local government has a limited ability to raise its own revenues to supplement the set amount received each year from the central government. Most of this revenue comes from taxing land and property. However, the last property valuation was done almost 40 years ago. This means that many houses or developments done since then are not taxed, and that taxes are levied at old, low rates. In addition, only about half the residents pay their taxes, with the local governments saying that the citizens do not understand their responsibilities to pay taxes. Citizens on their part tend to think that the level of services received does not justify paying any taxes. The local government interlocutors reported that the government used to seize houses for back taxes, but this practice was abused so was stopped and now there are few sanctions. Fines are stipulated in the 1970 Municipal and District Council Act and are outdated. Some fines are as low as USD 0.25, for instance.

Some towns came up with their own ways to raise revenue—for example, Linden put a road toll on truckers. However, this was stopped by the central government, which said it had not given them authorization to collect this tax. Officials in Linden also lamented not being able to get a percentage of the taxes on its mining production from the national government, since it believed that the coastal regions were able to collect taxes on agricultural production. In mining communities, indigenous communities do benefit from mining, with a percentage going to them as authorized under the Amerindian Act. Towns also pay the value-added tax (VAT) on purchases that they think should be waived in their case as they are governmental institutions and have limited resources, which could be helped by these cost savings.

Four new pieces of local government legislation were approved in recent years, with the final one passing after the coalition government came to power. The local government elections are scheduled for March 2016. A key change to the electoral system is for 50 percent of these seats to be constituency based, and the other 50 percent to be filled by proportional representation. This is expected to make councils more accountable to the voters, and see an increased participation of independent candidates. The changes also appear to be attracting prominent civil society and private sector individuals into thinking about running for election. Party officials located in the regions said they were looking for the best individuals to run, recognizing the importance of locality in these elections. They thought it would be difficult for individuals to run outside of the party system because of the strength of the parties in certain areas. Most

anticipated these would be peaceful elections. Some were hopeful for change, while others felt nothing would change unless the system itself changed and there was a real devolution of power.

Campaigning allegedly started for some parties. Some reported the PPP/C having "bottom house" meetings to energize their base, allegedly raising fears of ethnic exclusion if the coalition or other parties were successful in the local elections. Clean up activities for garbage and the drainage canals were evident in many areas, including Georgetown. The government also gave a year-end bonus of USD 250 to all government employees earning under USD 2,500/month. The opposition sees this as electioneering and buying votes while others see it as actions that were long overdue.

Subsequent to the assessment fieldwork, the government announced it would establish the **Local Government Commission** in early 2016. The commission had been approved by parliament in 2013, but never operationalized. It is expected to be funded from the 2016 budget and be operational by early 2016. It is intended to reduce the role of central government in overseeing local government by providing regulation, oversight, and policy performance reviews, including taxation and protection of the environment. All commissioners will be appointed by the president. Half of the commissioners will be identified by the leader of the opposition. The **Ministry of Communities** will still have some responsibilities for the operations of the councils, although the specifics of this are unclear.[67] During the assessment, the ministry stated that the government is committed to improving DRG and wanted to de-emphasize the role of the central government in favor of local ownership. The government also wants to see significantly increased capacities at the regional and local levels by 2020, recognizing that 2019 is a key indicator point with the next local government elections. It sees the need for technical assistance from the international community to support this effort for the next three to five years. It also looked for USAID support for the setting up of the Local Government Commission and to local and regional authorities to help them increase their generation of revenues, including help with valuation exercises and identifying other opportunities for local revenue generation.

There are several associations of local government entities, including the **Guyana Association of Municipalities** based in Linden, which has lobbied for a percentage of mining revenue for mining towns, and the **Association of Mayors and Counselors**. Both seem to be cross-party and supported in the past by FAC and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

3.7   POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS

The basic purpose of political parties is to contest and win elections and govern in the best interest of the populace. After 1957, the populace, which had been united in 1950, divided politically along ethnic lines, whereby the African and Indian populations were courted to vote "race first" by both the PNC (African) and the PPP (Indian). This practice, which started before independence, has plagued Guyana in its post-independence struggles for democracy and political stability.

Since independence, many political parties have formed, merged, and allied in Guyana. There seems to be a new political party or movement formed every election cycle, most attempting to move beyond the polarizing politics of ethnicity. Political parties are among the least-trusted institutions in Guyana, followed only by the police.[68] The PPP/C and the PNC/R have been relatively stable in their formation and became the "traditional" parties.

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[67]   Government Information Agency. (2015c). *Local government commission to be established in time for LGE- Funding provided in 2016 budget.*

[68]   Zechmeister and Seligson. (2014). "Advances, challenges, and setbacks in democratic public opinion in Guyana: The LAPOP AmericasBarometer." In *The Political Culture of Democracy in the Americas, 2014: Democratic Governance Across 10 years of the AmericasBarometer.*

The **People's Progressive Party** was the first major political party, formed in 1950 by Forbes Burnham, Cheddi Jagan, and Jagan's wife Janet Jagan (a U.S. citizen, born in Chicago). It subsequently split into two factions in 1955: a Jagan faction and the Burnham faction. The Burnham faction established the PNC in 1957. The PPP, which incorporated the Civic movement ahead of the 1992 election to become the PPP/C, is currently the opposition as it lost the most recent general election by one seat. It has 32 MPs, and 7 of the 10 RDCs. According to the PPP/C, as opposition they will work to protect the democratic and economic gains made since 1992. They see eight barriers to DRG:

1. Lack of free and fair elections,

2. Absence of parliamentary democracy,

3. Lack of political consultations,

4. Abuse of political power,

5. Racial and political discrimination,

6. Executive lawlessness,

7. Mismanagement of public expenditures, and

8. Subversion of constitutional bodies.[69]

The PPP/C operates according to "democratic centralism" that many view as undemocratic, even while its party structure and grassroots organizations are strong. Their centralized control system was evident during this assessment in Region 9 when a senior party official visited the region to ensure that the RDC chairman followed the party line. At the same time, the PPP/C complains that the new government is victimizing its supporters and undermining institutions they had strengthened since 1992. It is currently focusing its energies on contesting the upcoming local elections and creating its platform for the next general elections due in 2020.

The **People's National Congress** was formed in 1957 after Forbes Burnham, its founder-leader, split from the PPP. The party came to power in 1964 through a coalition and became more authoritarian during its 28 years in power, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s, effectively removing all legal means of deposing it from power. Hinds notes that the PNC government violated the civil rights and liberties of all Guyanese citizens and worked to undo or derail any multiethnic efforts pursued by Guyanese at home and abroad.[70]

In 1985, President Burnham died and a reform-minded Desmond Hoyte came to power. In 1986, under Hoyte, the PNC embarked on a liberalization process in both the economics and the politics of the country, opening up to calls for electoral democracy and the negotiation of the national elections in 1992. In a political environment dominated by ethnic considerations, the PNC has to figure out how to win and retain power when ethnically outnumbered by PPP/C. The PNC brought in elements of civil society and reform in 2001 to become PNC/Reform (PNC/R); took on a strategy of being more inclusive, democratic, and coalition minded; and promoted national unity. It has worked hard to distance itself from the PNC of the 1960s–1980s.

A Partnership for National Unity was formed ahead of the 2011 elections by the PNC/R and five smaller parties. The interests are simple: focus on issues, stay in power, and contest and win local government elections. APNU's biggest resources are the parties within the coalition, particularly the PNC/R.

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[69] Interview with the People's Progressive Party/ Civic, Georgetown, December 2015.

[70] Hinds, op. cit.

Alliance for Change was formed in 2005, founded by defectors from the PNC/R (Raphael Trotman), PPP/C (Khemraj Ramjattan), and the Working People's Alliance (WPA) (Sheila Holder). The party contested the 2006 elections and won five of the 65 seats with 8.4 percent of the vote. The AFC cuts across ethnic lines, attracting mixed, Indian, African, and indigenous voters in its call for constitutional reform, transparency within government, and a focus on issues over ethnicity. The AFC was championed for helping Guyana move beyond ethno-politics. The *New York Times* wrote, "Politics in Guyana have long been delineated by race. But a multiethnic movement that has emerged in recent years has given voice to a new generation of Guyanese who say that politics as usual has held the country back by favoring race over merit, undermining economic progress."[71]

The AFC's aim is to strengthen their position leading up to the 2020 national election by expanding their base beyond Georgetown; facilitating town hall outreach in regional districts; and being more inclusive through using quotas for indigenous peoples, youth, and women. They intend to remain intact as a party despite being a coalition partner in government with APNU, and focus on identifying local issues, local solutions, and empowering local governments and organizations to implement those solutions.[72]

There are other minor political parties, coalitions, and movements that make up the political landscape of Guyana. Coalition members include the WPA, National Democratic Front, National Front Alliance, Guyana Action Party, and Justice for All Party. The United Force has aligned itself with the PPP/C; the United Party of Guyana, People's Democratic Party, and the Mark Benschop for Mayor Movement are essentially opposition parties and movements. Mark Benschop is running for mayor of Georgetown with a U.S.-style campaign approach based on issues and meeting the voters in town hall type of formats, saying the system is broken and he wants to fix it.[73]

Elections in Guyana are administered by the **Guyana Elections Commission**. In 1990, GECOM was removed as a department under the government and became independent. The commission comprises six commissioners, three appointed by the president and three by the leader of the opposition, and a chair selected by mutual agreement between the president and opposition leaders. The appointment of party nominees as commissioners has not necessarily aided the increased confidence of political parties in the electoral process and its results, with some opining that it is the GECOM secretariat and the chairman that have rather added the higher value to elections. Both major parties consistently question the integrity and/or competence of GECOM's staff and operations before election day, with the losing party then blaming GECOM issues for its loss.

Since the 1992 elections, the quality of elections has measurably improved, from the quality of voter lists to polling day operations, in the opinion of local and international observers. The accuracy and timeliness of election results remains a major challenge for GECOM, although even here there have been improvements. Given the nexus of ethnicity and politics in Guyana, staffing and other related tasks must be handled extra carefully by GECOM. To mitigate suspicions that the parties have variously infiltrated and corrupted the process, GECOM uses international technical assessors to assure stakeholders of the integrity of its internal operations and key outputs, such as the voters list.

GECOM has also been working for years toward obtaining ISO certification to demonstrate the reliability and quality of its services. The chairman felt that this would increase GECOM's credibility as a professional and reliable electoral institution and build Guyanese trust in the institution and the electoral results. However, these hopes to obtain certification have been dashed by the PPP/C's refusal to accept the May 2015 election results and the petition PPP/C submitted to the High Court to overturn the election. The PPP/C contends that the election results were invalid because the process was flawed with procedural

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[71]   Gupta, op. cit.

[72]   Interview with Alliance for Change, Georgetown, December 4, 2015.

[73]   Interview with Mark Benschop for Mayor Movement, Georgetown, December 4, 2015.

errors because "results that have been derived from the [flawed] process cannot be credibly deemed to represent the will of the electorate."[74] The GECOM commissioners then approved a motion to ask the High Court to strike out the PPP/C petition as materially defective as it lacked sufficient grounds for the case. This issue split the GECOM commissioners along party lines, with the chairman casting the deciding vote to take the motion to the court. A bitter discussion followed in the press with the PPP/C using the chair's vote and the GECOM's motion as evidence to allege that it has something to hide and is afraid of public scrutiny.

3.8   CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society in Guyana is fairly dynamic and engaged at the economic, social, cultural, and political levels of society. CSOs can be found not only in the urban and rural areas, but also in remote parts of Guyana. They address many different issues, including religious, cultural, environmental, indigenous, East Indian, African, women, youth, sports, professional, business, social justice, media, sexual orientation, and governance, among others.

