

ANNUAL REPORT 2007



LIST OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i-iv
GENERAL	1
PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS	
Inter-Secondary Schools' Debating Competition.....	1
Poster and Essay Competitions.....	2
Female Windball Cricket Competition.....	2
Film Festival/Youth Workshop.....	2-3
Meetings with Constituents.....	3-5
Meeting with the President.....	5
Regional Visits.....	5-6
Consultation with Amerindian Leaders.....	6
MSF National Conversation Working Group.....	6
Guyexpo 2007.....	7
Research.....	7
Public Consultations with the African Guyanese Community.....	7-8
MEETINGS WITH THE DONOR COMMUNITY	
	8
MEETINGS WITH THE COMMISSION	
	8
LEGAL AND INVESTIGATIVE	
Complaints.....	8-9
ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE	
Staffing.....	9-10
Finance	11
Current Expenditure.....	12
RECOMMENDATIONS	12-13
CONCLUSION	13

ANNEXES

ANNEX ‘A’	Film Festival Report.....	14-24
ANNEX ‘B’	Report on Regional Visits.....	25-42
ANNEX ‘C’	Report on ERC’s Consultation with Toshaos.....	43-45
ANNEX ‘D’	Notes on MSF National Conversation Working Group meetings.....	46-69
ANNEX ‘E’	Complaints Matrix.....	70-90

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the year 2007 the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) engaged in a number of activities in accordance with its mandate as set out in Article 212D of the Constitution of Guyana.

The Commission's Annual Report which covers the period January 1, to December 31, 2007 highlights the following:

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Inter Secondary School's Debating Competition

The Commission hosted its annual Secondary Schools' Debating Competition which was won by the New Amsterdam Multilateral School from a field of thirteen (13) Secondary Schools representing five (5) Administrative Regions.

Poster and Essay Competitions

There were also the Annual Poster and Essay Competitions which targeted youth from six (6) Regions. Seven (7) persons were considered for prizes from thirty-five (35) entries for the Poster Competition, while nine (9) were adjudged winners from fifty-four (54) entries for the Essay Competition.

Female Windball Cricket Competition

The ERC with support from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport sponsored its first Inter-Secondary Schools' Female Windball first Cricket Competition as part of its programme of promoting harmony and good relations. Seventy-four (74) schools from seven (7) Regions participated and Corentyne Comprehensive Secondary School won the championship.

Film Festival/Youth Workshops

In keeping with Article 212D (d) of the Constitution of Guyana, the ERC held Film Festivals with young people at Primary and Secondary Schools as well as with youth groups and organisations throughout the Administrative Regions.

During the reporting period the Commission purchased four (4) new animated Conflict resolution films from the National Film Board of Canada to enhance its Film Festival programme.

MEETINGS WITH CONSTITUENCY

Annual meetings were held with the Commission's seven (7) Constituencies to report on ERC's work, update representatives on the Commission's status and provide them with the opportunity to air views and concerns.

MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT

With the failed motion in Parliament and the uncertainty regarding the Commission's status, the President met with ERC Commissioners and representatives of its Constituencies to determine together the way forward.

There was a unanimous call for the life of ERC to be extended while Parliament addresses the issues relative to deciding on the processes for re-appointment/appointment of Commissioners.

REGIONAL VISITS

Annual Regional visits were made to all Administrative Regions and meetings were held with Regional Executives, members of the business community and civil society as well as residents.

CONSULTATION WITH AMERINDIAN LEADERS

The Commission took the opportunity to consult with Amerindian Leaders who were in Georgetown for a meeting with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs.

The consultation which focused on mining in Amerindian Communities and the absence of a Amerindian on the ERC, was considered by the Commission as very fruitful.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER NATIONAL CONVERSATION WORKING GROUP

The MSF National Conversation Working Group comprising representatives from Administrative Regions, Political Parties and Civil Society met on three occasions in 2007 to follow-up on the recommendations of the MSF National Conversation held in 2006.

RESEARCH

The ERC commissioned five (5) studies late 2006 and 2007 to determine whether there was any evidence of discriminatory practices in the Public and Private Sector Agencies. Copies of the research reports were submitted to the National Assembly in October, 2007.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS WITH THE AFRICAN GUYANESE COMMUNITY

Public Consultations were held with thirteen (13) members of the African Guyanese Community to address their perceived needs.

The report of those consultations will be submitted to the National Assembly shortly.

MEETING OF THE COMMISSION

The ERC held twenty (20) Statutory Meetings and fifteen (15) special meetings to set policy, agreed on its work programme and guide the activities of the Secretariat.

LEGAL AND INVESTIGATIVE

Eighty-one (81) complaints were received in 2007. With thirty-four (34) from 2006, the Legal and Investigative Department had a total of one hundred and fifteen (115) complaints to follow-up, investigate and submit reports to the Commission.

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

Administration

The ERC continues to experience attrition particularly at the senior and technical levels. During the 2007, eight (8) positions became vacant. Seven persons resigned, while one officer's employment contract was not renewed by the Commission.

Finance

Of a budgetary estimate of one hundred and fifteen million, three hundred and seventy-eight thousand (\$115,378,000) dollars, a total of sixty-four million, three hundred and seventy-five thousand (64,375,000) dollars (\$2,810,000 for capital and \$61,565,000 current) was approved for the ERC in 2007.

Supplementary provision to the tune of four million, five hundred thousand(\$4,500,000) dollars was also granted in October, 2007 to fund the Commission's programmes for the remainder of the year.

The Commission received a additional two million, four hundred and thirteen thousand, four hundred and sixty-two (\$2,413,462) dollars to meet the nine (9%) percent pay increase for staff members retroactive from January, 2009.

ETHNIC RELATIONS COMMISSION

FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

GENERAL

The year 2007 had been extremely challenging for the Ethnic Relations Commission in the execution of its mandate, and moreso with the pending expiry of the term of office of Commissioners who had been appointed in 2003.

Nevertheless, the Commission made every effort to meet its objectives and complete its programme as planned for the year under review.

This report covers the period 1st January to 31st December, 2007.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

INTER-SECONDARY SCHOOLS' DEBATING COMPETITION

As part of its programme of promoting harmony and good relation among all Guyanese, the Ethnic Relations Commission launched its annual Secondary Schools' Debating competition in February, 2007. Thirteen (13) secondary schools (including two private schools) from five (5) Administrative Regions participated.

The aim of the Debating Competition was to encourage young people to engage in debates on matters relating to race and ethnicity, equity/inequality and justice/injustice and to sensitise them on the need for understanding and tolerance of each other's race, culture and religion.

The New Amsterdam Multilateral School which competed against the President's College, emerged winners of the champion trophy.

POSTER AND ESSAY COMPETITIONS

During February also, the Commission invited entries for the Poster and Essay Competitions under the Mashramani Theme “A Cultural Invasion in 2007”. These two activities targeted youth from the various Administrative Regions, to draw on their skills and imagination in the creation of art pieces and written work representing the integration of various cultures in Guyana.

Of the thirty-five (35) entries received for the Poster Competition, seven (7) were adjudged winners. There were nine (9) winners from a field of fifty-four (54) entrants for the Essay Competition. Both competitions attracted responses from six (6) Regions.

Prizes were awarded to winners of the three competitions at the end of the Debating Competition held at the National Library conference room on July 3, 2007.

FEMALE WINDBALL CRICKET COMPETITION

With 2007 as the year of Cricket World Cup, the Commission with support from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport sponsored an Inter-Secondary Schools’ Female Windball Cricket Competition on March 16, 2007. It was the Commission’s view that since cricket generates not only a competitive spirit but also pride, the ERC should promote this game to build on the strength and team spirit of young people in the secondary schools. It was also the decision of the Commission to encourage the participation of girls in the game to expose them to the development of team spirit, co-operation, and respect for each other regardless of race.

The tournament involved the participation of seventy-four (74) schools (including the New Opportunity Corps) from seven (7) Regions.

Corentyne Comprehensive Secondary School emerged winners of the champion trophy ahead of Anna Regina Multilateral School.

FILM FESTIVAL/YOUTH WORKSHOPS

Film Festivals and Youth Workshops were held at schools and with youth groups throughout the Regions to present scenarios and invite feedback and

to have young people share experiences on matters relative to race, culture and religion. A report of those activities is at **Annex A**.

MEETINGS WITH CONSTITUENTS

As is customary, the Commission held its annual meetings with the seven constituencies from August 13-17, 2007.

The objectives of the meetings were to report on the work of the Commission, inform representatives of the position regarding the Commission's status and give them the opportunity share their views on matters of concern to their respective groups.

A summary of the points noted during meeting with each Constituent is listed below:

a. Women's Constituency

- (1) It was the view of a section of this group that the ERC failed to address the issue of discrimination against persons of different sexual orientation
- (2) Called for supportive lobby in the formulation of the four Rights Commission
- (3) The issue of domestic violence was raised as a matter for the Gender and Equity Commission

b. Muslim Constituency

- (1) Demonisation of the Muslim Community based on negative foreign perception
- (2) Lack of consideration by some agencies in permitting Muslims time off for worship on Fridays.

c. Labour Constituency

- (1) Recommended equal access by Guyanese to employment and other economic opportunities in Guyana

d. Hindu Constituency

- (1) Recommended the establishment of Regional Ethnic Relations Committees to facilitate a wider reach of ERC's work
- (2) Called for the reconstitution of the ERC after the end of the term of office of Commissioners

e. Christian Constituency

- (1) Commended the ERC for its work, particularly during the 2006 General and Regional Elections
- (2) Supported the reconstitution of the ERC
- (3) Spoke on the need for an administrative mechanism to ensure that ERC continues to function until the Constitutional process takes effect
- (4) Recommended that a mechanism be put in place to ensure parity in the distribution of resources among Guyanese

f. Private Sector Constituency

- (1) Supported the continuation of the Ethnic Relations Commission
- (2) Called for social cohesion, political stability and crime to be addressed as a means of creating a safe environment for investment in Guyana

g. Youth Constituency

(1) Recognised the need for reconstitution of the ERC

(2) Commended the ERC for its work

MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT

In the light of the failed Motion in Parliament on May 10, 2007 and the subsequent Motion to advise the President on the Constitutional dilemma regarding the status of the Ethnic Relations Commission, and a request for him to make a determination on the way forward, President Bharrat Jagdeo invited ERC Commissioners and representatives of the seven (7) Constituencies to a meeting in his office on September 6, 2007.

The purpose of the meeting was to consult with the Constituencies on the Commission's status pending the outcome of the decision by the National Assembly.

Based on the unanimous support of the gathering for the status quo of the Commission to remain, it was agreed that there will be a 'transitional arrangement' to allow the ERC to continue to function while the matter receives the attention of Parliament.

REGIONAL VISITS

Between April and November, 2007 the Commission visited the ten (10) Administrative Regions to meet with officials and residents to update them on its work, follow up on complaints previously received and address new grievances.

Meetings were held with members of the Regional Executive, Neighbourhood Democratic Councils and Civil Society. Public meetings

were also held with members of the community at which a number of pertinent issues were highlighted. A full report on Regional Visits is at **Annex B**.

CONSULTATION WITH AMERINDIAN LEADERS

The ERC hosted a special consultation on October 23, 2007 with Amerindian Leaders who met initially under the auspices of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs to focus on matters relating to Amerindian Communities.

The main issues raised by the leaders at the Consultation were the failure of individuals and companies to pay royalties for mining in Amerindian Communities and the absence of an Amerindian representative on the ERC. A full report on the Consultation is at **Annex C**.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER NATIONAL CONVERSATION WORKING GROUP

Following the MSF National Conversation held in November, 2006 representatives from Political Parties, Regions and Civil Society were nominated by their respective constituency to form a Working Group to

- Review and endorse the MSF National Conversation Report
- To determine timeline for submission of the report to the National Assembly
- Follow up on agreed schedules for action based on recommendations made at the National Conversation
- Monitor the implementation of those recommendations
- Study and formulate a model of a system of governance that would ensure ethnic security in Guyana

The Working Group had three meetings and benefitted from advocacy training provided by USAID in 2007. A copy of a report on the meetings is at **Annex D**.

GUYEXPO 2007

The Commission participated in GUYEXPO 2007 held at the Sophia Exhibition Site from September 27 – October 2, 2007. The purpose of the Commission's involvement in the activity was to showcase its work, while promoting the need for racial tolerance, harmony and good relation among Guyanese. Brochures and other ERC handouts were distributed to the public throughout the period of the event.

RESEARCH

Between 2006 and 2007 the ERC contracted consultants to conduct studies into the following areas:

- An Investigation and Review of Employment Practices in the Public and Private Sectors in Region Four, Guyana
- Land Distribution: Assessment of Existing Practices
- To Assess whether there is any Discrimination in the Award and Distribution of Economic Opportunities in Guyana
- Public Procurement in Guyana with special regard to Openness and Fairness
- The Award of Academic Scholarships in Guyana

These studies were done in keeping with the Commission's functions at Article 212D(s) of the Constitution of Guyana, and also in response to complaints received from individuals and organisation from time to time.

Copies of the research reports had been submitted to the National Assembly on October 17, 2007.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS WITH THE AFRICAN GUYANESE COMMUNITY

Invitations had been publicized in the media for Guyanese to participate in a four-day series of public consultations from 13-16 November, 2007 to address the perceived needs of the African Guyanese Community.

Thirteen (13) members of the African Guyanese Community made presentations, while seven (7) were advised to meet with ERC Investigative Officers to file official complaints.

The report of the African Guyanese Consultations will be submitted under separate cover.

MEETINGS WITH THE DONOR COMMUNITY

Meetings on possible support of the work of the ERC were held during the reporting period with the following representatives of the donor community:

- **UNDP**
- **USAID**
- **CIDA**
- **EU**
- **DFID**

MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION

The ERC held a total of twenty (20) statutory meetings and twenty-eight (28) special meetings to address its business and set policy for the efficient functioning of the Commission.

LEGAL AND INVESTIGATIVE

Complaints

At the beginning of the year, the Legal and Investigative Department had thirty-four (34) complaints from 2006 that required follow up work, and received eighty-one (81) in 2007. That totaled the complaints for the period to one hundred and fifteen (115). Fifty-two (52) complaints were closed due to

- **Lack of response by Individuals, Ministries and other Agencies**
- **Reluctance of complainants to provide additional information**
- **Mediation**

Among the matters that received the attention of the Commission were:

- ✓ **Complaint of discrimination by Constable Rodney against the Police Commander, Essequibo for objecting to the wearing of Muslim clothing by him while on duty**
- ✓ **Complaint by Mr. Hamilton Green against the ICC/CWC World Cup 2007 Cricket for the production a manual that suggests discrimination of Guyanese culture**
- ✓ **Complaint by Ras Ian against Members of the City Constabulary**
- ✓ **Complaint by Mr. Azim Ally against the Head Teacher, Corentyne Comprehensive Secondary School**
- ✓ **Complaint by Mr. Perry Birbal against The Region 3 Administration**
- ✓ **Complaint by Mr. Peter McAlmont against the Ministry of Housing and Water**
- ✓ **Complaint by Messrs. Manuel Sammy and Robert Archer against the Guyana Power and Light Company**
- ✓ **Complaint by Ms. Maureen Ann Bynoe against the Region 6 Administration**
- ✓ **Complaint by Mr. Everall Franklin against the Guyana Power and Light Company**

A matrix of the complaints received and dealt with is at **Annex E**

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

Staffing

Attrition particularly at the technical level, continues to plague the Commission, thus in 2007 the following positions became vacant:

- **Head, Legal and Investigative**
- **Public Relations Officer**
- **Investigative Officer**

- **Programme Officer, Public Education & Awareness**
- **Administrative Assistant**
- **2 Drivers**

In the meanwhile, there is still need for a Legal Officer and Co-ordinator Dispute Resolution; these two positions (which were vacant for two years) are very important in fulfilling a vital part of the functions of the Commission.

The employment contract of the substantive Finance Officer which came to an end in February, 2007 was not renewed. This resulted from the Commission's dissatisfaction with her general performance. As a consequence, a court order was served through her Attorney on the Commission, and the matter is receiving the attention of the Supreme Court.

Staff Training

In May, 2007 the Chief Executive Officer/Secretary attended a training course sponsored by the Folke Bernadotte Academy in Facilitation of Dialogue Processes and Mediation Efforts in Sando, Sweden.

The CEO and Administrative Officer attended a workshop on "Strengthening the Implementation of Human Rights Treaty Recommendations through the Enhancement of National Protection Mechanisms" sponsored by the Government of Guyana and UNDP in July, 2007.

The CEO attended a follow up workshop in Geneva, Switzerland in November, 2007.

Apart from the above training activities, the entire staff of the Commission benefitted from training on HIV/AIDS in the Workplace, Occupational Health and Safety and Blood Donation.

Heads of Departments were exposed to a two-day supervisory training sponsored by USAID in December, 2007.

FINANCE

The Ethnic Relations Commission's budgetary estimate for 2007 was one hundred and fifteen million, three hundred and seventy-eight thousand (\$115,378,000) dollars, of which one million, nine hundred and fifty thousand (\$1,950,000) dollars was for capital expenditure and one hundred and thirteen million, four hundred and twenty-eight thousand (\$113,428,000) dollars for current expenditure. The approved budget was sixty-four million, three hundred and seventy five thousand (\$64,375,000) dollars (capital \$2,810,000 and current \$61,565,000).