Many of the organizations have benefitted from capacity building and training by donor agencies. They network with each other on specific issues locally, regionally, and internationally and coordinate efforts and strategies. Many of the CSOs also serve on relevant government boards and actively lobby the government on areas of concern, individually and collectively. The organizations' leadership tends to be professional and passionate; however, they are dependent on donor funding and are perpetually facing financial challenges.

There are few CSOs that are consistently and actively involved in promoting democracy and governance, although there are considerably more efforts being made in the area of human rights, particularly as relates to the LGBTI and gender agendas. Among the well-known and professional groups are the Guyana Human Rights Association (GHRA), the Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD), Help and Shelter, Red Thread, Transparency Institute of Guyana, Guyana Press Association, Guyana Bar Association, and St. Francis Community Developers. The Private Sector Commission, unions, GHRA, and some ethnic-based groups (such as the African Cultural and Development Association and the Indian Action Committee) lend support to more complex governance issues such as constitutional reform, elections, and security.

Few groups are able to escape the partisan label, perhaps due to the nature of the prevailing ethno-political conflict, the dynamics associated with small countries where everyone tends to know everyone and their business, and the fact that many CSO leaders wear multiple hats that increase complexities (if not conflicts) of interest. Efforts geared at improving the organizational governance of CSOs, inclusive of internal democracy and good governance, encouraging the use of broad-based coalitions (such as the Guyana National Youth Council), and promoting increased levels of volunteerism can be expected to help mitigate these real and perceived dangers within civil society.

CSOs in Guyana do not use more modern techniques for researching and advocating on issues due to limited awareness, capacity, and resources. The gathering and use of data, for example, is hardly done. An increasing clamor for more access to information from the public sector may signal increased appreciation by civil society for evidence-based approaches to their work. The government has recently signed an agreement with the IDB for support to strengthen the use of statistics "to improve government's capacity to gather and analyze available social and economic data as well as monitor and evaluate the impact of government policies and programs."[75]

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[74]   "Alexander accuses Benn and company of 'hypocrisy'." (2015). *Guyana Chronicle*. 7 December 2015.

[75]   Ministry of Finance Press Release, December 23, 2015

USAID support to a group of NGOs involved in HIV/AIDS activities led to their formation of the National Coordinating Committee (NCC) a representative committee with responsibility for oversight, coordination, and monitoring project results. Support over the years has focused on organizational strengthening and technical capacity building. Under a recent funding agreement, USAID is providing support to strengthen the NCC network for greater impact and sustainability of the national HIV response, advocating effectively for critical issues and establishing formal partnerships with the GoG, private sector, and other local and international agencies to promote an enabling environment for NGO operation in Guyana.[76]

3.9   MEDIA

Guyana's constitution guarantees freedom of expression and the ability to communicate and receive "ideas and information without interference."[77] This has generated a pluralistic media with several daily and weekly newspapers and a number of radio and television stations, the latter being liberalized only recently.

State media have the only nationwide reach. These include a daily newspaper (*The Chronicle*) and a broadcast network (*National Communications Network*) on radio, television, and internet. Private television is limited in reach and content. A small independent media exists and has not been shy to criticize the government, regardless of the party in power. Letters to the editors in newspapers are also prevalent and a common way for politicians and others to express their opinion. The disparate reach of private and state-owned media has implications, especially in the interior regions, where citizens are less likely to access unbiased information about political issues and policy positions.

The Stabroek News is considered as one of the most objective newspapers in the country. It also produces an online edition along with several other media houses. Most of the media is centralized in Georgetown with a scattering of reporters located across the country. There is one volunteer-based community radio station, located in Annai, serving indigenous communities that received assistance from the United Nation Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for its setup and USAID for its expansion. There is a small but growing set of new media news outlets, the most prominent being *Demerara Waves*.

Much of the media are partisan and politicized with editors and owners aligning along party lines. Although the media are active in discussing issues, media professionals felt it reacted to news rather than set the news agenda. Content is instead driven by sports, entertainment, news, talk shows, and current events. The media self-regulate, but there are no media standards without GECOM's Media Monitoring Unit, which issues a code of conduct and monitors the media during electoral periods. There is a half-drafted media code of conduct started under a previous FAC media project. There are frequent staff turnovers that leave a continual need for training of new journalists. Many journalists emigrate for better salaries and working conditions. The Guyana Press Association (GPA) states, for example, that 20 Guyanese journalists work for the media in Trinidad.

Private media are primarily commercial and depend on advertising for survival. Their independence is circumscribed by the fact that the government is the biggest advertiser. In 2009, the government withdrew advertisements from the *Stabroek News* and *Kaieteur News*, which the papers claimed was politically motivated.[78] Although the advertising was subsequently renewed, this contributed to a climate of self-censorship. The Media Owners Association report other barriers, that make it difficult to compete, such as import taxes on equipment, which the private sector must pay but the state media does not.

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[76]   Kaieteur News, New USAID project offers technical assistance to NGOs, January 16, 2016

[77]   Constitution, Article 146.

[78]   "Jagdeo's dangerous attempt to stifle media resurfaces- Press association." (2015). Kaieteur News Online.

In the past, the state media consistently provided pro-government coverage and attacked the administration's critics. The government administration also used other tactics to deflect media criticism of its actions. Among these, it barred the head of the GPA from entering State House or the Office of the President allegedly because of his critical reporting, it pushed through flawed access to information legislation despite stakeholder objections, and it filed civil defamation suits. Notable suits include a USD 150,000 case brought by the then-Attorney General against *Kaieteur News* for publishing an alleged transcript of the AG threatening one of its reporters for his critical coverage of the AG's performance and a USD 99,000 case against the *Stabroek News* over another column about his performance. President Jagdeo also filed a libel suit in 2010 against the *Stabroek News* for similar complaints.[79] As characterized by one media owner, "there was a dictatorship here. People were afraid to say anything as they would be crushed. People are still timid and scared."

During the DRG assessment, *The Chronicle* settled a defamation lawsuit for a story it ran under the previous administration about a former speaker of the National Assembly for "what was indisputably a politically directed campaign of which he was the target."[80] *The Chronicle* promised more objective reporting in the future. The APNU + AFC coalition promised to guarantee the independence of the media and access to information, and increase the access to the state media in its manifesto, but the GPA criticized the Prime Minister for not living up to the party's promises after he called a *Chronicle* reporter to express his disappointment over a story the reporter had written that he felt was critical to the new administration. The GPA saw this as a "retrograde and intolerable step that betrays the governing coalition's campaign and post-election promises not to engage in the freedom violations previous administrations were accused of."[81]

Former President Jagdeo issued 12 broadcast licenses in 2011, breaking the state monopoly on TV. Based on reports, most of these licenses were accorded to cronies of the PPP/C leadership, and without due process. This action was challenged in court by several media actors and their cases are still pending.[82] These licenses were issued before a new Broadcast Act went into effect. That act established a **Guyana National Broadcasting Authority** (GNBA) that is responsible for regulating, supervising, and developing the National Broadcasting System, and licensing broadcast agencies.

The act remains to be implemented fully, but requires a balanced and pluralistic broadcast sector and sets programming standards and sanctions for breaking them. The GNBA was created with one board member nominated by the leader of the opposition and the remaining six members by the president. This led to accusations that the authority was stacked with PPP/C supporters in the pre-May 11, 2015 period. The Media Owners Association also filed an injunction to stop the implementation of a new fee structure subsequent to the act that it claims would raise their rates by 100 percent. This legislation is also reportedly in the process of being updated by the new administration. There is also a National Frequency Management Unit, established in 1990 as a public corporation that manages the electromagnetic frequency spectrum and issues TV, radio, cell services, marine, and aircraft radio licenses.

Guyana has several professional media associations. The **Guyana Press Association** is the second-oldest press association in the Caribbean, dating from 1945. It has about 100 members. State reporters were not allowed to join the GPA until the recent change of government as it was perceived as critical of the then-administration. There is also the **Guyana Media Proprietors Association** that was established with the help of FAC in 2011, with owners of 12 TV stations and two major newspapers as members. These groups are linked to the international press associations and are able to internationalize issues easily, especially through Reporters without Borders.

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79   Freedom House. (2015b). *Freedom of the media 2015*.

80   "Chronicle apologizes to Ramkarran." (2015). *The Chronicle*. 6 December 2015.

81   "Government meddling in state media, says Guyana Press Association." (2015). *Jamaica Observer*. 3 Sept 2015.

82   Evans. (n.d.) *Strengthening media governance in Guyana: Mission impossible?*

In the telecom sector, 21 percent of the country has fixed lines, six percent broadband and 73 percent mobile penetration. Guyana Telephone and Telegraph (GT&T) has a monopoly for fixed lines and is the only digital subscriber line (DSL) operator. Its main competition is the fixed-wireless broadband providers, such as Digicel. The state recently sold 20 percent of GT&T to a Chinese state-owned Company, Datang Telecom Technology and Industry Group.[83] As of 2013, 20 percent of households have access to a computer with 33 percent using the internet. Guyana started a One Laptop Per Family (OLPF) Program under the previous administration that distributed 10,000 laptops across Guyana, with the last distribution going to teachers in August 2015.

3.10 PRIVATE SECTOR

Guyana's history of political instability, authoritarian tendencies, and unaccountable government has meant that the private sector often operates at a disadvantage. Outside of government, the small businesses that make up Guyana's private sector are major employers, contributing an estimated USD 3.8 million per year in taxes.[84] This gives the private sector more access to the government than regular citizens to lobby for their interests.

The private sector is interested in a more robust and responsible private media, better physical security, and strong institutions that are transparent and accountable. Business owners, through their associations in chambers of commerce and private sector organizations, actively lobby government on these and other matters and make themselves available to serve on public sector boards and constitutional commissions. The private sector, like others in the society, is dependent on government favors and patronage and was regularly intimidated and directly punished when criticizing previous governments. By contrast, the current government is seen as more tolerant of criticism and has not resorted to intimidation or coercion to get the private sector to act in accordance with its wishes.

It was noted under the previous PPP/C government that some private entities were marginalized and victimized by the government, including the private media, for criticizing government policies or ministers. Yet other businesses that were deferential to the government benefited from government contracts, placement of government advertisements, awarding of radio and television broadcast licenses, waiving of taxes, and access to lands at costs below market value.

Chambers of commerce seemed to be active in most towns, although their members were only a fraction of the commercial operators in their areas because local businesses do not see the value of joining or paying membership fees. They were participating with the RDCs to prepare the regional development plans and had many issues related to governance. Some of these included the tax system and need for simplification, centralized government systems, lack of information and data at the local level, and concessions to foreigners but a lack of incentives for local persons to start a business. Chambers of commerce also complained about the need for political connections, especially for small businesses to get a loan at a bank. The chambers organized into a Regional Chamber of Commerce in the 1990s with donor support. This body still meets but only intermittently.

Miners make up a significant component of the private sector, and have their own association to deal with their specific needs. For example, the Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners Association (GGDMA), represents some 300 (of the more than 12,000) miners in Guyana. The association is membership based; miners can join if they are willing to pay the dues. It is estimated that 70–80 percent of the gold producers in Guyana are from small- and medium-scale miners.[85] Because of their position in the economy, where

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83   BuddeComm. (n.d.) *Guyana- Telecoms, mobile, broadband and digital media – Statistics and analyses.*

84   Interview with the Private Sector Commission of Guyana, Georgetown, December 14, 2015.

85   Interview with Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners Association, Georgetown December 4, 2015.

gold makes up 50 percent of Guyana's exports,[86] governments have tended to have an open door policy with the GGDMA, holding monthly or bi-monthly meetings and consulting with them on matters of concern to their members.