In October, 2007 the Commission requested supplementary provision of six million, five hundred and seventy-six thousand dollars (\$6,576,000) to cater for the remainder of programmed activities as its allotted funds were virtually exhausted by the third quarter of the year. Of the amount requested, four million, five hundred thousand (\$4,500,000) dollars was approved. The Commission also received two million, four hundred and thirteen thousand, four hundred and sixty-two (\$2,413,462) for the nine (9) percent pay increase for staff retroactive from January, 2007. A breakdown is shown overleaf:

CURRENT EXPENDITURE 2007

'000

DESCRIPTION	PROPOSED	REVISED	ACTUAL	% ACHIEVED
Employment Cost	57,353	42,702	35,943	84%
Other Charges	56,075	25,776	33,187	128%
Total	113,428	68,478	69,130	101%

A comparison of current expenditure for 2006 over 2007 is shown below:

DESCRIPTION	2006	2007	% INCREASE/DECREASE
Employment Cost	42,521	35,943	18% decrease
Other Charges	39,767	33,187	19% decrease
Total	82,288	69,130	19% Decrease

The 2007 expenditure shows an overall average decrease of nineteen (19%) percent when compared with 2006. There was a decrease of eighteen (18%) percent in Employment Cost for 2007 because of a nine (9%) increase in salary as compared with the (17%) pay out in 2007. Other Charges decreased by 19% due to a decrease in the level of the Commission's activity for the year. This decrease affected expenditure in areas such as Advertising, Office Materials and Supplies, and Fuels and Lubricants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ethnic Relations Commission recommends for the consideration the following:

- a. The constituting and activation of the Ethnic Relations Commission Tribunal
- b. The formation of the four (4) Rights Commissions

- c. That the Ethnic Relations Commission be empowered to subpoena witnesses and documents to avoid the closure of cases for non-response from individuals and agencies.
- d. The process of consensual mechanism for the reappointment/appointment of members of the Ethnic Relations Commission should begin one year before the expected date of the end of term of serving Commissioners.

CONCLUSION

In light of the pending expiry of Commissioners' term of office and the Commission's work programme for 2007, the ERC's main focus was the completion of a number of outstanding matters in keeping with its mandate. The Commission therefore contracted experienced Researchers to conduct studies in the areas of Employment Practices in the Public and Private Sectors, Land Distribution, Award of Scholarships, Public Procurement and Distribution of Economic Opportunities.

Later in the year the Commission consulted with Amerindian Leaders and the African Guyanese Community and updated Constituencies on its previous year's work.

It must be noted however, that despite the efforts of the Commission to address complaints, its work continues to be stymied with the absence of the legal authority to summon witnesses and request documents for the conduct of proper investigation.

Your Honour,

In accordance with Article 212E(1) of the Constitution of Guyana, the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) hereby submit its fourth Annual Report.

Bishop Juan A. Edghill
Chairman
2008-03-

FILM FESTIVAL REPORT

ANNEX A

The Film Festival conducted by the Ethnic Relations Commission is a continuous program carried out by the Public Education and Awareness Unit. This program was taken to schools, youth groups, governmental and non-governmental organisations and summer camps in 2007, throughout the country.

The Commission acquired four new films from the National Film Board of Canada to enhance this program which started in 2004.

The four new films acquired are, *Elbow Room Distance*, *Bully Dance*, *Tete a Tete a Tete* and *When the Dust Settles*.

Below is a synopsis of the four films acquired.

Tete a Tete a Tete: This takes place in another realm one in which conflict is the stuff of real life. Newland examines out tendency to judge others for being different, and shows intolerance can threaten relationships and even result in violence. This film is a thought-provoking commentary on how beings interact.

Elbow Room/Distances: An office worker arrives bright and early, ready for another day on the job. But wait, there's a new co-worker sitting in a chair uncomfortably close. Pretty soon, elbows are bumping, ink is spilling, and tempers are flaring. **Elbow Room** is part of the **ShowPeace** series of lively animated films about conflict and dispute resolution. This film demonstrates four common approaches to interpersonal tensions: retreat, aggression, denial and - finally - negotiation.

When the Dust Settles: The prairie wind isn't responsible for the dirt flying in this film; the culprits are neighbouring gophers with an appetite for anger and revenge. Before sundown, the retaliatory rodents have all but obliterated both of their homes... is there any way that they can put the pieces back together? Part of the **ShowPeace** series of lively animated films about dispute resolution, **When the Dust Settles** tackles conflict and anger in a humorous and provocative way. We see ourselves as we watch the animal characters turn everyday conflict into all-out war! Amidst the chaos that conflicts create, there are still paths to reconciliation.

Bully Dance: The "stick people" in **Bully Dance** are imaginary, but this gritty tale of childhood bullying is all too familiar. Like the dance beat pulsating throughout the film, the bully's intimidation of a smaller victim is unrelenting. While **Bully Dance** offers no simple solutions, it does compel viewers - teachers, parents and children - to take stock of their actions and to find ways to end the painful experience of peer abuse. This film is part of the **Show Peace** series of lively animated films about conflict and dispute resolution.

Film Festival in Region # 1

Approximately 450 children benefitted from the Film Festival in this Region.

North West Secondary:

Fourth formers assembled and engaged in an informative discussion. The students were not too keen to talk at the beginning, but as the group touched on the necessity for Guyanese to live in peace and harmony, they became vocal.

They declared that there were no racial problems in that region since it was evident that the entire community comprised mixed races. They mentioned that some older folks might exhibit racial tendencies but it does not affect the young people. They see themselves as being cohesive. Some of them stated that they can carry anyone to their homes without any objection from their parents. When asked about the different tribes and if there were conflicts amongst them, they confidently said that they live as human beings ought to.

Hosororo Primary School:

A generator was arranged and the film “**Just A Little Red Dot**” was shown. From all reaction, the children enjoyed the film thoroughly. Teachers made reference to remarks made by HE The President in his address to the Toshias at the International Conference Centre, that “Amerindians can no longer be seen as “Museum Pieces” ” They view this remark as very disrespectful to all Amerindians, and have interpreted the President’s statement as prejudicial. They stated that “the President was telling us that we were museum pieces all the time.”

Another concerned teacher mentioned that in a text used throughout the schools reference is made to “Amerindians belonging to the bushes”.

A part of the poem cited was:

**“I went in to the Bushes,
And what did I see?
An Amerindian looking at me! ”**

They requested the ERC to investigate the issues raised by them.

In the discussion with students at one of the schools, one child said boldly that he could not take home someone with fair complexion; he added that his parents would accept someone with darker complexion.

It was apparent that there were ethnic issues in the community but the children were reluctant to talk about them.

The children also said that people from “town” visit their communities from time to time and call them names, such as “BUCK” and even tell them that they were made for the bush.

When asked whether they will ever come to “town”, they replied “never!” This was explored a bit more since there had to be a reason for their negative response. They stated that “town people” are racial because they encourage division and segregation, and this was unlike them who live in peace and harmony all year round. They reiterated that they are the indigenous people and they are proud about that.

Matthew’s Ridge Primary:

The film “**Just A Little Red Dot**” was shown to parents and children at the Matthew’s Ridge Primary School. The messages from the film were identified by the children. They were able to interact with the facilitator on issues pertaining to race relations in Guyana. Some of the comments made were:

“We love our neighbours”; “we live in harmony in Matthew’s Ridge”; “we are not racial”.

The children were asked if they were referred to by any derogatory names and they replied in the affirmative. The parents appreciated the efforts of that the ERC to visit their community and requested that it be done again sometime soon.

Film Festival in Region # 2

In this Region, the Film Festival was conducted in two separate schools and it attracted approximately 400 children.

The first was held at the Cotton Field Secondary School and attended by students of - Charity Secondary, Anna Regina Multilateral, Cotton Field Secondary, 8th of May Secondary, 8th of May Primary, Taymouth Primary, C.V Nunes Primary, Sparta Primary and Better Hope Primary schools.

The other session was held at the Johanna Cecelia Secondary school and attended by - Suddie Primary School, Huis’t Dieren Primary School, Aurora Secondary School, Abram Zuil Secondary, Rivers town Primary and Johanna Cecelia Secondary.

The messages from the Film were concisely put over by a student from the Abram Zuil Secondary School, who emphasised the need for Guyanese to appreciate and respect each other for who they are and what they do. “Tolerance and respect are two major factors that can lead to harmonious relationships”, she stated. An advice that she gave to the forum was “Don’t jump to conclusions, and don’t judge, because we are not God”.

The New Opportunity Corps and youth clubs were also involved in the Film Festival. These sessions were very interactive. Some of the themes that the students identified were respect, tolerance, understanding, support, leadership, communication, and guidance among others.

At the New Opportunity Corps the young people were very vocal on issues pertaining to race relations in Guyana. They see everyone as Guyanese but according to them, in certain instances people use racial slurs out of frustration and anger. They were confident that Inter-Racial marriages can help alleviate ethnic tensions in Guyana. One NOC inmate asked whether two enemies can attend the same church. This issue was address by Commissioner Roy Thakurdial. Commissioner Thakurdial did the opening remarks for the sessions and gave a brief outline of ERC, its functions and the role the Commission plays in youth development such as seminars, youth workshops, Poster, Essay and Debating Competitions and sports.

He expressed gratitude for the overwhelming support that was given to the team and was happy to see that schools were interested in the quest for racial harmony in Guyana.

A session was held at the Cotton Field Secondary School for the youth clubs in the Region but it was poorly attended. There were twelve persons in attendance from various youth arms. Although there was a small gathering the discussion with the young people was lively. They were concerned with a number of issues that impeded youth development. These were: job opportunities in the Region, lack of sporting facilities for the idle, land distribution for youths and most importantly drug abuse.

Film Festival in Region # 7

Three hundred and fifty ((350) children benefitted from the Film Festival in this Region. The sessions were held at the St. Anthony's Primary School and St. John The Baptist Primary School. The children participated fully in the discussion.

The themes and messages identified by the children were: co-operation, team work, guidance, friendship, leadership, love, unity, sharing, understanding and acceptance. The messages identified were: do not discriminate, be patient, do not use racial remarks, do not call friends names, be polite, share with each other and co-operate with all for a better country.

Organisations:

With the acquisition of the new films letters were sent out to public and private sector agencies for the films to be shown as a way of promoting good relations among staff members of those Organisations.

Since then the Public Education and Awareness Unit of the ERC met with the Guyana Public Service Union, the Guyana Forestry Commission, Guyana Power and Light Company and Camille's Institute for Business and Science Studies, Parent Teachers' Association.

The Institute of Private Enterprise Development had invited the ERC to conduct a Film Festival with children involved in its summer programme. This activity was conducted on July 17, 2007 at IPED's South Road Headquarters with six children between the ages of 7 and 11.

Despite the small number in attendance, the session was very interactive and stimulating. The group was shown the films, "**Dinner for Two**" and "**Just a little Red Dot**", which they enjoyed thoroughly.

The following messages were identified by children from the two films.

1. Animals depend on each other for food, humans depend on each other for existence
2. The characters in the film were concentrating on one object which distracted them from other available opportunities
3. The frog in the film showed a good example of sharing
4. Fighting in public or other spaces causes disturbances and makes people uncomfortable
5. Fighting makes one weak and an easy prey for predators
6. There is strength in unity
7. Persons must not be mocked when they display their culture in their dress or life style
8. Learning about other people's culture should be encouraged
9. We must respect each other's religion and culture
10. Parents can take example from their children who do not have a problem playing with children of other races
11. Racism is harmful

Summer Camps:

Officers of the Public Education and Awareness Unit visited 25 summer camps sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10. Approximately 2000 children between the ages 9-17 participated in the Film Festival.

Visits commenced on Monday, July 16, 2007 and concluded on August 13, 2007 with two teams visiting various locations simultaneously. The teams comprise:

1. Mr. Clarence Gravesande, Head of the Unit,
2. Ms. Shanee Burnett- Programme Officer
3. Ms. Anita Dabie- Programme Officer
4. Mr. Bhisham Mohamed- Programme Officer
5. Ms. Tusankine English- Public Relations Officer

Some of themes in the film that participants identified were:

1. Sharing resources benefits all stakeholders
2. There is strength in unity
3. Fighting for resources weakens and distracts people from observing other opportunities.
4. Fighting causes individuals to become weak and vulnerable.
5. Co-operation
6. Tolerance
7. Understanding
8. Respect
9. Appreciation
10. People must not be racial
11. Try to explore new things
12. Team participation is the way forward
13. We must live according to our National Motto “One People One Nation One Destiny”

14. Communication is the only means for a successful union
15. Self introspection first
16. Respecting each other's culture and beliefs
17. Try to know more about other races and their culture
18. Appreciate the work of others rather than criticise
19. Always think of ways in which we can help others

Below are the schools and youth centres at which Film Festivals were conducted:

Region # 2

- Suddie Primary School

Region # 3

- Leonora Secondary School-
- Bagotville Primary School
- Blankenburg Primary School
- Wales Community High School
- MalgreTout Primary School
- Den Amstel Primary
- Uitvlugt Secondary School

Region # 4

- Ann's Grove Primary School
- Virginia Primary School
- Stratsphey Primary School
- Peter's Hall Primary
- Long Creek Primary
- Yarrowkabra Primary School
- Plaisance Primary School
- Kuru-Kuru Training Centre
- Madewini Training Centre
- Camille's Institute For Business and Science Studies

Region # 5

- Rosignol Secondary School

Region # 6

- Smyth Field Drop in Centre
- Glasgow Youth Centre
- Lesbeholden Primary School
- Port Mourant Community Centre
- Hyde Park Community Centre

Region # 10

- Rock Stone Primary
- Christiansburg Community Centre

Youth Workshops:

Two youth workshops were conducted by the Public Education and Awareness Unit. One was held at the Regional Boardroom in New Amsterdam on Saturday, September 15, 2007 and the other on October 13, 2007 at the McKenzie- Lichas Hall, Region # 10. A total of 100 youths were invited to the workshops.

Region # 6

There were 63 participants at the session from all parts of the Region. The areas represented include; Line Path Settlement, Crab Wood Creek, Mibicuri, Black Bush Polder, Angoy's Avenue, Bloomfield and Whim.

Mr. Omeshwar Sirikishun, Region # 6 Culture, Youth and Sport Officer welcomed the team and the participants to the first ever Harmony workshop organised by his Ministry and the Ethnic Relations Commission.

Ms. Marlyn Ramjet Samad, Chairman of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, Region # 6 Committee, also a lecturer at the University of Guyana, challenged the youth to be committed and dedicated to the process of youth development in the region. She also mentioned that youth work was her major concern in the region and expressed the hope that out of this workshop, the young people would be more equipped with handling difficulties in the area in which they live.

Following introductions by participants, they were asked two questions. The questions were **“What Guyana requires of us?”** and **“When or where do you feel as Guyanese?”**

Some of the responses for the question “**What does Guyana require of us?**” were as follow:

- Commitment
- Love others
- Help others
- Love and unity
- Coming together
- Peace building
- Self introspection
- Co-operation
- Hard work
- Conscious people who can lead the nation
- Have respect and love for your country
- Be proud to be identified as Guyanese.
- Respect

The other question that was asked was “**Where and when do you feel as Guyanese?**” Some of the responses were as follow:

- At Mashramani celebrations
- At cultural shows
- Feel Guyanese all day and everyday
- 20/20 Cricket
- Sports
- When traveling
- National Holidays
- Community service
- Social functions
- Doing self help work

After this activity, a presentation on **goal settings** and **self esteem** was done. After lunch, Chairman of the ERC, Bishop Juan Edghill did a presentation based on issues contributing to **tension** which **hinder** the **peace building process** in Guyana and participants identified possible solutions to the issues.

Some recommendations were:

- Inter- Racial marriages
- Respect, understanding, appreciation and acceptance of each other’s religion and culture
- Parents must be involved in the promotion of ethnic harmony.
- Accept or get involved in peace initiatives
- Working together for one common goal

The Chairman encouraged participants to:

- Don't give up
- Be creative
- Explore the possibility of sharing
- Be positive and gain knowledge of other people's culture and religious background
- Concentrate more on solving conflicts rather than promoting it.

At the conclusion of the Chairman's presentation participants from the various NDCs voiced their appreciation to the Ethnic Relations Commission and the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport for affording them the opportunity to be part of the workshop.

Following that exercise, a brief discussion was done on the film "**Just A Little Red Dot**". Some of the themes and messages that the participants identified were:

Respect for each other religion, understanding ones culture before jumping to conclusion, appreciate each other as unique and special, tolerance, team effort, leadership, antagonism, racism, fear, communication and interpretation, commitment, friendship, parental values, empathy, self introspection, success come when we work together and motivation.

The participants were asked to describe in one word how they felt about the workshop. The responses were as follow:

- Most knowledgeable
- Wonderful
- Exciting
- Interesting
- Responsible
- Happy
- Proud- To see the future
- Belonging
- Respect
- Great
- Informative
- Terrific
- Educating Satisfy
- Braking Barriers
- Satisfy
- Budgeting
- Motivating
- Challenged
- Educated
- Appreciative

- Good
- Very educational
- Successful and nice
- Can be able to break barriers

Region # 10

There were 37 participants at the session from all parts of the Region. The areas represented include, Wismar, Amelia's Ward, Christainburg, Wisburg and surrounding areas.