The mining industry is regulated by the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), which employs a small number of mining officers (300) to inspect and administer thousands of mining operations across difficult to reach hinterland terrain.[87] There are gaps in the existing laws and regulations, such as how to deal with prospective licenses, retention of licenses, and the need for a miner identification card. The GGMC Assistant Commissioner stated that new regulations had been drafted, but were still in the consultation phase. Corruption in the sector and mismanagement by GGMC has accompanied increasing problems in the sector. These include environmental degradation, inefficient and unsafe mining operations, and smuggling of gold out of the country. A major shakeup within the leadership of the commission took place during the DRG assessment.

The DRG assessment team noted concerns raised about aggressive mining expansion in Region 8 especially, and the unplanned and ad hoc infrastructure development to suit mining needs. In addition, land disputes between miners and indigenous communities were commonplace and sometimes violent. The pollution and contamination of waterways is commonplace as is the destruction of tracts of forests. In Bartica, the IMC worried about the levels of mercury in the rivers and drinking water that came from mining. There is no testing done that could reassure them, or enable them to take action against the polluters. The mining industry is so big and state presence so small in most of these areas, that the miners create a parallel state dominated by "male party-hard culture."[88] Reportedly, alcohol and drug abuse, prostitution, child labor, trafficking in persons, and gun trafficking accompany this culture.

The agriculture sector makes up another 40 percent of exports and 33 percent of employment in Guyana but is made up of a large number of small private producers. Two-thirds of the economic sector is composed of services, led by the transportation and construction sectors. International oil companies, specifically the Exxon Mobil Corporation, are actively exploring for oil off the coast of Guyana. The Exxon Mobil find is the first large oil discovery for the country and holds great potential for Guyana, but the terms and conditions for its exploitation are still being negotiated with the government with technical support from the U.S. Embassy, other countries, and international institutions. These discussions, along with those on the development of a sovereign wealth fund to manage the income, are important, as this will shape the future nature of this sector and its contribution to Guyanese development.

3.11 KEY POPULATION GROUPS

Indo- and Afro-Guyanese. The forced relocation of Africans to the New World under the system of slavery applied to Guyana as well, whether under the influence of the French, Dutch, or British. According to the 2002 census, Guyanese of African descent make up over 30 percent of the population. Having endured the cruelty of slavery, emancipation saw the freed slaves leaving the plantations and purchasing land that they occupied as villages across the coast of Guyana. They were replaced on the plantations eventually by indentured laborers from India. The Indians continued arriving in Guyana until the early 1900s. Currently, Indo-Guyanese make up approximately 40 percent of the population.

Some argue that the relationship between the two groups was amicable in the early years, due to the similarity of their suffering under the British and economic and other forms of constructive engagement. Others contend that the seeds of inter-group hostility were sown through the preferential treatment meted out by the British, who provided land to the laborers while allowing for the retention of language,

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[86] IDB, UKAID, Complete Caribbean, and Canada. (2014). *Private Sector Assessment of Guyana.* p. 5.

[87] Interview with Assistant Commissioner, Guyana Geology and Mines Commission, Georgetown December 3, 2015.

[88] Interview with Miner and GGMA Member, Mahdia, December 10, 2015.

religion, and culture with the right to be repatriated if so desired. In recent years, arguments have grown that the Indian caste system feeds racism with Afro-Guyanese.

In the 1950s, the institutionalization of the divide between Afro- and Indo-Guyanese occurred through the establishment of political parties that, however well-dressed, represented in practice the nakedness of racial solidarity. Thus, the PNC came to be the party of Afro-Guyanese and the PPP the party of Indo-Guyanese. Since political independence was achieved from Britain in 1966, the pendulum of political power has swung from one party to the other, typically through long periods of uninterrupted and controversial rule. The PNC held office from 1966 until 1992, in a period associated with the rigging of elections; the PPP held office from 1992 until 2015, in a period increasingly associated with lawlessness and corruption. Afro and Indo tensions arguably peak around election times.

Changes in the national makeup and culture are eroding ethnic insecurity within both the Afro- and Indo-Guyanese communities. A rapidly growing segment of the population is ethnically mixed, alongside a fast growing indigenous population. Urbanization and modernization are adding to the increased contact between the groups in more constructive ways, such as are manifested by religious tolerance, culinary exchanges, marriage, and economic cooperation. These changes are beginning to be reflected in the political system via the emergence of a multi-ethnic coalition government.

Indigenous Peoples. According to the 2002 census, the indigenous population is the fastest-growing population in Guyana at nine percent of the population. Ninety percent of the indigenous population lives in the hinterland, spread across more than 160 communities in Guyana.[89] Under colonial rule and early independence, the indigenous population was mostly neglected, which was reflected in their lower levels of health, school enrollment, employability, economic activity, and political involvement. This was compounded by high levels of insecurity regarding their land tenure rights. Over the last decade, the PPP/C government granted demarcated communal land title to indigenous villages. This move was seen as crucial in giving indigenous communities control over their development and decisions about who can and cannot access, traverse, live on, or develop their lands. It is estimated that approximately 14 percent of Guyana's land mass has been communally titled, including four million acres of forests.[90] There are still many indigenous settlements and hundreds of family homesteads without a land title.[91]

Despite the communal land titling process, indigenous land rights in Guyana remain contentious because sub-surface mineral rights were not included in the titles. In other words, indigenous villages must enter into a contractual relationship with miners to exploit the minerals under their lands. In addition, the government continues to allocate land to mining and logging firms and create nature reserves without adequate consultations of indigenous communities because of poor planning and governance issues.[92] This view was echoed to the DRG assessment team repeatedly in indigenous villages in Regions 8 and 9. They have no way of effectively disputing or appealing these government decisions, which has led to disputes between indigenous villages, and loggers and miners.[93] "Means of redress in the country are also ineffective as community challenges to third party occupation of their lands have resulted in local court rulings in favor of the rights of miners and forestry lease holders rather than the indigenous communities."[94] The cost of addressing natural resource conflicts is incredibly high for indigenous communities. The typical redress process is located in the capital city, far away from hinterland areas. The cost of travel and legal representation, added to the cost associated with engaging complex, uncertain,

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[89] Dooley and Griffiths. (2014). *Indigenous peoples' rights, forests and climate policies in Guyana: A special report*. p. 7.

[90] Cultural Survival. (2015). *Convention on economic, social and cultural rights shadow report submission: Indigenous rights violations in Guyana.* p. 4.

[91] Dooley and Griffiths, op. cit.

[92] Cultural Survival, op. cit.

[93] Dooley and Griffiths, op. cit.

[94] Dooley and Griffiths, op. cit., p. 8.

adversarial, and slow processes (which often include multiple players [miners, foresters, ministries, communities, NGOs, etc.]) are daunting obstacles. In the end, dispute resolution is low and conflicts perpetually simmer with occasional eruptions.

Indigenous villages are managed by separate governance and administration arrangements from other Guyanese communities. An internally elected *Toshao* (Chief) and village councilors administer indigenous villages. The village *Toshao* and councilors carry out all the functions of a local government body, except the collection of taxes, with the added function of the *Toshao* as the village sheriff on matters of law and order. Additionally, these village councils are expected to come up with programs that ensure their continued inclusion in Guyana's social and economic development. The **Ministry of Indigenous People's Affairs** (previously Ministry of Amerindian Affairs), is the oversight ministry for coordinating government policies with respect to indigenous peoples and representing indigenous community issues within government. Most indigenous communities directly interface with this ministry when they wish to petition or lobby the government.

Indigenous peoples have unequal access to quality social services such as healthcare and education, communication and transportation, employment opportunities and income-generating activities, and justice. The unequal access to health care—lack of access to health information, lack of access to health facilities for serious or urgent medical needs, lack of access to safe drinking water in communities closer to mining areas—has become a fundamental human rights issue for indigenous peoples in Guyana. This is not a function of formal disenfranchisement but a function of geography and poor infrastructure. It was noted that the Guyanese school curriculum does not include subjects important to indigenous communities such as "language, community history, sustainable environmental practices, medicinal knowledge, other life skills necessary for promoting self-determination and balanced indigenous community development."[95] At least two political parties over the years have dedicated their focus toward the indigenous—the United Force and the Guyana Action Party. Currently, the indigenous are represented at the national level, and given their swing-vote role, receive special attention from all national political parties. Inter-party rivalry often leads to fracturing within communities.

As part of the PPP/C government's commitment to provide electricity for all in Guyana, the government provided solar panels to 11,000 indigenous households in the hinterland in 2010–2011. This was both sustainable and economical as it provided a viable alternative to depending on the government for electricity since it was unlikely that the government could afford to get these communities on the national electricity grid considering the distance between communities. Most indigenous communities engage in subsistence agriculture and operate outside of the cash economy. Indigenous communities involved in mining (i.e., have allowed miners to mine their lands) have sometimes been able to move beyond subsistence living, but not in a sustainable way. As gold prices have decreased in recent years, these communities have found themselves having to look to central government once again for funds to keep their villages afloat.[96]

Periphery Populations. Guyanese in rural, remote hinterland areas, which makes up the bulk of the country's land mass but a minority of the population, face a number of difficulties accessing both government social services and interaction with the wider Guyanese society. People in the peripheral areas outside of Georgetown and the coastal towns have more localized interests: access to education, justice, and social services at the community level; local infrastructural development; and local employment opportunities. With the new government in place, people seem hopeful but frustrated, as they want to see more, and faster, action from the government to change their local situation.

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[95]   Cultural Survival, op. cit., p. 3. These points were also raised in the interview with the Makushi Research Unit Annai, December 7, 2015.

[96]   Interview with Toshaos, Mahdia, December 10 and 11, 2015.

Employment was a key issue for many in the periphery. About 95 percent of the bauxite mining and sugar plantations have stopped due to low international prices, leaving large numbers of unemployed workers.[97] The Chamber of Commerce in New Amsterdam said this had left its area a ghost town. Children get their education in these locations, but then move away to find jobs. Many go to gold mining areas in search of more lucrative opportunities. The small populations remaining in these peripheral areas means that employers and local government have limited access to skilled persons with specialized expertise, such as financial management and project management.

Diaspora Population. The Guyanese Diaspora is estimated to be larger than the population remaining in Guyana, consistent with Guyana having the highest rate of migration in the world. A large number of Guyanese also go to universities abroad. Guyana received USD 438 million in remittances in 2014. This makes up more than 15 percent of its GDP.[98] The United States is Guyana's largest trading partner and has an estimated half-million Guyanese living there.[99] About 200,000 Guyanese are estimated to be in Canada[100] with other sizeable populations in the UK and throughout the Caribbean. Outward migration began before Independence, accelerated during the 1970s and 1980s, and has now settled at a rate of approximately 1,000 persons/month, leading to a decrease in the population between the last two censuses.[101] The Diaspora population are interested in having a stable democratic government with a growing economy in which their families can feel secure, find employment, and prosper. They want a country in which they can return to invest, start businesses, or retire. The issue they face is trying to tackle the sense of hopelessness and insecurity that Guyanese, especially the youth, feel.

The Guyanese Diaspora have in many instances continued to support political parties, both financially and with intellectual capital, providing advice and expertise. While the Diaspora does not have an "overseas vote," they have been known to return to Guyana during election time to vote in their districts. The Diaspora organizes their support for Guyana through political party groups, NGOs, or as individuals. There are few formal mechanisms for government to engage the Diaspora, save through events organized by Guyana's embassies abroad. One exception is the Guyana Diaspora project, started under the previous administration and implemented through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).[102] It seeks to engage Guyanese Diaspora members by documenting skills, resources, and the return interest and plans of those willing to support the country's development. The overall objective of the project is to contribute to economic development through the support and engagement of the Guyanese Diaspora. The current administration has taken trips abroad in 2015 to meet with Diaspora groups for the same reasons.