Ms. Leslyn Boyce, Region # 10 Culture Youth and Sport Officer, welcomed the team and the participants to the first ever Harmony workshop that has been organised. She encourage the participants to be good role models in promoting racial harmony in their respective communities, schools, and more important the country. She also thanked them for taking time from their busy schedule to be present at the workshop.

Immediately after the brief talk by the Ms. Boyce, participants were asked to introduce themselves and say something special about them. Following the activity two questions were asked for responses from the participants. The questions were **“What Guyana requires of us?”** and **“When or where do you feel Guyanese?”**

Some of the responses were similar to those that were shared by the Region # 6 participants.

After this activity, a presentation on goal settings and self esteem was done. After lunch, Chairman of the ERC, Bishop Juan Edghill facilitated the film **“Just A little Red Dot”**

He encouraged participants to:

To promote good morals and standards in their communities

Be contented with what is being provided

The Family is the first contributor for change

Try not to cause conflict and also know how to deal with it if it should arise.

REPORT ON REGIONAL VISITS

Regional Visits are part of the Ethnic Relations Commission public education drive. The visits during the year 2007 were specifically intended to apprise Regional Executives and civil society of the findings of the below mentioned areas of research, which were commissioned based on allegations of wide spread discrimination and marginalisation.

The researches were conducted in the following areas:

- Employment practices with particular reference to Region Four
- The award of economic opportunities
- Public procurement and tendering procedures
- The award of academic scholarship
- Land distribution in Guyana

During each visit to the Administrative Regions, Chairman of the ERC, Bishop Juan Edghill presented the findings of the researches, as outlined below.

Employment Practices

The Chairman said that the research into Employment Practices in Region 4 showed that the number one, two and three positions in the Public Service (PS) are equitably occupied by Afro and Indo-Guyanese. There was an increase in the number of Indo Guyanese entering after 1992. The research sought to find out why persons exited the PS and it showed that persons left because of retirement, migration and for the Private Sector which has a better remuneration package. The Private Sector showed a trend of Afro-Guyanese occupying the number one, two and three positions, much to the surprise of some persons, the Chairman said.

Concerning advertising of vacancies, the Chairman disclosed that this needed to be “tightened up”. He stated that notice must be available to all; through the mass media, or posted on public buildings. “At the level of recruitment is where you fashion your employment policy... In the first instance there must be notice to all, then the interview process must be equipped with a panel of judges with scores sheets... if the process is flawed, the product will be flawed,” the Chairman stated. “What the ERC is concerned about is a fair process in which objective criteria is evident... whatever the outcome is after that, we are happy,” he stated.

➤ **The award of economic opportunities**

The Chairman reported that one of the major limitations in determining whether economic opportunities were awarded equitably was the non-keeping of records pertaining to the ethnicity of applicants and awardees of various opportunities. In this

regard, he said, Parliament would have to determine whether such record should be kept alongside other bio data such as age and gender.

Notably, only one institution, Institute of Private Enterprise Development (IPED) kept records of ethnicity.

In the case of commercial banks, the Chairman said that while there cannot be a claim of ethnic discrimination, their lending portfolio might lead to that perception. For instance, if a bank has a tendency of granting capital financing to the agricultural sector, this may lead to a particular perception. Further, he said, the researcher observed that judging from the geographical breakdown of persons who accessed loans a conclusion can be made whether banks favored one group of persons.

The Chairman said that the researcher noted that it was alarming that there is not a national policy document to ensure parity in the distribution of economic resources.

➤ **Public procurement and tendering procedures**

The Chairman reported that the researcher did not find any pattern of institutionalised discrimination or marginalisation in public procurement and tendering procedures. However, he said that while the researcher did not find any deliberate attempts to alienate anyone from the process, where discretion was left to officials, problems may arise.

➤ **The award of academic scholarship**

The Chairman stated that the researcher found that the process was relatively fair and balanced. He said that the researcher recommended that advertisements on the availability of scholarships should not only be limited to daily newspapers, but all media and posted on public buildings.

➤ **Land distribution in Guyana**

The researcher found an absence of a national policy on land distribution, only a “white paper” that needs to be reworked, the Chairman said. He added that the researchers recommended that the policy, which qualifies persons with children only shall be eligible to receive house lots, needs to be re-examined.

Concluding his summary disclosure of the research findings, the Chairman said that the ERC was not asserting that they are 100% foolproof, but it is the first attempt at acquiring scientific data on these areas. He said that the Commission is anticipating that they will become the basis for debates and discussion in various discourses.

The Chairman also reported that the research reports were presented to the National Assembly and are in the hands of every Parliamentarian. He noted that a special ‘pull out’ of the Executive Summary will be available in newspapers, as is stipulated in the Constitution.

Issues raised by residents in Region One

Economic Opportunities

1. The absence of lending institutions for capital financing, particularly IPED, in Matthew's Ridge

Governance and Administration

- 1 The community is not efficiently notified by the RDC. The Regional Chairman acknowledged that communication to Matthews Ridge is challenging because of its remoteness. He pledged to take decisive steps in improving this situation.
- 2 Forest concession holders habitually fell trees and leave them to rot
- 3 The closure of small scale mining operation for large scale mining operations has forced residents of Matthew's Ridge to mine illegally, thus endangering their lives. They called for some small scale mining concession to be granted to them.
- 4 Persons who have permanent structures on the Port Kaituma Landing are being asked to remove to facilitate regularization and other infrastructural works. However, some residents contended that this is being done in a discriminatory manner.
- 5 The need for an efficient communication system among Health Care Institutions, (Arakaka, Matthew's Ridge and Port Kaituma) especially in cases of emergency

Land Distribution

- 1 Request for the allocation of lands along the Arakaka public road to residents who do not have land titles.
- 2 The need to educate residents on the process of applying for land for housing or other commercial purposes

Infrastructure

1. Limited access to portable water provided by GWI

Education

1. The poor condition of the Port Kaituma Secondary School dormitory. One resident claimed that there was inadequate lighting in the building which affects the ability of students to study, but provides a conducive atmosphere for them to become involved in delinquent activities. The resident added that the officer in charge of the dormitory is not physically capable of controlling the students' delinquent behaviour.
2. The prevalence of truancy
3. The urgent need for a permanent Welfare Officer in the Matthew's Ridge

REGION TWO- POMEROON SUPENAAM
APRIL 26-27, 2007

Commissioners Present:

Bishop Juan A.Edghill
Commissioner L. John P. Willems
Commissioner Cheryl Sampson
Commissioner Pandit Ramkissoon Maharaj
Commissioner Mr. Shaffeek Khan
Commissioner Rev. Roy Thakurdial

Staff Involvement:

1. CEO, Ms. Christine King
2. PRO, Ms. Tusankine English
3. Senior Programme Officer, Mr. Clarence Gravesande
4. Investigative Officer- Mrs. Cameal Mentore
5. Investigative Officer- Mr. Cyril Fredericks
6. Senior Programme Officer, Mr. Bhisham Mohamed
7. Senior Accounts Clerk, Mrs. Nirmala Persaud
8. Programme Officer, Ms Anita Dabie
9. Programme Officer, Ms. Shanee Burnette
10. Driver, Mr. Malcolm Providence

Places Visited: Anna Regina, Queenstown Aurora, Supenaam, Johanna Cecilia, Cotton Field

Number of meetings Commissioners conducted: (4)

Average attendance at each meeting: 15

The following is a list of issues raised during the ERC's outreach in Region Two:-

Economic Opportunities

- 1 The need for some form of activism among Afro Guyanese contractors to obtain NIS and Income Tax compliances so that they can be eligible for contracts
- 2 The need for heightened Private Sector enterprise to create employment, especially for young people.
- 3 Alleged inequitable distribution of employment at the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) and the Guyana Power and Light (GPL) and the Guyana Bank For Trade and Industry (GBTI).

Social Issues/Religious Issues

- 1 Holding of fund-raising and other sporting activities on sacred holidays. It is perceived that there is a greater level of respect paid to Christian holidays while holidays observed by other religious groups are not revered.
- 2 Some institutionalised rules are insensitive to the expression of citizens' religious persuasion- For example, the enforcement of the use of paramilitary uniforms
- 3 The need for citizens to be allowed to practice their religion while maintaining the right to be employed.

**REGION THREE- ESSEQUIBO ISLANDS, WEST DEMERARA
NOVEMBER 26, 2007**

Commissioners Present:

Bishop Juan A. Edghill
Commissioner L. John P. Willems
Commissioner Cheryl Sampson
Commissioner Carvil Duncan

Staff Involvement:

1. CEO, Ms. Christine King
2. PRO, Ms. Tusankine English
3. Finance Officer, Ms. Dawn Callender
4. Investigative Officer- Ms. Cameal Mentore
5. Investigative Officer- Mr. Cyril Fredericks
6. Administrative Assistant, Ms. Esther Robinson
7. Accounts Clerk, Ms. Amanda Ashby
8. Programme Officer, Ms Anita Dabie
9. Programme Officer, Ms. Oma Devi Sukhu

Places Visited: Vreed-en-Hoop, Leonora

Number of meetings Commissioners conducted: (3)

Average attendance at each meeting: 15

The following is a list of issues raised during the ERC's outreach in Region Three:-

Law and Order

- 1 The blaring and offensive music played by persons of a particular ethnic group, to the displeasure of another ethnic group. (Bushy Park)

**REGION FOUR- DEMERARA MAHAICA
NOVEMBER 20-23, 2007**

Commissioners Present:

Bishop Juan A. Edghill
Commissioner L. John P. Willems
Commissioner Cheryl Sampson
Commissioner Carvil Duncan

Staff Involvement:

1. CEO, Ms. Christine King
2. Administrative Officer, Ms. Yvonne Langevine
3. PRO, Ms. Tusankine English
4. Finance Officer, Ms. Dawn Callender
5. Investigative Officer, Ms. Cameal Mentore
6. Investigative Officer, Cecil Ramnarine
7. Senior Programme Officer, Mr. Bhisham Mohamed
8. Administrative Assistant, Ms. Esther Robinson
9. Administrative Assistant Ms. Audrey Thompson
10. Senior Accounts Clerk, Ms. Nirmala Persaud
11. Accounts Clerk, Ms. Amanda Ashby
12. Programme Officer, Ms Anita Dabie
13. Programme Officer, Ms. Oma Devi Sukhu
14. File Clerk, Ms. Kimyon Macedo
15. Cleaner, Ms. Earlena Adams

Places Visited: Paradise, Mon Repos, Lower East Coast, Friendship, Enmore and Georgetown

Number of meetings Commissioners conducted: (6)

Average attendance at each meeting: 25 - Georgetown – (55)

The following is a list of issues raised during the ERC's outreach in Region Four:-

Law and Order

1. Touts at the Timerhi Bus park are fueling racial animosity
2. Afro-Guyanese prisoner allegedly take advantage of Indo Guyanese at the Timehri lock-up.
3. It was reported by Mayor Hamilton Green that there is the practice fire-arm license are issued in a discriminatory manner.

Economic Opportunities

1. The discrimination of lower income women in accessing loans from commercial banks
2. Complaint that women applying for bank loans have to include the name of their spouse and their assets to qualify for loans
3. The absence of information during ERC research on ethnicity of persons who accessed economic opportunities did not facilitate a comparative analysis which was important in quantifying parity.
4. The granting of affordable loans to low income Guyanese who are owners of house lots to facilitate the erection of their homes, before the land is taken back by the Housing Ministry.
5. Contracts for infrastructural development are awarded to contractors who live outside of the community. These contractors do not offer employment to any member of the community.

Governance and Administration

1. A code of conduct to restrain politicians from engaging in practices which can incite racial animosity
2. A constituency based Local Government Elections. With the current representation on the city council (based in the previous election), a ward in Georgetown is represented by more than one councilor while other wards might not have any representation.
3. Need for an audit of the City of Georgetown
4. Property taxes have not been increased since 1996, yet there prices of infrastructural materials have increased. This disparity has contributed to the financial crisis of the City Council.
5. There is biased programming on NCN
6. The need for the constitution of a national commission to address the re-distribution of African ancestral lands
7. The erection of a monument at the Parade Ground to mark an aspect of slavery must be given consideration by the Government

Land Distribution

1. Region Four has been excluded from the Central Housing and Planning Land Selection Committee, and by extension, from any decision pertaining to the allocation of house lots or lease lands in Region Four. The other regions have representation on the committee, Region Four should be included as well.

Infrastructure

1. The provision of water by Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI) to many areas in the Region is inadequate, water supply is limited or non-existent.

Education

1. The inadequacies in the education system to deal with low achievers. One teacher said that the curriculum used in the senior secondary schools is also used in schools which were formerly Community High schools, and the content is difficult for those (CHS) students to grasp. Compounded with that she said, is the limited teaching resources and seating accommodation in many of the community schools.
2. The ERC needs to intensify its public education programme on the East Coast as the use of racial slurs is prevalent among school children.

REGION FIVE- MAHAICA BERBICE
NOVEMBER 8, 2007

Commissioners Present:

Bishop Juan A. Edghill
Commissioner L. John P. Willems

Staff Involvement:

1. PRO, Ms. Tusankine English
2. Administrative Assistant, Ms. Esther Robinson
3. Accounts Clerk, Ms. Amanda Ashby

Place Visited: Fort Wellington

Number of meeting Commissioners conducted: (1)

Average attendance: 30

The following is a list of issues raised during the ERC's outreach in Region Five:-

Infrastructure

1. Infrastructural works allegedly do not happen at the same rate in "Afro Guyanese" villages as they do in "Indo Guyanese" villages.

Land Distribution

1. Physical division of the races in specific villages- For example Bush Lot which is predominantly of "Indo Guyanese" and Hope Town, with "Afro Guyanese".
2. One Housing Officer services Region Five and Six. There should be at least one officer for each region given the extent of housing schemes in Regions Five and Six.
3. The need for the establishment of Regional/District Land Selection Committees which should comprise representatives from the parliamentary political parties and civil society.
4. "Afro and Indo Guyanese" seem unwilling to live in new housing schemes where either predominates.

Governance and Administration

1. Contractors who allegedly produce unsatisfactory works are not black listed, but are given additional contracts because they are allegedly politically favoured.
2. The alleged existence of political appointments in the Region- persons who are less qualified, supersede others with higher levels of qualification.

**REGION SIX – EAST BERBICE CORENTYNE
NOVEMBER 6-7, 2007**

Commissioners Present:

Bishop Juan A. Edghill
Commissioner L. John P. Willems
Commissioner Rev. Roy Thakurdial

Staff Involvement:

1. Administrative Officer, Ms. Yvonne Langevine
2. PRO, Ms. Tusankine English
3. Investigative Office, Ms. Cameal Mentore
4. Administrative Assistant, Ms. Esther Robinson

Places Visited: New Amsterdam, Rose Hall, Corriverton

Number of meetings Commissioners conducted: (5)

Average attendance at each meeting: 30

The following is a list of issues raised during the ERC's outreach in Region Six:-

Land Distribution

1. Alleged discrimination in the award of house lots to Afro Guyanese.

Economic Opportunities

1. The cashing of school uniform vouchers allegedly takes place in Indo Guyanese villages only.

Religious Tolerance

2. The predominance of the Muslim religion in Corriverton creates some insensitivity for other religions, Muslim prayers are repeated five times per day through loud speakers and this is inconsiderate to the religious diversity which exists in Corriverton.

REGION SEVEN - CUYUNI MAZARUNI
OCTOBER 31, 2007

Commissioners Present:

Bishop Juan A. Edghill
Commissioner L. John P. Willems

Staff Involvement

1. Administrative Officer, Ms. Yvonne Langevine
2. PRO, Ms. Tusankine English
3. Investigative Office, Ms. Cameal Mentore
4. Finance Officer, Ms. Dawn Callender
5. Administrative Assistant, Ms. Esther Robinson
6. Accounts Clerk, Ms. Amanda Ashby
7. Office Assistant Ms. Roslind Chandra
8. Programme Officer, Ms Anita Dabie

Place Visited: Bartica

Number of meetings Commissioners conducted: (2)

Average attendance at each meeting: 25

The following is a list of issues raised during the ERC's outreach in Region Seven:-

Land Distribution

1. The lengthy delay in the issuance of transport document, even though persons had fulfilled all the prerequisites a number of years ago.

Law and Order

1. Police are allegedly instigating racial tension. It was alleged that the police arrested a man for robbery and physically abused him without first conducting an investigation into the matter.
2. The issuance of fire arm license is allegedly being done in an discriminatory manner.
3. The ERC should undertake a media monitoring exercise to identify instance of racial incitement in the press.
4. The issuance of permission to conduct social event where loud music is being played is being done in a discriminatory manner.

Economic Opportunities/ Equity

1. It was suggested that duty free concession should not only be limited to executive officials in state agencies, but to other levels of employees as well.
2. Uniform vouchers were given out in a discriminatory manner. A resident alleged that families with five children got less vouchers while there were instance in which families with three children got more uniform vouchers.

Employment Practices

3. Employment of retirees in the education sector denies other qualified personnel opportunities, thus forcing them to seek employment outside of Guyana
4. The prevalence of officials who are 'acting' in positions in state agencies. In response to this concern the Chairman said that this matter was raised with the Public Service Commission (PSC) and the ERC was given the assurance that it would have been addressed. He advised that the PSC will be approached again on the issue.