3.12 INTERNATIONAL AND GLOBAL ACTORS

International actors have played a prominent role in Guyana since its inception. Among the older generations, and in parties such as the PPP/C, there are still lingering memories of Cold War politics and the roles different international powers played throughout Guyana's history. The PPP/C itself adopted Marxist-Leninism and advocated for closer ties to Cuba in the 1960s. The PNC-UF was perceived as more pro-Western and looked toward the United States and United Kingdom. Guyana joined the Non-Aligned Nations Movement in the 1970s and actively advocated for African liberation movements.[103] It

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[97]   Interviews with the Chambers of Commerce in Linden and New Amsterdam, December 7 and 8, 2015.

[98]   Maldonado and Hayem, op. cit., p 3 and 30.

[99]   International Organization for Migration. (2012). *IOM and Guyana launch diaspora engagement project.*

[100] High Commission of Canada to Guyana and Surinam. (2015). *Canada-Guyana relations.*

[101] Guyana Bureau of Statistics, 2012 Population and Housing Census. Retrieved from http://www.statisticsguyana.gov.gy/census.html

[102] Government of Guyana, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *Guyana diaspora project.*

[103] Smith, Raymond, *Guyanese Politics. Retrieved at http://home.uchicago.edu/~rts1/guyanese.htm.*

was one of the founding members of the Caribbean Community (**CARICOM**) and the location of the CARICOM headquarters is in Georgetown.

Within the continent, Guyana sought closer ties with Brazil and other South American countries, in part as a counterweight to Venezuela's territorial claims in western Essequibo and maritime areas. Suriname also claims the Corentyne River that forms the border between the two countries and the New River triangle in southeast Guyana. Together this accounts for more than 50 percent of Guyana's current territory and includes areas with significant natural resources.[104] Venezuela renewed its territorial claims after the recent announcement of the large offshore oil finds in the areas it claims. Guyana has taken the issue to the United Nations. The Secretary General met with both presidents in September 2015 and fielded a technical team to investigate and report back to him. Most observers felt the border disputes would not escalate into armed hostilities.

The **ABCE group** (America, Great Britain, Canada, and European Union) plays an influential role despite the previous government's reluctance for certain kinds of assistance. With the high levels of mistrust between national actors and parties, international actors are welcomed in some spheres as objective observers who can validate the integrity of a process. A key example of this is the international technical assessor, funded by donors, who is attached to GECOM during the electoral process.

Relations have warmed considerably with the election of the coalition government that ran on a reform platform and has directly sought international assistance for their implementation. The ABCE group meets regularly, and with other international actors from Mexico, Chile, and Brazil; UNDP; and IDB. There is international donor support from the Canadians and others to help the government's efforts relating to the offshore oil find (negotiation, contracting, and setting up a fund and systems for transparent and accountable accounting and financial management). The government has also announced its intentions to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). Concurrently, most development agencies have regionalized their assistance, placing Guyana within the context of regional, rather than bilateral, programming, with their offices now located in Barbados. The exception is the IDB, which provides the largest development support to the country and still maintains an office in country.

China is an active player in Guyana, providing assistance, building public infrastructure, and reportedly receiving large concessions of interior land for logging and mining. It also plays a significant role in loan-financed construction projects such as building the Skeldon sugar factory with an IDB and China Development Bank loan (USD 181 million in 2009) for the government-owned Guyana Sugar Corporation; expanding the international airport financed by China ExIm Bank (USD 138 million, 2012); and constructing the Marriott Hotel in Georgetown using GoG funding through its privatization fund and the Republic Bank (USD 53 million in 2009).[105]

International mining companies are also influential, as these significantly increase gold production and state revenues while employing hundreds of Guyanese. The Australian Troy Resources mining company will invest about USD 100 million into its Karouni gold mine, located in the disputed Essequibo region.[106] The Aurora mine is Guyana's largest with an initial development cost of USD 249 million, managed by a number of international joint ventures. With the exception of the accidental discharge of mining effluent in 1995, which seriously damaged Guyana's largest river, the international mining companies subscribe to higher standards of environmental protection than local miners do.

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[104] Donovan. (2014). *Challenges to the territorial integrity of Guyana: A legal analysis.* p 663.

[105] Ellis. (2014). *China on the ground in Latin America: Challenges for the Chinese and impacts for the region.*

[106] Jamasmie. (2015). *Aussie miner to open Guyana's second largest mine.*

4.0 OPERATIONAL AND PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENT

4.1 BROADER FOREIGN POLICY AND USAID DEVELOPMENT INTERESTS

The United States refocused its mission priorities in late 2015 in light of the changed circumstances in Guyana. These included the change in government that brought in a reform minded, multi-ethnic coalition into power; the discovery of significant oil discoveries off Guyana's coast; and Venezuela's ending of its PetroCaribe rice-for-oil arrangement with Guyana, which threatens the Guyanese economy but opens opportunities for Guyana to adopt clean, renewable energy. Likely influenced by Guyana's significant oil discovery, Venezuela also renewed its territorial claim on Guyana's Essequibo region.

The U.S. foreign policy goals, as stated in the December 2015 Integrated Country Strategy, are to foster development and assist the GoG to improve governance, both with an eye to expected oil exploration revenues. Within this context, it adopted three Mission goals:

1. Improve Guyana's willingness and capacity to govern effectively while respecting the rule of law to achieve a secure and democratic future for the Guyanese people.

2. Achieve a clean and secure energy future for Guyana and mitigate the effects of climate change.

3. Expand economic opportunities and prosperity while developing the necessary infrastructure for improved social services and transportation.

The objectives within Mission Goal 1 are to strengthen democratic institutions and principles to promote good governance and strengthen civil society by building capacity, and improve citizen security by remediating the root causes of violence and crime. Relevant sub-objectives include: build, enforce, and sustain the rule of law to ensure more government accountability to the citizenry; build capacity and deepen relationships with local organizations to create a robust civil society; support women, indigenous people, LGBTI persons, and other vulnerable groups to increase inclusion; and address the root social causes of violence and crime.

USAID's efforts in Guyana are managed by the Eastern and Southern Caribbean regional office in Barbados since the bilateral mission in Guyana transitioned in 2012. The regional office focuses on three main Development Objectives (DOs), specifically:

* DO1: youth involvement in crime and violence in targeted communities reduced;

* DO2: epidemic control of HIV/AIDs among key populations increased; and

* DO3: negative impacts of climate change on vulnerable population and natural assets reduced.

The Guyana office is staffed with three Guyanese Foreign Service Nationals stationed in Georgetown who manage technical and administrative responsibilities for USAID programs in Guyana and Suriname.

An American personal services contractor was to join in January 2016 to oversee USAID operations managed in country.

In its discussions with the DRG assessment team, the U.S. Embassy in Guyana recommended that USAID consider the return of its bilateral mission to Guyana because of the scope of the changes that open significant opportunities for substantial reforms and challenges that face Guyana as it moves forward in this new era. It also sees that the development challenges facing Guyana are significantly different from those facing the Eastern Caribbean states and could be better addressed bilaterally.

4.2   USAID'S CURRENT DRG PROGRAM

There is no current USAID DRG assistance in Guyana. In 2013, USAID funded the Leadership and Democracy (LEAD) project, implemented by the International Republican Institute (IRI). The USD 1.25 million program, which started in April 2013 and concluded May 2015, was originally designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Build political party capacity,

2. Strengthen the National Assembly, and

3. Increase youth and women's engagement in political and civic processes.

The PPP/C government saw it as an intrusion into its national sovereignty and repeatedly expressed concern about activities involving political parties. In March 2014, program implementation was put on hold for extended discussions between the Embassy and the government on program content. Agreement was formally reached in July 2014 and implementation restarted. Political party programming was discontinued and there were adjustments made to activities involving the National Assembly, in particular to discontinue a planned internship program and the creation of a cross-party women's caucus. The other program elements were retained. Some major activities and achievements of the LEAD project included:

- Support for women's and youth organizations to conduct voter education activities for national elections;

- Training to educate citizens on democratic principles, electoral systems, public advocacy, and ways to increase involvement in political processes;

- Town hall meetings to educate citizens on local government, its responsibilities, and the electoral process; and

- Support for a nationwide television program that examined legislation before the National Assembly and focused on issues of concern to women, youth, organized labor, and the private sector.

With the anticipation of local elections in 2016, USAID/ESC is supporting a one-year project funded by the global Elections and Political Processes (EPP) fund. This USD 700,000 project will support voter education for the local elections in March 2016, focusing on the involvement of youth and women; and lead a social cohesion process that involves political parties, elected leaders and constituents, with emphasis on youth and women. This project began in January 2016.

4.3   OTHER USAID AND U.S. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, USAID funds the Skills and Knowledge for Youth Employment (SKYE) project in Guyana. This USD 7.7 million, five-year project reduces youth involvement in crime and violence by expanding employment, education, and skill-building opportunities

for at-risk youth and addressing juvenile justice issues. It works to expand the use of alternative sentencing; supports reintegration and rehabilitation of youth offenders; and provides life and work skills training, counseling, and mentoring for more than 2,000 youth ages 15–24. The Educational Development Center (EDC) is implementing this project, which ends in September 2016. A follow-on activity is expected as the SKYE project is widely perceived as extremely effective. The Ministry of Communities recently gave EDC funding to support business ownership for 60 youth through the SKYE project.

The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) and other parts of the State Department also implement CBSI-funded activities in Guyana, including training for law enforcement professionals, counter-narcotics with the Department of Justice (DOJ) and DEA, and rule of law and human rights activities aimed at improving criminal investigations, case preparation and trial advocacy.

Under a police partnership program, INL will fund a police adviser to guide the establishment of basic and advanced interviewing and investigative techniques when dealing with children impacted by trauma and abuse. Working in collaboration with the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) and staff of the center, the police will be mentored and trained. Support will also be provided for criminal investigations. The primary purpose is to build the long-term institutional capacity of the CAC to perform their duties while meeting international policing standards and human rights norms. With the DEA, INL will fund a DEA Vetted Unit program. This will focus on counter-narcotics and training for local partners on intelligence gathering and other operational aspects, geared toward improving professionalism and increasing trust and confidence among cooperating partners. The DEA opened an office in Guyana in January 2016.

4.4   USAID RESOURCES AND INTENTIONS

USAID currently has no resources for DRG assistance in Guyana outside of the one-year, EPP-funded project that will focus on local elections and social cohesion activities and the funding within its CBSI regional project for justice and security support. The U.S. Mission in Guyana and the USAID Eastern and Southern Caribbean regional office see tremendous potential in the openings created by the new government and its reform agenda, along with the urgent need for more accountable governance, given the substantial increase in state revenue as a result of the country's significant oil discovery. The Mission has dramatically reshaped its priorities in light of these changes. It intends to lobby for DRG resources to take advantage of the window of opportunity for meaningful reform and help Guyana to create a safer, more prosperous country and deepen the U.S bilateral relationship with Guyana, both diplomatically and commercially.

4.5   DONOR COORDINATION

There is a high-level Donor Coordination Group that shares information on the various assistance efforts, however no notes or matrix of donor activities appeared to be kept. The donors meet more frequently during events such as elections. The ABCE heads of missions meet regularly to discuss issues and coordinate policy efforts. Many of the assistance agencies adopt a regional approach toward Guyana and manage their programs out of offices in Barbados. This includes FAC, the EU, DFID, and USAID.