**REGION EIGHT- POTARO SIPARUNI
OCTOBER19-20, 2007**

Commissioner Present:

Bishop Juan Edghill

Staff Involvement:

1. Administrative Officer, Ms. Yvonne Langevine
2. PRO, Ms. Tusankine English
3. Investigative Office, Ms. Cameal Mentore
4. Administrative Assistant, Ms. Esther Robinson

Place Visited: Mahdia

Number of meeting Commissioners conducted: (2)

Average attendance at each meeting: 30

The following is a list of issues raised during the ERC's outreach in Region Eight:-

Economic Opportunities

1. The need for the establishment of a financial institution in Mahdia.
2. A Toshao reported that Amerindians have not access contracts.

Law and Order/Social Issues

1. Amerindian women who married non-Amerindians or 'coastlanders' are marginalised when they return to their communities with their family.
2. The prevalence of deviant behaviour by students of the Mahdia Secondary School
3. The prevalence of human trafficking of minor females by businessmen.
4. The decline of morality among residents, both young and old. There is the prevalence of teenage pregnancy, underage drinking, drug abuse and human trafficking.
5. The need for a Social Worker to be stationed in the community to assist with addressing the number of social problems there.
6. The need for the establishment of a Community Development Council in Region Eight.
7. The need for an institutionalised mechanism in the form of a pledge and similar to the National Anthem, should be drafted and implemented.

**REGION NINE- UPPER TAKATU UPPER ESSEQUIBO
OCTOBER 24-26, 2007**

Commissioner Present:

Bishop Juan A. Edghill

Staff Involvement:

1. PRO, Ms. Tusankine English
2. Senior Accounts Clerk Ms. Nirmala Persaud
3. Administrative Assistant, Ms. Esther Robinson
4. Administrative Assistant, Ms. Audrey Thompson

Place Visited: Lethem

Number of Meetings Conducted: Two (3)

Average Attendance at meeting: (15)

The following is a list of issues raised during the ERC's outreach in Region Nine:-

Land Distribution

1. The need for inter-agency cooperation among institutions responsible for land distribution is important to avoid conflict among land owners.
 - (The Tabatinga area had been occupied by scores of people without land titles for many years. Recently, the Lands and Survey Department surveyed the area and subsequently the Ministry of Housing conducted a standard random selection house lot distribution exercise. Tabatinga was treated as though it was a 'maiden' expansion. Consequently, the house lots that the residents drew are currently occupied by other residents who have already erected permanent structures on the land.)

Governance and Administration

1. The need for lessening of the lengthy bureaucracy in the issue of house lots.

REGION TEN- UPPER DEMERARA UPPER BERBICE
OCTOBER 11-13, 2007

Commissioners Present:

Bishop Juan A. Edghill
Commissioner L. John P. Willems
Commissioner Cheryl Sampson

Staff Involvement:

1. Administrative Officer, Ms. Yvonne Langevine
2. PRO, Ms. Tusankine English
3. Investigative Office, Ms. Cameal Mentore
4. Senior Programme Officer, Mr. Clarence Gravesande
5. Programme Officer, Ms. Shanee Burnette
6. Filing Clerk, Ms. Kimyon Macedo

Place Visited: Mc Kenzie Linden, Ituni, Kwakwani

Number of Meetings Conducted: Two (5)

Average Attendance at meeting: (25)

The following is a list of issues raised during the ERC's outreach in Region Ten:-

Governance and Administration

1. The re-enactment of an employment over-sight committee. The Regional Democratic Chairman felt the council was alienated from employment decisions.
2. The insufficient release of medical resources. In the wake of the tragic accident which claimed several lives, the inability of the region's medical facility to cope with such an emergency was highlighted.
3. In Kwakwani complaints were made about the non-functioning of a committee set up to function as a Neighbourhood Democratic Council. However it was noted that the committee cannot carry out its basic functions, such as collection of garbage, because it is starved of adequate funding.

Land Distribution

1. The issue of land title is being conducted in a way that does not reflect transparency and good-will since in some cases land, especially for agricultural activities, is distributed in a partisan manner.
2. A "letter of promise" issued by the Ministry of Housing to residents who are awaiting land titles is not forthcoming from the Ministry in a timely manner. Lands are being repossessed from residents who cannot afford to build within a certain time frame.

Economic Opportunities

1. LEAP could contribute to economic advancement of the Region by embarking on a Capacity Building programme for small contractors.
2. The discontinuation of the European Union funded programme in Linden, which was brought to the Region to fill the vacuum left by the collapse of Bauxite Industry should be rescheduled since it has not yet had an opportunity to gain a firm footing to propel the Region into economic advancement. There needs to be a mechanism to ensure that it continues after all the problems it encountered in the initial stages, least it be perceived that Linden is being targeted for lack of economic opportunities.
3. There should be a waiver of the pre-qualifier for small contractors seeking access contracts for the first time.
4. Ituni residents spoke of inequitable distribution of forestry concessions between residents of Ituni and foreign companies.

Infrastructure

1. Linden experiences severe erosion yet the necessary funding is unavailable to carry out re-enforcement projects because Linden has not been declared a D& I area. Many years ago representation was made for Linden to be declared a D&I area, but to date, no action has been taken- Chairman Interim Management Committee reports.
2. The non-existence of potable water in Ituni.
3. The need for the main access road to be properly constructed.

Education

1. Ituni students experience difficulties with accommodation in boarding schools in Linden.

ANNEX C

REPORT ON ETHNIC RELATIONS COMMISSION'S CONSULTATION WITH TOSHAOS OCTOBER 23, 2007 GUYANA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE LILIENDALL, EAST COAST DEMERARA

ERC Chairman, Bishop Juan A Edghill said that the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) can facilitate mediation between Toshaos and mining concession holders if there were any disputes concerning Amerindian titled lands.

He was responding to complaints by Toshaos of friction between themselves and miners over lands that are now titled to Amerindian communities at a special consultation the ERC hosted with Amerindian leaders from indigenous communities countrywide, on October 23 last at the International Conference Centre.

The Toshaos said that the new Amerindian Act stipulates that indigenous communities must be given seven percent (7%) of the gross earnings operators derive from mining or logging activities within titled lands; but some are claiming ignorance of this new policy. In the past, miners and loggers operated within their concessions under the jurisdiction of the Guyana Forestry Commission and the Geology and Mines Commission. Now that some areas within which concession holders operate have been titled to Amerindian communities, they fall under the ambit of Toshaos, who are endowed with powers of Rural Constables. Some concession holders, the Toshaos said, opposing their authority and the seven percent royalty that they ought to pay to Amerindian communities.

In his response to these concerns, the ERC Chairman stated that one of the functions of the Commission is to provide alternative dispute resolution such as mediation or arbitration. He said in the light of growing hostility between the two groups, mediation is necessary to avoid another area of division among Guyanese groupings.

Minister of Amerindian Affairs, Carolyn Rodrigues, who was present at the consultation sought to clarify her Ministry's position on this matter. She said that some Toshaos approached the Ministry for large expanse of land but such title could not be approved. The Minister said that some Toshaos were uncompromising and it took lengthy negotiations and shuffling back and forth between their communities and the ministry before agreements could have been reached.

In the meantime, she stated, the relevant agencies had given concession to companies or small scale explorers who had applied to begin operations in areas which are now titled to Amerindians. The minister revealed that the provision in the Act for indigenous communities to receive the seven percent royalty was approved by the Geology and

Forestry Commissions and the concession holders were duly informed of the all of the administrative acts and policies which now affect their operations on Amerindian titled lands. “Miners have to respect the Village Council and if this does not happen, they will have to leave,” the Minister cautioned.

In his address to the Toshias, the Chairman stated that the ERC welcomed the opportunity to engage the gathering of Amerindian leaders to bring them up to date on the work of the ERC and listen to the concerns they experience with regard to ethnic relations. He noted that the Amerindian community has always been strong supporters of the work of the ERC, specifically its public education initiatives which it had prioritized as a hallmark to its successful groundings.

The Chairman reminded the Toshias of the Multi-stakeholder Forum (MSF) which he said saw fruitful engagements with many Amerindians across the country, which derived important recommendations for national development. He informed them that a report of the MSF has been handed over to the National Assembly. The Chairman told the leaders that they should lobby for the implementation of the recommendations which were suggested throughout the MSF process.

The role of the Amerindians in developing initiatives to ensure a peaceful 2006 election environment was recognised by the ERC Chairman. He stated that during the first half of 2006, the Commission’s preoccupation was in intensifying its efforts to ensure that the August 2006 election was not marred with violence and ethnic insecurity. “While there was a call for free and fair elections, there was a concern of pre and post election violence,” the Chairman said. “The Amerindian Community played an integral part in fashioning the programmes which assisted in the fostering of a peaceful 2006 elections,” he added.

The Chairman alluded to the researches commissioned by the ERC, mentioning the findings in those areas which directly affected Amerindians. He noted that in the area of economic opportunities, he was heartened to have heard that the Institute of Private Enterprise Development (IPED) was accepting household articles from Amerindians as collateral to access loans.

However, the Chairman stated that the unavailability of commercial banking facilities in many riverain areas is an issue that needs to be addressed for possible change, if there should be a propelling of economic activities in Amerindian communities.

The ERC Chairman noted that the research on the award of contracts did not reveal an institutionalized policy to marginalise any group from the process. He added, however, that the ERC is cognizant of concerns expressed by Amerindian contractors about not accessing contracts. The ERC head said that during its outreach programmes to the regions, the Commission engaged the Regional Executive Officers on this issue and was advised that Amerindian contractors have difficulties accessing contracts because of their inability to access Guyana Revenue Authority Income Tax and NIS compliances.

He said that through lobbying by various stakeholders, a policy was drafted and implemented to remove the necessity of these compliances for Amerindian contractors accessing a first contract. The Chairman encouraged the Toshias to inform the contractors within their respective geographical constituencies of this waiver.

With regard to the research on the award of academic scholarship, the Chairman told the Amerindian leaders that the research has shown that there is no basis for claims of discrimination in the provision of this service.

Referencing the research on land distribution, the ERC head said that while the research has not shown patterns of ethnic discrimination, the Commission is advocating the 'sharing of space'. At this juncture, an interjection was made by a Toshias who was concerned about what he described as an encroachment on Amerindian titled lands by loggers, who seek passage to access their concessions areas. Minister Rodrigues advised the Toshias that the Constitution provides for 'rights of passage' by citizens to any part of Guyana.

Among other concerns expressed by the Toshias was the non-representation of the Amerindian community on the ERC. Responding to this inquiry, the Chairman said that framers of the Constitution which made provision for the establishment of the ERC did not include any political parties or ethnic groups on the Commission. He noted however, that provisions were made for four other non-voting bodies to sit on the Commission namely: the Women and Gender Equality Commission, the Rights of the Child Commission, the Human Rights Commission and the Indigenous Peoples' Commission. The Chairman encouraged the gathering to advocate for the acceleration of these Commissions, specifically, the latter.

In his closing remarks the Chairman stated that it is important for the rights and status of Amerindian people to be preserved. Nevertheless, he said that calls for the right of indigenous people must be coupled with calls for integration. He reiterated the need for 'sharing space' which he said not only relates to land. "There are different cultures in Guyana, so we have to share space, not only to tolerate but it must be elevated to respect," the Chairman said.

Present at the consultation were Prime Minister Samuel Hinds, Minister within the Ministry of Education, Dr. Desrey Fox and Commissioners Cheryl Sampson and Shahabudin Mc Doom, of the ERC.

Giving brief remarks at the forum, Commissioner Sampson alluded to the successful engagements the ERC has had with the Amerindian during its sojourn around the country. She said that she was expectant that the evening's proceedings would be fruitful. Commissioner Shahabudin McDoom expressed appreciation to the leaders for welcoming the other race groups into Guyana, which is indigenous to the Amerindians. This expression of gratitude received a resounding applaud from the gathering.

ANNEX D

NOTES OF THE 2nd MEETING OF THE MSF NATIONAL CONVERSATION WORKING GROUP HELD AT GRAND COASTAL INN LE RESOUVENNIR, EAST COAST DEMERARA JUNE 19, 2007

Present were:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Bishop Juan A. Edghill | - Chairman, ERC |
| 2. Pandit Ramkissoon Maharaj | - Commissioner, ERC |
| 3. Ms. Cheryl Sampson | - Commissioner, ERC |
| 4. Mr. L. John P. Willems- | - Commissioner, ERC |
| 5. Mr. Shaffeek Khan | - Commissioner, ERC |
| 6. Reverend Roy Thakurdial | - Substitute Commissioner, ERC |
| 7. Ms. Christine King | - Chief Executive Officer, ERC |
| 8. Ms. Tusankine English | - Public Relations Officer, ERC |

Members of the Working Group

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Mr. Fitz Duke | - Region # 1 |
| 2. Mr. Rakesh Ramsamooj | - Region #3 |
| 3. Mr. Beni Singh | - Region #4 |
| 4. Mr. Shabbir Ali | - Region #7 |
| 5. Mr. Richard Sinclair | - Region #8 |
| 6. Mr. Eugene Isaac | - Region #9 |
| 7. Mr. Carlos Angel | - Region #10 |
| 8. Mr. Renis Morian | -Region #10 |
| 9. Mr. Hydar Ally | - People's Progressive Party /Civic (PPP/C) |
| 10. Mr. Joseph Hamilton | - People's National Congress /Reform-IG (PNC/R-1G) |
| 11. Mr. Overall Franklin | - GAP /ROAR |
| 12. Mr. Ishmail Muhammad | - The United Force (TUF) |
| 13. Mr. Trevor Williams | -Alliance For Change (AFC) |
| 14. Ms. Kamla Devi Ross | - Women Affairs Bureau |
| 15. Mr. Norman Mc Lean | - Private Sector |
| 16. Mr. Eon Andrews | - Trade Union Congress (TUC) |
| 17. Mr. Kyle Solomon | -Youth Constituency |
| 18. Mr. Lennox King | - Ethnic Based Organization |

GENERAL

The Chairman, Bishop Juan A. Edghill welcomed the Working Group to its second meeting and advised participants that over the two days the agenda will be:

1. A formal Working Group meeting during the first half of the first day and
2. Training in Advocacy sponsored by USAID/GDCCR and facilitated by Ms Bonita Harris for the remaining period.

He said that the main focus of discussion was to find a system of governance which would ensure ethnic harmony and security in Guyana.

The Chairman reminded members of the Working Group that they were asked to discuss this issue with their constituencies and should have come prepared to present a proposal.

He pointed out that the forum was not a decision making one, but rather to continue addressing issues that arose out of the MSF National Conversation. The group, he said, will be talking about what it wants, and hopefully arrive at a common point of understanding of working together for the realisation of the goals of the MSF.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was formally called to order at 9:14 hrs by the Chairman who requested that a moment of silent reflection be observed. Thereafter, members of the working group were asked to introduce themselves and the organisations they represented.

Outlining the procedure of the discussion, the Chairman said that the Commission had agreed that the Working Group would be broken up into smaller groups with each of them comprising representatives of political parties, civil society and regional representatives. The groups were expected to discuss the issue of governance and thereafter, a leader from each group was to report the group's recommendations.

It was the opinion of the representative from the PPP/C, Mr. Hydar Ally that the procedure would not be effective since the only other political party representative present at the time, was from the United Force (TUF).

The Chairman advised that the plan was suggested because the Commission had expected all representatives to be on time. He added that the Commission was not directing but was facilitating the conversation.

After some exchange on the suggestion, it was agreed that there should be an open floor discussion instead.

The Chairman highlighted several issues relative to governance, and disclosed that the Private Sector Commission had already been involved in exploring the area.

Mr. Norman McLean, Private Sector Representative informed the meeting that a number of issues had caught the attention of the Private Sector's Crime and Governance Sub Committee among which were the award of contracts, appointment of the Chancellor and Chief Justice and the voter registration process which he said were all governance issues that were considered sensitive by his organisation.

The Chairman advised that once the issues had been identified and discussed, recommendations that could be suggested to policy makers should follow. He then proceeded to encourage the expression of views from all participants around the table, beginning with the Representative from Region Nine (9), Mr. Eugene Isaacs.

Mr. Isaacs felt that since he was not present at the last meeting and not fully apprised about the topic for discussion, he could not give a regional perspective.

The Region Ten Representative, Mr. Renis Morian noted that from his constituency's perspective, institutions were not allowed to function outside of the political directorate. He gave examples of institutions in other countries such as the United States that are allowed to function independently. In response to the query on how institutions can function devoid of political influence, Mr. Morian suggested the adoption of models from other countries.

TUF representative, Mr. Ishmail Mohammed observed that enforcing of the law was a problem in Guyana. He said that laws were in place but they were not adhered to. In summarising, the Chairman noted the need for laws to be enforced, and for a judicial system that was not affected by political interference.

A SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE THAT PROVIDES ETHNIC SECURITY

In addressing this topic the Group agreed that professionals must be permitted to act free from political interference. The point was made that Government Ministers were expected to put forward policies while it was the responsibility of the professionals to implement them.

The Chairman emphasised the need for public education as it relates to the setting and execution of policies, since it was perceived that the system was not working because of political interference. He opined that there was need for some form of public information that clearly defined the role of politicians and the duty of professionals.

It was felt that there was no need to recommend new laws, but that it was necessary to ensure that the laws already established are made effective.

PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS/REFORM- ONE GUYANA (PNC/R-1G)

PNC/R- 1G Representative, Mr. Joseph Hamilton sought to redirect the focus of the discussion by reminding the group what the topic was. He spoke about

- The recognition that the Westminster system inherited was not working.
- Ethnic groups in the country had major problems of security in various areas; and the perception that the present political system was not working.

Mr. Hamilton then suggested that the website guyanacarribbeanpolitics.com could be browsed for articles by various Guyanese and Caribbean writers on the topic of “governance”. He highlighted articles written by Eusi Kwayana, Kampta Karran, Charles Gittens, Clarence Ellis, Eric Phillips, Dr Prem Misir, Dr. Rupert Roopnaraine, ACDA and the PPP/C.

Mr. Hamilton stated that Guyana was not unique in trying to find ‘a system of governance which would ensure ethnic security’. He argued that all multi-ethnic countries have had to grapple with issues of power sharing, even those with the same ethnic group. He posited that once it was broken down into religion or language, we had to address inclusivity. He gave the example of Lebanon and its diverse religious composition with Jews, Christians and Muslim.

Mr. Hamilton in presenting a definition of power sharing said that it is:-

“Creating conditions for an executive government that includes all the groups whether ethnic, religious or linguistic”

Citing Germany as another example in support of his argument, Mr. Hamilton said that when there were elections in Germany, despite one (1) party gaining the majority of votes, there was an understanding of a coalition government.

Mr. McLean at that point enquired if Article 13 of Guyana’s Constitution made provision for such an arrangement. The PNC/R representative in response said that Article 13 was just a statement, and that there was need for movement beyond Article 13 to commit to a process. He added that much rhetoric was disseminated on this subject matter and it was his view that there needed to be concrete commitment on the issue of shared governance.

He then shared the PNC/R- 1G proposal which speaks to

- Changing the position of Executive President. He said in the alternative arrangement, the President will possess authority to intervene to resolve some of the political complications that might arise from time to time. According to him, the President will essentially function like a “political ombudsman”.
- Seeking to put this type of Government in place will not cause an abandonment of national elections, because it can only be determined who gains the most votes through the election process.
- The party that obtains the most votes will be eligible for the Prime Ministerial position.

The Chairman observed that this arrangement will necessitate some constitutional changes in terms of the procedure for appointing cabinet members and Ministers of government.

Copies of several documents on the topic done by the PNC/R- 1G were later submitted to the ERC.

LABOUR UNIONS

In his contribution to the discussion, the Labour representative, Mr. Ian Andrews said that the Trade Union Congress (TUC) was concerned about:

- A volatile situation that seemed to be developing, that workers have been overworked and underpaid.
- There seemed to be an element of fear among the labour force. Workers were going to work without knowing what was going to happen, especially those working with expatriate companies or powerful companies with political connection. He noted that there was no substantial representation for workers in expatriate companies.

Mr. Andrews said that because of the action of some expatriate companies, the ILO and other international labour conventions were being violated. He added that the Termination of Employment and Severance Pay Act was riddled with discrimination and injustice and that the TUC was pressing for a review of this Act.

The Chairman supported the call for an environment in which fear was eliminated and for conditions of employment that provided security. He said that part of what was creating this fear was how various acts were being interpreted and used to the letter to the benefit of the employer. He then asked for suggestions for the creation of the kind of environment in which workers can feel a sense of security. Mr. Andrews suggested that the ERC should lobby for a sitting of Parliament to review the Termination and Severance Pay Act.

A question was asked about the power of the labour union, regardless of political affiliation.

It was felt that some of the problems faced by the TUC were as a result of the weakening of the labour movement. An example was illustrated regarding sugar workers. It was pointed out that regardless of how close GAWU seemed to be affiliated politically, it commanded power to the benefit of its workers.

Mr. McLean pointed out that whether or not there were new labour laws, there was still need for the exertion of power and unity within the labour movement to make sure that issues were resolved in the interest of workers.

PPP/C representative, Mr. Hydar Ally made reference to the dynamics of the TUC. He said that although GAWU was the largest trade union in Guyana, that union (GAWU) never held the leadership position of the TUC. He suggested a re-examination of the evolution of leadership in the Trade Union Congress.

In response, the labour representative stated that the process of election in the TUC was a democratic one.

GAP/ ROAR

The representative of GAP/ROAR, Mr. Overall Franklin, said that his party's position was that there was

- Need for the Regional System to be strengthened
- Need for a National Development Plan in order that each region could specialise in a development trust
- If the Regional system is allowed to work, the ethnic dilemma will be lessened

ETHNIC BASED ORGANISATIONS

Mr. Lennox King, representing Ethnic Based Organisations expressed concern about the same type of partisan politics existing even within the arrangement of power sharing. He said that there must be an evolution of power from the centre to the local community. It was his view that whatever form of governance was on the table for discussion, it had to be one of equity in which citizens could fully participate to their capacity. He suggested therefore that:

- The evolution of power could begin with Local Government Elections.
- There was need for “decent” fiscal transfers to be given to municipalities to carry out services that cannot be acquired through rates and taxes paid by residents.

The Chairman in supporting the views shared said that rather than a change in the system of governance, there must also be a change in political culture.

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATIVE

Ms Kamla Devi Ross, representing women observed that

- There needed to be a mechanism in place for women in Parliament to represent issues affecting women as a special group.
- Women's representatives in Parliament voted against the nominations for a Women and Gender Equality Commission.

Ms Cheryl Sampson, ERC Commissioner, in response explained that Parliament had sent out a list of nominees for the Women and Gender Equality Commission. She said

that the entire process went through, but it was stalled because of disagreement over the names of persons recommended to serve on the Commission.

The point was made that the Group should not be swayed by the need for equity while ignoring competence. They were advised to avoid a pre-occupation with having equal representation of ethnic and religious groups or gender in institutions, lest the importance of competence is diminished.

ALLIANCE FOR CHANGE (AFC)

The AFC representative, Mr. Trevor Williams, stated that the Westminster system of governance has failed. He stressed the need for a system in which everyone felt that he/she had a contribution to make, and informed the gathering that the AFC was prepared to be part of continued discussion on that 'model'.

He suggested the implementation of the recommendations of the Discipline Services Commission.

The Chairman summarising the discussion stated that in order to have ethnic security, there must be inclusivity and that the independence and integrity of institutions must to be maintained.

YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE

According to the Youth Representative, Mr. Kyle Solomon, youth advocated the strengthening of the Regional Democratic Councils as a mean of giving governance power to the people, and that Article 28:01 should be observed once RDCs were given certain authority.

PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY/CIVIC (PPP/C)

Mr. Hydar Ally, PPP/C representative giving his Party's position from "Towards Inclusive Governance in Guyana" stated that:

- The PPP was open to the discussion on a system of governance which would ensure ethnic security in Guyana, but a convincing effort by all stakeholders was a pre-requisite to continue this process towards inclusivity
- The PPP/C was open minded in its approach to shared governance as suggested by the Opposition
- People must be economically secure. He said that there was need to create an economy that will help the country to grow
- The PPP/C believed that all political parties needed to work together in trust and unity for the greater good of the country

After the presentation, the youth representative asked what had to be done to create the trust suggested by the PPP/C for the creation of a system of governance that ensures ethnic security.

In response, Mr. Ally said that harmony was essential to effect political agreement. He said also that decisions/agreements made at round table discussion must be carried out in all circumstances by the stakeholder. For him, this would create trust and eliminate suspicion.

Mr. Ally promised to submit a copy of the PPP/C document to ERC.

REGIONAL PRESENTATIONS

The following points were noted from presentations by representatives of the undermentioned Administrative Regions.

Region # 1

- Politicians needed to be more accountable to the people and refrain from the blame game.
- There was a need to monitor expatriate companies setting up operations in the administrative regions.
- The residents were asking for at least 50% participation in decision making in the region.

Region #3

- Policies must be agreed upon by all stakeholders before implementation.
- Not only government and men should be involved in Local Government business, everyone needed to be involved since everyone was affected.
- Policies must be agreed upon by all Parties.

Region #4

- There was a lack of interest in citizens' participation and there was need for a change.

Region #7

- Un-employment, lack of opportunities and cost of living were issues affecting the region.
- Need for interest at the grass root level.

Region #8

- The finances of the region were not distributed equally and this needed to be changed.
- There should be a decentralization of authority within the region.
- Re-energizing of people at the community level.

Region #9

- The need for proper legal mechanisms to ensure ethnic security.
- Need for checks and balances in the regions.

Region # 10

- Need for the liberalization of the media in Linden. Residents are forced to view one television station controlled by the Government.
- The workers were disillusioned because of little or no labour representation. Expatriate companies are not recognizing the rights of bauxite workers.

SUMMARY OF GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Need for continued engagement on the issue of a system of governance to ensure ethnic security in Guyana.
2. Manifestation of change in the political culture could be realised at local government elections.
3. There was need for the strengthening of the Regional Democratic System and active civil participation at the NDC level.
4. Fiscal transfers should be proportioned to each region based on a nationally accepted plan of development that would see each region specialising in a development thrust.
5. There was a perception of general malaise/ apathy at the grassroots level and the need for an activity to revitalize and re-invigorate grassroot participation so that citizens could ultimately get involved in managing their own affairs.
6. There were concerns expressed that Article 28:01 had not been working in the manner for which it was intended. As a consequence, government institutions and RDCs were not allowed to function in a manner that was free from political interference.

7. The recognition that there should be some sensitisation in the media about the process of policy making- who was responsible for setting policies and for implementing them, and how the two co-ordinate to ensure that professionalism and integrity at the level of institutions are maintained.
8. If there was to be ethnic security, professionalism of institutions must not be compromised.
9. The creation of a new political culture that allowed for the evolution of power.
10. The need for conducive conditions or environment to allow for the participation or inclusion of all groups.
11. In creating a new political culture, efforts must be made to free the environment of fear and intimidation.
12. Ethnic security must be considered alongside economic security.

Tusankine English

Scribe

**NOTES OF THE 3rd MEETING OF THE MSF
NATIONAL CONVERSATION WORKING GROUP
HELD AT ETHNIC RELATIONS COMMISSION
BOARDROOM
66 PETER ROSE AND ANIRA STREETS QUEENSTOWN
OCTOBER 16, 2007**

Commissioners present were:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Bishop Juan A. Edghill | Chairman, ERC |
| 2. Mr. Carvil Duncan | Labour Constituency Representative |
| 3. Mr. L. John P. Willems | Private Sector Constituency Representative |
| 4. Rev. Roy Thakurdial | Christian Constituency Representatives |
| 5. Ms. Cheryl Sampson | Women Constituency Representative |

Members of the Working Group present were:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| 1. Mr. Fitz Duke | - Region # 1 |
| 2. Mr. Beni Singh | - Region #4 |
| 3. Quacy Henry | - Region #6 |
| 4. Mr. George Moore | - Region #7 |
| 5. Mr. Richard Sinclair | - Region #8 |
| 6. Mr. Eugene Isaac | - Region #9 |
| 7. Mr. Hydar Ally | - People's Progressive Party /Civic (PPP/C) |
| 8. Mr. Joseph Hamilton | - People's National Congress /Reform-IG (PNC/R-1G) |
| 9. Mr. Everall Franklin | - GAP /ROAR |
| 10. Mr. Ishmail Muhammad | - The United Force (TUF) |
| 11. Ms. Kamla Devi Ross | - Women Affairs Bureau |
| 12. Mr. Eon Andrews | - Trade Union Congress (TUC) |
| 13. Mr. Lennox King | - Ethnic Based Organisations |
| 14. Rev. Fitzpatrick Alert | - Christian Constituency |
| 15. Mr. Abu Bakr Haniff | - Muslim Constituency |

The third meeting of the Multi Stakeholder Forum Working Group was called to order at 09:00 hrs by the Chairman of the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), Bishop Juan Edghill, who asked that a moment of silence be observed.

Recapping on the last meeting held on June 19, 2007 at Grand Coastal Inn, the Chairman said that meeting was convened to conduct a formal Working Group session and a workshop which focused on training for lobbying and advocacy. That workshop was sponsored by the USAID and facilitated by GDCCR Consultant Ms. Bonita Harris.

The Chairman stated that the Commission received favourable reports from USAID on the workshop. He asked members of the Group to provide their feedback. GAP/ROAR representative, Mr. Everall Franklin along with the Women's Representative, Ms Kamla Devi Ross stated that the workshop was informative. They also commended Ms. Bonita Harris for a job well done.

Referring to the formal Working Group session of the June 19, 2007 meeting, the Chairman stated that the Group continued the discussion on *a system of governance to ensure ethnic security in Guyana*. He said that the PNC/R-1G and the PPP/C had submitted their party's proposal on the subject, which were circulated to all the members of the Group.

Continuing his recap, the Chairman added that the Group felt that there was a good system at the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) level of the Local Government structure, which must be allowed to work free from political interference. In addition, he said, there were concerns expressed about streamlining the role of policy makers and those who are supposed to implement policies.

The Chairman noted that the Group had agreed that instead of changing structures that are in place for good governance, there should be strengthening of the systems.

He also examined the 12-point summary outlined in the report of the June 19, 2007 meeting.

Pointing to the Group's suggestions that DIFID be approached for assistance in fashioning a programme for the enhancement of the Local Government structure, he revealed that the Commission contacted that organisation's head who indicated that it was formulating a programme for the Local Government Elections. The Chairman added that he had informed DIFID's head of the Working Group's recommendation that there should be a Public Education initiative to inform citizens on how to participate effectively in the Local Government systems.

He inquired whether the Group would be interested in working along with DIFID to develop a strategy for such a programme or whether it should be done solely by the ERC. Responding to the Chairman's inquiry, Mr. Franklin noted that the suggestion for a public education programme was "a good idea". However, he said, the Local Government system was undergoing reforms, so the timing of the public education programme may have to be deferred until all reforms have been completed at the legislative level.

The Chairman queried from the PPP/C representative how soon the Local Government Reform would be completed. Mr. Hydar Ally responded that the completion of the legislation was within the ambit of the Guyana Elections Commission and not the PPP/C. He noted, however, that the Party was not satisfied with GECOM's pace.

Shifting focus, Mr. Ally said he was unclear about two things 1) what was the objective of the meeting, and 2) the general mandate of the Group. In an attempt to provide clarity, he suggested that the Group needed to develop clear guidelines and timelines on the way forward so as to propel the recommendations and suggestions which were brought to the fore during its previous meetings.

Responding to Mr. Ali, the Chairman said that one of the focuses of the Group was to agree on the various views on the topic, *a system of governance which will ensure ethnic security in Guyana*. He said PNC/R has proposed 'shared governance' while the PPP/C had said that 'inclusive governance' will guarantee ethnic security in Guyana. In addition, the Chairman noted that the documents outlining the parties' proposals had been circulated among the Groups and it should have been studied by each member to determine where PNC and PPP positions differ and where they agree.

The Chairman added that once the Group had concluded the discussion on the parties' proposals, efforts should be made to approach international partners for technical help to fashion the system of governance which all could find acceptable.

Mr. Ali sought to caution the Group about being too preoccupied with the issue of ethnic insecurity. Surrounding the discussion on a suitable system of governance, he said, was the assumption that there is ethnic insecurity in Guyana, but according to reports from the researches the ERC commissioned; this may not necessarily be the case, at least in any institutionalized manner. The PPP/C representative added that there was an inherent assumption of such a problem as if it was a fact, but it was not substantiated scientifically.

Before responding to that point, the Chairman clarified the specific areas which the Group had consensus at the last meeting:-

1. The electoral system currently in place does not augur well for Guyana
2. When elections are completed, some people who feel dissatisfied and marginalized
3. There is perception of ethnic mobilisation during elections

In addition to the Chairman's clarification, PNC/R 1 G's representative, Mr. Joseph Hamilton, reminded the Group that it was given a mandate at the National Conversation. He said that all of the representatives expressed dissatisfaction with the system of governance presently in place. According to him persons pointed out issues of discrimination, stagnation and economic marginalisation. Mr. Hamilton added that based on the recommendations forwarded to address those issues, a committee was formed to discuss and develop proposals for a system of governance which will benefit the entire Guyanese population.

Responding to Mr. Hamilton's points, the Chairman said that there were strong feelings expressed against the system of governance currently in place but it was not the opinion of everyone at the National Conversation.

At this juncture, Mr. Franklin inquired from the PPP/C representative whether the government was interested in bettering the system of governance currently in place. He said Mr. Ali's questioning whether ethnic insecurities really exist lend to the assumption that the PPP/C was not interested in improving the governance structure.

Speaking on behalf of the ruling party, Mr. Ali said, that the PPP/C believed that there is room to build bridges of national reconciliation. He added that the Party has always been in the forefront of the search for political solutions of the issues which affect the populace.

Mr. Ali referred to the Constitutional Reform Committee which is tasked with exploring constitutional changes to foster unity in Guyana. "While the Group is seeking to sound its voice on these issues, it ought to recognise that at the highest level of Parliament there is a committee mandated by the Constitution to continue the search for political solutions to the problems the country faces, including issues of social security", he said.

Against that backdrop, Christian Constituency representative, Mr. Fitz Alert, asked the Chairman whether the deliberations by the Group were useless, given what Mr. Ali said about the functions of the Constitutional Reform Committee. The Chairman said that he did not agree that the deliberations of the Group were futile. He added that from those deliberations a report will be presented to the National Assembly.