The main assistance agencies in Guyana are the ABCE group, IDB, and UNDP. Current **British** assistance in Guyana is focused on improving infrastructure (roads, electricity, flood control). DFID was previously supporting a Security Sector Reform program; this was halted after agreement could not be reached with the previous government on the content and approach for the program. The new government has asked DIFD to resume SSR support. DFID undertook a SSR needs assessment and mapping of donor efforts in the sector the first quarter of 2016. It anticipates starting a one- to three-year program, focusing on quick wins, such as trainer-of-trainers (TOT) for police training. It would also look at the issues of security sector salaries and civil service reform as part of this effort. DFID has also done some work with the National Assembly. It conducted an assessment in 2012 and recently sent MPs to the UK to see how a

coalition works. DFID experts visited Guyana in February 2016 to work on the functioning of parliamentary standing committees.

Canada and Britain are discussing help to the GoG to set up a Sovereign Wealth fund to manage the proceeds from an offshore oil discovery, which reportedly can yield as much as 700 million barrels of oil. The U.S. Embassy, Canadians, and others have offered assistance for the government's negotiations with the oil companies and support for Guyana's intentions to join EITI. Canada has provided support, capacity building, and training in the media sector, including training of the GECOM Media Monitoring Unit, with the British Broadcast Commission (BBC); and, provided some support to strengthen the justice system and training for the police on narcotics investigation and interdiction. Canada has also provided support in collaboration with UNDP to live-stream proceedings of parliament.

The **EU** has a €34 million project (2014–2020) for sea wall and river defenses to prevent flooding. It has a €600,000 fund for democracy and human rights that it uses to issue grants to human rights-oriented CSOs for issues such as GBV and child abuse. Among other donors, it has funded SASOD and NGOs working with indigenous people. It funded two technical assistant grants for GECOM for the 2015 elections, including the international assessor and the MMU. GECOM wants the MMU to become permanent and hopes the EU might consider this, as financial support will be necessary. The EU also intends to bring in experts from the EU Parliament for short visits as requested by the Prime Minister. The EU may also engage the capacity-building unit in the EU Parliament and the EU's Horizon 2020 program to train parliamentary researchers.

The **IDB** has USD 200 million in grants and loans available for Guyana (including USD 40 million of EU funds). Among other efforts, it will support the Ministry of Public Security in modernization of the police, fire, and prison services; community security and policing; and the reintegration of inmates after incarceration. IDB had a multi-year justice sector reform project that finished in 2015. The government asked it to do more in the sector and the IDB will field a consultant to scope out what was requested. If it provides assistance, the IDB would link this effort to the security aspects of justice. It also has USD 740,000 available to strengthen financial management and procurement and it will help the Bureau of Statistics get accurate data for national planning on issues such as unemployment.

UNDP has a country program in Guyana and several democratic governance activities. One is a follow-on to its successful social cohesion project that contributed to peaceful elections in 2006, and aimed at achieving the same result for the 2015 elections. This project ended in March 2016. UNDP also supported the national dialogue on indigenous engagement in the climate change discussions and the development of indigenous community development plans.

China is reportedly providing substantial amounts of assistance to Guyana, much of it tied to the use of Chinese firms and construction. Newspapers also report that China provided USD 4.8 million in military assistance for the Guyana Defense Fund (2014).[107]

4.6   PRACTICAL CONSTRAINTS ON THE RECIPIENT SIDE

As Guyana's economy is reliant on international commodity prices, there is strong likelihood that the country's financial situation will increasingly distract the government from undertaking DRG interventions. This is in part because the government is well aware of the slender margin through which it came to power, and is therefore increasingly anxious to please voters in the lead-up to the 2020 elections.

While the coalition government has an ambitious agenda for reforms, it has a limited pool of persons available to plan and implement reforms. The continued emigration of Guyana's professionals abroad has decapitated the public and private sectors. The IDB Country Representative noted the limited absorptive

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[107]   GINA, GDF gets 5M RMB in military aid from China- will enable it to better defend country's borders.

capacity of the private sector to implement IDB-funded infrastructure projects. Similarly, there are capacity issues within the public sector to effectively manage projects and project finances.

In addition to practical political and skills constraints, Guyana's geography and underdeveloped road and communications infrastructure is another constraint. Outside of the coastal areas, roads are poor and some locations are only accessible by river or by air. This adds time and costs onto any project implemented outside of the capital.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE USAID DRG STRATEGY AND PROGRAM

5.1 STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

There is a window of opportunity open now to support the reform process and build momentum for the process currently underway that can strengthen Guyana's governance, balance the power of the executive, start the devolution of power to local government, and ensure a more accountable and responsive government. These democratic reforms, if adopted and implemented, can address the over-centralization of power, politicized and nonperforming institutions that were found during the assessment, and increase governance effectiveness and responsiveness.

The election of a multi-ethnic, multi-party coalition brought a fresh opportunity to Guyana to make these substantive democratic reforms that could transform its political system and make it more effective, accountable, and inclusive. However, this outcome is far from certain. There are indications of significant change, but there are also reasons for concern. Indicators that the government is serious about change include:

- The APNU + AFC 100-day manifesto that calls for widespread democratic reforms, including constitutional reforms;

- APNU + AFC national consultations from August to November 2015 on social cohesion, gender, sugar and rice issues;

- Scheduling of the long-delayed local elections for March 2016—half of those seats constituency based, and creation of the Local Government Commission;

- Creation of a committee that reviewed the constitutional reform process and made recommendations on the way forward to the government; and

- Passage of the anti-money laundering bill and other legislation needed to address narco-trafficking that had been blocked in previous parliaments.

In addition, the government directly requested international assistance to support its reform process. In a July 2015 letter, the Prime Minister requested USAID to resume its democracy and governance programming. He praises the inroads made by USAID's LEAD project despite the difficult circumstances it stated were created by the previous government, and notes that "this is a critical time in our nation's history and I hope that you will be able to assist us." The Prime Minister also provided his government's commitment to strengthening Guyana's democratic institutions and values, and asked for assistance in building the capacity of ministers, elected representatives, and political parties; drafting constitutional reform; helping local government elections and electoral/GECOM reforms; establishing an independent

National Assembly; restructuring/streamlining the Government Information Service; and strengthening the National Assembly and legislative drafting.

The government also formally requested assistance from the UK for security sector reforms and the IDB for justice sector support. The Attorney General asked the DRG assessment team for support to undertake a complete assessment of the justice sector and its systems including the courts, public prosecutor, judiciary, and prisons, saying "we're trying to restore the rule of law in Guyana." This is in stark contrast to the previous government that closed down USAID's assistance to the National Assembly, Canadian support to the independent media,[108] and the British SSR program.

The window open today could also close without making significant change. Twenty-three years ago, there was another window for reform with the change of power from the PNC to the PPP/C. This window was lost as the reforms faltered and that government assumed the attributes of the past and became a hardened "elected oligarchy."[109] There are worrying signs now as well, perhaps not due to a lack of willingness, but to inexperience in governing. These include:

- MPs giving themselves a 50 percent pay raise while giving the public service five percent, which created anger among their supporters and a feeling of "business as usual;"

- Slow pace of action for some important functions such as getting the human rights and other constitutional commissions up and running;

- Fast tracking of legislation that bypasses parliamentary standing orders and gives the opposition the opportunity to charge foul and boycott the sessions;

- Tensions within the coalition that are becoming more evident with the more moderate AFC members feeling sidelined by the former PNC members; and

- Continuing opposition from the PPP/C, which refused the offer to form a government of national unity, which controls seven of the 10 RDCs and has already started an aggressive local elections campaign at the grassroots level to gain control of local government.

The political missions of the ABCE countries moved swiftly to support the APNU + AFC reform agenda diplomatically and through their discreet mission funds. Supporting these reforms is made all the more urgent by the size of the offshore oil reserve discovery and the need to put systems in place now that can manage that wealth for the good of the country. Otherwise, it will perpetuate Guyana's problems and harden its oligarchic nature. Development assistance is urgently needed to provide the expertise and comparative experience that can help Guyana with its transition and build forward momentum to improve its systems and balance of power.

The DRG assessment team estimates that this window of opportunity will close within the next 18 to 24 months. After that, the focus will be on the 2019 local elections and 2020 national elections. Some argue that it will close within the next year if not supported, citing rising citizen anger and impatience against the slowness of the reform and the signs of "business as usual."

The DRG assessment recommends that USAID focus on constitutional reform, strengthening Guyana's checks and balances, and on devolution and local governance. In the immediate term, this should be done by focusing on the reform processes, oversight mechanisms, information flow, and newly elected local authorities. In the medium to long term, it should be done by reinstating a DRG program in Guyana that can make a substantive contribution to strengthening Guyana's democratic institutions and systems. The

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[108] Evans, op. cit.

[109] Hinova and Khemraz. (2011). *Elected oligarchy and economic underdevelopment: The case of Guyana.*

assessment does not recommend political party assistance in the near term, as the parties are internally regrouping and intending to work out their own issues and are not open to outside assistance at this time.

5.2 DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GOVERNANCE OBJECTIVE

The DRG objective recommended is more accountable, responsive, and balanced governance in Guyana. This has three sub-objectives: support constitutional reform, strengthen checks and balances, and strengthen local governance. The major assumptions underlying the ability to achieve these objectives are:

1. Local elections will be held in 2016 and 2019, with general elections in 2020. Assistance provided now will educate the public on how to improve the election process and determine whether Guyana continues to move forward with democratic reforms or backslides.

2. The APNU + AFC coalition remains intact through to the 2020 general elections because of self-interest.

3. The governing coalition maintains enough citizen and political support to achieve constitutional and other reforms.

4. Civil society will be an active partner in the reform process.

5. Guyana will join EITI and put the systems in place required to be a member of that organization.

6. Guyana will be seen as a strategic country in the region, not only because of its oil reserves, but given its position as a gateway to and from South America, which makes it a key partner in the fight against traffickers. Guyana is also important for its biodiversity and forests, which will be perceived as important global assets that must be protected.

7. Other donors will provide some DRG assistance to Guyana to support the reform process—especially if the United States provides the lead, as the United States is still considered among the most-influential donors in Guyana.

8. USAID is able to gain additional resources to support the DRG sector in Guyana and the APNU + AFC reform agenda.

5.3 DEVELOPMENT HYPOTHESIS

Democratic reforms through constitutional reform, strengthened checks and balances, and strengthened devolution and local governance within the window of opportunity that is now open will address structural issues of the over-centralization of power and politicized and underperforming institutions. This will reduce the power of the executive, strengthen critical oversight mechanisms, increase the ability of state institutions and local government to function without political interference, and bring government closer to the people. This in turn will increase government effectiveness and responsiveness.

5.4 PRIORITY SUBSECTORS

To increase accountability, improve government responsiveness, and create more balanced governance, the assessment recommends assistance to the priority subsectors listed below. In general, it is recommended that the Mission focus on constitutional reform process and ensuring previous reforms are implemented to address the structural problems within Guyana's governance, most notably to balance the power of the executive, address the winner-take-all nature of the political and electoral system, and devolve power to local government. Balancing the power between the respective branches, strengthening

the checks on government, starting the devolution process, and bringing power back closer to the people will make government more effective and responsive to the needs of all Guyanese. Strengthening checks and balances will increase the accountability of government and the even application of its rules and systems. This is needed to balance the dominance of the executive; address issues of cronyism, impunity, and corruption; and ensure the rule of law is applicable to all in Guyana local governance. Strengthening local governance so that local governments are better able to serve the needs of their constituents will be another important outcome of this priority in a context where officials have not been elected in decades and the systems and decision-making are overly centralized and dependent on national government.

These are key areas that if strengthened, can provide Guyana with a more accountable, responsive, inclusive, and effective governance.

5.4.1   Near-Term Critical Processes and Actors to Support

- Constitutional reform, reformists, and the national consultation process, which is expected to start in earnest in mid-2016;

- Citizen participation in the 2016 local elections and their understanding of their roles and responsibilities as citizens and those of their newly elected officials which USAID has already started with its EPP project for 2016;

- Newly elected local officials and the Local Government Commission;

- Key constitutional commissions, such as the Human Rights Commission and the Integrity Commission, which are critical commissions but only currently functioning at limited capacity;

- Guyana's efforts to join EITI and meet the required transparency and accountability standards; and

- Access to information related to the above priority areas and actors.

5.4.2   Medium- to Long-Term Important Processes and Actors to Support

- Independent media,

- National Assembly,

- Devolution of power to regional and local governments and related institutions,

- Implementation of constitutional reforms,

- Transparency and accountability in the natural resources management sector,

- 2019 local government elections,

- Youth and women's engagement in the reform and democratic processes, and

- 2020 national and regional elections.

5.5   ILLUSTRATIVE ACTIVITIES

USAID's resources are likely to be limited in the near term. The illustrative activities recommended are for a range of areas, but are targeted at particular aspects of those areas, particularly for the near term where the assessment team believes USAID has a comparative advantage and could ramp up or scale down its activities depending on its level of resources.

5.5.1   Support Constitutional Reforms

To support constitutional reform, the assessment team recommends activities in the priority areas below:

1. **Support the constitutional reform process** to ensure it is an informed, inclusive, participatory, and transparent process to foster a more democratic political culture and ensure its legitimacy. Providing information and building consensus for reforms can help bridge ethnic differences as they look together to the future to build a more accountable, transparent, participatory and predictable state. As part of this process, targeted support should be provided to ensure implementation of previous constitutional reforms, such to complete the establishment of constitutional commissions. To support this, the assessment recommends the following priorities.

NEAR TERM

- Offer punctual technical assistance (TA) and comparative reviews of constitutions and legal documents with parliament, the constitutional commission, and CSOs as warranted by the process and demand. This could include an assessment of the existing constitutional commission structures and mandates with an eye to streamlining their structures.

- Provide targeted support for national consultations and increase the space for dialogue on the constitutional reform process through CSO and other efforts to help ensure national inclusion and build public confidence and ownership in the reform process and its outcome through the constitutional reform commission (or expert panel), parliament, media, and CSOs.

- Support CSO advocacy efforts for parliament to complete the nomination process for commissioners for the constitutional commissions, including the Integrity Commission.

- Support the constitutional referendum process, if held, through support for voter information via civil society, GECOM, and the media; and through CSO monitoring of the process in coordination with other donors.

MID TO LONG TERM

- Strengthen CSO networking, advocacy and monitoring for the implementation of reforms, including media coverage.

- Support strengthening the Human Rights and Integrity Commissions through TA and training for new commissioners and staff as warranted to ensure they can function effectively and efficiently to fulfill their constitutional mandates.

5.5.2   Strengthen Checks and Balances

To strengthen checks and balances, the assessment team recommends activities in the priority areas listed below:

1. **Strengthen key institutions**, including local government, constitutional commissions, parliament, and the media through targeted support, and in coordination with other donor efforts, so they are better able to fill their constitutional roles and oversight functions. To support this, the assessment recommends the following priorities:

   NEAR TERM

   - Conduct assessments of key institutions with strategic recommendations that can feed into the constitutional reform process as well as to strengthen the sectors of:

     – Rule of law in support of the AG's efforts to reform and strengthen rule of law and the justice sector, increase efficiency and efficacy, and end impunity;

- Electoral system with GECOM to see where cost-effective, practical reforms could be made to strengthen electoral administration and results transmission and to make recommendations for a less winner-takes-all type of electoral system; and

- Economic governance to look at the governance aspects of economic activity. Although outside the main DRG purview, the need for improved economic governance is evident, and becomes especially critical as Guyana looks toward a dramatic increase in revenue and economic activity generated from the oil sector.

These assessments should be done with other donors also interested in these sectors, such as the UK, Canada, IDB, EU, and/or UNDP. Each relevant institution could contribute an expert for the different assessments.

- Possibly create a small flexible fund to take advantage of windows of opportunity as they arise to support high-impact, low-cost changes within key institutions that will strengthen their accountability mechanisms and/or oversight roles. This could be discussed with other donors and done as a multi-donor initiative.

MID TO LONG TERM

- Strengthen parliamentary oversight and legislative capacities through targeted TA and training opportunities and by exploring other opportunities to provide research type help to the institution through an internship program. This could address the lack of human resources within parliament and build a new generation that is interested in public policy work.

- Support a constituency outreach program by parliament to link the MPs with their constituents, particularly by the regional MPs (depending on funding levels).

- Support an orientation program for newly elected parliamentarians in 2020 if not already supported by another donor.

- Crosscut this sub-objective—indeed, all of the sub-objectives—to strengthen access to information and evidence-based decision-making. Increasing access to accurate information should be integrated where possible, as this can improve strategic planning and policymaking and counter disinformation by those interested in maintaining the status quo or in perpetuating divisive politics. This also provides needed information to citizens so they can understand the hows and whys of participation. If empowered through accurate information, citizens can demand better governance and hold their government officials accountable for their actions.

5.5.3 Strengthen Local Governance

This recommendation is to strengthen local governance so that local governments are better able to respond to and serve the needs of their constituents. This is needed in a context where officials have not been elected in decades and the systems and decision-making are overly centralized and dependent on national government. To strengthen local governance, the assessment recommends the following two priority areas:

1. **Support the devolution process and institutional capacity building** to ensure local government has the authority and resources needed to provide effective and accountable governance and be able to make its own decisions on local issues. This is needed to counter the top-down, overly centralized nature of the government so that local government can be more responsive to the needs of its constituents. To achieve this, the assessment recommends the following priorities:

NEAR TERM

- Support the development of the Local Government Commission and its efforts through targeted TA to provide oversight to the elected local government organizations, including dealing with issues of staffing and dispute resolution between local authorities.

- Build capacity for 2016-elected local officials through curricula development and TOT for a basic orientation course and on the functioning of local government, and on roles and responsibilities. This curricula support should be provided to the government agency that will be responsible to provide training for the local government officials and staff to increase sustainability of efforts.

- Assess institutional arrangements and allocation of power among central, regional, and local governments to make recommendations for devolution and streamlining those systems. If done in time, this should feed into the constitutional reform process and could be a multi-donor effort.

MID TO LONG TERM

- Update curricula and support in-service training for basic orientation and training courses for newly elected local officials and their staff after the 2019 elections.

- Support CSO advocacy and governmental actions to update the land valuations and tax rolls at the local levels and assess possibilities for other areas of tax revenue generation for local government. Increasing local government revenue is essential for them to be able to function effectively and provide essential services for their communities.

2. **Strengthen citizen engagement in local governance.** This interaction helps to inform the government on citizen concerns, which contributes to better policy decisions and provides a forum for citizens to engage with their officials, voice their concerns, and understand the government's constraints and needs to balance competing priorities. To achieve this, the assessment recommends the following priorities:

NEAR TERM

- Support dissemination of information on the 2016 local government elections and the roles and responsibilities of citizens and their local government officials through government information processes, media, and CSOs. This is expected to be covered under USAID's 2016 EPP-funded project.

MID TERM

- Support constituency engagement with locally elected officials in targeted areas on key elements (e.g., effective and efficient local services delivery, project management, transparent and accountable financial management, and tax collection processes and management). Support citizen engagement with regional parliamentarians on local issues and needs. This should be done as part of the efforts listed under parliamentary outreach in Section 5.5.2.

- Support dissemination of information on local government elections of 2019.

5.6   GENDER CONSIDERATIONS

The legal framework of Guyana does not differentiate between women and men, and accords all equal rights. The exception is for the LGBTI groups where gay sex is illegal and openly LGBTI persons face social discrimination and prejudice. As is the case in the region, men, especially young males, are falling behind women in the attainment of education and in providing leadership for personal, familial, and communal development. Men are increasingly involved in risky behaviors, such as crime, drug abuse, and

violence, and live significantly shorter lives than women (64 vs. 69 years).[110] Women face serious levels of GBV, particularly domestic abuse.

Both women and men are affected by the main DRG problems identified in this assessment. The 2003 USAID Gender Assessment found gender issues "subsumed within the broader context of social, economic and political dysfunction and problems" with their roles, access to resources, and power limited by political instability, governance issues, crime and violence, and divisiveness.[111] This situation was little changed in 2015. As then, these conditions affect women and LGBTI groups more severely because societal norms are more likely to place them in lower-paying jobs than higher-paying ones, and not in decision-making positions. For instance, although there are many women in government—some in very high positions of power, such as former President Janet Jagan, and the two Chief Whips in the current National Assembly, Gail Teixeira and Amna Ally—most women in government tend to be in supportive positions or work in low-paying private sector jobs such as private security guards or vendors. There are currently no openly LGBTI persons in parliament.

Addressing the DRG problems identified in this assessment will help women and LGBTI persons as well as Guyanese men. However, to address the specific needs facing women and LGBTI groups, the assessment recommends:

NEAR TERM

- Adopt gender-sensitive programming that identifies and addresses the needs of women, LGBTI groups, and young men.

- Consult with women, youth, and LGBTI groups on DRG-related program designs to ensure program inclusivity, vet any training manuals developed by USAID, and ensure they incorporate needed equity awareness components. Also, use these groups to generate similar components for any public service efforts related to the reform process, referendum, or elections.

- Identify key women in leadership positions, both elected and in staff positions at the local, regional and national levels, to ensure their inclusion in programmatic and training activities. Support the development of a network of these women to provide peer support and discuss common issues.

- Encourage networking between women (as well as men) champions of reform in government and with civil society advocacy groups that lobby for equity reforms in the reform process.

MID TO LONG TERM

- Undertake an updated gender assessment and incorporate the findings in the DRG program.

- Support the establishment of a multiparty women's caucus in the National Assembly that meets regularly and develops a common platform on issues critical to equitable rights and participation.

- Continue support for the women's networks recommended above and include training as needed. Continue to work with women's, youth, and LGBTI groups to develop voter education messages on equity-related issues for the 2019 local and 2020 general elections.

5.7 SEQUENCING

The assessment recommendations are divided into near-term and medium- to long-term recommendations. Near-term recommendations are those needed within the next one to three years.

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[110] United Nations Development Program. (2015). *Human Development Report 2015.*

[111] USAID/Guyana. (2003). *Gender Assessment for USAID/Guyana.* Retrieved from http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACG104.pdf, p ii.

Medium- to long-term recommendations are those needed in the lead up to the 2019 local elections and the 2020 national election through to the inauguration and training for those newly elected officials.

It is extremely important that donors support the near-term developments that include both the reform process that the new government is initiating and the election of local leaders in Guyana's first local elections in more than two decades. This provides a window of opportunity to support a nationally driven democratic reform process under a government that came into office with a democratic reform agenda and the support of its citizens who voted for change. This has the potential to turn Guyana around and transform the country for the good of its people.

The need for support is now, as the reformers assess their situation and make strategic plans and decisions to improve their sectors. Momentum also needs to be built for the reforms, which will face stiff opposition from vested interests and the status quo. The reform process is expected to swing into high gear in June 2016, potentially receiving a boost in momentum through the May 2016 commemoration of the nation's 50th anniversary of independence and the holding of the local government elections in March 2016. National consultations are likely to start after that with an expectation that the reforms come to a vote by 2018. After this, attention will shift to the next local elections in 2019 and the general and regional elections in 2020.

The assessment anticipates that a mid- to long-term DRG support program would focus on the implementation and monitoring aspects of the new reforms as well as to support key government actors to balance the power of the executive and to serve their constitutional checks and balances function more effectively. Although the team did not project activities beyond 2020 or 2021, these types of activities are likely to be needed by Guyana for the longer term.