Seeking to propel the discussion, the representative of the United Force, Mr. Ishmail Muhammad said that the discussion on a system of governance should not be lengthened by "going backward and forward" but the group should work with what it had. The Chairman noted that sometimes in order to achieve goals, vacillating was necessary. He added that the issues which had kept the discussion from moving forward nationally were that of trust and fear concerning how shared or inclusive governance can work. "I think we should have the patience and hear each other through. The countries that have come to important agreements took years- some of them decades, so don't let us give up too quickly," the Chairman advised.

Mr. Franklin interjected that in order for the process to move forward, the PNC/R needed to have the gumption to admit that it was responsible for some wrong doings of the past and apologise for them. He added that the party's call for shared governance was as a result of losing three consecutive elections. The question which should be addressed by the PNC/R, Mr. Franklin said, was whether the call for shared governance was out of frustration or a genuine desire for the good of the country.

"Once we are honest, then we can move forward with this issue," Mr. Franklin said. But, the PPP/C also has a responsibility to put out a categorical position on the matter, after so many years in government, he added.

The Chairman summarised an extract from page three of the PPP/C's document which stated that, it has always sought to address the issue of ethnic insecurity, especially during the PNC administration. "During this period, the PPP continually sought unity and

explored proposal to generate ethnic security and the generation of democracy,” the document states.

The Chairman said there was a perception that once the PPP/C was ruling, it would look after the interest of the Indians, but the Party claims that it has the interest of all Guyanese at heart. The same perception would hold if the PNC was in government, he said. “Because of how these Parties are made up, there is an ethnic security question,” he added.

The Chairman said at the National Conversation, the question was asked whether any of the Parties would admit that it was ethnic based and the answer was a resounding no. Nevertheless, the Chairman noted that the positions of the Parties on governance needed to be discussed; specifically, whether power must be shared at the executive level as the PNC/R position stated or the PPP/C’s perspective.

Region Nine representative, Mr. Eugene Isaacs suggested an alternative to shared governance. He stated that there should be a mutual body autonomous from the parties and it should make up the National Assembly.

Mr. Lennox King interjected that unless the two major Parties acknowledge that they are ethnically based, and desist from purporting that they are national parties, no affirmative action can be taken on the issue of shared governance. He added that the leaders of these Parties have to stop instilling fear in their constituencies for votes. “We have a window of opportunity now where we can be magnanimous- move forward and decide where we want to go and if we are truly interested in seeing this country moving forward,” Mr. King stated.

“People don’t want to admit without the other coming up to the wheel”, the Chairman responded. He then asked if there can be synonymous acceptance by the PPP/C and the PNC/R that they both contributed to the ethnic dilemma the country faces.

Mr. Franklin responded that such a question was pertinent, but it must be properly structured and put to both Parties for a direct response. “Politically, it would not be expedient for either Party to beat around because there are other players in the field that would capitalise on that contradiction ... It would be a good time now to present that question- I think that will help the process,” he stated.

The Guyanese people, the Chairman noted, at many of the Neighbourhood Conferences of the MSF asked for national reconciliation. Some pointed to the South African example, he revealed. Responding to this, the PNC/R representative stated that his Party would welcome a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He said in the case of South Africa, it was not the Nationalist Party (the opposition) that put forward the proposal for ‘truth and reconciliation’; it was the party in government. “While persons may purport that the opposition may be unwilling to go through such a process, it is the State that has to put it in motion financially and structurally,” Mr. Hamilton stated.

Seeking to obtain a definitive affirmation from Mr. Hamilton, the Chairman asked if the state should begin a process of national reconciliation, would the PNC would support such a measure. Mr. Hamilton responded that the PNC has called for the Truth Commission, but unless the Party that controls the State's purse puts a structure in place, it would not happen.

The Chairman also asked Mr. Ali, what was the PPP/C's position on this topic, but he said his Party did not have an official view. The Chairman then inquired whether he would take the responsibility of going back to his Party for its view on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and he responded favourably.

At this juncture, Mr. Hamilton revealed that the Constitutional Reform Committee had not met in six years. The Chairman suggested that the opposition call for a meeting of the Committee.

Against this backdrop, Mr. Franklin said that during his tenure as a parliamentarian, he heard both Parties expressing feelings of alienation from 'the process'. He said that the PPP/C took to the cane fields when the economy was about to take off under the PNC administration because they did not feel apart of 'the process'. "It is the same thing the PNC/R is complaining about now", Mr. Franklin said.

Stating that the PPP/C must admit that it made some agreements under duress, he noted that the ideal was a process that can be guided not by pressure or what he described as '*ungovernability*' but by best interest of Guyana."

Is it political wisdom to force someone to agree to something because of the need for peace? the Chairman asked.

Guiding the Group's attention back to the discussion on Local Government Reform, the Chairman noted that it had agreed that the RDC system was a model for other countries to emulate- all that was needed was the strengthening of structures to allow it to function more efficiently.

Mr. Franklin noted that alongside the strengthening of RDC system, there must a mechanism for decisions made at that level to influence the policies which the executive government set. "Even if we have a perfect regional system, we still have to have that power to influence what happens at the executive level and that is where the political scientists can band their heads together to see how that can work," he said.

At this juncture, Mr. Ishmail suggested a re-examination of the Local Government system which was formed in 1980. He said the country was in transition from a Co-operative Republic to capitalism to socialism. However, there are vestiges of a Co-operative Republic, according to the 1980 Constitution. "The top has changed while the bottom remains, so we are finding some difficulties," Mr. Muhammad posited.

The Chairman thereafter redirected the Group's focus to concrete measures for the strengthening of the Regional systems.

In response, Mr. Franklin said that through a nation wide consultative process, a National Development Strategy (NDS) was agreed upon. Others in the Group noted that there was a document so named. Mr. Franklin continued that the nation needed to decide how it would develop and what vehicles should be used to facilitate that development outlined in the NDS. When that was accomplished, then there should be decisions made concerning areas of specialization for each region, he added.

The Chairman said Chapter 28:01 stated how the local government structure should be formulated. Outlining its structure, he said, there is an elective council that is made up of Councillors who obtain their seats based on proportional representation. The Councillors meet and vote for the Chairman who shall be considered the political head of the regional administration.

At one time he said, the Regional Chairman was apart of the National Congress for Local Democratic Organs, these along with two other organs completed the 65 seats in Parliament. There was a change of that system so that parliamentarians are now chosen from the gazetted list each Party puts up before general elections, he added. He asked the Group if it thought that there should be a review of the previous system.

The Chairman continued that apart from the elected officials, there is the administrative arm headed by the Regional Executive Officer (REO), appointed by the Minister of Local Government.

Against this backdrop, Mr. Hamilton opined that the weakness of the RDC rested in the appointment of the administrators by a political figure. "If you have a political system where someone else controls the administrative arm, all you have is form without substance," he stated.

"The local government system was never allowed to work because of the political interference of the central government," Mr. Hamilton said. He offered that there needed to be the establishment of a Local Government Commission (LGC) responsible for the appointment of personnel within the RDC. "If we don't do that all the nice things in Chapter 28:01 means nothing," he said.

Mr. Hamilton said that the proposals for Local Government Reform did not take into consideration how officers within the RDC administrative arm are to be appointed and the LGC would only have oversight over the municipalities and the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils, according to the proposals for the Local Government Reform. In addition, he said, there was no catering for fiscal transfers change to affect the RDC. The regional administrative arm RDC is totally excluded from Local Government Reform, Mr. Hamilton.

The Chairman asked Mr. Ali to comment on this and he said there were some new measures in the Local Government Reform. For instance, he said, fiscal transfers will be done through a more scientific method. Another reform measure, he said, has to do with the elected officials. For the first time, persons are going to be elected to the local democratic council based on the constituency model rather than party representation in Parliament- 50% of the councillors will be elected based on the constituency model, Mr. Ali added.

“These measures, to my mind are very significant in the area of Local Government Reform which would further democratize the Local Government system.

At this juncture, Mr. Hamilton re-emphasised that the task force which was established to address Local Government Reform, did not affect the Regional Democratic Council (RDC). He noted that the system cannot be strengthened unless there was some autonomy over its finances.

Chairman sought to find out why framers of the Reform did not include the RDC, but Mr. Hamilton said he could not provide an answer. But he emphasized that the regional system cannot be strengthened without autonomy of fiscal transfers. He added that even though the Act stipulated autonomy, permission has to be granted by the Minister of Local Government.

Mr. Ali then sought to redirect the focus of the meeting noting that there needed to be a way of creating a strong economy.

The Chairman interjected that he asked for concrete proposals for the strengthening of the regional systems.

Mr. Ali noted that was not being done since all the issues of the local government system led to rhetorical discussions. Again, he shifted the focus of the discussion to the creation of economic wealth, the absence of which, he posited, was the reason for Guyana’s ethnic dilemma. “We have to focus on creating wealth because that is the basis of any insecurity,” Mr. Ali posited.

The Chairman responded that the prospect of economic adventurism and prosperity that is coming to Guyana makes it necessary for the State and the ruling party to advance this discussion on how all Guyanese could feel included in the ‘economic pie’.

Mr. Ali stated that there was no deliberate attempt by the PPP/C administration to discriminate and marginalise any group of the population. He further noted that there were perceptions of ethnic discrimination which had no basis on reality and asked that perception be addressed.

The Chairman stated that the ERC had dealt with the issue of perception by commissioning research in five areas which were plagued with claims of discrimination.

Mr. Ali noted that he was aware of the research reports and encouraged the Group to familiarise themselves with the information.

At this point Mr. Hamilton interjected stating that according to an article which appeared in the Stabroek News papers (pg. 4, 16/10/07), gossip was more powerful than truth. This reference evoked much laughter among the group.

The ERC Chairman noted that it was his opinion that the government had no policy of discrimination. He agreed that the major issue, as Mr. Ali noted, was 'perception'. "While somebody may know about an incident, or an issue, I think when you are dealing with the State, you have to ask, is it centrally directed? Is it based upon policy? Is the policy of State agency discriminatory? the Chairman questioned. "What do we need to do in a magnanimous way to show that people are going to be included?" he continued. "We need to have the political will to move in that direction", the Chairman suggested.

At this juncture, Labour Representative, Mr. Eon Andrews asked about ratification of changes made in the Constitution.

The Chairman noted that the old constitution was examined by the Constitutional Reform Commission, which traversed the country harnessing recommendations for changes to it. He continued that there were some agreements for immediate changes while others needed further deliberations and it was the task of the Constitutional Reform Select Committee to continue that process, but the meeting heard that the process had stopped, the Chairman noted.

Reverting to the issue of inclusivity in the 'economic pie', Mr. Fitz Alert stated that there was a perception that the administration believed that it was the owners of the State. Therefore, he suggested that there should be checks and balances, which are enshrined in the Constitution to tighten what he described as a "loose system."

He added that the Group has an opportunity to make recommendations for systemic changes, after discussing the inadequacies in governance. The Chairman asked the Group to document in writing, after consulting with their constituencies, what are their recommendations for changes to make the local government and RDC systems more effective, as well as central government. These recommendations should be sent into the ERC for discussion at the next meeting, the Chairman stated.

He then asked Mr. Hamilton to summarily outline his Party's position on *the system of governance to ensure ethnic security in Guyana*. Before exploring the PNC/R's position, Mr. Hamilton referred to a statement made by Mr. Lennox King's stating that the major parties must admit that their constituencies are ethnically based. He conceded that while the PNC/R is a national Party, it had accepted the notion that large support came from the Afro-Guyanese community.

Referring to the Party's position on the *system of governance to ensure ethnic security*, he said that the PNC/R did not have a policy paper on shared governance, but it had

allowed its members to present papers on ‘Executive Power Sharing’ at the onset of Constitutional Reform process.

Mr. Hamilton continued that the PNC/R made deliberate efforts to place persons of other ethnic groups in key positions to engender feelings of ethnic security among persons who are not traditionally supportive of the Party. However, this strategy did not have the desired effect, he said.

To support the point, he made reference to, Mr. Odinga Lumumba and Minister Henry Jeffrey who are both African Guyanese, but perceivably do not have their support because of the former affiliation with the ruling party. “This is fundamental to the argument. It is not a face or a look; it is how psychologically people were brought up over the past 50 years. Unless you are at Freedom House or Congress Place, you are not representing my interest,” he stated, referring to the perception.

The Chairman asked Mr. Hamilton whether he thought that perception had changed but he responded that there was no evidence to support such a change. He referred to the ‘ballot box psychology’ in which people are opened to vote favourably for another Party, but when they enter the ballot box, place they mark next to the symbol which represents the Party made of up persons from their ethnic origin.

“It is against this backdrop, that one must attempt to construct a political system where ethnic groups see their representative in an executive position, since Local Government does not carry the political clout as Central Government in the minds of the populace”, Mr. Hamilton stated.

The PNC/R’s suggestion for an alternative system of governance was removing of the executive presidency, he added. The alternative an individual who would act as a referee, Mr. Hamilton said, so that all sides would have the confidence that the person would be objective.

The Chairman asked what process would be employed to elect such a person and Mr. Hamilton said that a list of approximately six persons can be nominated by civil society for a final selection of one. The term which could be used to describe this method, he said, was a Consensually Selected President.

“Of course Parliament would have to ratify the legal framework for such an arrangement” Mr. Hamilton said.

In summary he said, the PNC/R propose a division of the Head of State and Head of Government. The latter, Mr. Hamilton said would be decided through the normal electoral process.

Women representative, Mrs. Kamla Devi Ross observed that the Constitution does not provide for the alternative system of governance the PNC/R was suggesting. Mr. Hamilton agreed that these arrangements would have to come into effect by Constitutional changes.

He noted that in the PNC/R's proposal, competitive politics would remain through General Election and all the Parties that get 10% would form the government. The ministerial positions, he said, would be based on electoral allocations as a result of poll performance.

However, the Parliamentarians must be empowered to represent constituencies; not Party interest. The debate and deliberations of issues should not be based on the 'party whip' but upon how it affects the people they represent, he added.

In response to Mr. Hamilton's representation, Mr. Ali noted that his ideas were interesting and he commended him for "thinking outside the box", which he said was what the country needed to move forward.

However, the PPP/C representative posited that one must not try to impose a solution to the problems which exist in Guyana from an academically contrived approach. He noted that democracy must be seen as an evolving process and further, ethnic security must not be the only driving force for changes in system of governance.

Continuing, he said, there needed to be a paradigm shift in the way in which race and ethnicity were conceptualised since the terms were often confused.

Mr. Ali said that the PPP/C had always been preoccupied with good governance that promoted national well being and bridged the ethnic divide. He said that an analysis of history would prove that the PPP/C, particularly in the 60s, was at the forefront of the call for national unity and coalition politics.

The major stumbling block to political partnership, Ali posited, was trust. He said that despite of inter-party dialogue, the two main parties had not been able to resolve the issue of trust. "What is necessary at this stage is confidence building and it is the prerequisite for an elevation on the discussion on a system of governance which will ensure ethnic security in Guyana" Mr. Ali said.

"We believe without trust, suspicion will continue, motives will be questioned, policies will be judged on distorted criteria, the allocation of resources will always be followed by allegation of party politics and it will be difficult to arrive at agreements," he added.

More positively, he noted, the country had come "a long way from the 60s" as it relates to putting 'checks and balances' in place in the area of governance. "Very few countries in the Caribbean have that checks and balances at the Parliamentary level and the room for consultation with the opposition," he said. "There is need for further exploration on how we can bring the people together and the system of governance which will make that happen, but the prerequisite to all of this is confidence and good faith," Mr. Ali continued.

Unfortunately, he said, the ruling Party's experience with the main opposition has not inspired the level of confidence needed to move the process forward.

The Chairman inquired whether the PPP/C would be prepared to engage the PNC/R in bilateral discussions on this matter and Mr. Ali noted that it was ongoing; not specifically on the issue of shared governance but on other fundamental issues which affect the governance of the country.

Mr. Alert asked whether the ERC can give the two Parties a dead line when they can advance the discussion, but the Group agreed that such a demand did not fall within Commission's mandate. The Chairman responded that the fast tracking of discussion was based on the political climate and not on stringent time frames.

Mr. Beni Singh suggested that there should be efforts to engender the grass root unity and that would add pressure on policy makers to legislate and implement measures of good governance.

Referring the PPP/C and the PNC/R's presentation, Substitute Commissioner representing the Christian Constituency Reverend Roy Thakurdial noted that there were areas of consensus, particularly the need for reconciliation. He was interested in determining how the Working Group can advance the process of national reconciliation. The Commissioner suggested that the Group should peruse past as well as contemporary documents which speak to this issue and identify a common thread. He continued that politicians needed to have the courage to 'come to the table' and accept culpability for past, responsibility for the present and pledge to move forward through reconciliation.

Speaking after Rev Thakurdial, Mr. King asked Mr. Ali to suggest how the prerequisite trust, which he emphasised in his presentation was necessary to move any political coalition forward, could be achieved.

Mr. King referred to the 1950s when political leaders fought together against what he described as a 'common enemy', but after gaining Independence, he said, they started fighting each other.

Mr. Ali agreed that the fight for independence did engender a deep sense of unity among the leaders of that time. However, he noted, that the nation still had common enemies: poverty, HIV, and unemployment.

"We have to create opportunities for our young people to have decent lives. We have to try to create a stable environment that will allow investors to come and create wealth in this country," Ali said. "Too often people recognise that we have political instability, fragmentation in the politics, fear, tension and that is a disincentive for people to come and invest. We have to raise the investment profile of this country and to do that, we have to have the two major political Parties talking the same language," he emphasised.

Seeking to propel to discussion to the level of the National Assembly, the Chairman asked Mr. Hamilton whether the PNC/R's proposal was brought to the attention of the CRC or the Select Committee of Parliament. Mr. Hamilton responded that members of the Party presented various papers which speak to the issue to the CRC. The Chairman

clarified that he asked the question because he was cautious that the issues raised in the discussion did not “fall by the wayside.”

The Chairman suggested that the Group should write to the Speaker of the National Assembly informing him of the discussion so that a process could be strategised. At the same time, he said, the Group could take the opportunity to forward the proposals for the strengthening of the local government systems.

At this juncture, Mr. Ali interjected that rather than the ERC taking what he described as a “quantum leap”, the political Parties must be given the opportunity to crystallise their positions and advance the discussion among themselves.

On the other hand, Mr. Hamilton posited that the ERC would not be stepping outside its mandate if it wrote the Speaker of the National Assembly concerning the non-functioning of the Constitutional Reform Select Committee. However, he agreed with Mr. Ali that the ERC should allow the political Parties to have their own bilateral discussion on the issue.

Mr. Eugene Isaacs noted that the PNC/R can force the government hands on issues that affect its constituency. However, he stated that the Amerindians were not represented by any one political Party, hence his call for a Nationalist Party.

Interjecting with another issue, Mr. Alert noted that the appointment of senior members of a political Party as Permanent Secretary heightens the level of fear and ethnic insecurity. Mr. Hamilton added that once political activists were put in positions to implement established legislations, there was likely to be problems.

The Chairman noted that the appointment of political activists to Permanent Secretary positions was not a recent development. However, he noted, there was now a more overt manner in which it was done.

Mr. Hamilton responded that while he agreed with the Chairman, a situation in which political activists oversee legislative functions was not a desirable ideal.

Representative of the Muslim Constituency opined that it was necessary to mobilize ‘grass root’ -participation, adding that this should complement any political activism. He further noted that the creation and distribution of wealth should not be seen as a primary means of dissolving the ethnic insecurity which exists in Guyana.

On this premise, Mr. Isaacs suggested that there should be the establishing of a legal language to provide for the equitable distribution of resources.

At this juncture the Chairman reverted to a point discussed earlier concerning the insecurity citizens feel once they do not perceive their race was in a position of authority to represent their cause. He asked Mr. Hamilton specifically, how what he described as the ‘cycle of suspicion’, should be addressed, particularly among the African Guyanese community.

In the first instance, Mr. Hamilton said, religious leaders have the responsibility of providing faith based teaching to influence a sense of morality among Guyanese. Referring to “Afro Guyanese”, he said that they need to desist from blaming “Indo Guyanese” and the PPP/C for their plight but “call the influential African men into account”.

Mr. Alert interjected that every person must be called into account regardless of his or her race. However Mr. Hamilton noted that he made that statement based on the specificity of the Chairman’s question.

The meeting closed after Mr. Ishmail opined that there was need to revamp the electoral system from that of Proportional Representation to a constituency based one.