ANNEX 1: INTERVIEWS

IN GEORGETOWN

Civil Society

African Culture and Development Association

Phillips, Eric, Board Member

Grahame, Charmaine, Secretary

Amerindian People's Association

Jean, La Rose

McGarrell, Michael

Guyana Association of Women Lawyers

Amin, Saidie, President, Attorney

Singh-Barkerdy, Joya, Assistant Secretary, Attorney

Trotman, Dean, Secretary, Attorney

Guyana Bar Association

Ram, Christopher, President

Guyana Council of Churches

Bishop Francis Alleyne, Vice Chairman

Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners Association

Sparman, Colin, Administrative Coordinator

Guyana National Youth Council

David, Shamezea, Member

Teekab Tricia, Board Secretary

Doraisami, Mahendra, Member

Guyana Organization of Indigenous Peoples

Klauky, Colin, Director

Indian Action Committee

Ramharack, Yvette, Executive Member

Rasheed, Maria, Secretary

Subhan, Neaza, Executive Member

Persaud, Evan, Executive Member

Inter Religious Organization

Simeon, Ras Executive Member

Jeffrey, Wendel, PRO

Persaud, Krishwalall, Vice President

Bacchus, Neil, Assistant Secretary

Nauth, Joyce, Treasurer

McGarrell, Ronald, Chair

Red Thread

Dea Souza, Karen, Coordinator

Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination

Simpsons, Joel, Managing Director

Greaves, Karl, Treasurer

Transparency Institute

Ram, Christopher, President

Youth Challenge Guyana

Nicholson, Dimitri, President

Experts

Alexander, Vincent, GECOM Commissioner and Local Government Expert

Collins, Rudy, Former Chairman of GECOM (1992)

Government of Guyana

Constitutional Reform Committee

Hughes, Nigel, Chairman

Parris, Haslyn, Member

Persaud, Gino, Member

Fraser, Stephen, Advisor

Department of Natural Resources and the Environment

Scotland, George, Assistant Commissioner, GGMC

Duff, Kara, Legal Adviser, GGMC

Singh, Donald, Land Management, GGMC

Dennison, Newell, Commissioner (ag), GGMC

Dr. Ramdass, Indarjit, Executive Director, Environmental Protection Agency

McDonald, Imole, Technical Officer, Environmental Protection Agency

Khan, Tamara, Legal Officer, Environmental Protection Agency

Watson, Euilene, Technical Officer, Environmental Protection Agency

Lawrence, Derrick, Director of Compliance, Environmental Protection Agency

Guyana Defense Force

Brigadier General Phillips, Mark, MSM, Chief of Staff

Colonel Nazrool, Husain

Guyana Elections Commission

Dr Surujibally, Steve, Chairman

Guyana National Broadcast Authority

Craig, Leonard, Chair

Josiah, Jocelyn, Board Member

Boyal, Violet, Administrative Manager

Integrity Commission

Jaisingh, Amanda, Chief Executive/Secretary

Ministry of Communities

Bulkan, Ronald, Minister

Ministry of Indigenous People's Affairs

Alliceock, Sydney, 4th Vice President, Minister

Da Silva, Judie, Project Officer

Welch, Vibert, Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Legal Affairs

Williams, Basil, Attorney General and Minister

McDonald, Rene, State Council

Henry, Namela, Personal Assistant

Ministry of Public Security

Ramjattan, Kemraj, Second Vice-President and Minister

McAlmon, Daniella, P Secretary

Craig, Leonard, Adviser to the Minister

National Assembly

Dr. Scotland, Barton, Speaker

Isaacs, Sherlock, Clerk

Walton, Oneika, Public Relations Officer

Gilgeous, Hermina, Deputy Clerk

Office of the Leader of the Opposition

Jagdeo, Bharratt, Leader

Office of the Presidency

Trotman, Raphael, Minister of Governance and MP

Gaine, Therese, Ministry of Governance

Office of the Prime Minister

Nagamootoo, Moses, Prime Minister and First Vice President

Women and Gender Equality Commission

Swan-Lawrence, Diana, Chief Executive Officer

Media

Guyana Media Proprietors Association

Rambarran, Jacob, President

Griffith, Charles, Special Projects Director

Guyana Press Association

Marks, Neil, President

Woolford, Enrico, Executive Member

Chabrol, Denis, Executive Member

Wharton, Iva, Secretary

Political Parties

Alliance for Change

Hughes, Nigel.Chairman

Mark Benschop for Mayor Movement

Benschop, Mark, Movement Leader and Mayoral Candidate

Millington, Robert

Warner, Latoya

Ramsaroop, Gerhard

People's Progressive Party

       Rohee, Clement, General Secretary

       Teixeira, Gail, Central Committee member

       Pauline Sukhai, Central Committee member

       Mustapha, Zulfikar, Central Committee member

       Ramsarran, Beri, Central Committee member

       Kumar, Neil, Central Committee member

Private Sector

Guyana Chamber of Commerce

       Hinds, Lance, President

Private Sector Commission

       McLeon, Norman, Chairman

       Boyer, Edward, Vice Chairman

       Doouhoo, Ramesh, Hon. Secretary

       Alleyu, Elizabeth, Executive Director

International Organizations and Other Donors

British High Commission

       Rimmer, Ron, Deputy High Commissioner

EDC

       Erskine, Dale, Juvenile Justice and Gender Specialist, USAID Skills and Knowledge for Youth Employment Project

European Union

       Lambe, Derek, Head of Political, Press and Information Section

Iwokrama

       Gobin, Dane, Chief Executive Officer

Inter-American Development Bank

       Makonnen, Sophie, Country Representative

       Bonnet, Kevin, Institutional Strengthening

United Nations Development Program

       Musa, Khadija, Resident Representative

       Benn, Trevor, Programme Analyst, Governance

U.S. Embassy

Holloway, Perry, Ambassador

Hunt, Bryan D, Deputy Chief of Mission

Bjorkman, D. James, Political and Economic Counselor

Carr, Leon A, II, INL Coordinator

Adelson, Robert, Public Affairs Officer

USAID

Lawrence, Ted, USAID General Development Office, USAID Eastern and Southern Caribbean, Barbados

Noble, Chloe, Program Management Specialist

IN ANNAI

Annai Central Village Council

Salty, Zalita, Senior Councilor

Johnny, Delina, Councilor

Williams, Custley, Williams, Councilor

Brown, Vera, Villager

Salthy, Gulene, Councilor

North Rupununi District Development Board

Gilbert, Randy, Vice Chairman

Andies, Surish, Secretary

Haynes, Lakaam, Treasurer

Williams, Michael

Radio Paiwomak

Victor, Director

Toka Village Council

Darius, Islano, Toshoa

Tsaaie, Eugene, Deputy Toshoa

Davis, Kennard, Farmer

Davis, Charles, Village Council

Audries, William, Village Councilor

Issac, Ezra, Councilor

Francis, Zipporah, Youth

Davis, Joy, Youth

Davis, Vanessa, Teacher

Davis, Tracy, Youth

Davis, Eunice, Youth

Davis, Josephine, Youth

Ondries, Youth

Issacs, Ruth, Teacher

Women's Groups

Farias, Veronica, Representative, Medicine from Trees, Biwa Hill

Francis, Rita, Representative, Women's Grass Root, Biwa Hill

Winter, Derresia, Representative, Medicine from Trees, Biwa Hill

Browne, Vera, Sawing Group, Tourism:, Representative, Biwa Hill

Breumer Sashia, Leona, Annaputo Processes, Friendly Security, Chairperson, Biwa Hill

Times, Priscilla, Mouretta Women's Lyro Processes WWAP, President

Allicock, Paulette, Makush Research Unit Coordinator, Deputy Toshao

IN BARTICA

Faith-Based Organizations

Gomes, Lashley, Pastor, St Paul's Presbyterian Church

Melville, Ivor, Pastor, Bartica Ministry Settlement

Persand, Premeishal, Private Sector (Hindi)

GECOM

Fredericks, Glendon, Registration Officer

Guyana Organization of Indigenous Peoples

Lawless, Victor, Member and Former Regional Councilor

Interim Management Committee

Marshall, Gilford, Chairman

Williams, Kenneth, Councilor

Hope Foundation

Melville, Ivor, Executive Director

Subryan, Marilyn, Counselor

Regional Democratic Council

Bradford, Gordon, Regional Chairman

Seeream, Elvis, PPP/C and Regional Councilor

IN LETHEM

APNU

Toney, William, Regional Representative

Experts

Edwards, Rene, Conservancy International Expert

Fraser, World Bank Consultant on Forests

Edwards, Christina, Human Rights Activist (Telcom)

Magistrate Court

Wilson, Allan, Magistrate

Moko Moko and Kumu Village Councils

George, James, Tosaho

Charles, Jameson, Councilor

Francis, Vania, Councilor

Salvador, Catherine, Secretary

Ramsarran, William, Deputy Toshao

Lyte, Amelia, Councilor

George, Charlotte, Councilor

Ambrose, E, Women's Group

Anocidio, Cynthia, Women's Group

Anocidio, Margery, Women's Group

Jorquant, Anna Lisa, Treasurer

McDonald, Zironna, Councilor

Raymundo, Magdalene, Villager

Williams, Charles, Councilor

Neighborhood Democratic Council

Boston, Terrance, Vice Chairman

People's Progressive Party/Civic

Charlier, Alister, Member of Parliament Region 9

Singh, Clarie, Regional Supervisor, Region 9

Regional Democratic Council

Allicock, Brian, Regional Chairman

    Parker, Carl, REO

Rupununi Chamber of Commerce

    Gajie, Daniel, President

    Stephenson, Verdun, Member

    Chakrabooty, Barudeb, Director of Transportation

    D'Aguiar, Jacqueline, Public Relations Director

    Joseph, Lilian, Member

    Singh, Edward, Director of Agriculture

St Ignatius Village Council

    Xavier, Yusa, Toshao

    Rodrigues, Rachel, Councilor

    Francis, Emeria, Senior Councilor

    Benedict, Dennis, Deputy Toshao

    Ambrose, Allan, Councilor

    Williams, Laurence Eric, Councilor

    Francisco, Regina, Councilor

    Park, Greenville, Councilor

    Ambrose, Abel, Councilor

    Joseph, Jonathan, Councilor

    Youth Representatives: St Ignatius Youth Group, St. Ignatius Football Association; St. Ignatius Sports Club

IN LINDEN

Interim Management Committee

    Gordon, Orin, Chairman (Mayor)

Linden Care Foundation

    Maxwell-Beann, Hazel, CEO

Linden Chamber of Commerce

    De Jonge, Kevin, President

    Payne, Staydon, Development Officer

Radio 104.3 FM

Payne, Staydon, Administrative Manager, Linden Wireless Communications Network

Regional Development Counsel

Morian, Rennis, Regional Chair, Region 10

Aldoph, Elroy, Vice Chairman Region 10

IN MADHIA

Guyana Geology and Mines Commission

Persaud, Cecil, Mines Officer

Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners Association

Junior, Timothy, Member

Guyana Police Service

Corporal Willis, Officer-in-Charge, Mahdia

Ministry of Social Protection

Broomes, Simona, Junior Minister

Red Thread

Thomas, Marbell

Evans, Marcia

Regional Democratic Council

Fredericks, Bonaventure, Regional Chair

Downes, Rafel, Regional Executive Officer (REO)

Williams, Jillian, Deputy REO

Goung, Gavin, Deputy REO

Gaffoor, Naiem, Councilor

Austin, Byron, Councilor

Junor, Oswald, Councilor

Village Council, Micobie & Campbelltown (inclusive of Princeville)