Tusankine English

Scribe

**ANNEX E
COMPLAINTS - 2007**

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
1.	Anonymous	Strata Gold Tassawani, Barima River North West District	12-01-07	Complaint of discrimination against Amerindian workers and unsafe sexual behaviour by men and women on the site and requests an investigation.	By virtue of Rule 2(1) (b) of the Rules of Procedure of Complaints being anonymous, the ERC was unable to proceed with investigations. Closed.
2.	Hamilton Green	Mayor City of Georgetown Regent Street Georgetown	26-01-07	He complained of a publication made in the ICC/CWC 2007 Cricket Manual reflecting a distinct Indian fusion of the West Indian and the East Indian Cultures and suggested that the publication is discriminating of other cultures pertinent to Guyana.	Letter of complaint was acknowledged. Mr. Green was requested to send a copy of the reply he received from the CEO/CWC. This was done The CEO/CWC apologized for the publication made. A report was submitted to the CEO. The complaint was closed on 20-06-07.
3.	Eric Benjamin	Lot 574 Section A Block X Diamond Housing Scheme EBD	29-01-07	Complained about discrimination meted out to him by Surendra Rawat, an Indian National working at Gafoor's Shopping Mall.	Private Legal Action was taken in the High Court. As a result, the ERC could not proceed. File closed on 6-07-07.
4.	Ras Ian	Guyana Rastafarian Council Lot 129 Orange Walk, Bourda, Georgetown	12-02-07	He complained that on 3-01-07 members of the City Constabulary, discriminated against members of the Rastafarian Community at Merriman's Mall, Georgetown.	Letter of complaint acknowledged. A statement was taken from him and the complaint was forwarded to the Town Clerk, Georgetown for comments. The Town Clerk replied on 7 th January, 2008.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
5.	Police Constable 18666 Clive Rodney	Suddie Police Station	12-02-07	He complained that the Commander of 'G' Division, Essequibo of the Guyana Police Force was discriminating against him because he was a Muslim and wears Muslim dress on duty.	Complaint was acknowledged. By letter a copy of the complaint was sent to the Commissioner of Police for comments. A report was received from him and based on that Rodney was written and the matter was closed on 30-05-07.
6.	Azim Ally	Lot 38 Friendship Village Corentyne, Berbice	26-02-07	His son Abid Ally aged 16 years; student of Corentyne Comprehensive High School was sent home by the Head Teacher and suspended for an indefinite period because he wore a beard in keeping with his Muslim custom. He felt that he was discriminated against because of his religion.	Letter of complaint acknowledged. The complaint was sent to the REO Region # 6. A meeting was held with the Commission, Head Teacher and Staff of the Ministry of Education at the school to resolve the matter. From the meeting a decision was taken for Abid Ally to return to school. Filed closed on 28/06/07.
7.	Guytree Goolsarran	Lot 79 Jasmine Street, Eccles, East Bank Demerara	01-03-07	She complained of racial discrimination and breaches in the Theoretical Examination for a Drivers License.	The complaint was forwarded to the Commissioner of Police, the Traffic Officer and the Police Complaints Authority for comments. A report was received, but the complainant was unable to attend a meeting scheduled by the ERC. She later sent a letter requesting no further action, hence the file was closed on 07-01-08.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
8.	Clyde Persaud	Lot 11 Crescent Road Timehri EBD	08-3-07	Complained that his neighbour, Abiola Barker abused his wife Debra Jeffery much to her annoyance. He would like her to be warned.	He was advised that his complaint did not fall under the ERC's mandate and that he must report to the Police for necessary action to be taken. File closed on 08-06-07.
9.	Ivor Melville	Lot 40 Second Avenue Bartica	09-03-07	He complained that he was discriminated against because of his religion by Mr. Dave Persaud aka Dave Scott who put Abeer on his face without his consent and also abused him.	The matter was investigated. A settlement was reached between the parties who submitted a sworn affidavit signed by a Justice of Peace, requesting no further action. File closed on 25-06-07.
10.	Perry Birbal	Lot 9 Melville, Wakenaam Essequibo River	23- 03- 07	Maria Johanna, Wakenaam was flooded between 28-02-06 and 01-03-06. Cash crops, live stocks and house hold items were damaged. Zeelandia was also flooded. East Indians lived at Zeelandia, while Africans lived at Maria Johanna. He received information that Regional Authorities were paying flood relief monies to the Zeelandia residents and not to those in Maria Johanna.	Legal Officer advised that there was no empirical evidence available to prove discrimination. Birbal was written and also encouraged to continue to be vigilant and make complaints when necessary. File closed on 04-01-08.
11.	Gita Narine	Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security. Water and Cornhill Streets Georgetown	23-03-07	She asked the ERC to request of the Minister a transfer for her, based on domestic grounds.	This request was forwarded to the Minister. To date, no response was received. Enquiries continuing.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
12.	Zabeda Ally	Lot 457 Church Street, Enterprise, East Coast Demerara	23-03-07	She complained against the Head Mistress Ms. Olive Daw, Bladen Hall Multilateral School, who she alleged discriminated against her daughter, Mrs. Bibi Nazreen Kisseur who was running the canteen at the school.	Complaint acknowledged. The matter was investigated and the Legal Officer advised that the complaint did not fall under the jurisdiction of the Commission. Bibi Zabeda Ally was written to that effect. Information was also received that the matter is presently in Court. The Commission can no longer pursue the complaint because it is before the court. File closed on 18-12-07.
13.	Robert Archer	Tranquility Hall Mahaica. East Coast Demerara.	28-03-07	Complained of wrongful dismissal by GPL on the grounds of racial discrimination	Complaint acknowledged. It was sent to GPL for comments. A reply was received. Mr. Archer was written on June 5 th , 2007 for further evidence but he did not respond. He later informed the ERC that he was desirous of taking his matter to the Court. ERC can no longer pursue the matter; hence the file was closed on 20-12-07.
14.	Manuel Sammy	Diamond, East Bank Demerara.	28-03-07	Complained of wrongful dismissal by GPL on the grounds of racial discrimination.	Complaint acknowledged. It was sent to GPL for comments. A reply was received. Mr. Sammy was written on June 5 th , 2007 for additional evidence. A reply was received from him.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
15.	Peter Mc Almont	Lot 86 Brush Dam Friendship Village, East Coast Demerara.	03-04-07	He complained that he was discriminated against on racial grounds by the Ministry of Housing who asked him to remove from the land that he had occupied for years.	Complaint acknowledged. Copy of the complaint was forwarded to the Ministry. A response was received and Mc Almont was written. File closed on 13-08-07.
16.	Maureen Ann Bynoe	Kildonan Village Corentyne Berbice	03-04-07	Complained that she was discriminated against on racial grounds by the Education Administration of Region # 6, when she applied for the position of Education Officer Region # 6. She was offered a similar post in another Region.	Her complaint was acknowledged. It was sent to the Ministry of Education; Teaching Service Commission and the Chairman Region # 6 for comments. No response received to date.
17.	Richard Amsterdam	Angoy's Avenue New Amsterdam, Berbice.	09 -04- 07	He wrote a letter in which he spoke of discrimination, alienation and separation. He did not say by whom, when, where or what he was complaining about.	Complaint acknowledged. He was advised that his letter did not satisfy Rule 3 (d), (e) and (f) of the procedure of the Commission. The matter was closed on 26-06-07.
18.	Coretta Remington	46 Bent Street Werk-en-Rust Georgetown	12-04-07	Complained that she was denied promotion to a Class Two Clerk and is citing racial discrimination.	Complaint acknowledged. A letter was sent to her for further comments. She did not respond. After not hearing from her, the matter was closed on 09-06-07.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
19.	Mahadeo Gopie	Lot 71 Glasgow Housing Scheme East Bank Berbice	12-04-07	He complained that he was discriminated against because of his race by the Station Officer, of the Fire Station, New Amsterdam. Berbice.	Complaint acknowledged. Investigations were carried out. The Minister of Home affairs and the Fire Chief were written on the matter. Report was received from Mr. Lawrence David, DSM, Chief Fire Officer. The report states that the complainant was very indisciplined. As such he was written and told that his matter fell outside the Commission's mandate. File closed on 26-06-07.
20.	Sookhwa	Lot 2, Cotton Tree Village, West Coast Berbice	17-04-07	He complained about discrepancies with his bank account at N.B.I.C. Regional Branch, Berbice.	Complaint was forwarded to the Bank for comments. The Bank responded to him on 18-04-07. A copy was also sent to ERC on 12-07-07. ERC wrote him on 12-04-07 and a copy of the bank's letter was also attached. File closed on 12-07-07
21.	Ganesh Persaud	Lot 3 Perth, Essequibo Coast	23-04-07	He complained about one Ajodhia Persaud, Supervisor of the Mahaicony Rice Mill situated at Schoonard, Essequibo Coast and who has a purchasing centre gave him short weight and when he complained, was discriminated against.	Complaint acknowledged. The matter was referred to Mr. Alli Baksh, the Chairman, Region # 2. There was no response. This matter is to be followed up.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
22.	Carl Anthony Parker	Deputy R.E.O, RDC Office Anna Regina, Essequibo Coast	23-04-07	A copy of a resignation letter from him was received at ERC. This letter was addressed to the Secretary, Public Service Commission.	He was advised that it was not a complaint and that if he needed to make one, he should do so officially by completing a Complaint Form which was attached. He did not respond. Matter closed on 25-06-07.
23.	Seokumarie Somwaru	Enterprise, E.C.D	23-04-07	Complained of racial discrimination. Her grandson attends the Dolphin Community High School and he complained that an African Guyanese teacher called him “a coolie”. She went to the school to speak to the teacher who insulted her.	Her complaint was accepted and she was advised to submit additional information so that investigations could be done. She did not comply, hence the matter was closed.
24.	Nicholas Da Silva	502 Onderneeming Housing Scheme, Parafait Harmonie Region # 3	25-04-07	He said that he is a preacher and that Ms. Waddington of the said area and previous member of his Church, used to supply electricity to the Church, but stopped for no reason. After a while, she complained to the Police that the noise emanating from his church was affecting her. He was later charged, reprimanded and discharged.	Investigations were done. No racial discrimination was proven. No further action was taken and the matter was closed.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
25.	Ghan Mohanlall	Lot 30 West Windsor Castle, Essequibo Coast.	26-04-07	Complained that he is a rice and cattle farmer. Cows were destroying his farm. Four men in his district were allowing their cows to destroy his crops. He reported this to the Police, but no action was taken.	Letter of complaint was acknowledged. Investigations done, which revealed that two men were charged by the Police and placed before the court. ERC does not have any authority to pursue the matter; because it is before the Court, hence the case was closed on 27-07-07.
26.	Anita Dass	Lot 23 Cotton Field, Essequibo Coast	26-04-07	Complained that she was discriminated against by the Regional Education Officer, Region # 2, who failed / refused to recommend her for a Drama Workshop Course. She felt that he had a personal reason, and complained that he made some negative remarks to her. She demanded an apology.	Complaint acknowledged. She was asked to verify the exact words he said. She did not respond. The matter was closed on 28-08-07 and she was informed.
27.	Edward Laud	Katoonaili Primary School, Region # 9	03-05-07	Complained that there was discrimination by the Regional Chairman, Region # 9 in awarding a contract to build the Primary School.	Letter of complaint was acknowledged. Complaint sent to the Regional Chairman for comments. So far there has been no response from the Regional Chairman.
28.	Marlyn Dawson	Lot 52 Crown Dam Industry, East Coast Demerara	08-05-07	She complained that on 26-04-07, Ms. Chandrawattie Roopnarine c/d Maureen, F.E.I whose son is her daughter's child father, abused her and called her a "Black Dog".	Complaint acknowledged. The ERC could not have proceeded because the matter was in court. She was informed accordingly. File closed on 12-06-07.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
29.	Seeranie Seegobin Thru' Juliet Coonjah	Suddie, Essequibo	08-05-07	Complained of violence against women and young girls.	Investigations were conducted which revealed that no racial discrimination and violence was proven. A letter was sent to her to that effect on 26-07-07.
30.	Mohamed Khan	Lot 43 Cotton Field, Essequibo Coast. Region # 2	11-06-07	Complained against the Guyana Rice Producers Association	In examining his complaint, it did not fall within the ambit of the ERC. He was written to. File closed on 29-06-07.
31.	Edward Niles	Lot 216 Grove Housing Scheme EBD	6-07-07	Complained of not being paid salary in lieu of leave. He worked during CWC-2007, while on pre- retirement leave.	Complaint forwarded to Regional Chairman, Region # 4 who responded. Niles should have proceeded on 42 days pre-retirement leave which was approved by the Regional Administration. The Region had nothing to do with his attachment to CWC-2007. No discrimination was proven. File closed on 13-08-07.
32.	Juliet Patterson	Lot 48 Stanleytown, New Amsterdam	17-07-07	Complained about deductions from her salary for NIS but received no benefits.	Complaint was acknowledged. Letter sent to General Manager, NIS, for attention and comments. No response.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
33.	Carl Robinson	Vigilance North, ECD.	26-07-07	On 10-07-07, he wrote a letter to H.E. the President, Mr. Bharat Jagdeo, copied to ERC, complaining of a land issue and racial discrimination.	His letter was acknowledged. He was also invited to attend a meeting at ERC on 30-07-07 to discuss the issue, but he never did. It was difficult to contact him at the given address. After not hearing from him, a letter dated, 22-08-07 was sent to him and copied to his Excellency, informing him that the matter was closed on 22-08-07.
34.	Samantha Moore	Lot 17 Amelia's Ward, Linden	27-07-07	She complained that she was discriminated against by her Tutors at the Charles Roza School of Nursing Watooka; Linden. She was denied the privilege of writing the Midwifery Examination. She had 33% attendance, while 80% was required to qualify for the examination.	Complaint was acknowledged. Investigations were done and a report submitted. No discrimination was proven. The School has clear guidelines regarding students' attendance, while in training. She was written. File closed on 07-11-07.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
35.	Nicola Harris	Lot 8, Vlissengen Road, West Ruimveldt Housing Scheme	20-08-07	Complained of sexual harassment by her Supervisor Mr. Paul Lord, Senior Protocol Officer.	Letter of complaint acknowledged on 22-08-07. She informed the Investigative Officer, that she had reported the matter to Mr. Norman McLean, Human Resources Manager who promised to investigate. She asked that ERC takes no further action. She was advised to put her request in writing, but she did not. After three months and there was no response the case was closed on 20-12-07.
36.	Charles Brown	Lot 60 Pike Street, Kitty Greater Georgetown	29-08-07	Complained of discrimination by Mrs. Davina Arjune of Survival Supermarket Vlissengen Road.	Investigations were conducted and a report submitted. A meeting was held at the ERC which was attended by the parties concerned. Both apologized to each other for remarks used. The Chairman spoke to them at length about the need for peace and harmony. The matter was resolved amicably. Closed on 27-11-07.
37.	Cyril Walker	301 Church Street, South Cummingsburg.	25-09-07	Complained against Dr. N. Gopaul, who made inflammatory remarks at a general meeting of N.B.S held at the Le Meridian Pegasus Hotel on 8-9-07	Letter of complaint was acknowledged. Letter sent to Dr. N. Gopaul for his comments. So far there has been no response.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
38.	Mortimer Mingo	Regional Chairman Region # 10	11-10-07	Complained that the REO, Mr. Henry Rodney was employing persons to work in the Region without consulting him.	Investigations were carried out and a report submitted. This matter was addressed by the Commission and was to be followed up.
39.	George Marshall	Kara-Kara, Linden.	11-10-07	He complained that residents of Amelia's Ward were not receiving titles for their lands; also the Kara-Kara creek was blocked and needed clearing.	His complaint was acknowledged and forwarded to the Minister of Housing and Water for attention. No response to date.
40.	George Wright	213 New Jersey Hill, Wismar.	11-10-07	Complained that he went to the Ministry of Housing and Water and applied for land to build a house but was unsuccessful. He wants the ERC to assist him.	His complaint was forwarded to the Honourable Minister, Mr. Harrynarine Nawbatt for his attention. No response to date.
41.	Vibert Sullivan	28 "D" Anjue Alley, Christianburg, Linden.	11-10-07	Complained that he was given a piece of land at Linden and the # was 3319. He marked the land with pickets and sometime after, he observed that the pickets were removed. He was unaware of what happened and claimed that he reported the matter to former Minister of Housing Mr. Shaik Baksh, who promised to look into the matter.	The complaint was acknowledged and referred to Minister of Housing and Water. No response to date.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
42.	Molly Shakespeare	36 Miles Ituni, Upper Demerara River	12-10-07	She complained that her daughter Cleary Allicock, age 12 years attends the Linden Foundation Secondary School at Amelia's Ward. She was refused admission to the school's dormitory by the school's authority. She is claiming that her daughter was discriminated against.	The complaint was acknowledged. A letter was sent to Ms. Marcel Hutson, REDO Region # 10 for attention. No response to date.
43.	Lynette Peters	Ituni Backlands	12-10-07	Complained that her son Andrea Fullington, age 13yrs, a student attending the Linden Foundation Secondary School at Amelia's Ward was accommodated in the dormitory provided, but he is no longer there. She alleged that he was given two lashes by the house mother who is no longer there.	She said she was annoyed, hence her complaint. However, she cannot give the name of the house mother. No investigation was done. She also said that this complaint was made for future reference.
44.	Ian Mc. Donald	River Road, Ituni.	12-10-07	Complained of discrimination. His daughter Keon Mc Donald age 13yrs was refused accommodation in the school's dormitory at Linden	The complaint was forwarded to Ms. Marcel Hutson REDO, Region # 10. No response to date.
45.	Seventh Day Adventist Students	University of Guyana	17-10-07	Complained of discrimination, based on their religion. They are final year students and are not allowed to attend lectures on Fridays. They cannot attend on Saturdays, because of their Sabbath.	The Lecturer, Mr. Olato Sam was contacted and he advised that the University of Guyana has rules and regulations and as a consequence there was nothing he could do. A report was submitted to the Commission for a decision.
46.	Rudolph Adams	81 Mocha Village, EBD.	18-10-07	Complained of discrimination and dismissal from the Guyana Forestry Commission.	A report was submitted to the Commission and the GFC was written to. A response was received from GFC. This matter is to be followed up.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
47.	Patrick De Castro	Vryheid's Lust, South East Coast Demerara	18-10-07	Complained of racial discrimination by Dexter Austin, who erected a shack in front of his house. Austin claimed that he was given permission by Nella Wills, Michelle Ramhdehol and Nurse Melville, who are all neighbours of De Castro.	His complaint falls outside the ERC's mandate. However, a letter was sent to the Regional Chairman, Region # 4 to look at the issue raised by him and to advise ERC on any action taken. No response to date.
48.	Ossie Melville	23 First Avenue, Bartica.	18-10-07	Complained of discrimination against him by his neighbour, Mr. Dashraj, a J.P. who is preventing him from carrying on activities at his business premises.	Report submitted. For decision by the Commission.
49.	Karl Amsterdam	165 Paradise Housing Scheme & Mahdia, Potaro	22-10-07	Complained of discrimination. He had applied for seven hundred (700) acres of land situated on the right bank of the Canje River at Kuri Savannah and was "being pushed around" by the Lands & Surveys Department..	Letter of complaint was acknowledged. Investigations were conducted and the report submitted. He has to check with Go Invest for his approval. He was written and advised accordingly. File closed on 04-01-08.
50.	Fu Chang Li	Culvert City , Rupununi	25-10-07	He came to Guyana in 1997 to work on the Moco-Moco hydro project, Region # 8. He later married a Guyanese woman in 2002 and settled in Lethem; he has two sons. He applied for citizenship / naturalization in 2003 to the Ministry of Home Affairs and has not received a response. He is asking the ERC to intervene on his behalf.	Complaint was acknowledged. Investigations carried out and a report was submitted. Further enquiries to be made with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
51.	Jagdesch Harrypaul	Culvert City, Rupununi	25-10-07	He complained of discrimination. He had leased a track of land from Ministry of Agriculture in 1996 and has not received his land Title. Requesting ERC to help.	His complaint was acknowledged. Report submitted. He later requested no further action in the matter. He was advised to submit same in writing, which he did.
52.	Mary Jones	Lot 33, Fourth Avenue, Bartica	31-10-07	Complained of discrimination meted out to African Guyanese children in Bartica by Jasmattie Das, PPP Councillor. She also complained against Mr. Winston Miller of Lot 8, 4 th Avenue Bartica, who broadcast racist messages on T.T.S. Channel 5 Station.	Letters were sent to the persons mentioned for comments. The letter to Ms. Das was copied to Ministry of Human Services and Social Security. A response was received from Ms. Das and the Minister of Human Services and Social Security. There was no response from Mr. Miller.
53.	Olinda Loncke	Lot 10, 1 ¼ Miles, Potaro Road Bartica, Region #7	31-10-07	She complained that her brother-in-law, Mr. Neville Alleyne was squatting illegally on the front reserve of her property and despite her complaints to several Agencies, he would not move.	No discrimination proven. She was advised to seek legal redress in a court of law to have the matter resolved. Closed on 31-12-07
54.	Caesar Perreira	Agatash Village, Left Bank of Essequibo River.	31-10-07	Complained of verbal and physical abuses, damaged to property by the Mc Intyres, Simmons and Fernandes families of Bartica, also Ms. Lucille Primus, the village Chairman. This had been happening for years and there was no peace. Need, ERC to help.	Letter of complaint was acknowledged. Enquiries continuing.
55.	Rampersaud	Lot 89 Fourth Avenue Bartica.	31-10-07	His complaint is based on hearsay, i.e. people saying that he is racial. He cited the Regional Chairman, Region # 7.	Letter of complaint was acknowledged. No discrimination was proven. His complaint is without merit. Closed on 19-12-07.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
56.	Vibert Crighton	Agatash, Bartica. Region #7	31-10-07	Complained that Mr. Vishnu Misir, the former REO, of Region # 7 wanted two acres of his land that was owned by his Grandmother Rebecca Cottam, (deceased).	Letter of complaint was acknowledged. Investigations revealed that his complaint does not fall under ERC's mandate. However, he was written and advised to seek legal redress in the court. Closed on 10-12-07
57.	Newton George	Lot 1064 South Sophia, Cummings Park, Cummings Lodge. E.C.D	13-11-07	Complained of racial discrimination. He needed a loan from the Republic Bank, Water Street Georgetown and was told that he had to have \$100,000 in the bank to qualify for a loan.	Letter of complaint was acknowledged. No discrimination was proven after the matter was investigated. He was written and advised to comply with the Bank's instructions. Closed on 31-12-07.
58.	Godfrey Alexander	Lot 27 Farm Old Road E.B.E.	13-11-07	Complained against three Policemen viz. Corporal Foo, Constables Guyadeen and Lall, who assaulted him. The matter was dealt with by the Chairman of the Police Complaints Authority and Mr. Alexander was advised to take private action.	Letter of complaint was acknowledged. The Policemen are no longer members of the Police Force. He was informed accordingly. File closed on 31-12-07.
59.	Ruby Dopwell	General Secretary, Ethiopian Orthodox Church, 26 Princess Street Wortmanville	15-11-07	On 9 th July, 1997 she applied on behalf of the Church to the Ministry of Housing for a piece of land to build a Cathedral for church members (25). Two sites were proposed (a) East to West on Hadfield Street on Mandela Avenue (b) next to the Multilateral School by YWCA on Croal Street.	Complaint acknowledged. A letter was sent to the Ministry of Housing and Mr. Andrew Bishop of the Lands and Surveys Department for comments. The Minister replied stating that the land does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Housing Authority. This matter is still pending. There has been no response from the Commissioner of Lands and Surveys.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
60.	Adrian Junior Elgin	Lot 41 Mandela Avenue, East Ruimveldt	16-11-07	Complained that he applied to rent a booth at the Guyana Post Office Complex, East La Penitence/Mandela Avenue to sell fruit juices and beverages. He is a Faithist. He completed all documentation but "is being pushed around" by Ms. Ferguson of the Post Office. Request assistance from ERC.	The matter was investigated. Report submitted. The Postmaster General was written on the complaint. No response so far.
61.	Ralph Peters	192 Lance Gibbs Street	16-11-07	Complained that he was discriminated against. He was employed by the National Enhancement Committee to beautify the city of Georgetown for Cricket World Cup 2007. His payment was \$30,000. He received an advance of \$7,000 leaving a balance of \$23,000. He was "being pushed around" to collect his \$23,000, hence his complaint	Investigations were carried out which revealed that he was paid the \$23,000 on 8 th November, 2007 before he made his complaint on 16 th November, 2007.No discrimination was proven. He was informed. Case closed.
62.	Hubert Edwards	21 Campbleville H/S, Member of the Maha Kalahan Shakti Devi Mandir affiliated to the IRO of Guyana	21-11-07	He complained that the UNDP allowed persons to use his specimen to produce peace buttons.	His complaint was acknowledged. Investigations continuing.
63.	Paramlall Goberdhan	Walton Hall, Essequibo Coast.	22-11-07	He wrote a letter to Dr. Roger Luncheon copied to ERC complaining against the Ministry of Education. He was awarded a contract for rehabilitation works to be done on EIT Board. He purchased materials for the project on 28-07-07 valued \$3,200,000. The Ministry subsequently informed him that the works would be re-tendered by the Region No. 2 Administration. He is seeking compensation of \$500,000	A Letter was sent to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education. A reply was received stating that the project was shelved while other pressing needs of EIT were addressed. Mr. Goberdhan was advised accordingly.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
64.	Randolph Harlequin	c/o 99 East La Penitence, Georgetown	23-11-07	Complained about Police harassment in Berbice, the pirating of his Property Rights as a recording artiste, the occupation of his land by East Indian residents in Berbice and compensation for injuries from an assault by one Sundar.	Letter of complaint was acknowledged. Investigations continuing.
65.	Mohan Ramsundar	22 Side Line Dam, Chateau Margot, ECD	27-11-07	Complained of fraudulent practices by some workers attached to GPL.	Letter of complaint was acknowledged. Investigations continuing.
66.	Deowattie Seenarine	106 Parika E.B. Essequibo	26-11-07	Complained of harassment by the NDC Chairman, Mr. Moti Singh who bulldozed her fence.	Letter of complaint was acknowledged. Investigations were carried out and no discrimination was proven. She has the matter in Court. ERC cannot proceed. Closed on 19-12-07
67.	Winston Baird	40 Eccles EBD	27-11-07	Complained of racial discrimination. He applied to DOCOL at Eccles for permission to sell cooking gas and Mr. Bridgemohan, the area representative did not approve his application.	Letter of complaint was acknowledged. Investigation was done. Report submitted. Further investigations are being carried out.
68.	Oswald James	Friendship Village, EBD	27-11-07	Complained made against the NDC & Councillors about the drainage situation in his area but no action was taken.	Complaint acknowledged. Investigations continuing.
69.	Dwakanauth	237 Busby Dam, Craig EBD	27-11-07	He complained about the attitude of Woman Police Constable Melville attached to Grove Police Station, who he alleged took \$5,000 to settle matters when the Policing Group of Craig/Garden of Eden arrests Indo Guyanese and take them to the Station. He said that she would also use remarks such as 'when all you fight, I do not have a problem because I will be richer'.	This complaint was sent to the Police Complaints Authority for attention. Awaiting a response.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
70.	Norman Cox	White Water Village, Barima/Waini, NWD Region # 1	28-11-07	Complained of discrimination by I.P.E.D in that the Institution failed to provide loan services to his community.	Complaint acknowledged. The Commission wrote the Credit Manager, IPED on 17-12-07 on the matter. No response was received to date from IPED.
71.	Dexter King	Mabaruma North West District, Region # 1	28-11-07	Alleged discrimination by the Police at Mabaruma. He complained about noise nuisance, Police harassment and the refusal of the Police to accept his complaints.	A letter of complaint was acknowledged. Investigations continuing.
72.	Deyaram Chowtie	Yarakita Mabaruma, North West District. Region # 1	28-11-07	Alleged racial discrimination by the Land and Surveys Department, Region # 1. Claimed he bought a tract of lease land in Yarakita which the Lands and Surveys Department failed to transfer to him.	Report submitted. Letter to be sent to Lands and Surveys Department.
73.	Wilma Das	Matthews Ridge, Heaven Hill, North West District, Region # 1.	29-11-07	Complained of racial discrimination by the NIS. NIS had offered \$15,000 as death benefits for her son Mc Turk, a former Post Master (deceased) She did not uplift the money and is desirous of knowing about all his benefits. .	Complaint acknowledged. The Commission wrote Ms. Doreen Nelson, Credit Manager of NIS to have the issue examined and to advice on the matter. No response to date.
74.	Aurealia David	Matthews Ridge, Heaven Hill, North West District, Region # 1	29-11-07	Ms. David alleged that monies generated from fund raising activities by the Nursery School in Matthews Ridge are not properly accounted for by the Teacher entrusted with it.	Complaint acknowledged. Mr. Fermin Singh, Regional Chairman of Region # 1 was written to on 14-12-07, to examine the issues raised. No response was received to date.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
75.	Nalini Delon	Arakaka, North West District, Region # 1	29-11-07	She complained that the communication system in Arakaka was down for the past six (6) months, (radio sets and telephones). She also complained of shortage of medical personnel at the Health Centre.	Complaint acknowledged. Mr. Fermin Singh, Regional Chairman, Region # 1, was written on 14-12-07 to examine the issues raised and to advise on action taken. No response to date.
76.	Mavis James	Matthews Ridge, Heaven Hill, North West District, Region # 1	29-11-07	She complained of discrimination by GUYWA	Complaint acknowledged. The Regional Chairman, Region # 1, was written with a view to examine the issue and advise the Commission on action taken. No Response.
77.	Wesley Albert for Melanie Albert	Port Kaituma, North West District, Region # 1.	29-11-07	He complained of racial discrimination against his wife by the Ministry of Education. She was previously admitted to the Teacher's In-Service training programme in Port Kaituma. She was forced to withdraw from the programme because of her poor grades.	Mr. Albert was to submit an authorization from his wife to act on her behalf. Investigations continuing.
78.	Nicola Higgins	Fitzburg, Port Kaituma. North West District, Region # 1	29-11-07	Complained about the level of supervision in the female dormitory at Port Kaituma Secondary School	A letter of complaint was acknowledged. Report submitted. This was to be followed up by the Commission.

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME OF COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS	DATE OF REPORT	COMPLAINT AGAINST AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	ACTION TAKEN
79.	Lloyd Gonsalves	One Mile, Port Kaituma, North West District, Region # 1.	29-11-07	Complained of racial discrimination by one Mr. Li, an employee of the Jai Ling Logging Company in Port Kaituma, who is prospecting for land to construct a Saw Milling Complex in the Orinoco Area, where he is farming.	This matter is receiving the attention of the Commission.
80.	George Matthews	One Mile, Port Kaituma, North West District, Region # 1	29-11-07	Complained of racial discrimination by one Mr. Li, and employee of the Jai Ling Logging Company in Port Kaituma, who is prospecting for land to construct a Saw Milling Complex in the Orinoca Area, where he is farming.	Complaint acknowledged. Report submitted. This matter is receiving the attention of the Commission.
81.	Leroy Bumbury	One Mile Port Kaituma, North West District, Region# 1.	29-11-07	Complained of racial discrimination by the Jai Ling, Logging Company. He alleged that he witnessed a Chinese man assaulting an Amerindian worker. He reported the matter to the Police, but was dismissed for the position taken by him. He was dismissed without being paid.	Complaint acknowledged. Report submitted. This matter is receiving the attention of the Commission.