Domingo, Vanessa, Councilor

Andre, John, Toshao

James, Patrick, Senior Councilor

Pio, Ivan, Toshao

Thomas, Marbell, Deputy Toshao

Edwards, Samantha, Councilor

Thomas, Maurice, Councilor

Roberts, Daniel, Councilor

Edwards, Graty, Councilor

IN NEW AMSTERDAM

APNU + AFC

Pilgrim, Barbara. Regional 6 Manager (APNU)

James, Lindon, Region 6 Manager (AFC)

Crawford, Kevin, Region 6 Volunteer (ANC)

Berbice Chamber of Commerce

Kassim, Rafeek, Vice Chairman

Alexander, Ryan, Senior Vice President

Marray, Gyandat, Secretary

Guyana Chronicle

VanKeric, Jeune, Freelance Reporter

Municipal Council

Alexander, Sharon. Town Clerk

Cummings, Colleen, Management Clerk

Henry, Merlyn, Deputy Town Clerk, Human Resources Manager

Regional Development Council

Armogan, Permaul, Regional Chairman

Saint Francis Community Development Organization (Rose Hall)

Foster, Alex, Director

IN WEST COAST BERBICE

Naarstigheid Neighborhood Democratic Council

Peters, Dorothy, Chair, Neighborhood Democratic Council

Christian, Myrtle, Overseer

McAlmont, Renal, Assistant Overseer

IN WASHINGTON

Carter Center

Calder, Jason, Guyana Field Office Representative, Baltimore

International Republican Institute

Johnson, Stephen, Director Latin America and the Caribbean

Rimkunas, Katya, Deputy Director, Latin America and the Caribbean

State Department

Oaks, Megan, Team Leader, Caribbean, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL)

USAID Washington

Molina, Stephanie, Regional Coordinator for Europe and Eurasia, Center of Excellence for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance

Mitchell, Carrie, LAC Regional Coordinator, DHA/DRG

Strom, Chris, LAC/RSD/DHR

Jacobson, Lisa, e-Intern, DCHA

Johnson, Mathew, e-Intern, DCHA

Dorn, Brennan, Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, LAC/RSD/DHR

Banks, Debbie, Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, LAC/CAR

Denham, Julie, DCHA/DRG Electoral and Political Processes

Whittington, Amber, DCHA/DRG Electoral and Political Processes

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ANNEX 3: HISTORICAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

The split of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) into two factions in 1955 and the establishment of the People's National Congress (PNC) by PPP co-founder Forbes Burnham in 1957 led to the hardening of political, economic, and social structures along ethnic lines. PPP co-founder Cheddi Jagan courted and was supported by rural Indo-Guyanese, while Burnham courted and was supported by Afro-Guyanese. This division led to mistrust between the two main political parties, their leaders, and their constituents.

In 1953, Guyana had a new constitution with universal suffrage, and it held parliamentary elections. The PPP won the election but was in office for only four months before the British government suspended the constitution, disbanded the PPP government, and reintroduced direct (British) rule because of its concern over the PPP's Marxist perspective. The PPP split into two factions while disbanded from government—the Jaganites and the Burnhamites. In 1956, a new constitution was introduced, with an election held the next year. The now-factional PPP won this election with the British maintaining autonomy on key decisions. In 1961, after the formation of the PNC in 1957, the British granted Guyana internal self-government, and the accompanying election was contested by the PPP, the PNC, and the United Force (UF). The PPP won the majority of seats in those elections, followed by the PNC and the UF. In the 1964 elections, the PNC and the UF entered into a coalition and won over the PPP.[112]

Guyana was among the many countries seeking political independence from European colonial powers in the 1960s, at a time when the colonialists themselves were seeking to divest themselves of colonies that were increasingly proving to be both administratively problematic and financially burdensome. International politics—specifically, Cold War politics—greatly influenced political activities in pre- and post-independent Guyana. The PPP was sympathetic to and identified with the Soviet Union and espoused communist ideology. Being conscious of the geopolitics, Burnham presented the PNC as sympathetic to socialism but not communism. The UF identified itself as a capitalist party. The PNC was seen as a better alternative to the PPP, presumed as communist hardliners by the British and Americans. Therefore, with the coming to power of the PNC/UF in 1964, the British moved to grant Guyana full independence, which it did in May 1966.

The British and the United States exerted influence over events in Guyana during the 1950s and 1960s, which kept Jagan/PPP and communism from taking over the country.[113] These events ranged from the suspension of the constitution in 1953 to the provision of support to opponents of the PPP. [114] There was unprecedented violence in Guyana in the 1960s, with race as the dividing line. Estimates of deaths range into the hundreds, with families migrating into safer spaces from places where their race was a minority. A consequence of the physical insecurity was thus a more pronounced physical separation of Indo- from Afro-Guyanese as these groups moved away from each other, for the most part, into mono-ethnic village enclaves.

The PPP alleged for years that external forces, specifically British and U.S. intelligence agencies, were instrumental in instigating the unrest—allegations subsequently corroborated through the release of

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[112] GECOM Elections in Guyana.

[113] Raymond T. Smith, Living in the Gun Mouth': Race, Class, and Political Violence in Guyana, pp 223 – 252.

[114] The Guardian, MI5 Files Reveal Details of the 1953 Coup that Overthrew British Guyana.

classified documents by both agencies.[115] This era institutionalized the PPP's suspicion of western powers, heightened ethnic insecurities, and established a legacy of inter-party rivalry where the PNC is seen by the PPP as a tool of the west.

After independence in 1966, the PNC held on to power for 26 years through tight centralized party control and manipulation of the electoral machinery, which began under colonial rule.[116] Burnham said he would lead the country to socialism in 1968, and Guyana became a member of the Non Aligned Movement. In line with the centralizing tendencies of the PNC government, Guyana adopted a new constitution in 1980, which introduced an executive president as head of state and head of government, and allowed for state ownership of the means of production, even though 80 percent of the major industries were already nationalized. The constitution also called for citizens to be organized within groups, with trade unions and cooperatives the most popular choices.

Forbes Burnham died in 1985. Before his death, he presided over an increasing authoritarian government and a deepening of the ethnic divisions that were a legacy of the 1960s violence. Burnham, who was widely considered a strongman, was succeeded by Desmond Hoyte, who was considered a moderate within the PNC. Hoyte inherited a country in severe economic and political crisis, accompanied by seemingly intractable social problems and an international community that had been distanced. Hoyte consolidated his position by winning the highly controversial 1985 general elections and setting out his reform agenda to lead Guyana out of economic crisis by aligning more toward to the West and less toward socialist ideology. He re-engaged international donors, international financial institutions, and foreign investors; pursued electoral and political reforms, including ending overseas and proxy voting; and allowed for a freer press.

The general elections, which were due in 1990, were postponed because of a contested voters list. The Carter Center mediated the ensuing political crisis and helped secure electoral reforms—inclusive of a new voters list and a reformed electoral commission. Through these efforts to secure a resolution, critical transitional elections were held in 1992. Those elections were widely seen as competitive and credible by international observers and were won by the PPP/Civic (PPP/C).[117] The PNC did not accept the election results, and there were demonstrations and street violence.[118] The next elections were held in 1997, which the PPP/C again won. The Organization of American States (OAS) Observer Mission deemed them as "adequate" but noted that a "serious breakdown" occurred after the ballots were counted. The PNC again refused to accept the results, and violence ensued. The Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) was invited to facilitate negotiations between the two parties, resulting in the Herdmanston Accord. This called for a CARICOM audit of the electoral process, reform of the constitution, and new elections within three years (as opposed to the typical term of five years).[119] It also called for a Joint International Technical Assessor to monitor the electoral process and provide monthly reports to the election commission, donors, and government. The Guyana Election Commission (GECOM) became a permanent institution in 2001.

Despite violence and a questionable voters list, the PPP won 52.9 percent of the vote at the 2001 elections, and the incumbent president Bharrat Jagdeo was re-elected. Constitutional reforms produced over the 1999–2000 period were enacted in 2001, save for the electoral system, where an interim system

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[115]   Odeen Ishmael, editor, The British Declassified Files on British Guyana – 1958 – 1964.

[116]   The PNC held power for 28 years in total from 1964 – 1992. The first four years was through a PNC/TUF coalition which fell apart in the lead up to the 1968 election.

[117]   The PPP absorbed remnants of the civil society-led, pro-democracy movement GUARD to contest the 1992 elections under the label PPP/Civic or PPP/C.

[118]   Organization of American States. *Report of the Electoral Observation Mission: General and Regional Elections in Guyana, August 28, 2006.* p. 1.

[119]   Ibid.

was agreed upon and has been used in every election since. This interim system required all 65 members of the unicameral National Assembly be directly elected under the system of proportional representation for five-year terms, with 25 members elected from Guyana's 10 geographic constituencies, and 40 elected from a national "top-up" list to guarantee a high degree of proportionality. However, the system for electing the president remained unchanged: The nominee of the party who receives the largest number of votes, whether a plurality or a majority, wins the presidency, resulting in a winner-take-all system. Although the international observers did not report any significant irregularities, the 2001 election results were also strongly contested by the PNC because of the technical issues that caused a four-day delay in the reporting of election results.[120]

The implementation of the remaining constitutional reforms did not occur as expected after those elections. Accusing the PPP/C of deliberately frustrating the reform process, the PNC agitated for the implementation of agreed reforms. An agreement between President Jagdeo and opposition and PNC Leader Robert Corbin titled "Constructive Engagement"—reached with the support of the private sector, labor unions and the Guyana Bar Association (GBA)—helped create space for the overdue reforms to be implemented.

This civil society-led initiative did not entirely succeed, due in part to a wave of crime and associated violence that was unleashed on the nation from early 2002. While the reform process muddled its way to various achievements that included the establishment of the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) in 2004, public frustrations with both the PPP/C and the PNC escalated as the parties were increasingly perceived as part of the nation's problems. Riding this wave of discontent, a new party called the Alliance for Change (AFC) was formed on a non-racial platform.

In contrast to the previous post-Independence elections, all political parties accepted the 2006 election results, which were also the first peaceful elections in Guyana's history. The timely announcement of the results within three days contributed to this, as did a large internationally supported Guyanese effort to build social cohesion and hold peaceful elections in the years leading up to those elections. By this time, the PNC had adopted the title PNC/Reform (PNC/R) in a bid to counter persistent and electorally damaging PPP/C references to the PNC's past performance in government. This change did not help the PNC, which only won 22 seats, with the AFC picking up five seats on its first electoral outing (mostly at the expense of the PNC/R) and the PPP/C gaining the government with 36 seats. A coalition of two small parties, Guyana Action Party/Rise, Organize, Rebuild (GAP/ROAR), earned one seat.

Building on the gains from 2006, the general and regional elections in 2011 were considered by international observers as credible and generally well administered, despite delays in the release of results. There were some street protests, but all political parties accepted the results, which for the first time in 20 years gave the opposition a slim majority in the National Assembly and created a minority government.

This created a political stalemate whereby majority opposition decisions made in the National Assembly would be taken to court by the ruling PPP/C government or bills passed would not be assented to by the president. There were disagreements on policy and spending, and the PPP/C and opposition parties were at an impasse by late 2014. After the threat of a no-confidence motion, President Donald Ramotar suspended parliament in November 2014. This set the stage for the May 2015 general and regional elections, after parliament was eventually dissolved in February 2015.

The PNC/R dominated A Partnership for National Unity (APNU), which came together for the 2011 election, formed a coalition with the AFC for the 2015 elections. This coalition won the election with a one-seat majority. Although the PNC/R and PPP/C can claim a small number of voters from the different ethnic groups, the AFC is seen as a party of issues and courts supporters from across the ethnic divides.

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[120] Ibid.